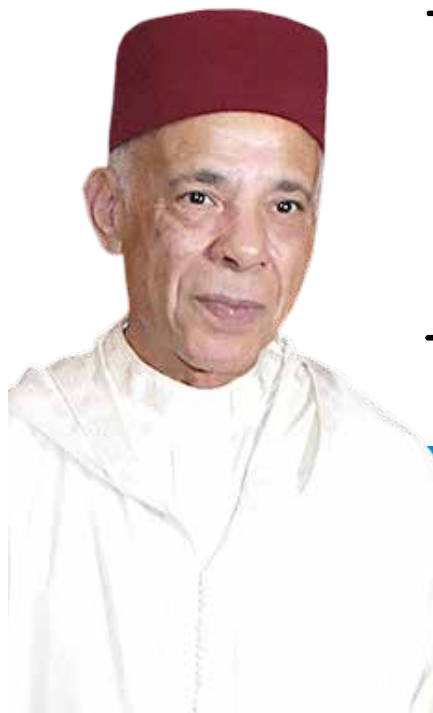




Saturday, August 01, 2026

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Morocco, Pakistan relations constantly on the move: envoy

Detailed News On Page-08

Ali Pervaiz Malik praises role of Azerbaijan envoy

Detailed News On Page-03


ICCI chief for durable export oriented plan

Detailed News On Page-07



DG ISPR presser

Military says good governance 'extremely important' for Pak

ISPR DG Lt Chaudhry says hard state does not mean "military is running the state"

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Friday stressed the importance of good governance, saying it was "extremely important" for Pakistan's security. "Good governance is essential for Pakistan's security. If the issues are not being resolved, it means that there should be done something for good governance," the ISPR DG said while addressing a press conference on counterterrorism and security. According to the ISPR DG, the country's challenges cannot not be resolved without ensuring good governance in the country. On Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's remarks, the ISPR DG declined to comment, calling them personal opinion of the former. The ISPR chief said the National Action Plan consisted of 14 points on which all political parties were in agreement.

The military's spokesperson was referring to Naqvi's remarks saying Pakistan's existing governance system had collapsed and was no longer capable of addressing the country's challenges, calling for administrative reforms, including the creation of new administrative units.

"The system we are living under has collapsed. Problems cannot be solved through it [...] If this system continues, we will still be sitting here 10 years from now discussing the same issues [...] You have to move towards administrative units. Call them provinces or give them any other name," he told an event in Islamabad on Thursday.

Lt Gen Chaudhry ruled out any talks with terrorists, rejecting the false impression of deteriorating security situation in Balochistan. He said that some of the elite and Sardars (tribal leaders) in Balochistan did not want children from poor families to progress. "We will not talk to you; we will talk to the people of Balochistan," he added. The ISPR chief said that Pakistan was not a hard state if the Constitution and law were not equal for every citizen. "Are we a hard state? No," the DG ISPR said, adding that a hard state

meant one where the Constitution and law were equal for everyone. "It [hard state] does not mean the military is running the state," he said. According to the ISPR DG, a sustained negative propaganda campaign was being waged against the state on the pretext of the situation in the province. Turning to the issue of missing persons, the chief military spokesperson said the commission on missing persons had received 201 applications.

He questioned the composition of the missing persons list, saying that individuals killed during counterterrorism operations were later found to be listed as missing persons. He said that those present in militant camps could also be found on the missing persons list. Addressing the situation in Balochistan, he said the province's geography and terrain were also challenges. He said Balochistan's population was 14.89 million and distances between posts extended across large areas. He further said that specific elements were involved in worsening conditions in the province, saying some groups were involved in activities including terrorism, robbery, drug trafficking and diesel smuggling. The ISPR DG said the people of Balochistan were the province's real stakeholders. He added that security forces were targeting militants and carrying out operations against them. The military spokesperson ruled out further negotiations with terrorists, saying there was no room left for talks. "Either you surrender, or we will fight you," he said. The military's spokesperson began his presser by giving a breakdown of the operations conducted against terrorists during the ongoing year. According to Lt Gen Chaudhry, security forces carried out 40,348 operations, killing 2,084 confirmed terrorists, while an average of 10 militants were eliminated daily.

Presenting an overview of the security situation, the ISPR DG said that security forces conducted an average of 194 operations every day. He added that 1,971 operations were carried out alone in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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LG polls in Capital draw near

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced the commencement of preparations for local government elections in the federal capital, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Islamabad, the process of delimitation has begun following the completion of training for the delimitation committees. The Deputy Commissioner has provided the necessary maps, and the formal exercise will start on August 1, 2026, concluding on October 13, 2026.

The ECP has also forwarded its recommendations on the draft Local Government Conduct of Election Rules to the Ministry of Interior and the Chief Commissioner Islamabad, urging the immediate publication of the rules so that printing of election materials and other arrangements can proceed without delay.

In Punjab, hearings on objections to preliminary delimitations have been completed by the respective authorities. Decisions will be communicated to the delimitation committees by August 7, 2026, and the final delimitations will be published on August 17, 2026. The ECP will then consult with the provincial

Continued on Page 06

Iran says its forces struck two oil tankers

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran has announced that its forces struck two oil tankers attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz under what it described as U.S. "air escort." The incident caused fires aboard the vessels and temporarily disrupted traffic in one of the world's most vital energy chokepoints. The Strait of Hormuz handles nearly 20% of global oil shipments, and any disruption there has immediate implications for international energy markets.

Meanwhile, Kuwait reported that it intercepted and destroyed Iranian drones aimed at "vital and military facilities," including Ali Al Salem airbase. Kuwaiti officials condemned the attack as a violation of sovereignty, while regional allies expressed solidarity. The United Arab Emirates also denounced the strikes, warning of the growing danger to Gulf states. The United States confirmed that its forces continue to target Iranian military infrastructure,

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov paid a farewell call on the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Farewell Call

PM Shehbaz reaffirms commitment to further strengthen Azerbaijan ties

Ambassador Farhadov thanked the prime minister for the warmth, hospitality, and support extended to him by the Government and people of Pakistan throughout his diplomatic assignment, describing his tenure in Pakistan as a cherished chapter of his diplomatic career

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to further strengthening the brotherly ties with Azerbaijan, recalling the high-level exchanges between the two countries over the past two and a half years. The prime minister, talking to Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov, who paid a farewell call on him, expressed confidence that the strong foundation laid during the envoy's tenure would continue to guide the trajectory of bilateral ties in the years ahead.

The prime minister warmly acknowledged Ambassador Farhadov's dedicated efforts to strengthen the deep-rooted, brotherly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan during his tenure. He commended the Ambassador's contributions in expanding bilateral cooperation across political, trade, economic, defence, culture and people-to-people domains, including the launch of direct flights between the two countries.

Conveying his warm regards to President Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister Shehbaz fondly recalled his numerous visits to Azerbaijan over the past two and a half years, as well as the visit of President Aliyev to Pakistan in July 2024. He also wished Ambassador Farhadov continued success in his future assignments. Ambassador Farhadov thanked the prime minister for the warmth, hospitality, and support extended to him by the Government and people of Pakistan throughout his diplomatic assignment, describing his tenure in Pakistan as a cherished chapter of his diplomatic career. He reaffirmed Azerbaijan's continued commitment to deepening its strategic partnership with Pakistan. He also presented the prime minister with a book based on his family's experiences of living in Pakistan. Deputy Prime Minister and

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Case against Meta head in India

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Police in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad have registered a case against the head of Meta India, Arun Srinivas, over multiple videos posted on the company's Facebook platform that depicted Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an "abusive manner," a senior police officer said on Friday. The videos spread as Modi contended with the biggest wave of youth-led protests India has seen in more than a decade, a movement over leaked papers in national examinations that has led to the resignation of his education minister. Police are preparing to send a notice to Meta Platforms regarding the case, said V Aravind Babu, deputy commissioner of police for cyber crimes in Hyderabad. Meta did not immediately respond to a Reuters' request for comment on Friday.

Earthquake jolts parts of Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A 2.9-magnitude earthquake was felt in different parts of Karachi on Friday, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The PMD said that the earthquake struck at 6:01pm, with its epicentre located within the port city. According to the Met Office, the earthquake occurred at a depth of 10 kilometres. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage following the tremors. Earthquakes are not uncommon in Pakistan, as the country is situated on the boundary of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. Large parts of South Asia are seismically active because a tectonic plate known as the Indian plate is pushing north into the Eurasian plate.

PPP warns

'Better not to take administrative units debate any further'

No concrete proposal regarding administrative units put forward before us so far, says PPP

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the main ally of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the Centre, on Friday advised against taking the debate of new administrative units any further. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi a day earlier said Pakistan's existing governance system had collapsed and was no longer capable of addressing the country's challenges, calling for administrative reforms, including the creation of new administrative units.

"The system we are living under has collapsed. Problems cannot be solved through it [...] If this system continues, we will still be sitting here 10 years from now discussing the same issues [...] You have to move towards administrative units. Call them provinces or give them any other name," he told an event in Islamabad.

He told journalists later that the efforts of the Chief of Army Staff and the Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir would not yield lasting results unless politicians worked together to reform Pakistan's governance system.

"Unless politicians fix the country's system, the Field Marshal's hard work will be of no benefit [...] The country's political parties will have to come together to improve the system," he added.

In response, PPP Vice President Sherry Rehman, during Geo News' programme "Geo Pakistan", suggested against such an idea. "It would be better if the debate about administrative units is not taken any further. No concrete proposal regarding administrative units has been put forward before us so far," she said. The PPP leader noted that it was also not the

Continued on Page 06

At least 32 killed after coal mine explosion near Quetta

Chief Inspector of Mines Balochistan Muhammad Atif told Dawn that 34 miners were inside the two mines when the explosion occurred

DNA

QUETTA: Rescue teams recovered 32 bodies overnight from two coal mines in the Sorange coalfield near Quetta after a methane gas explosion, while the search for two more miners was under way on Friday, an official told Dawn. The explosion occurred on Thursday at a private coal mine in the Sorange coalfield, about 30 kilometres northeast of Quetta. The methane gas explosion triggered a fire, caused the mine to collapse, and affected another nearby mine. Chief Inspector of Mines Balochistan Muhammad Atif told Dawn that 34 miners were inside the two mines when the explosion occurred. "So far, 32 bodies have been recovered from both mines," he said. "The operation is continuing in the mine where the explosion took place to recover two miners." Earlier, officials said the explosion occurred on Thursday afternoon when 24 miners were working about 4,000 feet underground in the first mine. Soon after the explosion, a fire broke out inside the mine, causing parts of the structure to collapse. The blast was heard over a wide area of Sorange. The explosion severely affected another mine near the main site, with 12 miners working in the second mine at the time.

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President, PM express deep grief over coal mine explosion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of lives in a coal mine explosion in the Sorange area of Quetta, where several workers were killed. In separate statements, the president and the prime minister directed the relevant authorities to rescue all workers trapped in the mine and ensure the provision of the best possible medical treatment to the injured. They extended their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the elevation of the ranks of those who lost their lives in the incident. They also prayed for grant of strength to the bereaved families to bear the loss with patience.

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Pak, Turkiye agree to strengthen railway coop

The two sides agreed to restore the Islamabad–Tehran–İstanbul (ITI) freight train service at the earliest and develop it into a permanent commercial trade corridor. They described the ITI freight corridor as a strategic initiative for enhancing trade and regional connectivity among South Asia, Central Asia and Europe

LAHORE: Pakistan and Turkiye have reaffirmed their commitment to expanding long-term cooperation in the railway sector, with both countries agreeing to promote joint investment, technology transfer and modernization projects during a high-level meeting held in Ankara. According to the PR spokesperson on Friday, the understanding was reached during a delegation-level meeting between Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Abdulkadir Uraloglu on the second day of the Pakistani minister's official visit to Turkiye. The two sides agreed to restore the Islamabad–Tehran–İstanbul (ITI) freight train service at the earliest and develop it into a permanent commercial trade corridor. They described the ITI freight corridor as a strategic initiative for enhancing trade and regional connectivity among South Asia, Central Asia and Europe. During the meeting, the Pakistani delegation briefed the Turkish side on the upgra-

dation of the Rohri–Taftan Main Line-3 (ML-3), stating that the project would significantly improve regional trade and freight operations through Iran. Progress on the Karachi–Rohri Main Line-1 (ML-1) project was also shared, while Turkish companies were invited to invest in the remaining sections of the railway network. Pakistan also invited Turkish public and private sector companies to participate in Pakistan Railways' infrastructure projects. Both sides discussed the possibility of Turkiye's participation and technical cooperation in the Uzbekistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan Railway Corridor (UAPRC). A detailed presentation was given on Pakistan Railways' digital transformation, modern signaling systems, rolling stock upgradation and private sector participation. The two countries agreed to enhance cooperation in technology transfer, digital railway solutions, capacity building and modern operational systems. The meeting also explored opportunities for joint investment, joint ventures and local manufac-

turing at Pakistan Railways' Carriage Factory in Islamabad, concrete sleeper factories and engineering workshops. Both sides expressed interest in utilizing Turkish technology for the local production of railway equipment, passenger coaches and freight wagons. Pakistan and Turkiye also agreed to promote cooperation in railway manufacturing, outsourcing, industrial collaboration and greater private sector participation. Detailed presentations on railway projects, regional connectivity and investment opportunities were delivered by both delegations. Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi said Pakistan would fully benefit from Turkiye's experience, investment and advanced technology in the modernization of Pakistan Railways. The two countries reaffirmed their resolve to transform bilateral railway cooperation into practical projects, joint investments and initiatives aimed at promoting regional economic growth and connectivity.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: A motorcyclist drives through a road during the fresh monsoon spell in the Federal Capital.

Pehchaan' app launched

ABBOTTABAD: According to the police, registration through the Pehchaan mobile app is completely free of cost. Every registered driver will be issued a unique QR code, enabling passengers and law enforcement agencies to verify the driver's identity quickly and efficiently, thereby improving the safety and security of both drivers and commuters. The initiative is part of Abbottabad Police's efforts to promote safe travel, build public confidence in transport services, and introduce a secure, technology-driven transportation system. Police have advised drivers to complete their registration by contacting their respective Traffic Wardens or visiting the designated Pehchaan Desk. The Abbottabad Traffic Police said its personnel were available to provide guidance and assistance throughout the registration process. The police urged all eligible drivers to register with the Pehchaan mobile app and contribute towards building a safer driver community and a more secure Abbottabad.—APP

HEC's mandatory AI programs introduced

SIALKOT: Government College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS) on Friday introduced new policy of Higher Education Commission (HEC) which makes AI Course mandatory for all degree programs from Fall 2026, a release of the varsity said. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has announced that a 3-credit-hour Artificial Intelligence (AI) course will be mandatory for all undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes at public and private universities starting Fall 2026. This initiative aims to equip students with essential AI knowledge and practical skills, preparing graduates for the rapidly evolving digital economy and future job market. Whether you're pursuing a bachelor's, master's, or postgraduate degree, AI will now become an integral part of your academic journey.—APP

CM GB orders immediate rescue operation for climbers

GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Amjad Hussain has ordered an immediate and effective rescue operation after taking notice of reports that contact had been lost with a 10-member international mountaineering team following an avalanche on Broad Peak (8,047 metres). According to official information from the Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) and the district administration of Shigar, the Chief Minister directed all relevant departments and the district administration

to remain on high alert and to expedite search-and-rescue efforts in close coordination with the Pakistan Army. The Chief Minister said that every possible resource should be utilized to ensure the safety of the international expedition led by renowned mountaineer Nirmal "Nims" Purja. The team includes Hunza-based Pakistani climber Sohail Sakhi, along with mountaineers from Nepal, the United States, Oman, China and other countries.

Despite adverse weather conditions, he instructed the authorities to keep both aerial and ground rescue teams fully prepared so that immediate assistance could be provided as soon as weather conditions permit. Expressing deep concern over the incident, Chief Minister Amjad Hussain prayed for the safety of all climbers. He directed the concerned authorities to keep him informed of the rescue operation's progress on a moment-to-moment basis.—APP

Rain disrupts power supply on 84 PESCO feeders across KP

PESHAWAR: Heavy overnight rain temporarily disrupted electricity supply on 84 feeders across the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) region, affecting parts of the Peshawar, Khyber, Mardan, Swabi and Swat circles, according to a PESCO spokesperson. The PESCO spokesperson said that 41 feeders were affected in the Peshawar Circle, followed by 22 in Khyber, 12 in Mardan, five in Swabi and four in the Swat Circle. PESCO immediately launched repair work to restore power supply at the earliest. On the directives of the PESCO Chief, the General Manager (Operations) is personally supervising the restoration and repair operations to ensure the earliest possible resumption of electricity supply.—APP

Kundi deplores KP's exclusion from S Asian Games

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has termed the reported exclusion of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from the South Asian Games 2027 as regrettable, saying the move could negatively affect the province's positive image and sports development. He expressed these views during a meeting with Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association and former provincial minister Aqil Shah at the Governor House. The meeting discussed the promotion of sports, development of sports infrastructure in the province and preparations related to the South Asian Games 2027. Aqil Shah informed the Governor about his concerns over the alleged exclusion of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from hosting events of the South Asian Games 2027.—APP

Heavy rain causes flooding across Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD: Heavy rainfall accompanied by strong winds lashed Abbottabad and its adjoining hilly areas on Friday, causing streams and nullahs to overflow and inundating major roads across the city. Several feet of rainwater accumulated on the Karakoram Highway, Murree Road, PMA Road, and other key arteries, including Mandian, Supply, and Jinnahabad, severely disrupting the flow of traffic. Water also entered low-lying areas and link roads, creating difficulties for residents, while long queues of vehicles were reported on major

highways due to flooding and traffic congestion. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), intermittent heavy rainfall is expected to continue over the next 24 hours in Abbottabad and other parts of Hazara Division. The department has warned that intense downpours may trigger urban flooding in low-lying areas, flash flooding in local streams and nullahs, and landslides in vulnerable hilly regions.

The PMD has advised tourists planning to visit Galiyat, Nathiagali, Thandiani, Kaghan Valley, and other mountainous des-

tinations to stay updated on weather conditions and road status before travelling. Local residents have also been urged to avoid unnecessary movement, particularly near rivers, streams, and flood-prone areas, and to exercise extreme caution during periods of heavy rainfall.

Meanwhile, local authorities have appealed to the public to avoid unnecessary travel until weather conditions improve. Citizens undertaking essential journeys have been advised to use alternate routes where possible and drive with extreme caution to ensure their safety.—APP

NHMP foils highway safety fence theft attempt

SARGODHA: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) foiled an attempt to steal a government-installed safety fence on the motorway and arrested the suspect red-handed before handing him over to the local police. According to an NHMP spokesperson, officials of Beat No. 12, Faizpur, of MC-One Zone in the M-2 South Sector were on routine patrol when they spotted a man attempting to steal a section of the safety fence at kilometre 5 southbound near Lima. Upon seeing the Motorway Police patrol vehicle, the suspect attempted to flee. However, the officials acted swiftly and apprehended him at the scene. During the initial investigation, the suspect was identified as Zeeshan, son of Allah Ditta, a resident of Mason Colony. The accused was later handed over to Kot Abdul Malik Police Station for further legal proceedings, where a case was registered against him.

Illegal structures demolished along protected river zone

HAVELIAN: The district administration carried out a large-scale anti-encroachment operation in Havelian, demolishing dozens of illegal structures built within the protected river zone, as part of efforts to restore the natural flow of the river and mitigate flood risks during the monsoon season. The operation was conducted on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad Sarmad Saleem Akram and led by Additional Assistant Commissioner-II Havelian Muhammad Osama, in collaboration with police, the Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA), the Irrigation Department, and Revenue field staff. According to the district administration, the operation targeted illegal encroachments along the Dorr River and adjoining areas under the provisions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa River Protection Ordinance, 2002 (as amended), and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Property (Removal of Encroachment) Act, 1977 (as amended). During the operation, authorities demolished 10 illegally constructed residential houses, five boundary walls, and five shops in Mohalla Began, Havelian Town. In Langra-I, two crushing plants were inspected, and one was demolished after being found in violation of the River Protection Ordinance. The administration also razed two illegal block factories and two shops established within the protected river zone in Havelian Town. Near Ayub Bridge, an illegally constructed school building and a park built inside the protected river corridor were also demolished. Officials said the operation was aimed at restoring the river's natural course, removing encroachments from the protected floodplain, protecting government land, and reducing the risk of flooding to safeguard lives and property during the ongoing monsoon season.—APP

Seminar proposes to strengthen institutional ties

During his visit, Ali Zaman Advocate toured the various galleries of China Window, where he was introduced to different aspects of Chinese history, culture and development, as well as Pakistan-China friendship. At the conclusion of the visit, he signed the Friendship Wall.

PESHAWAR: Prominent legal expert and Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan, Ali Zaman has proposed holding a seminar on justice systems of Pakistan and China so that the legal frameworks and judicial systems of both countries could be studied and compared. He expressed these views during his visit to China Window, the Chinese cultural and information centre established in Peshawar. He said that the proposed seminar would provide legal experts, lawyers, academics and students with an opportunity to understand the judicial structures, legal traditions and dispute-resolution mechanisms

of both countries. Such an initiative could also help identify areas where legal institutions and professional bodies of Pakistan and China could exchange knowledge and experiences. Ali Zaman Advocate emphasized that relations between Pakistan and China should be strengthened not only through economic and development cooperation but also through institutional, academic and professional exchanges. He observed that interaction between lawyers and legal scholars of the two countries could contribute to greater mutual understanding and open new avenues of cooperation in the field of law and justice. The

proposed seminar could include discussions on constitutional frameworks, the functioning of courts, access to justice, legal education, commercial laws and the role of modern technology in judicial proceedings. Participation by senior lawyers, judges, researchers and representatives of academic institutions would make the event an effective platform for meaningful dialogue. Ali Zaman Advocate described China Window as an important milestone in Pakistan-China friendship. He said that China Window is playing a commendable role in creating awareness about Pakistan-China friendship in Peshawar and across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Ali Zaman

expressed the hope that China Window would continue to promote people-to-people contacts by organizing cultural, educational and awareness activities related to China and Pakistan-China relations. He said that the proposed legal seminar would add a new dimension to these efforts by bringing together members of the legal community and encouraging dialogue on the judicial systems of the two friendly countries. During his visit, Ali Zaman Advocate toured the various galleries of China Window, where he was introduced to different aspects of Chinese history, culture and development, as well as Pakistan-China friendship. At the conclusion of the visit, he signed the Friendship Wall.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

AUGUST

Aug 01/China
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzerland
National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01 /Syria
Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Bukino Faso
National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea
Independence Day

Aug 15/India
Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland
Armed Forces Day

Aug 17 /Indonesia
Independence Day

Aug 24/Ukraine
Independence Day

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Independence Day

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Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

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Ali Pervaiz, Azerbaijani envoy discuss expanding energy coop

Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik appreciated outgoing Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov’s invaluable contributions towards strengthening the longstanding friendship and strategic partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik has reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to further expand collaboration with Azerbaijan in the petroleum and energy sectors. He was talking to Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov who paid a farewell call on him in Islamabad. Ali Pervaiz Malik appreciated outgoing Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov’s invaluable contributions towards strengthening the longstanding friendship and strategic partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. The Minister lauded Ambassador Farhadov’s efforts in enhancing bilateral cooperation during his tenure, particularly in the energy sector. He noted that Pakistani companies and SOCAR have significantly expanded their cooperation, laying the foundation for greater collaboration in areas of mutual interest. Ali Pervaiz Malik conveyed his best wishes to Ambassador Farhadov for his future endeavours and thanked him for his commitment to furthering Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations. The Minister reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to further deepening cooperation with Azerbaijan, especially in the petroleum and energy sectors. He emphasized that both countries are working with a

shared vision to build stronger economic ties and create opportunities that will benefit future generations. Ambassador Khazar

Farhadov thanked the Government of Pakistan for its support and hospitality during his tenure. Both sides expressed confidence

that the close partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan would continue to grow and achieve new milestones in the years ahead.

Kitchen items’ prices fall by 0.91pc

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI)-based weekly inflation decreased by 0.91 percent during the week ended on July 30, 2026, for the combined consumption group, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to PBS data, the SPI for the week under review declined to 357.61 points from 360.88 points recorded in the previous week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 9.05 percent. The weekly SPI, with base year 2015=16=100, covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) decreased by 1.19 percent to 345.63 points from 349.80 points. Likewise, the SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733–22,888, Rs 22,889–29,517, Rs 29,518–44,175 and above Rs 44,175 declined by 1.37 percent, 0.97 percent, 0.81 percent and 0.68 percent, respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 27 items (52.94 percent) increased, six items (11.77 percent) decreased, while 18 items (35.29 percent) remained unchanged. On a week-on-week basis, the items that witnessed decrease in prices included tomatoes which declined by 22.96 percent, followed by chicken 11.20 percent, electricity charges for Q1 9.06 percent, bananas 0.70 percent, sugar 0.16 percent and pulse moong 0.15 percent. On the other hand, the prices of onions witnessed the highest increase of 7.62 percent, followed by diesel 4.17 percent, eggs 3.16 percent, petrol 2.46 percent, wheat flour 2.00 percent, potatoes 1.93 percent, LPG 1.90 percent, pulse gram 1.44 percent, vegetable ghee (2.5kg) 0.71 percent, pulse mash 0.69 percent, pulse masoor 0.64 percent and firewood 0.15 percent. On the other hand, prices of tomatoes declined by 22.96

percent, followed by chicken 11.20 percent, electricity charges for Q1 9.06 percent, bananas 0.70 percent, sugar 0.16 percent and pulse moong 0.15 percent. On a year-on-year basis, prices of potatoes declined by 30.89 percent, followed by pulse gram 19.89 percent, chicken 19.56 percent, sugar 17.48 percent, salt powder 14.09 percent, pulse masoor 12.80 percent, eggs 8.38 percent and pulse moong 7.38 percent over the corresponding week of last year. Major annual increases were recorded in the prices of tomatoes by 228.71 percent, followed by onions 95.36 percent, wheat flour 78.65 percent, LPG 51.76 percent, diesel 37.42 percent, petrol 23.28 percent, gents sponge chappal 16.69 percent, mutton 16.06 percent, chilies powder 15.20 percent, bananas 14.69 percent, beef 13.44 percent and bread 9.69 percent, according to the PBS.—APP

CCP okays acquisition of BP’s global Castrol lubricants business

ISLAMABAD :The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the proposed acquisition of BP plc’s global Castrol lubricants business by Motion JVCo Limited, a special purpose vehicle established by U.S.-based investment firm Stonepeak Partners, after its Phase-I review. Castrol lubricants are marketed and sold in Pakistan through Castrol Group Holdings Limited. Notwithstanding the fact that the transaction is global, under Pakistan’s merger control law, acquisitions involving businesses with operations in Pakistan are reviewed to ensure they do not substantially lessen competition or create or strengthen a dominant position in the relevant market, said a release issued here on Friday. Under the transaction, BP plc will sell Castrol Group Holdings Limited—which owns the global Castrol lubricants business—to Motion JVCo. Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPP Investments), through its wholly owned subsidiary, will acquire an indirect minority stake, while Stonepeak will retain indirect sole control following completion. CCP identified the relevant market as the sale of lubricants in Pakistan. The Commission found that neither Stonepeak nor CPP Investments has existing operations in Pakistan’s lubricants market. As a result, the transaction does not combine competing businesses in Pakistan and creates no horizontal or vertical overlap with the target’s operations. In Pakistan, Castrol lubricants are marketed through a third-party distributor. The Commission concluded that the acquisition would not alter the market structure, create entry barriers, or result in the creation or strengthening of a dominant position in Pakistan’s lubricants market. Accordingly, it authorised the transaction under Section 31(1)(d)(i) of the Competition Act, 2010.—APP

ITP issues safety advisory amid heavy rain

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Friday issued a public safety advisory amid heavy rainfall in the federal capital, urging motorists to exercise extra caution, avoid waterlogged roads and cooperate with traffic officials, while confirming that traffic continued to flow smoothly across the city. An ITP official told APP that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Kainat Azhar Khan was personally monitoring the traffic situation across Islamabad to ensure uninterrupted traffic flow despite the ongoing rain. Traffic police officers had been deployed at key roads and intersections to regulate traffic and provide assistance to commuters wherever required. He urged motorists not to stop beneath underpasses or create unnecessary congestion, and advised them to avoid driving cars or riding motorcycles through heavily waterlogged areas. The official further advised road users to drive at a reduced speed, maintain a safe distance from other vehicles and use indicators and headlights where necessary to ensure safe travel during the rainy weather. He said citizens could contact the Pucar-15 emergency helpline in case of any emergency and follow the official Islamabad Police social media platforms for the latest traffic updates and travel advisories.—APP

OGRA announces increase in RLNG prices

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), in accordance with the Federal Government’s policy guidelines, has notified a substantial increase in the prices of Re-gasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) for July 2026, with the revised rates taking effect from According to the notification, RLNG transmission and distribution prices for both the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) and the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) have registered increases of over 32 percent. For SNG-PL, the RLNG transmission price has been fixed at US\$23.7020 per MMBtu, up from US\$17.9394 per MMBtu in June, reflecting an increase of US\$5.7626 per MMBtu or 32.12 percent.—APP

Family caregivers Pak’s overlooked second patients

ISLAMABAD:Not every hero wears a white coat. Some spend years quietly caring for a child with autism, a parent with dementia, or a loved one living with a disability or mental illness. Their days begin before sunrise and end long after everyone else has gone to bed. They give their time, energy, and love without expecting anything in return. Yet while everyone asks about the patient, very few ask a simple question: How is the caregiver? For many families in Pakistan, caregiving is a lifelong responsibility. Mrs. Nadia, a resident of Rawalpindi, who is caring for her daughter with a mental disorder for the past 30 years, said every day demands patience, strength, and sacrifice. “Looking after her daughter is emotionally and physically exhausting, but she continues because her child depends entirely on her.” Kamran, a 40-year-old another Rawalpindi resident caring for his father who lives with dementia, told APP that the challenges extend beyond the home. He said caregivers often face social misunderstanding, with people staring, asking insensitive questions and failing to recognise the realities of the condition. “The most painful part is watching someone you love suffer while feeling helpless,” he said. Like many caregivers, Kamran acknowledged that he often neglects his own health while prioritising his father’s care. Doctors say these experiences are common. Clinical psychologist Dr. Usama, practicing at the Pakistan Institute of Mental Health, explained that caregivers often suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, frustration, sleep problems and emotional exhaustion because they spend their time caring for others while neglecting themselves. He said caregiver burnout was not a sign of weakness but a natural response to long-term stress that should be recognised and treated early. Caregiver burnout is becoming increasingly common as Pakistan’s need for long-term care continues to grow. According to the 2023 Population and Housing Census, the country has around 3.5 million persons with disabilities, nearly 1.6 percent of the population. Most depend on family members because rehabilitation centres, home-care services and long-term care facilities are limited. As a result, unpaid family members provide round-the-clock care, often sacrificing their own health, careers and personal lives. Family caregivers of persons with disabilities often bear an invisible psychological burden that can be as debilitating as the physical demands of caregiving, according to a practicing psychiatrist Dr. Zainab. “Years of continuous caregiving, financial strain and social isolation leave many caregivers vulnerable to chronic stress, anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion. Unfortunately, their mental health needs are rarely recognised because the focus remains on the patient,” the psychiatrist said. The expert stressed that caregivers should be treated as “second patients” and recommended, respite care, support groups and financial assistance to reduce burnout. International research echoes these concerns. Dr. Anthony Komaroff of Harvard Medical School says caregiving can bring emotional rewards but also place a heavy physical, emotional and financial burden on families. The World Health Organization says supporting caregivers is essential because healthier caregivers provide better care and improve patients’ quality of life. Experts say the burden is made heavier by the limited support available in Pakistan. Affordable mental health services, respite care, counselling, caregiver support groups and workplace policies remain scarce. Many caregivers hesitate to seek help because caregiving is often seen as a moral duty, and admitting struggle is viewed negatively. Many developed countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, provide disability benefits, home nursing, respite care, counselling and caregiver support programmes. These services do not remove the challenges of caregiving, but they help families cope with emotional and financial pressure. In contrast, Pakistan offers very limited institutional support, leaving families to shoulder much of the physical, emotional and financial burden of long-term care.—APP

IFMP board approves relocation to Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of the Institute of Financial Markets of Pakistan (IFMP) has approved the relocation of the Institute’s head office to Islamabad as part of a major strategic transformation aimed at making IFMP the country’s premier institution for financial market education, continues professional training, and capacity building. The Institute will, however, maintain a regional office in Karachi. The Board unanimously elected Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), as Chairperson of the IFMP Board, while Mr. Muhammad Ali Farid Khawaja, Commissioner, Securities Market Division (SMD), SECP, joined the Board as SECP’s nominee member, said a release issued here on Friday. The meeting was attended by Dr. Mubbashar Sadiq, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), IFMP; Mr. Jawad Hashmi, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX); Mr. Shariq Jaffrani, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Cen-

tral Depository Company (CDC); Dr. Ahmed Junaid, Dean, Karachi School of Business and Leadership (KSBL); Mr. Shahrukh Usmani, Company Secretary, IFMP; and Mr. Ahmad Javed, Manager Finance, IFMP. Addressing the meeting, Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu said that with 64–67% of Pakistan’s population under 30, the country has immense potential to expand financial inclusion, retail investment, entrepreneurship, and employment. He said SECP has set a target of increasing Pakistan’s capital market investor base from around 500,000 to 2.5 million, emphasizing that financial literacy and skills development will be fundamental to achieving this objective. He said IFMP will lead a nationwide financial literacy initiative by taking financial education to schools, universities, and professional communities across Pakistan. The Institute will equip youth and professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in the formal financial sector, strengthen investor confidence, and

impart professional courses to develop qualified human capital for the capital market and insurance industries. Commissioner SECP Mr. Muhammad Ali Farid Khawaja said the Pakistan Stock Exchange must expand its reach across Pakistan, noting that a growing number of new investors are emerging from Punjab and other regions of the country. He said IFMP will significantly expand its mandate by introducing free online financial literacy courses, continuous professional development programmes, certification courses for capital market and insurance intermediaries, and specialized industry training to build a skilled financial services workforce. The Board also placed on record its appreciation for the valuable contributions of outgoing SECP nominee directors Mr. Osman Syed and Dr. Yasir Mahmood, and acknowledged the dedicated leadership of Mr. Shoaib Javed Hussain during his tenure as Chairperson of the IFMP Board.—DNA

MoU inked to boost vehicle exports

ISLAMABAD: MG JW 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, under the agreement, MG JW Automobile Pakistan will export 100 locally assembled vehicles to Bangladesh during the current year, while total

exports are projected to reach 5,800 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 Bhuiyan, 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. He noted that Pakistan’s automotive industry has achieved international manufacturing standards and possesses significant export potential. Chief Executive Officer of MG JW Automobile Pakistan, Jianqiang Shao, welcomed the partnership and reaffirmed the company’s commitment to expanding Pakistan’s automotive exports to regional and international markets.—APP

Briefs

China-aided rural dispensary opened in Punjab

ISLAMABAD: A China-aided health facility was inaugurated in the village of Ratwal, Attock district, Punjab province, marking a latest addition to the growing portfolio of China-Pakistan livelihood cooperation projects. Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan and Chinese Consul General in Lahore Sun Yan jointly attended the inauguration ceremony of the dispensary, which is expected to provide basic free medical services to nearly 80 surrounding villages where access to healthcare facilities has traditionally been limited. The project is aimed at improving medical conditions in remote rural areas of Punjab and enhancing the health and well-being of local communities. It represents another outcome of China's "small and beautiful" livelihood initiative and a vivid manifestation of the two countries' efforts to build a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future for the new era. Ratwal, a village in Attock District at an altitude of 531 meters, lies in a region where healthcare resources have long been scarce. The newly inaugurated dispensary will help address the longstanding challenge of limited access to healthcare in Pakistan's rural hinterlands.—APP

Police kill two wanted suspects

ATTOCK: The police killed two alleged proclaimed offenders during a joint operation and rescued a woman abducted for a Rs 50 million ransom, the police said on Friday. The operation, carried out by the Crime Control Department (CCD) in cooperation with Haripur police, targeted suspects accused of involvement in kidnapping for ransom, terrorism, armed robbery, targeted killings, sexual assault and extortion. The police said the raid took place in the Dhenda Bypass area within the jurisdiction of Khallabat police station, Haripur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The operation was led by CCD Attock District Officer, Yasir Matloob Kiani and Inspector Syed Imran Haider Kazmi, with support from Haripur Police and the Elite Police Force. According to police, the main target, identified as Zarghamullah, his father Khalid Mehmood Khan allegedly opened fire on security personnel when the police team attempted to arrest them. The police said the exchange of gunfire lasted for more than two hours.—APP

Islamabad Police recruitment enters 4h day

ISLAMABAD: The fourth day of the Islamabad Police Recruitment 2026 physical endurance and running tests continued on Friday under the close supervision of senior police officers at test centres in Islamabad, Karachi and Peshawar, with officials reviewing security, administrative arrangements and candidate facilitation to ensure a transparent and merit-based recruitment process. An ICT Police spokesperson told APP that DG Safe City/DIG Traffic Muhammad Haroon Joiya visited the Police Lines Headquarters recruitment centre in Islamabad, where he inspected various stages of the physical endurance test and directed the officers concerned to ensure its smooth, transparent and well-organised conduct. DIG Headquarters Muhammad Ateeq Tahir and DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq jointly supervised the ongoing physical endurance and running tests at the Police Lines Headquarters test centre. They reviewed security and overall administrative arrangements and directed the staff to maintain strict merit, transparency and continuous monitoring throughout the recruitment process. Meanwhile, DIG Security Rana Umar Farooq monitored the recruitment exercise at the F-9 test centre, where physical endurance tests were being conducted.—APP

Minister calls for transparent, trade bodies' electoral process

Jam Kamal Khan said that following Parliament's approval of amendments to the Trade Organizations Act, significant reforms have been introduced to streamline the regulatory framework and improve the functioning of trade organizations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Friday directed the Director General Trade Organizations (DGTO) to ensure that the upcoming nationwide elections of Chambers of Commerce and trade associations are conducted in a transparent, fair and credible manner through strengthened monitoring, digitalization and institutional reforms. Addressing the media in his video message after receiving a detailed briefing from Director General Trade Organizations (DGTO) Bilal Khan Pasha on preparations for the 2026-28 trade bodies' elections, the Minister said the Government remains committed to strengthening the institutional framework governing trade organizations and ensuring that the electoral process reflects the highest standards of transparency, accountability and fairness. Jam Kamal Khan said that following Parliament's approval of amendments to the Trade Organizations Act, significant reforms have been introduced to streamline the regulatory framework and improve the functioning of trade organizations. He added that the Ministry of Commerce is extending full institutional support to the DGTO to modernize and digitalize its operations so that it can facilitate Chambers and Trade Associations more effectively, both during the elections and beyond. The Minister directed the DGTO to accelerate the digital transformation of election management by establishing a dedicated elections portal on the Ministry's website carrying election schedules, applicable laws and rules, noti-



cations, voter lists, election results and other relevant information for stakeholders. He also instructed the DGTO to develop a digital dashboard for real-time monitoring of election activities across the country and directed all trade organizations to submit election schedules, voter lists and election results in soft-copy format to facilitate efficient digital management and oversight. Emphasizing transparency and equal access to information, the Minister directed that final voter lists be published in accordance with the Trade Organizations Act and Rules and that comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) be issued to ensure uniform implementation of election procedures across all trade organizations. Jam Kamal Khan further highlighted that, for the first time, the DGTO has been strengthened with additional human resources to support election monitoring.

Officers from the Ministry of Commerce, Trade Development Authority Pakistan, State Life Insurance Corporation and other government organizations will serve as independent observers and witnesses during the elections to enhance transparency and provide credible documentation for any subsequent complaints or appeals. The Minister also said that the Ministry is coordinating with provincial authorities to ensure appropriate administrative and security support at larger polling venues where high voter turnout is expected, to maintain a peaceful and orderly election environment. He encouraged Chambers and Trade Associations to modernize their own internal election management systems by adopting stronger monitoring mechanisms and greater use of digital tools, noting that transparent and well-documented processes would significantly reduce post-election

disputes and appeals. Earlier, DGTO Bilal Khan Pasha briefed the Minister that the election process for Chambers of Commerce and Trade Associations has commenced and will continue until 30 September 2026, while elections of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) will begin on 1 October and conclude by 31 December 2026. He informed the Minister that around 380 registered trade organizations fall under the DGTO's regulatory framework, of which 320 organizations are scheduled to hold elections this year. The DGTO further briefed the Minister on the complete election process, including preparation of voter lists, scrutiny of nominations, constitution of election commissions, ballot paper management, polling arrangements, monitoring mechanisms, dispute resolution procedures and post-election appeals. The Minister informed the House that comprehensive arrangements have been made to strengthen transparency through deployment of trained election observers, development of SOPs, improved documentation of polling and vote counting, and enhanced coordination with relevant authorities wherever required. Concluding his remarks, Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan directed officials to maintain complete neutrality, ensure strict compliance with the Trade Organizations Act and Rules, and facilitate free, fair and transparent elections throughout the country. He also extended his best wishes to all Chambers, Trade Associations, candidates and voters participating in the 2026-28 trade bodies' elections, expressing confidence that the entire electoral process would be completed peacefully, transparently and in a spirit of cooperation.

Shaza lauds Kazakhstan envoy's role in boosting Pak-Kazak tech ties

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Friday appreciated Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, for his role in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. During a farewell meeting, the two sides discussed cooperation in the information technology and telecommunications sectors and explored ways to further expand collaboration. Shaza Fatima praised Ambassador Kistafin's efforts to promote Pakistan-Kazakhstan ties, particularly in the field of technology. She said he had played an important role in enhancing cooperation and strengthening bilateral relations during his tenure. The minister acknowledged the ambassador's contributions and wished him success in his future assignments. She also presented the Ambassador with a commemorative shield in recognition of his services and contributions to strengthening ties between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.—APP

Pakistan faces persistent inflationary pressures

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is expected to continue facing inflationary pressures during the current fiscal year, particularly in the near term, although the broader economy is showing signs of steady recovery, according to the Finance Ministry's latest Monthly Economic Update. The ministry said average inflation increased to 7.1% in the previous fiscal year, compared with 4.5% a year earlier. Consumer prices also rose sharply in June, when the annual inflation rate climbed to 11.1%. For July, inflation is projected to range between 9% and 10%, while the external sector is expected to remain resilient. However, the report cautioned that renewed geopolitical tensions in the middle East could fuel inflation and create challenges for Pakistan's external economic position. Despite these risks, the ministry said the country's economic recovery is continuing, supported by improving macroeconomic indicators and sustained overall stability. The report highlighted several encouraging developments from the last fiscal year. Workers' remittances reached \$41.6 billion, exports totaled \$30.8 billion, and government revenues recorded significant growth, reflecting stronger economic activity and improving fiscal performance. — APP

Enrolment of Six-month China research fellowships began

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) has opened applications for six-month research fellowships in China for students enrolled in MS and PhD programmes in Pakistan. The fellowships are being offered under HEC's Academic Collaboration under CPEC Consortium of Universities programme, which seeks to strengthen research and institutional links between Pakistan and China, Gwadar Port reported. HEC said the programme was intended to improve the quality of research in Pakistan by giving scholars opportunities to conduct research or training at laboratories in Chinese universities and interact with international researchers. Applicants must be enrolled full-time in Pakistan and have an approved research topic. They must also obtain an official invitation or acceptance letter from a supervisor at a Chinese host institution. Both the applicant's Pakistani university and the proposed Chinese host university must be members of the CPEC Consortium of Universities. Applications opened on July 26 and will close on August 14, according to HEC.—DNA

SC delegation concludes working visit to China

ISLAMABAD: A technical delegation of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, led by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan, and Chairman of the National Judicial Automation Committee concluded official visit to the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China from 26 to 30 July 2026. The delegation comprised officers of the Court's Information Technology Section. The visit formed part of the continuing institutional engagement between the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Supreme People's Court of China under the judicial co-operation framework between the two institutions. It was undertaken in furtherance of the Chief Justice of Pakistan's digital reform vision for an efficient, technology-enabled, and citizen-centric justice system. During the visit, the delegation held meetings with senior officials of the Supreme People's Court of China, including Mr. Liu Guixiang, Justice and

Standing Member of the Adjudication Committee, and Mr. Duan Nonggen, Director of the International Cooperation Department. The delegation also held detailed discussions with Mr. He Fan, Director General of the Adjudication Management Office, and Mr. Chen Qiwei, Deputy Director General of the Information Technology Service Center, and received practical demonstrations of technology-enabled adjudication, case management, and court administration systems. Further engagements were held with Mr. Yu Maoyu, President of the Publishing House; Mr. Zhang Chengbing, Assistant Editor-in-Chief of the Publishing House and General Manager of Faxin Digital Technology Co. Ltd.; Mr. Yuan Dingho, Head of the Publishing House Office and Legal Department; and officers of Faxin Technology. As part of the technical exchange, the delegation visited the Legal Information Intelligent Achievement Presentation Hall, Digital Court Laboratory of the Supreme People's

Court of China, Beijing Internet Court, and Litigation Service Hall at the Xicheng District Court. Practical demonstrations were provided on artificial intelligence applications, e-filing systems, digital judicial infrastructure, intelligent case management, data-driven court administration, and technology-enabled public service delivery. The engagements provided valuable insight into the responsible use of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in judicial and administrative processes and enabled the delegation to identify suitable practices that may be adapted to Pakistan's institutional and legal requirements. The visit strengthened judicial cooperation, technical capacity building, knowledge-sharing, and mutual learning between the two apex courts. It also reaffirmed the Supreme Court of Pakistan's commitment to leveraging technology to improve accessibility, efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in the administration of justice.—DNA

Population Welfare staff role to be extended across govt depts

ATTOCK: Additional Deputy Commissioner General (ADCG) Attock, Anil Saeed on Friday said that Population Welfare staff's role would be extended in other government departments in an effort to improve public service delivery and make better use of existing staff. The ADCG announced the move while chairing a review meeting on the department's performance at the Deputy Commissioner's Office here. He said stronger coordination between government departments and more efficient use of human resources would help improve the implementation of official policies. The meeting reviewed the Population Welfare Department's performance, ongoing programmes, operational challenges and future strategy. Saeed said delivering quality public services in line with the priorities of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif remained a key objective. He stressed that closer cooperation and an integrated

approach among government departments were essential to achieving that goal. He directed officials to involve Population Welfare Department field staff in wider government initiatives and public welfare programmes so they could contribute more effectively to community services. The meeting was attended by Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Asad Ismail, Population Welfare Department officials and representatives from other government departments. Participants also discussed family welfare programmes, public awareness campaigns and measures to strengthen inter-departmental collaboration. Concluding the meeting, the ADCG directed the officials to use all available resources to meet departmental targets, expand field activities and improve coordinated awareness campaigns so that government welfare initiatives reach people across the district.—APP

PPP should respect people's mandate

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SA-FRON Engineer Amir Muqam on Friday urged the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) to respect the outcome of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections instead of questioning the results, saying the party should examine why voters rejected it despite its influence in the region's government and administrative structure. Addressing a large public rally in Khawra, Muzaffarabad, in support of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate for LA-31 Saqib Majeed Raja, the minister said the high voter turnout reflected the victory of democracy and the political maturity of the Kashmiri people. "Rather than raising objections to the election re-

sults, the PPP should review the reasons behind its defeat," he said, adding that the party's allegations were unfounded as the AJK government and administrative machinery were already under its influence. Mr Muqam said parties should avoid creating unnecessary political disputes and instead respect the public mandate. He noted that PML-N also had reservations regarding results in certain constituencies but chose to uphold the democratic process. Highlighting PML-N's electoral performance, he said the party's organisational efforts over the past two years had begun yielding results and expressed confidence that voters in Muzaffarabad Division would place even greater trust in the party after Mirpur.

Mr Muqam praised the police, district administration and the people of AJK for ensuring peaceful elections, describing them as deserving of appreciation for maintaining a democratic atmosphere. On development projects, he announced that construction of the Khawra-Charkpora link road would be completed on a priority basis. He also said the federal government was constructing five Daanish Schools in AJK and expressed the desire to establish one in Khawra as well. The minister said the federal government would continue providing subsidies and relief measures for the people of AJK while pursuing development and public welfare projects across the region.—APP

Muqam seeks inquiry into Quetta mine disaster

The Balochistan chief minister assured him that a complete probe would be conducted and all aspects of the incident would be thoroughly examined

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Friday expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives in a gas explosion at the Sorange coal mine near Quetta, where several miners were killed. According to initial reports, a large number of the victims belonged to Shangla district. The minister contacted Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti by telephone and urged a transparent and comprehensive investigation into the tragedy, while the provincial government assured a full inquiry into the incident. Expressing heartfelt condolences, Mr Muqam said the nation stood with the bereaved families in their hour of grief and sorrow. During his conversation with Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, the federal minister stressed the need to determine the causes of the explosion and ensure accountability through an impartial investigation. The Balochistan chief minister assured him that a complete probe would be conducted and all aspects of the incident would be thoroughly examined. Mr Muqam also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls, the elevation of their ranks, and strength and patience for the families left behind. The deadly explosion has triggered widespread grief across the country, particularly in Shangla, from where many of the deceased miners are believed to have originated, according to preliminary information.—DNA

ASHRAF INDUSTRIES (PVT) LTD
127 C, Industrial Estate
Sialkot-51340, Pakistan
Phones: +92-53-3256000 / 3256708
E-mail: info@ashraf.net.pk

Collateral damage

DR. BADER BIN SAUD

IN late June, Al-Riyadh newspaper reported on the implementation of executive regulations for the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers, Witnesses, Experts and Victims. The report noted that the legislation included stringent measures regarding data confidentiality. These include concealing the identity of individuals to prevent attempts to assault them or to exert retaliatory and workplace pressure upon them. Such a step signaled the desire of the Saudi legislative system to end the era of enforced silence, and to confront those who favor or flatter influential figures in the workplace and in social disputes.

The new legislative measure is intended to dismantle a deep-rooted crisis in Saudi society, which has continuously worked to rearrange the balance of power within it, forcing people to make decisions that contravene their actual principles and convictions. In 1902, the American sociologist Charles Cooley formulated his well-known theory on the "mirrored self" to explain how people assess themselves based on the judgment of others. Many individuals experience an internal conflict between the desire to tell the truth, in all its details, and the potential consequences that might result from doing so.

These consequences might hurt their personal interests or cause them psychological or physical harm. Or it could place them under the microscope of social criticism: "What will people say?" The prospect of such judgment can turn into a distressing nightmare that forces individuals to sacrifice the desire for justice and their legitimate rights, simply to avoid isolation, exclusion or being accused of folly. The most difficult thing is that these concerns can take hold of a person to the extent that they dictate fateful decisions and influence family and professional disputes to the point that the person resorts to what is known as "utilitarian compliance." This means an individual will side with a person they believe to be influential, capable or powerful, whether through influence, wealth or connections, even if that person is unjust or a liar, based on the pretext that the person will inevitably prevail and get what they want, with or without the consent of others. In sociology, the weight of a society's authority is measured by its ability to compel individuals to make decisions that contravene their own principles. In his thesis, "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind," published in 1895, French psychologist Gustave Le Bon explained that people within groups voluntarily relinquish their individual judgment in favor of the prevailing tides of power and collective spirit. This surrender does not stem from fleeting fear, he explained, but rather represents the utilitarian submission to which a person resorts after assessing the balance of power within their environment and choosing what they perceive to be the strongest party in the equation. Many people favor individuals in positions of authority and align themselves with them, even if they are unjust. This assertion was supported by an experi-

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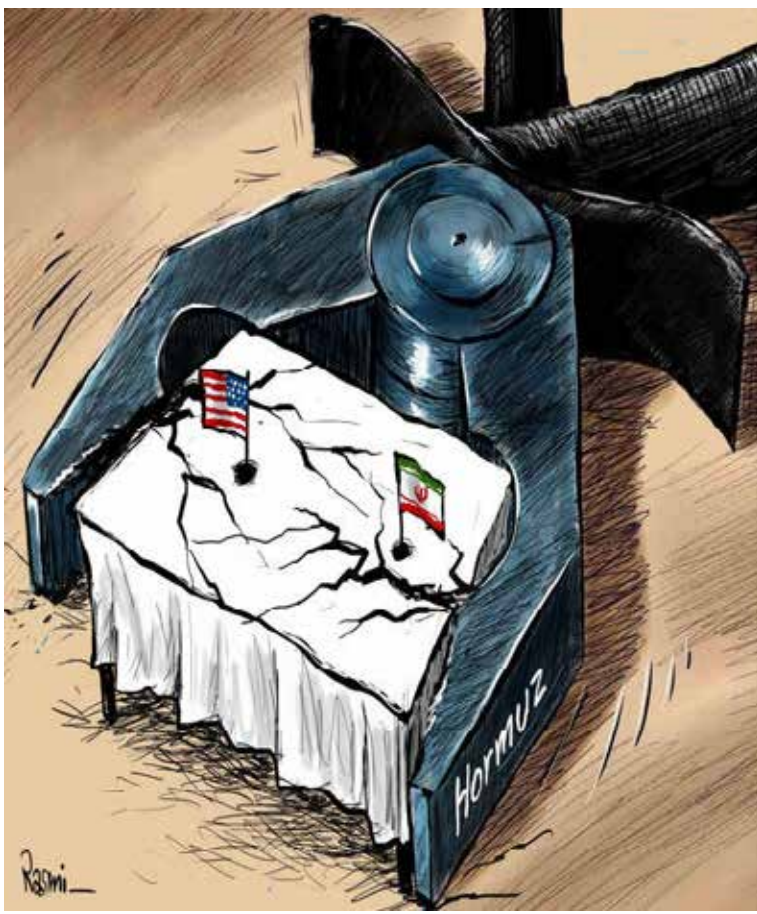
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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394

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



ment on the social power of formal attire, conducted in the United States by Leonard Beckman in 1974 and published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology. In field tests he studied the effect of an influential person's appearance on how people responded to what they said.

He found that acceptance of what people said while wearing ordinary clothes did not exceed 42 percent, but shot up to 92 percent if the speaker was wearing clothes that symbolized influence or authority, such as the uniform of a police officer or traffic warden. This provides conclusive statistical evidence that the human mind instinctively links outward appearance with credibility, and might explain why so many people favor individuals in positions of authority and align themselves with them, even if they are unjust. An experiment demonstrating bias in attitudes was carried out by the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1955. It isolated a test subject in a room and led them to believe the other participants had chosen an opinion that was, in reality, illogical. The experiment revealed that a desire to maintain one's status in a group led people to side with the illogical opinions, even though they knew them to be false, simply because the majority agreed with them or because they were expressed by a figure of authority or popularity. This type of conformity increases in social and professional contexts the more the subordinate party benefits from a person with greater influence or prestige, and the more that those around them exercise coercive self-censorship to avoid undermining that person's commercial or family standing. This aligns with a study by Alan de Botton, published in 2004, on "status anxiety," in which he examined the chronic anxiety that affects people when they fear social judgment or the loss of prestige, and their eagerness to align themselves with those in power and other influential figures, to endorse even their falsehoods, and to cite them in an effort to protect their own social standing from the threat of marginalization. We can find further real-world evidence in a similar vein, for example in the case of Patty Hearst, the granddaughter of the American media billionaire William Randolph Hearst. Her abduction in 1974 by far-left American militant organization the Symbionese Liberation Army, the threats she faced from her captors and her isolation from the outside world ultimately led her to accept her kidnappers' narrative of persecution by the state and capitalist society. She took up arms alongside them and participated in their crimes, viewing this as her only path to salvation. In other words, the victim was transformed into a new perpetrator. The situation illustrated by these studies and examples is no different in Saudi society, particularly with regard to certain individuals who abandon their principles out of modesty or fear when conflicts arise, transforming them from victims to perpetrators as they remain silent about the facts as they know them, in order to protect their own future interests, to maintain prestige, or out of simple courtesy. Behavioral and utilitarian aberrations in Saudi society that were common practice have now been addressed by the legal system. However, the response to this by legal authorities in the West has differed from that in Saudi Arabia. Examples include the US Sarbanes-Oxley Act, enacted in 2002, and the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977. They impose severe criminal penalties on anyone who panders to or yields to pressure from the powerful, thereby ensuring that these powerful figures are stripped of their moral authority the moment they are publicly confronted and questioned by authorities.

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 Pickaxe mountain facility as a potential existential threat to the United States and the global community is deeply concerning. This facility is so strong, so formidable, and so meticulously designed that normal conventional weapons are unable to reach its core. The durability of Pickaxe to conventional interdiction 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 permits 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 Pickaxe facility would have catastrophic consequences. While Iran might survive a nuclear attack if it does not fall on most of its cities, the Iranian counterattack would likely eliminate Israel, a small country that cannot survive even a small or middle-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 likely views 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. This 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, but the Trump administration's pumped-up ego and hubristic attitude may lead it to continue pursuing domination on the battlefield regardless of the consequences. Secondly, Iran's ability to shut down the Strait of Hormuz represents the most potent economic weapon at its disposal. The impact would extend far beyond those countries that import oil to include those that import fertilizers and food. Without fertilizer, 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 fertilizer, which keeps the population alive, would affect billions of people. The resultant immigration pressure 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 expansion of the conflict to the Red Sea, where Iran's Houthi allies in Yemen have declared a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia, threatens to close a second major global shipping route, 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, of 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 keep going, and Europe will be literally overrun by desperate refugees that will suck 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 reconstituted. 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 reconstitution. Humanity is being condemned to an absolute decade or more of catastrophe. The responsibility for this war and its repercussions 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 recognize 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 weaponry system the United States has now which can change the war scenario is the nuclear weapon. But if 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 recognize and address. The cycle of violence appears destined to continue, with Iran having learned to manage the conflict and the United States lacking 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 demand an end to this insane policy. Donald 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 put its head together in unity to stop this war as soon as possible, ensuring that humanity is not eliminated 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 to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

The Battle of Ideas and Pakistan's Future

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Gramsci would likely argue that societies cannot expect political stability if the institutions responsible for producing informed citizens are themselves fragmented. A nation that neglects the quality of its educational system, intellectual discourse and cultural institutions risks allowing confusion and division to replace consensus. This does not imply that governments should seek ideological conformity or suppress dissent

POLITICS is often understood through elections, governments and the exercise of state power. Yet history repeatedly demonstrates that lasting authority is not secured by laws alone. Nations rise and decline not merely because of military strength or economic resources, but because of the ideas that shape public attitudes and define what people accept as natural, legitimate and desirable. It was this deeper dimension of power that the Italian political thinker Antonio Gramsci sought to explain through his influential concept of cultural hegemony. Writing during the early twentieth century, Gramsci challenged the conventional belief that governments rule primarily through force. He argued that durable political authority depends on consent as much as coercion. Every society develops institutions that influence the beliefs, values and habits of its citizens. Schools, universities, families, religious institutions, newspapers, literature, television and, in today's world, digital platforms all contribute to shaping public opinion. When these institutions reinforce a shared understanding of society, governments enjoy stability because citizens come to regard the existing order as both legitimate and inevitable.

Gramsci described this process as cultural hegemony. The dominant groups in society retain influence not simply because they possess economic or political power, but because they are able to define the prevailing ideas, values and assumptions that become widely accepted. Power, therefore, operates through persuasion as much as through authority. This insight remains remarkably relevant in the twenty-first century. Countries now compete not only through military capability or economic performance but also through information, narratives and public diplomacy. The struggle over ideas has become a defining feature of international politics. Nations invest heavily in education, media, cultural exchanges, scientific research and technological innovation because they recognise that influence begins long before negotiations or conflicts arise. Pakistan's experience illustrates the importance of this lesson. Since independence, the country has often devoted considerable attention to immediate political crises while paying comparatively less attention to the institutions responsible for shaping long-term national thinking. Frequent policy shifts, changes of government and competing political narratives have weakened the development of a coherent national vision. Education is perhaps the most obvious example. Successive governments have introduced reforms, yet disparities in curriculum, standards and access continue to divide society. Public schools, private institutions and religious

seminaries frequently produce graduates with different intellectual foundations and contrasting understandings of citizenship. Such divisions make it difficult to cultivate a common civic culture capable of supporting democratic stability and national cohesion. The media landscape has undergone an equally dramatic transformation. Traditional newspapers continue to play an important role in informing public debate, but television channels and social media increasingly dominate the flow of information. While these platforms have expanded freedom of expression, they have also encouraged sensationalism, misinformation and political polarisation. Public discussion often becomes driven by immediate controversies rather than thoughtful examination of long-term national priorities.

Gramsci would likely argue that societies cannot expect political stability if the institutions responsible for producing informed citizens are themselves fragmented. A nation that neglects the quality of its educational system, intellectual discourse and cultural institutions risks allowing confusion and division to replace consensus. This does not imply that governments should seek ideological conformity or suppress dissent. On the contrary, Gramsci believed that ideas should be contested openly. Healthy societies encourage debate while strengthening the institutions that enable citizens to distinguish evidence from propaganda, reason from emotion and national interest from partisan rhetoric. For Pakistan, this means investing in intellectual capacity with the same seriousness traditionally reserved for physical infrastructure. Roads, ports and energy projects are essential for development, but so too are universities that encourage original research, schools that promote critical thinking, libraries that remain accessible to all and media organisations committed to professional standards. Another important lesson concerns the relationship between culture and national identity. Pakistan possesses a rich civilisational heritage shaped by Islamic traditions, regional languages, literature, art and diverse cultural practices. These should not be viewed as competing identities but as complementary elements of a shared national experience. A confident nation does not fear diversity; it draws strength from it. The country's universities also deserve renewed attention. Higher education should extend beyond producing graduates for the job market. Universities must become centres of intellectual inquiry where difficult questions are examined without fear and where policy debates are informed by evidence rather than political expediency. Countries that lead in science, technology and innovation are generally those that protect academic freedom while demanding high standards of scholarship.

Foreign policy offers another arena where Gramsci's insights remain instructive. Pakistan often finds itself navigating complex geopolitical rivalries involving major powers and neighbouring states. Diplomatic success increasingly depends not only on strategic partnerships but also on international credibility. A country respected for the quality of its institutions, educational achievements, cultural contributions and scientific progress enjoys greater influence than one known only through the lens of security concerns.

Soft power has become an indispensable component of national strength. Literature, cinema, academic exchanges, sports, humanitarian engagement and technological innovation all shape how nations are perceived abroad. Pakistan has made notable contributions in many of these fields, yet these achievements deserve greater institutional support and international visibility. Citizens, too, have an equally important role. Cultural hegemony is not created solely by governments or elites. Every conversation in a classroom, every newspaper editorial, every university lecture and every family discussion contributes to the broader political culture. Responsible citizenship requires intellectual curiosity, tolerance of differing opinions and a willingness to engage with evidence rather than rumours. Gramsci's greatest contribution was his reminder that power begins with ideas. Military capability may defend borders, and economic growth may improve living standards, but neither can substitute for a society united by informed citizens and resilient institutions. Nations that neglect the battle of ideas often discover that political instability originates long before it appears in parliament or on the streets. Pakistan stands at an important moment in its development. Its youthful population, expanding digital connectivity and growing educational aspirations present significant opportunities. Realising this potential, however, requires sustained investment in knowledge, culture and institutions that cultivate informed public opinion. Building highways and industrial zones is necessary, but building intellectual confidence is equally important. Gramsci's message was neither a blueprint for domination nor a call for ideological control. It was a recognition that the future belongs to societies capable of shaping ideas through education, dialogue and culture. For Pakistan, the challenge is not merely to govern effectively but to nurture a political culture where democratic values, social responsibility and informed citizenship become enduring national strengths. Such a transformation would not produce immediate headlines, but it would provide the strongest foundation for lasting stability and national progress.

Briefs

'Better not to take administrative units debate any further'

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"right time" to speak about administrative units and stressed that, while her party always strives to resolve issues politically, there was a need to "fix governance". Meanwhile, State Minister for Interior Talla Chaudhry said that Naqvi believes no solution sans political backing is workable. "Everyone says that the system should be made better. With regards to the current system, Naqvi has played an important role." Chaudhry asked whether, except for "one province", which other province had shown better performance after the 18th Amendment — a landmark legislation which devolved powers from the Centre to the provinces. "Naqvi made the statement in good-will; it should not be seen as an attempt to derail the system. There's a need for reforms, and Naqvi has invited political parties in this regard." The minister called for the establishment of new provinces if there's a need for better governance. "PML-N has always spoken about new provinces for [better] governance." The basis, Chaudhry explained, for establishing a new province should be governance. "If governance isn't good, then a new province should be formed. No other province apart from Punjab has been able to show performance."

At least 32 killed after coal mine explosion near Quetta

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Mining engineers and workers had created alternative routes to access the affected mines, but the presence of large quantities of methane gas and the fire created major hurdles in reaching the bodies and trapped miners deep underground. Provincial Minister for Mines and Minerals Mir Shoaib Noshewani announced that the provincial government would provide Rs500,000 compensation to the families of each deceased miner, while Rs300,000 would be paid to every injured worker. He also said an inquiry would be conducted into the incident. In June, three people were injured after explosive material used in mining had accidentally detonated in Quetta division's Khanuzai area. In April, three coal miners were killed in a mine accident in Bolan.

President, PM express deep grief over coal mine explosion

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They emphasized the need for strict implementation of safety measures in coal mines to protect the lives of workers and prevent such tragic incidents in the future. President Asif Ali Zardari said the contribution of workers to the country's development was invaluable and that ensuring their safety was a shared responsibility of the state. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and other relevant departments to continue rescue operations in an effective and expeditious manner until all affected workers had been rescued and provided with the necessary relief. He said the country's workers were a valuable national asset and stressed the need for permanent safety measures to safeguard the lives of coal mine workers.

ICC unveils host venues for 2027 Men's Cricket World Cup

ICC Men's Cricket World Cup makes its much-anticipated return to Africa after 24 years

DNA

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday announced 12 host venues for the 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, which will be staged across South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The announcement was made during a launch ceremony in Johannesburg, where eight cities in South Africa, three in Zimbabwe and Namibia's capital, Windhoek, were confirmed as hosts for the 50-over showpiece. South Africa will host matches at Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg, SuperSport Park in Centurion, Newlands Cricket Ground in Cape Town, Kingsmead Cricket Ground in Durban, St George's Park in Geberha, Mangaung Oval in Bloemfontein, Boland Park in Paarl and Buffalo Park in KuGompo City, formerly known as East London. Zimbabwe's venues will be Harare Sports Club in Harare, Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo and Fale Mosi-oo-Tunya International Cricket Stadium in Victoria Falls, while Namibia Cricket Ground in Windhoek will host the country's matches. Fans can now register their interest to receive updates on ticket sales and other tournament information ahead of the competition. The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup returns to Africa for the first time in 24 years after South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya jointly hosted the 2003 edition.

The 2027 tournament, which will feature the world's top 14 teams, will be staged under the theme "Three Nations, One Heart-beat", celebrating the shared optimism, diversity and unity of the three host nations. The event will also embrace the African philosophy of Ubuntu — "I am because we are" — highlighting compassion, togetherness and human connection. This aligns with the tournament's "Make the Circle Bigger" campaign, reflecting the region's cultural diversity, 29 officially recognised languages and shared passion for cricket. "This marks an exciting milestone on the road to the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027," ICC Chairman Jay Shah said. "The unveiling of the host cities and the tournament brand signals the beginning of a journey that will unite fans around the world and build anticipation for one of our sport's biggest global events." The return of this prestigious tournament to Africa after 24 years is a landmark moment for cricket. We are confident that South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia will deliver an unforgettable event, showcasing the warmth, passion and rich diversity that make this region truly unique." ICC Chief Executive Sanjog Gupta described the World Cup as the pinnacle of one-day cricket and said its return to Africa would celebrate the continent's vibrant cultures, breathtaking landscapes and enduring love for the sport. "The vibrant brand unveiled today reflects

the energy, ambition and spirit of the event, while every host city offers fans a unique opportunity to experience the warmth and diversity that make Africa truly memorable," Gupta said. He added that the tournament would leave a lasting legacy by helping grow the game and inspiring future generations of cricketers across the region. Several cricketing greats attended the launch ceremony, including South Africa's Graeme Smith, Makhaya Ntini, Hashim Amla, Temba Bavuma and Kagiso Rabada, alongside Zimbabwe's Hamilton Masakadza and Namibia's Rudolf Jansen van Vuuren. The tournament's visual identity is inspired by the traditional African wire bowl and incorporates colours representing the three host nations, including Zimbabwe Chilli, African Root, Fynbos Pop, Namib Dune, Harare Dawn and Two Oceans. South Africa has hosted several major ICC events since co-hosting the 2003 World Cup, including the inaugural ICC Men's T20 World Cup in 2007, the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2023, and the ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cups in 2020 and 2024. Zimbabwe also co-hosted the 2003 edition, while Namibia will stage its first senior ICC global tournament. Both Zimbabwe and Namibia hosted matches during this year's ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup. The 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup will

feature 57 matches under a new three-stage competition format designed to increase competitiveness. A Super Series involving the teams ranked 12th to 14th will determine the final qualifier for the main event. The remaining 12 teams will then compete in two groups of six in a 30-match round-robin stage, with the top three teams from each group and the next best-placed side advancing to the Super Seven stage. The Super Seven will comprise 21 round-robin matches before the top four teams qualify for the semi-finals, where the first-placed side will face the fourth-placed team and the second-placed side will meet the third-placed team for places in the final. Host countries, venues:
South Africa
Wanderers Stadium (Johannesburg)
Centurion (Tshwane)
Newlands Cricket Ground (Cape Town)
Kingsmead Cricket Ground (Durban)
St George's Park (Geberha)
Mangaung Oval (Bloemfontein)
Boland Park (Paarl)
Buffalo Park (KuGompo City, formerly known as East London)
Zimbabwe
Harare Sports Club (Harare)
Queens Sports Club (Bulawayo)
Fale Mosi-oo-Tunya International Cricket Stadium (Victoria Falls)
Namibia
Namibia Cricket Ground (Windhoek)

Asia confederation backs UEFA, CONCACAF opposition to FIFA World Cup sale plan

LONDON: The Asian Football Confederation said on Friday it "stands in solidarity" with regional bodies UEFA and CONCACAF in opposing plans to sell a stake in the World Cup to private investors but stopped short of threatening to boycott events run by FIFA, global football's governing body. The confederation in a statement expressed "deep concern" about the proposed establishment of a \$20 billion commercial subsidiary, FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), to run the World Cup and FIFA's other events. "The fact that the situation has reached the point where the real possibility of a FIFA World Cup boycott has entered public discourse should concern everyone who cares about the future of our game," the statement said. "Football should never have

been placed in such a position." European football's governing body UEFA said Thursday it would boycott the World Cup should FIFA press ahead with its private investor plan. "No UEFA national teams will participate in any FIFA competition for so long as these proposals remain alive, unless this proposal has been abandoned in its entirety and binding assurances have been given that FIFA will never again open its governance or competition to private ownership," UEFA said in a statement. "The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product... No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale." The Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) has also

expressed concern that the proposal was made public before FIFA's 211 member associations were fully consulted. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has called on its members to review FIFA's controversial plan. On Thursday, AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al-Khalifa, had said the way the proposal had been made was "totally unacceptable" in a letter to member associations. The AFC said that "the proposed FFE cannot realistically achieve the necessary broad consensus and unity required to move forward..." "The FIFA World Cup is the pinnacle of global football and derives its strength from the participation of all confederations and the world's leading football nations." The AFC also made a thinly-veiled attack on the governing body's president,

Gianni Infantino, saying the plan "has exposed fundamental weaknesses in FIFA's consultation and decision-making processes that must now be addressed." Even after FIFA issued a new statement on Friday, saying that each national association "should be allowed to review the proposal and have a say in shaping their own future," the AFC said "central concerns surrounding governance, institutional process and meaningful consultation remain unanswered." It said the furor must become a catalyst for institutional reform at FIFA, and that "meaningful democracy is not measured solely by the opportunity to vote." "It begins with transparent governance, timely consultation, informed deliberation and genuine participation throughout the decision-making process." —APP

Uefa countries to boycott World Cup over Fifa proposals

"No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale," says Uefa

LONDON: Uefa's member associations have unanimously voted to boycott the World Cup and other Fifa competitions in protest at Fifa's plan to sell stakes to external investors in a subsidiary that will run the global governing body's tournaments, European soccer's governing body said following a virtual meeting on Thursday. World soccer's ruling body said on Tuesday it plans to create a \$20 billion subsidiary to run the World Cup and its other events and will offer stakes of up to 20% in it to external investors. "No Uefa national teams will participate in any Fifa competition for so long as these proposals remain alive, unless this proposal has been abandoned in its entirety and binding assurances have been given that Fifa will never again open its governance or competitions to private ownership," Uefa said in a statement. "The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product. It is one of football's greatest sporting legacies. It has been built over generations by players, national teams and supporters across every continent," Uefa added. "No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale." A spokesperson for the English FA backed the decision, saying the organisation "stands shoulder to shoulder with our European colleagues". The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and CONCACAF also strongly criticised Fifa earlier, saying they were not consulted in the process. The Women's World Cup is set to be held in Brazil next year. Fifa is set to stage its inaugural Under-15 World Cup in Azerbaijan in October. — APP

Esports World Cup 2026 set to crown 4 champions in Paris

DUBAI: With the 2026 Esports World Cup halfway through, the next few days will see four champions crowned, with the OWCS Midseason Championship, Call of Duty: Warzone Resurgence Series Championship, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang's Mid Season Cup, and Street Fighter 6 concluding in week four. With 10 tournaments already wrapped up, the Club Championship race is also tightening with every result. The defending champions, Team Falcons, are right in the thick of it in week four, as they look to climb up the rankings. The Saudi club is the favorite in Warzone, still alive in the MLBB knockouts through Falcons PH, and will look to secure back-to-back EWC championships in Overwatch. The story writes itself around Kim "Proper" Dong-hyun. He won Overwatch last year with Team Falcons and walked away with Finals MVP, then packed his bags for Zeta Division over the off-season. He has not missed a beat since, tearing through the Korean circuit across the first half of 2026.

Over the next few days, 16 teams will clash across two brackets, with the top four from each field securing a spot in the single-elimination playoff bracket. Everything culminates in a first-to-four Grand Final showdown on Sunday, where a massive \$1 million prize pool awaits the victor. The MLBB's Mid Season Cup is down to the final eight teams. After an entire week of group stage action reduced the pack, which included the shock elimination of reigning champions Team Liquid PH, it is single-elimination from here, best-of-five all the way, widening to a best-of-seven for Saturday's Grand Final. With \$3 million on the line, valuable Club Championship points, and the MSC trophy waiting at the end, what is certain is that a new champion will walk away victorious. There have been more than a few upsets already, alongside some of the closest MLBB games ever. Team Falcons PH and Yagong Galacticos have already booked spots in the top four and are looking strong contenders for the crown. — DNA

LG polls in Capital draw near

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government to finalize the election schedule. Officials confirmed that the Commission is fully prepared to conduct the local government elections in Punjab on time. Meanwhile, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, delimitations have been completed in 23 districts, while work continues in seven others. The ECP held a consultative meeting on July 14, 2026 with the Chief Secretary and Secretary of Local Government under Section 219(3) of the Elections Act. Following the provincial government's request, a 15-day extension was granted. Subsequently, on July 21, 2026, the provincial government amended Section 5(e) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act, increasing the population limits for Village and Neighborhood Councils from 5,000–15,000 to 30,000–40,000. However, the number of seats in the Ninth Schedule remained unchanged, creating a legal anomaly. The ECP informed the provincial government that this inconsistency must be resolved before delimitations can proceed in the remaining districts. On July 28, 2026, the Chief Secretary notified the ECP that the government intends to amend the Ninth Schedule and requested three weeks to finalize the changes. The ECP granted the extension but reiterated that it remains fully prepared to conduct elections once the legal framework is clarified. The Commission emphasized that under Article 219(d) and Article 140-A of the Constitution, as well as Section 219 of the Elections Act 2017, it is bound to hold local government elections within 120 days of the expiry of local bodies' terms. Despite repeated efforts to complete delimitations and issue election schedules, both federal and provincial governments have often amended local government laws during or after these processes, causing delays. To prevent future disruptions, the ECP has proposed amendments to Article 140-A and Section 219 of the Elections Act 2017, recommending that no changes be made to local government laws or boundaries after the expiry of local bodies. It further suggested that if governments intend to introduce major reforms, legislation should be completed at least one year before the end of local bodies' tenure.

Iran says its forces struck two oil tankers

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including missile batteries, drone facilities, and command centers. Washington framed these operations as necessary to "degrade Iran's ability to threaten innocent mariners." In parallel, Saudi Arabia joined U.S. forces in striking Iran-backed groups in Iraq, while Israel intensified its campaign in Lebanon. Egypt also reported drone attacks on a Mediterranean port, underscoring the widening scope of the conflict. The escalation highlights the fragile state of regional stability. Civilian casualties have been reported in Iran following U.S. strikes, and Gulf states fear collateral damage from drone attacks. Diplomatically, Pakistan continues efforts to mediate, but the pace of military escalation undermines prospects for dialogue. The twin incidents—tanker strikes in Hormuz and drone attacks on Kuwait—illustrate how the confrontation between Iran and the U.S. is spilling across multiple fronts, threatening energy security, regional sovereignty, and global markets.

PM Shehbaz reaffirms commitment...

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Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch also attended the meeting.

FIFA vows to go ahead with private investor proposal

PARIS: World football's governing body FIFA vowed on Friday to press ahead with an "open and democratic" consultation on a proposed private investment plan despite widespread opposition to the proposal. That opposition included a pledge by Europe's governing body UEFA to boycott the World Cup if FIFA went ahead with its private investor plan. FIFA said in a statement all of its member associations should have a chance to consider the plan. "Nobody is selling football," it said. "This is not something FIFA would ever entertain." FIFA president Gianni Infantino however suffered a serious blow on Friday as his senior adviser quit over the plan to sell a stake in the business operations of the World Cup, calling it a "bad deal" for the sport. "It is a bad deal for FIFA's member associations, a bad deal for football, and a bad deal for the long-term future of the game," wrote Carlos Cordeiro, a former head of the US Soccer Federation. FIFA also said it had heard feedback from UEFA and CONCACAF, the governing body for football in North and Central America, which said all 41 of its member associations had rejected FIFA's proposal to sell a stake in the business operations of the World Cup. The world body also said its planned consultation process had been "disrupted

by incorrect media reports." "We respect the feedback and concern aired in public and reaffirm our commitment to an open and democratic consultation," FIFA's statement said. "We will proceed with this consultation process to ensure that each (member association) has the ability to express its vote based on facts," it said. FIFA has said the plan it announced on Tuesday could raise up to \$4.2 billion based on an valuation of \$20 billion for the FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), the commercial subsidiary it proposed to run events such as the World Cup and Club World Cup. If approved, the project could provide each of FIFA's 211 member associations with a one-off payment of \$20 million in early 2027 and increase their funding allocation for the 2027-2030 cycle from \$8.0 million to \$20 million. Private investors would be allowed under the proposal to acquire stakes in the company but would remain minority shareholders. UEFA said in an earlier statement none of its national teams would participate in any FIFA competition "for so long as these proposals remain alive." "The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product... No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale," it said.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino described the initiative on Wednesday as a "golden opportunity to turbocharge the development of the game globally." However, UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin, who boycotted the World Cup final to show unhappiness with FIFA, said there was no place in world football for such a model. "Football's future cannot be dictated by the expectations of those whose first duty is to maximize financial return," he said. "Nor can the interests of national associations, leagues, clubs, players and supporters become subordinate to investor returns. Football cannot mortgage its future for financial gain." Several leading European federations and European Union officials also criticized the proposal as another step in the commercialization of sport, while also raising concerns about potential conflicts of interest. The EU praised UEFA on Thursday for "defending the integrity of the game." "Proud to see Europe's football associations leading on governance, standing firm on their principles," European commissioner for sports Glenn Mulcahl said in a social media post. CONCACAF members, including the three co-hosts of the recent World Cup, unanimously rejected the proposal on Thursday. It said "the membership

expressed deep concerns about the lack of due process surrounding the proposal, the artificially short deadline imposed, and the absence of any review or approval by the relevant FIFA governance bodies." The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has also expressed concern that the FIFA proposal was made public before all 211 member associations were fully consulted. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has also urged its members to review FIFA's divisive plan. UEFA said in its statement on Thursday that the World Cup was "one of football's greatest sporting legacies" and described the proposal as "a failure of leadership" and "governance by intimidation." "It is both irresponsible and indefensible that a proposal of such significance for football was conceived in secret and brought to the brink of approval without any meaningful consultation with those entrusted with stewarding the game," UEFA said. "National associations around the world are now presented with an ultimatum — accept the irreversible capture of football's greatest competitions or bear the consequences. "Some things are simply too important to sell. The FIFA World Cup belongs to football. It always will. And so long as Europe has a voice, it will never be for sale." — APP

Briefs

Abbasi meets
DG TCDD
Teknik

TURKIYE: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Thursday held an important meeting with Director General of TCDD Teknik, Mustafa Özdöner and his team at the Eryaman Monitoring Centre in Türkiye.

The meeting focused on further enhancing Pakistan-Türkiye cooperation in the railway sector, particularly in modern technology, digitalization and technical collaboration.

The Federal Minister reviewed the Turkish experts' experience and advanced systems in train operations, traffic management, modern signalling, Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) and digital railway systems.

Both sides agreed to benefit from Türkiye's successful experience in modern signalling, centralized traffic control and digital railway operations for the advancement of Pakistan Railways. The two sides also agreed to further promote technical cooperation, professional training, exchange of expertise and capacity-building programmes between Pakistani and Turkish railway experts.

The meeting also reviewed potential areas of cooperation in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Predictive Analytics and smart railway technologies.

In the context of the modernization of ML-1 and ML-3, the establishment of an advanced centralized traffic management system was also discussed, with a focus on making train operations safer, more efficient and technologically advanced.

Federal Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi expressed keen interest in benefiting from the expertise and experience of Turkish specialists in railway safety, emergency response and efficient train operations. The meeting reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthening the long-standing brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye through modern technology, technical cooperation and exchange of expertise in the railway sector. **_APP**

Gold prices
surge by
Rs3,000 per
tola

ISLAMABAD :Gold prices witnessed a sharp increase in the local market on Friday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola rising by Rs3,000 to settle at Rs430,436, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs2,572 to Rs369,029, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold gained Rs2,357 to reach Rs338,288. In the international market, the price of gold climbed by \$30 to \$4,080 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, silver prices also recorded an upward trend in the local market. The price of silver per tola increased by Rs79 to Rs6,294, while the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs68 to Rs5,396. The price of silver in the international market also increased by \$0.79 to \$58.15 per ounce, the association added. **_APP**

Tahir calls for long term
business-friendly export policy

The ICCI President said the private sector stands ready to work closely with the government in developing practical policies that promote investment, industrialization and export competitiveness. He added that stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors would help restore investor confidence and place the national economy on the path of sustainable growth.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has stressed the urgent need for adopting a comprehensive export-led growth strategy, saying that sustainable economic prosperity, employment generation and macroeconomic stability can only be achieved by significantly enhancing Pakistan's exports.

Talking to different delegations from the trade and industrial sectors at the Chamber House here on Friday, he said Pakistan possesses immense industrial and entrepreneurial potential, but structural challenges, high cost of doing business, expensive energy, cumbersome taxation, regulatory bottlenecks and limited access to global markets continue to constrain the country's export performance.

Sardar Tahir Mehmood observed that the government should formulate a long-term, predictable and business-friendly export policy that encourages industrial expansion, value addition, innovation and diversification of export markets. He emphasized that facilitating exporters through simplified procedures, affordable financing, technological up-



gradation and a competitive business environment is essential to unlocking Pakistan's true export potential.

The ICCI President said the private sector stands ready to work closely with the government in developing practical policies that promote investment, industrialization and export competitiveness. He added that stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors would help restore investor confidence and place the national economy on the path of sustainable growth.

He reiterated ICCI's commitment to serving as an effective bridge between the business community and policymakers, adding that the Chamber would continue advocating reforms aimed at improving the ease of doing business and strengthening Pakistan's position in international markets.

Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub and Vice President Mohammad Irfan Chaudhry said that Pakistan's economic revival depends on creating an enabling environment where businesses can compete confidently in global markets. They urged policymakers to prioritize export-oriented industries, reduce the cost of doing business and introduce reforms that encourage productivity, innovation and investment.

Oil spill from shadow fleet
tanker spreading off Oman

BEIRUT/LONDON: A sanctions-hit tanker is leaking oil off the coast of Oman and the spill has spread in recent days, increasing concern about possible environmental damage to coastal areas, according to an analysis of satellite imagery and shipping specialists. The Caroline Bezege took Russian oil on board at the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk before leaving for its most recent voyage, ship tracking data shows. It first reported difficulties on June 8 off the southern Yemeni port of Mukalla, two maritime security sources said, adding that initial assessments indicated that a blast occurred onboard. A satellite image from July 28 shows a dark slick in the water near the vessel and lighter patches north of Al-Qiblayyah island, which lies close to Oman's coast and is part of a protected marine area. "The darker oil slicks indicate that at least one of the hulls of the crude oil storage ship seems now to be breached, and the ship is leaking crude oil," Wim Zwijnenburg, a remote-sensing specialist with the Dutch peace advocacy organization Pax, said after reviewing the imagery. The area's monsoon season, which usually peaks in July and August, can bring severe weather conditions that could rapidly spread the crude oil, Zwijnenburg added. Reuters verified that the ship shown in recent satellite imagery is the Caroline Bezege by its deck structures and paint, which matched archive imagery of the vessel, which is subject to European Union and UK sanctions for alleged involvement in carrying Russian fuels. Its owner, listed on shipping databases as Shanghai-based Rentour Shipmanagement, could not be reached for comment. Oman's Transport, Communications and IT Ministry did not respond to a request for comment. An oil tanker specialist who reviewed the satellite images said the vessel was likely to be listing. Other maritime sources warned that it could break up at some point. "At present the vessel is not broken up. Discussions by authorities are ongoing on addressing safety and environmental risks," a spokesperson for the UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO) said earlier this week, adding it was monitoring the situation closely. Russia uses aging, often poorly maintained tankers in its so-called shadow fleet to circumvent Western sanctions on its oil exports. It is not clear whether the blast damage on the vessel was caused by a possible attack by Ukraine, which has targeted Russian-related tankers, or stemmed from the conflict in the Middle East. **-APP**

Rossiya, Xinhua open SCO
Expert Forum in Bishkek

BISHKEK: The Rossiya Segodnya media group and the Xinhua News Agency inaugurated the SCO Expert Forum in Bishkek as part of the Kyrgyz Republic's presidency of the Organization. The event convened heads of leading analytical centers and representatives of academic circles from member states, observer states, and dialogue partners of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Among the forum's speakers were: Zhumabek Sarabekov, Director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics of the Republic of Kazakhstan; Kubatbek Rakhimov, Executive Director of the Applicata Center for Strategic Solutions (Kyrgyzstan); Lakshmi Boojoo, Director General of the Economic Policy and Competitiveness Research Center (Mongolia); Majid Ehsan, President of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (Pakistan); Kadir Temiz, President of the ORSAM Center for Middle Eastern Studies (Türkiye); Nandan Unnikrishnan, Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation (India); Nikita Belenchenko, Director of the Center for International Studies of the Faculty of International Relations at the Belarusian State University (Belarus); Ousavanh Thienthepvongsa, Director General of the Socio-Economic and Policy Research Institute at the Lao Academy of Social and Economic Sciences; Kin Phea, Director General of the International Relations Institute of Cambodia at the Royal Academy of Cambodia; Ahmed Tawalbeh, Head of the Mass Communication Department at the Gulf University (Bahrain) Mohamed Ali Elsayed, representative of the Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS) (UAE), among others. First Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the Rossiya Segodnya media group Sergei Kochetkov affirmed: "This summer, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization celebrated its 25th anniversary. Over a quarter of a century, the SCO has evolved from a border alliance into one of the principal global centers of power, uniting several dozen states. Today, the organization plays an increasingly prominent role in shaping a multipolar world order, creating a platform for equitable dialogue and joint pursuit of solutions to the most pressing issues on the international agenda. Amid global instability, it is especially vital to strengthen trust among states, deepen economic and cultural ties, and safeguard the information sovereignty of the SCO member states." President of the Xinhua Institute Liu Gang, in turn, underscored: "Today, the countries of the Global South are exploring new development opportunities and advocating the construction of an equitable and orderly multipolar world. Collaborative mechanisms such as the SCO and BRICS, which complement one another and ensure mutual reinforcement, have forged favorable conditions for analytical centers and research institutes of the Global South to fully realize their potential in articulating policy recommendations and shaping public opinion. In this context, it is imperative to enhance collaboration and build bridges for interaction among these structures." During the forum, experts deliberated on the significance of the SCO amid the transformation of the global architecture of international relations and identified the principal challenges confronting the organization. Participants devoted particular attention to ensuring regional security, safeguarding information sovereignty, expanding trade and economic ties, and advancing cultural collaboration among SCO countries. The SCO Expert Forum formed part of the program of the SCO Media and Think Tank Summit, organized by the Xinhua News Agency and the Kabar Kyrgyz national news agency. The SCO is an international organization founded in 2001. Its membership comprises India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan. Its observer states include Afghanistan and Mongolia, while dialogue partner states include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bahrain, Cambodia, Egypt, Kuwait, Laos, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Türkiye, and Sri Lanka. **-APP**

Egypt's North Coast beach
access dispute sparks debate

CAIRO: A dispute over access regulations at a luxury residential and resort development on Egypt's North Coast has ignited a wider debate on the balance between private investment and public rights. The controversy, at Emaar Misr's Marassi project, began when homeowners there objected to the introduction of fees for access to certain beaches and services and an electronic system for regulating guest and visitor entry. Critics argue that the measures restrict the rights of property owners within the development. The dispute intensified after videos and complaints circulated on social media, prompting several homeowners to pursue legal action seeking to overturn some of the decisions and claim compensation. Speaking at an event on the North Coast last week, Emaar Misr Chairman Mohamed Alabbar sought to reassure residents by emphasizing the company's long-standing commitment to Egypt. "Marassi is 100 percent Egyptian and Egyptians deserve the credit for implementing every detail," the Dubai-born businessman said. "They are the owners of this place and we learn from them." Alabbar said that his role within the project was largely symbolic

and that its management and execution relied on Egyptian expertise. Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris defended Alabbar. He said in a post on X that the criticism was a "manufactured campaign" targeting one of the UAE's largest and longest-established real estate developers and a major investor in Egypt. All tourist resorts and residential developments operated under rules designed to ensure fairness among homeowners, hotel guests and visitors while protecting the rights of all parties, he said. Marassi covers about 6.5 million sq. meters and includes five beaches, 23 residential communities and about 3,300 hotel rooms. During a meeting with Alabbar in 2022, Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly reaffirmed the strong ties between Egypt and the UAE and reiterated Cairo's support for Emirati investment. Mesbah Kotb, deputy editor-in-chief of Al-Masry Al-Youm, told Arab News that successive governments had permitted the construction of hundreds of adjacent tourist resorts, many of which had come to regard nearby beaches as their private property. "Beaches are a public right for all Egyptians and everyone residing in Egypt," he said. "Private

rights may exist in certain cases, but they must be properly regulated and clearly defined." Kotb said that he did not support granting exclusive beach access to every hotel along the coast, although limited exceptions could be justified for some remote resorts. "For all other beaches, there should be unified regulations governing their use, whether they are adjacent to tourist resorts, hotels or residential communities," he said. Kotb compared such regulations to beach safety measures like warning flags and lifeguards, arguing that public beaches should be managed through clear rules rather than broad restrictions on access. "The same principle applies to public conduct generally," he said. "Just as there are rules governing streets and public parks, beaches should be regulated in a way that protects everyone's rights." Former Tourism Minister Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour said that Egypt's coastline should remain open to the public but acknowledged that carefully regulated exceptions could apply to genuinely private beaches. "The general principle is that the sea should be accessible to everyone, whether residents or visitors," he told Arab News. **-DNA**

People
allowed back
home in
southwestern
France
00:0000:45

BORDEAUX, France: Thousands of people evacuated in southwestern France due to a major wildfire were gradually allowed back home on Friday after authorities said the fire, which has burned for more than a week, was contained. French authorities have ended the evacuation of 12 districts in the west and southwest of Bordeaux, allowing 144,000 people out of more than 220,000 to return home, Gironde prefect Sophie Brocas said in a statement on Friday. "The situation is stable, the fire is contained within its perimeter," she said. "Overnight weather conditions were favorable: falling temperatures and high humidity levels." The A63 highway that links the city of Bordeaux with the Spanish border was reopened. However, access to the Cap Ferret peninsula, a tourist hotspot, where valuable properties are located, remained closed, as the only road connecting it with the mainland runs through burned areas. The wildfire in the Landes area west of Bordeaux has devastated 42,000 hectares (103,784 acres) of highly flammable pine tree forests, after a severe dry spell. The fire burned a few hundred houses. **-APP**

Sniffer dogs
search mall
wrecked after
Japan quake

KUMAMOTO, Japan: Sniffer dogs in Japan helped rescuers Friday make a final sweep of a shopping mall wrecked by an explosion after a big earthquake, as the death toll from the tremor three days earlier hit 35. "At the Aeon mall, 11 people were pulled out as of last night (Thursday), among them seven dead. To make sure that no one else is inside, we are finalizing our confirmation with the assistance of professionally trained dogs," government spokesman Minoru Kihara said. Local media quoted the operator of the mall, which was evacuated before being ripped apart by the suspected gas blast over an hour after Tuesday's quake, as saying that all employees were now accounted for. At the other major disaster site following the 7.1-magnitude jolt, a paper factory, nine bodies have now been recovered and search and rescue operations were terminated, Kihara said. **-APP**

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Briefs

Govt notifies 7% pension increase effective from July 1

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has issued a notification, officially approving a 7% increase in pensions for retired civil servants and armed forces personnel, effective from July 1, 2026. According to an Office Memorandum issued by the Ministry of Finance, the federal government has approved a 7% increase in the baseline pension with effect from July 1, 2026, for all civil pensioners of the federal government, including civilians paid from Defence Estimates, as well as retired personnel of armed forces and civil armed forces personnel. The 7% increase in pension shall also be admissible to pensioners who retire on or after July 1, 2026. The increase will also be admissible on family pension granted under the Pension-cum-Gratuity Scheme, 1954, the Liberalised Pension Rules, 1977, as amended from time to time, on pensions sanctioned under the Central Civil Services (Extraordinary Pension) Rules, as well as on the Compassionate Allowance under CSR-353. If the gross pension sanctioned by the Federal Government is shared with any government in accordance with the rules laid down in Part IV of Appendix III to the Accounts Code, Volume I, the amount of the increase in pension will be apportioned between the federal government and the other government concerned on a proportionate basis. The increase in pension sanctioned under this OM will not be admissible on the Special Additional Pension allowed in lieu of the pre-retirement Orderly Allowance and the monetised value of a driver or an orderly, the O.M. concluded.

IHC tells NCCIA to provide journalist with details

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday directed the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) to provide vlogger and journalist Asad Toor with details of the allegations against him in connection with a summons issued by the agency. The agency had issued a notice to Toor on Wednesday for an inquiry into "alleged dissemination, transmission and/or public exhibition of false/fake information" by him. He was directed to appear before the NCCIA Cybercrime Reporting Centre in Islamabad at 11am on July 31.

Toor challenged the summons in the IHC on Thursday, arguing that the NCCIA had failed to fulfil the legal requirements while issuing the notice and did not provide details of the allegations levelled against him. On Friday, Justice Mohammad Azam Khan took up Toor's petition. Advocate Attaulah Kundi appeared before the court on behalf of the petitioner. During the hearing, the court asked the petitioner's counsel, "Why don't you appear before the NCCIA? Don't you have a defence?" — APP

Pakistan greatly values relations with Morocco

Morocco Celebrates Throne Day, Ambassador Highlights Strong Ties with Pakistan



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Pakistan marked the 27th anniversary of King Mohammed VI's ascension to the Throne with a ceremony that underscored Morocco's achievements under the King's leadership and reaffirmed the deep-rooted friendship between Morocco and Pakistan. Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik said that Pakistan attached great importance to its relations with Morocco. He

hoped that these relations would further be cemented in the days to come. Speaking at the event, Moroccan Ambassador Mohamed Karmoune emphasized the progress Morocco has made over the past 27 years. He noted that democratic institutions have been strengthened, the country's GDP has tripled, and social protection policies have expanded access to healthcare and social services. "The security and stability enjoyed by Morocco, as well as the efficiency of state institutions, have allowed important economic development," he said.

Ambassador Karmouné highlighted Morocco's emergence as a hub for industry, tourism, and investment. The Kingdom has become Africa's leading car exporter, producing nearly one million vehicles annually, while the aviation and renewable energy sectors continue to grow. In 2025, Morocco welcomed a record 20 million tourists, including members of the diaspora. "These accomplishments are the result of clear strategic direction and resolute policies turned to the future," he added.

The Ambassador also paid tribute to the historic relations between Morocco and

Pakistan, which span more than 72 years. He praised the "brotherly relations based on mutual respect and trust" and pointed to regular political dialogue, high-level exchanges, and coordination in international organizations as evidence of the strong partnership. "We strongly believe that working together will achieve our common development vision and embed our relations in excellence," he affirmed. The celebration served not only as a reflection on Morocco's progress but also as a reaffirmation of the enduring ties between the two nations.

Four bodies including Oman, Nepali climbers found

The Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) said that the 10-member team included six Nepalese climbers, a Pakistani, an Omani, an American and a climber from China. The climbers from Nepal were identified as renowned mountaineer Nirmal Purja, Pur Bahadur Gurung, Kili Pemba Sherpa, Nima Sherpa, Nawang Thindu Sherpa and Gyalu Sherpa

DNA

GILGIT: Four bodies were found on Friday as a search operation was underway to locate climbers who went missing on Broad Peak a day earlier after an avalanche struck around midday. The Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) said that the 10-member team included six Nepalese climbers, a Pakistani, an Omani, an American and a climber from China. The climbers from Nepal were identified as renowned mountaineer Nirmal Purja, Puri Bahadur Gurung, Kili Pemba Sherpa, Nima Sherpa, Nawang Thindu Sherpa and Gyalu Sherpa. It identified the remaining climbers as Nadhira Ahmed Abdullah Al Harthy from Oman, Pakistani climber Sohail Sakhi, Wang Zhong from China and Mallory Geis from the United States. ACP President Major General Irfan Arshad told on Friday that four bodies had been found. He identified two of the dead as Oman's Nadhira Ahmed Abdullah Al Harthy and Nepal's Puri Bahadur Gurung. In a statement issued earlier in the day, ACP

Senior Vice President Karrar Haidri said two Pakistan Army Aviation rescue helicopters, carrying rescue personnel and additional specialised equipment, had been dispatched to support the ongoing search and rescue operation. The statement said the ACP president, along with the club's senior leadership, remained in constant contact with the highest government authorities and relevant agencies to facilitate the rescue operation. "Every possible effort is being made to ensure that helicopter support and all available rescue resources are mobilised at the earliest opportunity, subject to weather and operational conditions," it added. The club said it was closely monitoring the situation and coordinating with all relevant stakeholders while expressing solidarity with the climbers' families and the international mountaineering community. Meanwhile, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Amjad Hussain Advocate directed all relevant departments to remain on high alert and expedite the search and rescue operation in coordination with the Pakistan Army, according to an official statement.

Oil falls more than \$1 on greater flows despite US-Iran war

Brent slips \$1.03 to \$88, WTI crude loses \$1.50 to \$82.09 a barrel

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Friday but kept on track for a monthly rise of about a fifth, as more supplies flowed through crucial maritime chokepoints, despite a lack of major breakthroughs in talks between the United States and Iran. Brent futures fell \$1.03, or 1.2%, to \$88 a barrel by 0215 GMT, while US West Texas as Intermediate (WTI) crude slipped \$1.50, or 1.8%, to \$82.09 a barrel. On a monthly basis, both benchmarks were set to rise about 20%. Crude oil edged lower as rising tensions in the Middle East were offset by signs of increased shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, ING analyst Daniel Hynes said. The strait, which usually carries about a fifth of global shipments of crude oil and liquefied natural gas, has been a focal point for oil markets as it has largely been blockaded since the February 28

launch of the US-Israel war on Iran. Saudi Arabia seeks to lead a coalition to boost defence cooperation in the Bab El-Mandeb Strait, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, all choke-points for energy supplies. The Saudi defence ministry said 14 nations, including Djibouti, Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan and Turkey, were in support of the multinational maritime defence coalition. Houthis in Yemen declared a naval blockade last week on Saudi Arabia, threatening the Red Sea route for its oil exports, an alternative to the Strait of Hormuz. Although tanker traffic has continued through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, higher security risks have boosted freight costs and insurance premiums to embed a significant geopolitical risk premium in oil prices, said Priyanka Sachdeva, analyst at Phillip Nova. — DNA

Govt to resolve problems of traders: Naqvi

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has met a delegation of traders and industrialists from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan and assured them that the government would employ all available resources to resolve their issues and ensure their protection, the interior ministry said on Friday.

In a statement on X, the ministry said representatives from all chambers of commerce spoke about the security situation in their respective provinces and the challenges they were facing. For his part, Naqvi briefed the delegation on the overall security situation in the country, particularly in KP and Balochistan, and the steps taken by the government in this regard, the statement added.

"He assured the business community of complete co-operation," it stated, further quoting Naqvi as saying: "The government will employ all available resources to resolve the issues of traders and industrialists and ensure their protection." He further said that he would soon visit Peshawar and Quetta and held detailed meetings with the business community in the presence of senior government officials and representatives so that "a permanent and practical solution" for the challenges being faced by traders and industrialists could be worked out.

Algeria bus crash kills at least 25

ALGIERS: An Algerian passenger bus crashed into a ravine on Friday killing at least 25 people and wounding dozens, the country's civil defense agency said. The bus left the road near the coastal town of Boumerdes, east of the capital Algiers, for unknown reasons, according to the civil defense. At least 44 people were injured in the crash and the civil defense warned that the death toll could rise further. The agency said its teams responded to the accident around 9:40 am local time (0840 GMT) to assist the victims of what is the deadliest accident in Algeria in recent years. — **APP**

IMF unlikely to approve fuel levy cut

ISLAMABAD: Petroleum Minister Ali Perwaiz Malik has said any cut in the petroleum levy is unlikely to secure approval from the International Monetary Fund unless the government identifies an alternative revenue source to offset the loss. Briefing the Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum, Malik said the levy currently charged on petrol and diesel was already lower than the level imposed during wartime, adding that "perhaps the IMF may agree" if Pakistan developed another revenue option. His remarks came as lawmakers challenged the government's daily fuel pricing system, calling it a burden on consumers, while the minister defended it as a market-linked mechanism aimed at managing global price volatility. The committee, which met with Senator Umer Farooq in the chair, also took

strict notice of the absence of performance audits of oil rigs and directed the relevant authorities to submit the audit report within seven days. Malik told the committee that the government had eliminated political interference in fuel pricing by authorising Ogra to independently set petroleum prices through a transparent mechanism. Ogra chairman informed lawmakers that Pakistan's petrol and diesel prices are linked to Singapore market benchmarks, not crude oil prices. He said the daily pricing mechanism would help cushion consumers from sudden shocks caused by international market fluctuations. However, Senator Saifullah Abro criticised the mechanism, calling daily price revisions a "slow poison" and saying ordinary consumers could not understand the complex pricing formula. — APP

PPP, PML-N hold reconciliatory meeting following message from Islamabad

Sources say both sides agreed that current political confrontation should not be allowed to escalate further

ISLAMABAD: Amid mounting tensions between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) over the ongoing Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections, senior leaders of the two coalition partners met in Muzaffarabad on Thursday in an effort to contain the political fallout from allegations of electoral rigging. The meeting followed days of increasingly bitter exchanges between the two parties after the Mirpur polls, with the PPP alleging large-scale irregularities and questioning the credibility of the electoral process.

PPP leaders, including Qamar Zaman Kaira, Nadeem Afzal Chan, AJK Prime Minister Faisal Rathore and Nayyar Bukhari, met Rana Sanaullah and Amir Muqam from the PML-N. According to sources privy to the discussions, leaders from both sides candidly exchanged complaints over statements made during the election campaign and

after the announcement of Mirpur results.

The PML-N leadership asked the PPP to produce evidence supporting its allegation of systematic electoral rigging. In response, PPP leaders maintained that their objections were specific to four constituencies – LA-5, LA-9, LA-11 and LA-12 – where they believed serious irregularities had taken place. The PML-N side argued that by restricting its complaints to four constituencies, the PPP had effectively accepted the results on the remaining nine seats, where the PML-N won five and the PPP secured four.

The sources said both sides agreed that the current political confrontation should not be allowed to escalate further or cast a shadow over the remaining phases of AFK elections. The meeting also produced an understanding on election-day security in the remaining constituencies, particularly in Muzaffarabad. According to sources, both parties agreed that no individual should be allowed to carry firearms in or around polling stations, with the objective of ensuring peaceful, orderly and credible polling.

The meeting is being seen as the first serious attempt by the two coalition partners to contain a dispute that had threatened to deepen political tensions despite their partnership in the federal government. – **APP**

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Rang-e-Balochistan Ramp Walk
Wild Majesty - The Animal Kingdom Ramp Walk
Classical Sitar Performance
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SERENA HOTELS

Thursday, 27 August 2026

Pakistan
OBSERVER
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