



Islamabad POST

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US-Iran standoff

Defence Minister Asif says US, Iran close to 'some sort' of deal

Signals in last two three days are that we are close to some

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Tuesday the United States and Iran were close to "some sort" of deal, and fellow mediator Qatar said talks on managing the Strait of Hormuz were at an advanced stage, despite reports of new attacks on shipping in regional waters. The comments offered some hope that Iran and the US can end a stalemate that has in effect blocked the vital waterway, through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas flowed before the war. Prospects for a deal had appeared to dim on Monday after the sides' latest remarks and demands. In an interview with Bloomberg News, Asif said "things are shaping up again in favor of a peace arrangement or a deal." "The signals in the last two three days are that we are close to some sort of an arrangement." Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran on Tuesday, Araghchi's Telegram channel said on Tuesday, without providing further details. Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesperson told a briefing earlier on Tuesday that separate discussions between Oman and Iran over management of the Strait of Hormuz were at an advanced stage. Iran's Foreign Ministry's Public Relations Office did not immediately respond to a call for comment. Pakistan and Qatar have been the main mediators in the conflict in which thousands

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Pakistan takes Iran into confidence on trilateral defence deal

DNA

TEHRAN: Syed Mohsin Naqvi, Pakistan's Interior Minister, convened with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran on Tuesday evening, deepening discussions on the Middle East conflict and regional defense cooperation. Both sides exchanged views on the ongoing regional war, emphasizing the urgent need for de-escalation and dialogue to prevent further escalation. Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi took FM Araghchi into confidence regarding Pakistan's coordination with Riyadh, highlighting Islamabad's efforts to balance ties across the Gulf. Naqvi briefed Iran on the trilateral defense pact involving Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan, underscoring its role in shaping a new regional security architecture. Talks also touched on ongoing mediation efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, with Pakistan reaffirming its role as a guarantor of dialogue between Washington and Tehran.. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump accused Iran of being "devious negotiators" in an interview released late on Monday and described some of his current options in the war — "just bop along" and let Tehran fail economically or hit them "really, really hard."

"I'm sort of negotiating," Trump told Real America's Voice in a phone interview. "They're very devious negotiators." Since the conflict began in late February, Trump has repeatedly oscillated between threats of escalation and claims that a peace deal is imminent. Trump described one of his possible strategies as: "Do what I'm doing now: just bop along and look how bad they're doing." "Economically, they are a mess. They can't borrow money. We control their money, what they had, which is a lot. They had a lot, and we have total control of it. I'm their banker," he said, referring to frozen Iranian assets. Another option would be to "Hit them really, really hard," Trump said.

Former Syrian President given death penalty

NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS: A Syrian court sentenced ousted leader Bashar al-Assad to death on Tuesday after a trial in absentia, convicting him of crimes including killings, torture, and arbitrary arrest during the country's nearly 14-year war. It was the first conviction against Assad, who was ousted in a rebel offensive in December 2024 that ended decades of his family's iron-fisted rule over Syria, and the brutal war that killed hundreds of thousands of Syrians. Assad fled the capital Damascus as fighters approached nearly two years ago, and is currently in Moscow. In a trial of former government officials on Tuesday, a judge handed down a death sentence to

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PM for audit of bonded warehouses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has directed to conduct an independent three year third-party audit of customs bonded warehouses across the country. He was chairing a meeting regarding Federal Board of Revenue in Islamabad today. Shehbaz Sharif said there is no room for any irregularity in customs bonded warehouses. He said strict action be taken against officials found involved in any irregularity or illegal activity in accordance with the law. The meeting was briefed on customs bonded warehouses and Inland Revenue enforcement.

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12 dead as wedding party falls into canal

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: As many as 12 people, including six minors, were found dead after a speeding loader rickshaw carrying 24 people fell into the Muzaffargarh Canal on Monday night after attending a marriage ceremony in a nearby village, it emerged on Tuesday. On Monday, three loader rickshaws carrying a wedding procession were travelling to Basti Arain from Lomar Wala in Kot Addu district when one of the rickshaws lost control due to overspeeding and fell into the Muzaffargarh

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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and General Syed Aamer Raza, NI (M), S.Bt, Commander National Strategic Command, during a Special Investiture Ceremony at Aiwan-e-Sadr, where the President conferred Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) upon General Syed Aamer Raza. – DNA

President Zardari confers Nishan-e-Imtiaz on NSC Commander Gen Raza

PM Shehbaz, Field Marshal Munir attend ceremony at Aiwan-e-Sadr

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: National Strategic Command (NSC) Commander General Syed Amir Raza was conferred the Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) by President Asif Ali Zardari at a ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and the services chiefs also attended the ceremony on Tuesday. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani, federal ministers, other senior officials, and ambassadors of several countries were also present at the event. PM Shehbaz had promoted Gen Raza — who was previously serving as the Chief of the General Staff — from the Lieutenant General's rank to the rank of "Four-Star General" and simultaneously appointed him to the coveted post. The new title — NSC Commander — was established after the Pakistan Army, Air Force, and Navy (Amendment) Bills 2025 were passed last year, and consequently, the post of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC) was abolished. General Raza was commissioned in 6 Lancers, a distinguished armoured corps regiment, in 1988. He is a graduate of Command and Staff College Quetta, National Defence University Islamabad, and the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. General Raza has held various important command, staff, and instructional appointments. He was brigade major of an infantry brigade, General Staff Officer Grade-2 at Chief of General Staff Secretariat, Chief of Staff of a Strike Corps, Director General Weapons and Equipment Directorate, Chairman Heavy Industries Taxila, and Chief of General Staff at the General Headquarters Rawalpindi. He has commanded an armoured regiment, an armoured brigade, an infantry brigade in South Waziristan, infantry division, and a corps along the eastern border. He has also remained on the faculty of School of Armour and Mechanised Warfare.

Briefs

2.4 million Afghan girls out of school

NEWS DESK

PARIS: Around 2.4 million girls in Afghanistan have been denied access to secondary education since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, the United Nations said Tuesday, urging an end to such "discrimination." The Taliban administration, recognized solely by Russia, has imposed a series of restrictions on women that the United Nations has characterised as "gender apartheid." Girls cannot study beyond primary school, a policy the Taliban authorities justify based on their interpretation of Islamic law. The number of girls denied access to secondary school has risen by 200,000 since last year and could reach nearly four million by 2030 if the ban persists, said the UN's cultural and educational agency UNESCO.

Re-polling on 2 AJK seats on Aug 15

NEWS DESK

BAGH: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Election Commission on Tuesday ordered re-polling at some polling stations in two constituencies in Poonch Division's Bagh district. Polling in four constituencies of Bagh and Haveli districts was held on Monday as part of the third and final phase of AJK elections. Balloting in the Poonch and Sudhnoti districts had been postponed over law and order concerns in the wake of tensions between protesters and authorities. Re-polling at nine polling stations in LA-15 (Bagh Central) and 14 polling stations in LA-16 (Bagh East) will be held on August 15 (Saturday), AJK CEC Ghulam Mustafa Mughal told at his office on Tuesday.

Man shot dead after 'opening fire' on security personnel

The information minister said there was "no reason for opening fire on security personnel", later confirming the incident location as Rawalpindi's Mall Road

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: A man, whom police claimed was affiliated with a "particular political party", was shot dead by law enforcement officials on Rawalpindi's Mall Road on Tuesday after he allegedly opened fire on security forces, injuring an official. "The attacker, Muhammad Hussain, was immediately killed in retaliatory fire," said a statement by Rawalpindi police. The police added that evidence and "links have emerged from his mobile phone and other belongings", adding that further investigation is ongoing. "Law enforcement agencies remain fully prepared and committed to eliminating all forms of terrorism and incitement to unrest," police said. PTV News, quoting security sources, said the alleged assailant was a resident of Khyber district and an "active PTI member". A PTI flag, bullets and

weapons were also allegedly recovered from him, the report added. In a statement aired on news channels following the incident, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar slammed PTI's "politics of violence" after state media reported the incident. The information minister said there was "no reason for opening fire on security personnel", later confirming the incident location as Rawalpindi's Mall Road. Tarar also slammed the "politics of violence adopted by the PTI" and criticised its members for "coming equipped with weapons". The minister referred to the call for a long march to Islamabad, which has been announced by the PTI for September 27. He claimed that it was "on record that they always come armed at all their protests, open fire on security personnel and martyr them". "They do not believe in a peaceful

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Japan provides grant aid human resource scholarships

Japanese ambassador says Japan deeply values its relationship with Pakistan, and the JDS Program is one of the most personal and enduring ways we invest in that relationship

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has extended grant aid worth 350 million Japanese Yen for the implementation of the Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) FY 2026 Program in Pakistan. A formal signing ceremony was held in Islamabad, where Notes Verbale were signed and exchanged between His Excellency Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, and Mr. Muhammad Humair Karim Kidwai, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Government of Pakistan. Additionally, a Grant Agreement outlining the implementation details of the project for Fiscal Year 2026 was signed between Mr. SHINOZAKI Yusuke, Chief Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Pakistan Office, and Mr. Miran Mohiyuddin Soomro,

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WATER JUST GOT BETTER!!

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Murree Sparklets Bottled Drinking Water

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Balakot gets 110-bed category-c hospital

MANSEHRA: A modern 110-bed Category-C hospital has been completed and made operational in Balakot, providing improved healthcare facilities to residents of the area and tourists travelling to the Kaghan and Naran valleys. The hospital was completed on the directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Muhammad Sohail Khan Afridi by the Planning and Development Department in collaboration with the relevant department. The project was completed at a cost of Rs924.5 million. The newly established facility has departments for General Surgery, General Medicine, Gynecology and Obstetrics, Ophthalmology, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT), Orthopaedics, Trauma and Emergency Services, Labour Room, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Dental Services. Situated at the gateway to the Kaghan and Naran valleys, the hospital is expected to provide timely medical and emergency services to the local population as well as domestic and foreign tourists visiting the region throughout the year. The operationalization of the hospital will increase healthcare capacity in the area, facilitate timely treatment during emergencies and reduce the burden on District Headquarters Hospital Mansehra and other major healthcare facilities. The facility is also expected to play an important role in ensuring better access to quality medical services for tourists travelling to the scenic valleys, particularly during the peak tourism season.—APP

20-maund rotten mangoes destroyed

MULTAN: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has fined a juice processing plant Rs.500,000 after officials found around 20 maunds of rotten mangoes at its premises in the Industrial Estate area, here on Tuesday. The action was taken during an inspection conducted under the supervision of PFA Director Operations South Rameez Zafar. Officials said the mangoes were foul-smelling and unfit for human consumption and were allegedly intended for use in the preparation of mango pulp and juice. The seized stock was destroyed on the spot, according to the authority. During the inspection, PFA officials also found heavy insect infestation in the plant's cold storage, along with poor sanitation and hygiene conditions. PFA Director General (DG), Raja Mansoor Ahmed said strict action would be taken against food businesses found compromising public health. He said adulteration, negligence and malpractice in food preparation would not be tolerated and that the authority would continue inspections and enforcement operations to ensure the supply of safe and quality food to consumers.—APP

Chinese delegation explores joint ventures, trade opportunities

ICCI President invites Chinese companies to invest, manufacture and build supply chains in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Chinese business delegation led by President of the Dongguan Ganzhou Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of Dongguan Chuanbo Metal Products Co. Liu Ying has explored extensive opportunities for investment, joint ventures and industrial cooperation in Pakistan, particularly in manufacturing, infrastructure development, construction, new energy, advanced materials and export-oriented production. During a business interaction hosted by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), a detailed presentation showcasing Dongguan Chuanbo Metal Products Co. was also played, highlighting the company's business profile, products, manufacturing capabilities and potential areas for collaboration with Pakistani enterprises. The presentation provided the Pakistani business community with a closer insight into the company's capabilities and prospects for market cooperation. Speaking on the occasion, Liu Ying said the delegation had come to Pakistan with a strong interest in exploring practical business opportunities and developing long-term partnerships with Pakistani companies. He emphasized the importance of strengthening private-sector linkages and expressed the hope that the visit would lead to concrete cooperation in investment, joint ventures, manufacturing and technology-based partnerships. The delegation represented a diverse range of Chinese businesses associated with metal and plastic products, construction, new energy, advanced materials, flooring solutions, packaging, international trade and investment, offering substantial scope for B2B co-operation. The visiting companies expressed interest in exploring Pakistan's market and using partnerships with local businesses to expand their regional footprint. In his welcome address Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President ICCI, said the visit represented an opportunity to transform the traditional Pakistan-China friendship into a stronger partnership based on investment, manufacturing, technology transfer and joint value creation. He said Pakistan offers a large market, a young population, entrepreneurial talent, strategic connectivity and immense opportunities in infrastructure, energy, manufacturing and technology. He invited Chinese companies to invest, manufacture, establish joint ventures and develop supply chains in Pakistan, saying that cooperation should go beyond conventional trade. He particularly highlighted opportunities in infra-



structure development, construction, renewable energy, industrial manufacturing, engineering, advanced materials, packaging and technology, adding that Chinese expertise and investment could help accelerate Pakistan's industrial development while creating employment and export opportunities. He said Chinese companies could use Pakistan as a platform to access regional markets, while Pakistani businesses could benefit from Chinese technology, capital, manufacturing expertise and global market networks. The ICCI President assured the delegation that the Chamber and Pakistan's business community were ready to facilitate B2B meetings, investment matchmaking, joint ventures, technology partnerships and

market access. "Let us not merely trade with each other; let us build with each other, invest with each other, innovate with each other and grow together," he said, expressing confidence that the visit would open a new chapter of Pakistan-China industrial cooperation, investment and shared economic prosperity. In his vote of thanks ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry reiterated that the Chamber will continue to play the role of a bridge between the business communities of both countries. Those present on the occasion also included ICCI Executive Members Waseem Chaudhry, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Mirza Mohammad Ali, Imran Minhas, Najeeb Ellahi Malik, Malik Mohsin Khalid, ICCI senior member Yasir Javaid and other.

Pakistan assembled 13m mobile devices during 2026

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan assembled 13.1 million mobile devices during January-June 2026, with Chinese brands occupying several leading positions as local handset production continues to expand toward smartphones and 5G devices, Gwadar Pro reported quoting Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) data. During this period, Pakistan imported only 2.55 million mobile phones, highlighting the growing role of local production in meeting domestic demand. The six-month production comprised 7.32 million 2G

phones and 5.78 million smartphones. Within this rapidly changing market, 101,005 5G-enabled handsets were assembled locally in May 2026 alone, highlighting the growing presence of the latest mobile technology in Pakistan's domestic production sector. The 2026 brand figures show VGO TEL leading local assembly with 1.86 million devices during January-June, followed by Infinix at 1.34 million. Itel recorded 0.89 million, while TECNO and Vivo stood at 0.83 million and 0.78 million, respectively. Samsung followed

with 0.77 million units, while Nokia recorded 0.70 million. The chart also shows ONKA at 0.70 million, X Mobile at 0.52 million, Oppo at 0.48 million and QMobile at 0.48 million. The latest numbers show that smartphone production has become a major part of Pakistan's domestic mobile industry. Of the 13.1 million devices assembled in the first half of 2026, 5.78 million were smartphones, while 7.32 million were 2G handsets. The rollout of locally assembled 5G devices adds a new dimension

to the 2026 figures. The 101,005 5G handsets assembled in May alone indicate that manufacturers are beginning to introduce next-generation devices into Pakistan's local production mix. Chinese brands remain central to this shift, particularly in the affordable and mid-range smartphone market. Their presence among the leading producers has helped make locally assembled smartphones an increasingly important part of Pakistan's mobile market.—APP

Sindh motorway, highway projects get Rs49.3b

ISLAMABAD: Sindh's motorway and highway infrastructure is set for a major boost in the current financial year, with Rs49.305 billion earmarked for key projects, including the Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway and rehabilitation of the flood-damaged N-5 corridor. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the Sindh component of the National Highway Authority's Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2026-27 includes nine motorway and highway projects with a combined approved PC-I cost of Rs594.977 billion. Cumulative expenditure on these schemes stood at Rs122.508 billion by June 2026, while their remaining throw-forward liability was recorded at Rs472.469 billion as of July 1, 2026. The FY27 allocation comprises Rs8.055 billion in local funding and Rs41.25 billion in foreign assistance. The biggest share, Rs30

billion, has been earmarked for the 306-kilometre Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway, a six-lane, divided and fenced facility planned on a build-operate-transfer basis. The project has an approved cost of Rs363.7 billion and a throw-forward of Rs363.691 billion. The allocation for this project includes Rs2 billion in local funding and Rs28 billion in foreign assistance. According to the document, the procurement process is expected to be finalised in November 2026. Another Rs9 billion has been allocated for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the N-5 section between Moro and Ranipur, covering kilometres 318 to 404 on both the northbound and southbound carriageways, as well as the restoration of 32 damaged bridges. The project, costing Rs57.245 billion, had utilised Rs13.224 billion by June 2026, leaving a throw-forward of Rs44.021 billion. Its annual allocation consists of Rs1.75 billion in rupee fund-

ing and Rs7.25 billion in foreign assistance. Physical progress stands at 23 per cent on Lot-1 and 19pc on Lot-2, with completion targeted for June 30, 2027. The NHA has earmarked Rs5 billion for the construction of an additional carriageway (221.9km) on the Indus Highway (N-55) between Shikarpur and Rajanpur. The funding also includes Rs4 billion in foreign assistance. Against an approved cost of Rs44.704 billion, expenditure on the project currently stands at Rs32.108 billion, with throw-forward of Rs12.596 billion. Progress has reached 24pc on Lot-1, 21pc on Lot-2, 79pc on Lot-3 and 73pc on Lot-4. The project is targeted for completion in October 2026. A further Rs2.5 billion has been allocated for the China-aided rehabilitation of the 66km Hala-Moro section of N-5. With an approved budget of Rs27.973 billion, the project's procurement process is now finalised.—APP

Faisalabad lights up as city gears up to celebrate IDay

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad is taking on a festive national hue ahead of Pakistan's 79th Independence Day (ID) as the Deputy Commissioner's Office was illuminated in vibrant green and white lights as part of ID preparations to celebrate the occasion with renewed patriotic spirit and national fervor. A spokesman of local administration said here on Tuesday that the district administration has stepped up preparations for Independence Day celebrations across the city on the directions of Deputy Commissioner 9DC) Muhammad Nauman Siddique. He said that the Deputy Commissioner's Office has been decorated with colorful electric lights while the government building has been illuminated in green and white, reflecting the national colors and adding to the festive atmosphere ahead of August 14, 2026. He said that arrangements were also underway to decorate the city with national flags and green-white bunting while various other activities were being planned to mark Independence Day in a befitting manner. He said that special activities aimed at promoting patriotism and highlighting the spirit of national unity are being arranged for citizens to provide families and residents an opportunity to participate in the celebrations and express their love for the country. He said that the decoration of government buildings and prominent locations in national colors is part of the district administration's efforts to create a festive atmosphere while reinforcing the message of national solidarity, unity and commitment to Pakistan. He said that the people were also appealed to celebrate Independence Day with national dignity, discipline and a sense of responsibility while ensuring due respect for the national flag and other national symbols. The celebrations are expected to add a distinct patriotic color to the city as public and government spaces are being prepared to welcome the national day, he added. The city is taking on a festive national hue ahead of Pakistan's 79th Independence Day as the Deputy Commissioner's Office was illuminated with vibrant green and white lights to celebrate the occasion with renewed patriotic spirit and national fervor. A spokesman said here on Tuesday that the district administration had stepped up preparations for the Independence Day celebrations across the city on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Nauman Siddique.



Islamabad: Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt and Managing Director National Telecommunication Corporation Maj. Gen. (R) Ali Farhan displaying the Documents of Intent to strengthen PBM's nationwide connectivity infrastructure, after signing at PBM Headquarters.

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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

Aug 25/Uruguay
Independence Day

Aug 30 /Turkey
Armed Forces Day

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Independence Day

Aug 31/Malaysia
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RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Bharath calls for integrated weather, disaster alert system

“Looking at climate trends over the past several decades, it is clear that climate change has become a permanent reality in Pakistan,” he said, adding that the country was increasingly experiencing extreme weather events, including severe monsoons, abnormal rainfall, cloudbursts, floods and other climate-related disasters

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Health Dr Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath on Tuesday called for integrating weather and disaster alerts issued by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) with advance preparedness measures in the health sector. While addressing a conference on National Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, he said that upon issuance of an alert, health teams, medicines, essential medical equipment and other necessary resources should be made available in the affected districts without delay. He stressed that climate change had become a permanent reality in Pakistan, directly affecting the population and putting additional pressure on the health system. “Looking at climate trends over the past several decades, it is clear that climate

change has become a permanent reality in Pakistan,” he said, adding that the country was increasingly experiencing extreme weather events, including severe monsoons, abnormal rainfall, cloudbursts, floods and other climate-related disasters. Dr. Bharath noted that a large number of people were displaced or forced to migrate every year due to climate-related disasters. Such situations significantly increased the risk of malaria, dengue, cholera, diarrhoea and other infectious and epidemic diseases, while children, elderly people and other vulnerable groups faced additional health challenges. The minister said the country could no longer afford to respond only after an emergency occurred and stressed the need to develop a comprehensive and sustainable system for preparedness, re-

sponse and recovery. He reiterated close coordination among the Ministry of Health, provincial health departments, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), international development and aid agencies, and other relevant stakeholders to formulate clear and practical Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). “These SOPs should clearly define the level, institution and mechanism through which the health sector will respond to disasters or mass displacement,” he said. The Minister of State termed a trained and effective health workforce the most important component of the emergency preparedness system. He stressed that district-level health teams should be trained in managing climate-related disasters, disease outbreaks, emergency

medical assistance, the healthcare needs of affected populations and the provision of services in temporary camps. The minister said the conference should be followed by concrete measures, including training and capacity-building of the health workforce, development of SOPs for healthcare delivery during disasters, clear protocols covering the relocation, rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced populations, and special arrangements for vulnerable groups, particularly pregnant women and children. “We need the federal and provincial governments, district administrations, international partners, aid agencies and all relevant stakeholders to work under a common framework to effectively protect our population from the increasing impacts of climate change,” he concluded.—APP

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov awards Daily Islamabad POST with certificate for newspaper contribution towards promotion of bilateral relations. Editor Ansar Mahmood Bhatti received the certificate. DNA

HEC chief lauds COMSATS' university's digital governance

ISLAMABAD: Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, Chairperson of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), visited COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) on Tuesday for a demonstration of the university's in-house digital systems suite, developed to streamline operations across the student lifecycle, electronic filing, financial management, recruitment, and statutory governance. Rector CUI, Prof. Dr. Raheel Qamar, led the walkthrough, presenting the range of digital tools built by the university to modernize administrative and academic processes. Officials said the systems have already delivered measurable gains in efficiency, cutting down processing

time, operational costs, and paper usage across CUI's campuses. The event was attended by Vice Chancellors, Rectors, and senior representatives from several sister universities and institutions, including the University of Rawalpindi, Barani Institute of Information Technology (BIIT) Rawalpindi, National University of Technology (NUTECH) Islamabad, Bahria University Islamabad, Air University Islamabad, MY University (Muslim Youth University) Islamabad, Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi (FJWU), Rawalpindi Women University, University of Wah, and Iqra University Islamabad. The Inter-University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences Pakistan (IUCPSS) was also represented. Following the demonstration, an exchange of views took place among attendees on how the digital governance model could be scaled and extended to other institutions within the higher education sector, with several representatives expressing interest in future collaboration. In this context, Chairman HEC requested that CUI facilitate the participating universities in adopting the digital systems on a cost basis, a proposal to which Rector CUI readily agreed, underscoring the university's commitment to supporting sector-wide digital advancement. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman HEC commended CUI's initiative, describing the digital platforms as an exceptional example of innovation in higher education administration. He praised the Rector's vision in spearheading the development of the suite, calling it a reflection of the university's commitment to progress and digital transformation. He further noted that such systems hold significant promise for the wider academic system, particularly in enabling faster, paperless processing and improved institutional governance.—APP

Dr Ramesh dedicates Global Hindu Award to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Patron-in-Chief Pakistan Hindu Council and minority Parliamentarian Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani has announced to dedicate the Global Hindu Award, which he recently received in Canada, to Pakistan, on the occasion of National Minorities Day. In a video message, Dr Vankwani, who is also Chairman of Prem Nagar, said that March 23, August 11 and August 14 hold exceptional significance in Pakistan's national history, said a press release received here on Tuesday. Under the inspiring leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the adoption of the Lahore Resolution on March 23, 1940, gave a clear roadmap to the dream of an independent and sovereign homeland, while on August 14, 1947, Pakistan emerged as an independent state on the world map. However, he emphasized, August 11, 1947, falling between these two historic dates, is a particularly significant day that provided clear direction regarding the future of minorities of Pakistan. He said that during the final days of British rule, the region had descended into severe political turmoil, uncertainty and

communal tensions. In particular, non-Muslim communities living in the present-day Pakistan faced serious concerns and uncertainty about their future. Dr Ramesh Kumar highlighted that in such a critical situation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, while addressing the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, clearly articulated the principles of equal citizenship and religious freedom for all citizens of Pakistan. The Founder of Pakistan assured the people that there would be no discrimination in the new state on the basis of religion, faith or community, and that every individual would be free to worship and live according to their religious beliefs. Referring to Quaid-e-Azam's August 11 speech, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani further said, "I am proud that my forefathers responded to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's call and declared Pakistan their motherland. Today, millions of citizens belonging to Pakistan's non-Muslim communities, including myself, are passionately playing their proactive role in the development and progress of Pakistan." Dr Vankwani

further said that being honoured with the Global Hindu Award in Canada recently was more than a personal achievement. "In fact, it is a great honour for Pakistan," he said, emphasizing that winning the prestigious global recognition after a highly competitive process involving distinguished personalities from different countries demonstrated that patriotic citizens belonging to Pakistan's minority communities can also bring honour to their country through their abilities, services and contributions at the global level. Dedicating the international honour to Pakistan on the National Minorities Day, Dr Ramesh Kumar said that whenever a Pakistani citizen achieves distinction anywhere in the world, the dignity and prestige of the entire country are reflected in that achievement. According to him, Minorities Day reminds that Pakistan does not belong to any single class, religion or community; rather, it is the common homeland of all its citizens. He stressed the need for all Pakistanis to rise above the majority and minority debate and collectively contribute to the national development.—APP

Digital media can help build responsible society

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media (SAPM) Fahd Haroon said that digital media has immense potential to empower youth, promote innovation and help build a more informed, responsible and connected society. Addressing a gathering at the first meeting of August of the Rotary Club of Islamabad Metropolitan (RCIM) in Islamabad, he said the digital revolution had created unprecedented opportunities for Pakistan's young population, enabling them to acquire skills, access global knowledge, showcase their talent and connect with economic opportunities beyond geographical boundaries. He said smartphones had evolved from being merely communication tools into classrooms, workplaces, marketplaces and news platforms, providing young people with access to education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. "Digital media can provide our youth with a powerful platform to learn new skills, access global knowledge, showcase their talent, build businesses and connect with opportunities beyond geographical boundaries," he said. The SAPM said a young person sitting in any part of Pakistan could now learn from leading institutions and experts in Pakistan and around the world, work for companies locally or internationally, launch a startup, pursue freelancing opportunities and introduce Pakistani creativity and innovation to the global audience. However, he stressed that the role of digital media extended beyond economic opportunities, as it could also contribute to strengthening social cohesion and promoting informed national discourse. He urged young people to use digital platforms not only for consuming content but also for creating knowledge, promoting innovation, highlighting positive stories about Pakistan and contributing constructively to society. At the same time, he cautioned that greater digital access also brought greater responsibility, with misinformation, online hate and cyberbullying posing serious challenges to social harmony. He stressed the need to promote digital literacy alongside digital access, enabling young people to distinguish facts from misinformation, engage respectfully online, protect their digital identities and use technology responsibly.—APP

13th ERC meeting sharpens Pak's monsoon readiness

ISLAMABAD: The Emergency Response Committee (ERC) on Tuesday reviewed the prevailing monsoon situation, hydrological conditions, weather outlook and national preparedness at its 13th meeting held at the National Emergencies Operations Centre (NEOC) at NDMA headquarters in Islamabad, directing federal and provincial authorities to strengthen coordination, ensure timely early warnings and keep response resources ready to protect vulnerable communities. The meeting was held on the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and chaired by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal via video link as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) continued its national-level oversight of preparedness and coordinated response during the 2026 monsoon season. Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik, Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Mueen Wattoo, Punjab Minister for Health and Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique, NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik, representatives of provincial disaster management authorities, Pakistan Meteorological Department and senior officials from relevant federal ministries and departments attended the meeting. The National Emergencies Operations Centre presented a comprehensive situational briefing covering the latest weather forecasts, river flows, vulnerable locations and anticipated impacts of the ongoing monsoon spell. Provincial authorities briefed the committee on preparedness measures, availability of rescue resources, emergency stocks, evacuation plans and coordination with district administrations. The meeting placed particular emphasis on maintaining uninterrupted communication, timely dissemination of early warnings, pre-positioning relief resources and ensuring the operational readiness of response agencies in vulnerable districts. The chair directed all relevant departments and response agencies to maintain close coordination and ensure timely implementation of preparedness and response measures. The committee also stressed the need for proactive action at the district level to minimise risks and ensure the safety of vulnerable communities amid the ongoing monsoon season.—APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, in Islamabad Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 5 am to 12 pm, Waheed Abad, Khanna Dak, UC-2, Burma, Rehman Enclave, Shareefabad, Sudhran, Waris Valley, Khadhrapur, Khanna East, Ghauri Garden, from 6 am to 10 am, Taramri, Lehtar Road, ISI, from 8 am to 12 pm, Gharial, feeders. In Rawalpindi City Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 5 am to 12 pm, Al-Noor Colony, AFOSH, feeders. Similarly, in Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, electricity will remain suspended from 5 am to 10 am, Jhata Hatyal, Bhal, Jarrar Camp, from 6 am to 10 am, Jail Park-1, Car Chowk, Mehboob Shaheed, Park View, Pindi Board, Chowk Pindori, feeders. In Attock Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 5 am to 12 pm, Hussainabad, Lala Zar, Industrial State Bathar, from 6 am to 10 am, Katchery, Dar ul Islam Colony, Attock Cantt, Dhoke Fateh, Feeders.—APP

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Briefs

National Housing Policy termed as historic milestone

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada termed the new approved National Housing Policy 2026 a significant achievement and a historic milestone for the Ministry, particularly as Pakistan had been without an updated national housing policy for almost a quarter of a century. Federal Minister and the Secretary, Ministry of Housing & Works, congratulated the Policy & Planning Wing of the Ministry for its dedicated efforts in preparing the policy document. They appreciated the team's extensive work and emphasized that efforts had been made to take all major stakeholders on board during the policy formulation process. Federal Cabinet in its last meeting has approved the National Housing Policy 2026, marking a major milestone for Pakistan's housing and urban development sector. The approval comes after nearly 25 years, as the country's previous National Housing Policy was approved in 2001. The approval of the National Housing Policy 2026 fulfills a longstanding need for a comprehensive national framework to provide clear strategic direction for the development of the housing and urban planning sectors. The policy has been formulated to address the diverse and evolving challenges of housing and urban development and to provide a coordinated, inclusive and sustainable approach for the future. The overarching vision of the policy is to promote adequate, affordable and sustainable housing for all, while ensuring improved access to housing opportunities, basic amenities and supporting infrastructure. The National Housing Policy 2026 sets out nine clear strategic themes, covering the key dimensions of the housing and urban development sector that also include Land for Housing, Housing Finance, Construction Services, Technology and Building Materials, Development of Intermediate and Secondary Towns, Slums/ Katchi Abadis and Squatter Settlements, Affordable Housing, Low-Income, Low-Cost and Rural Housing and Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing. The policy provides a comprehensive framework covering land availability, housing finance, construction and technology, balanced urban development, low-income and rural housing, institutional and legal reforms, as well as climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable housing. He emphasized that the policy would provide clear strategic direction for addressing the country's housing deficit and emerging urban development challenges. APP

IRSA releases 320,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 320,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 346,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1550.00 feet, which was 148.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 210,700 cusecs and 209,900 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1207.65 feet, which was 157.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 31,700 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 260,600, 210,000, 262,400, and 137,100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 32,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 56,200 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Author reveals 9-year journey behind iconic brands book

Murree Brewery CEO calls for governance reforms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The launch of Pakistan Iconic Brands by Arshad Awan at the Islamabad Golf Club turned into a vibrant gathering of diplomats, civil society members, and senior officials, including Murtaza Solangi, Spokesperson to the President of Pakistan. Speaking at the event, Isphanyar M. Bhandara, CEO of Murree Brewery, highlighted the challenges faced by Pakistan's industrialists and businessmen. He stressed that governance systems need to be improved to ensure better production and sustainable growth. He also elaborated on Murree Brewery's CSR initiatives, underscoring that corporate social responsibility remains paramount for the company's vision and operations. The author, Arshad Awan, shared his journey of writing the book, revealing that it took him nine years to complete the project. He described the work as a celebration of Pakistan's most enduring and influential brands, capturing their role in shaping the country's commercial and cultural identity. The event was attended by a large number of diplomats, members of civil society, and prominent personalities, reflecting the significance of the book in documenting Pakistan's business heritage.



Pak, US renew landmark Fulbright-HEC partnership

The Government of Pakistan and the United States have renewed their longstanding partnership in higher education through a new five-year agreement between the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP), reaffirming their shared commitment to academic excellence, human capital development, and international educational cooperation. The Ministry of Education and Professional Training welcomes the renewed agreement, which will cover the period from Financial Year 2026-27 through Financial Year 2031-32 and encompass the Fulbright Master's and PhD programmes, Visiting Scholar Programme for post-doctoral scholars, Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Programme, and Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Programme. Under the agreement, the programme has set a target of supporting 66 PhD scholars over the five-year period, in addition to opportunities provided through the other programme streams. The initiative will continue to offer Pakistani scholars and academics opportunities to pursue advanced education, undertake research, strengthen professional expertise, and contribute to Pakistan's socio-economic development upon their return. As part of the financial commitment, HEC will provide at least USD 4.54 million annually, with the total funding commitment capped

at PKR 6.48 billion over the five-year period. The agreed payment schedule provides for USD 2 million by June 30, a further USD 2 million by January 31, and the remaining balance by April 30, subject to the timely release of government funds. Any interest earned on HEC funds held by USEFP will be reinvested in student grants, thereby further supporting the educational objectives of the partnership. The selection process under the renewed agreement will remain merit-based, with no fixed quotas for any particular group, region, or category. HEC will participate directly in the selection panels and will contribute to identifying priority fields of study aligned with Pakistan's national development and security priorities. This collaborative approach will help ensure that the programme continues to respond to emerging national needs while maintaining the highest standards of academic merit and transparency. To strengthen oversight and assess the effectiveness of the programme, a Joint Review Committee comprising representatives of the partner institutions will meet twice a year to review programme performance and impact. USEFP will also provide HEC with annual audited financial statements, while relevant records will remain open for review by HEC upon reasonable notice, reinforcing transparency, accountability, and effective financial governance.—DNA

Authority (CDA) builds and manages the city. The ICT Administration, headed by an unelected Chief Commissioner, handles law and order, revenue and the surrounding rural areas. The Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation (MCI) is supposed to be the municipal body, but has not held fresh elections since 2015. Since none of these institutions is elected by Islamabad's residents, even a local tax cannot be approved here. It has to go to the National Assembly because the capital has no legislature of its own. Ahsan Iqbal himself highlighted this gap while addressing residents at Fatima Jinnah Park, noting that Islamabad's population has crossed 2.4 million, far beyond what the existing system was designed to handle. Islamabad's political voice is also unusually weak. It has only three members in the National Assembly, out of more than 300 seats nationwide. Laws specifically affecting the capital are passed by MNAs elected from across the country, most of whom do not live here and are not directly accountable to its residents. A resident of any province has a provincial assembly to make local laws. Islamabad residents do not. This gap reached the courts in 2023 when lawyer S. M. Yawar Abbas filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court seeking a proper assembly for the capital, similar to Delhi's. In December 2024, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani closed the case with an important observation: Islamabad needed its own legislative assembly to protect citizens' rights, and the federal government should engage political stakeholders on a possible constitutional amendment.—APP

Islootees wait for a political voice of their own

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad residents are anxiously waiting for a government of their own, like people in many developed capitals, where local issues are handled under a single elected and accountable political system. For decades, residents of the federal capital have been looking for a platform that can address their civic, political and administrative issues under one roof. In June 2026, a government committee led by Federal Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal presented Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with the ICT Governance Model, proposing a 27-member elected assembly for Islamabad. The proposed body would have 21 directly elected members, five reserved seats for women and one for minorities. It would then choose its own Chief Minister or Mayor, a political leader who would finally be answerable to the people of the capital. Right now, Islamabad is run by three separate federal bodies, none of which answers directly to the public. The Capital Development

PBC backs govt's rightsizing drive

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) here on Tuesday endorsed the government's rightsizing agenda, calling for a leaner, more efficient and focused public sector while offering to provide detailed recommendations on privatization, restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and expanding private-sector participation. During a meeting with Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad, Chairman PBC, Ziad Bashir, and Chief Executive Officer, Javed Kureishi emphasized that a streamlined public sector can improve economic efficiency and create greater space for private investment and market-led growth. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss key areas of economic reform, including the government's ongoing privatization programme, restructuring of SOEs and measures to reduce the government's footprint in commercial activities. The participants discussed the proposed privatization of power distribution companies (DISCOs), banks, and airports, with emphasis on improving efficiency, attracting investment, and enhancing service delivery through greater private-sector participation. They discussed opportunities for bringing major public-sector entities to the capital markets through Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), including State Life Insurance Corporation (SLIC). It was noted that greater participation of private and institutional investors can support improved corporate governance, transparency,

operational efficiency, and access to capital, while contributing to the government's objective of encouraging market-led economic activity. The meeting also covered tax rationalization and the development of a medium-term tax policy framework. The PBC leadership also appreciated and supported the measures introduced in the Federal Budget FY27, particularly the policy shift from a narrow focus on increasing the tax burden towards broadening the tax base and economic activity. The leadership welcomed the incentives provided to the private sector and businesses, particularly measures aimed at supporting exporters, enhancing competitiveness, reducing the cost of doing business, and encouraging investment and expansion. On the occasion, Khurram Schehzad appreciated the PBC's engagement and emphasized the importance of continued consultation with the business community in shaping economic policies and reforms. He noted that constructive government-business dialogue is essential for building investor confidence, improving the business environment, and developing practical and sustainable reform measures. Both sides reaffirmed the importance of continued engagement between the government and the business community to support the reform process, strengthen investor confidence, and develop policies that facilitate greater private-sector investment, competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth.—APP

IGP pushes smarter tech-driven security monitoring

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Tuesday visited Safe City Islamabad to review ongoing construction work and operations of its various sections, directing officers to further strengthen security monitoring through the effective use of modern technology. An ICT Police spokesperson told APP that the IGP Rizvi conducted a detailed inspection of the construction work underway at the Safe City facility and reviewed the functioning of different sections. During the visit, Rizvi examined the technological infrastructure and security monitoring mechanisms being used to support policing across the federal capital.—APP

4m rare manuscripts, records digitized

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has digitized around 4 million historical records under a comprehensive modernization programme of the National Archives of Pakistan (NAP). According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the initiative is being carried out under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) project titled "Strengthening & Modernizing National Archives of Pakistan." Besides the document digitization, the project has also restored 50,000 historical records to ensure their long-term protection. The digitization of 2.7 million pages of rare books, manuscripts, newspapers, and other valuable documents has already been completed, marking significant progress in the country's transition towards digital preservation of historical records. To further strengthen the initiative, the government is establishing a dedicated IT Wing in the National Archives. Photographs, microfilm rolls, audio and video recordings, and other archival holdings have already been digitized. The modernization programme will enhance e-governance by making archival records more accessible to researchers, policymakers and the public, while also protecting irreplaceable historical documents from physical deterioration and natural disasters.—APP

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Makkah Agreement is not a pact against anyone

HANI HAZAIMEH

THE signing of the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement by Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan marks an important development in the Middle East's evolving security landscape. Predictably, the agreement has prompted speculation about whom it is intended to confront. In a region accustomed to viewing alliances through the lens of rivalry, competing axes and geopolitical confrontation, new security arrangements are often interpreted as the creation of a new bloc against an existing one. That reading risks missing the broader significance of the agreement. The Makkah Agreement should not be viewed as a pact targeting Iran, Israel or any other country. It should be understood primarily as a defensive partnership designed to strengthen deterrence, protect sovereignty and contribute to regional stability. The distinction matters because deterrence and aggression are not the same thing. Indeed, the purpose of credible deterrence is often to prevent the sort of conflicts that military capabilities are designed to confront. The agreement comes at a time when the Middle East has experienced an extraordinary accumulation of security threats, including wars, missile and drone attacks, threats to maritime routes and growing uncertainty over traditional security arrangements. Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan have each been affected by this instability, either directly or indirectly. Their decision to strengthen defense cooperation is therefore neither surprising nor inherently provocative. If an attack against one member is to be treated as an attack against all three, the message is unmistakably one of deterrence. Potential aggressors must understand that any attack will not remain a limited confrontation involving a single country. It could trigger a collective response involving three significant regional powers. That calculation can make aggression less attractive. This is the fundamental logic of deterrence: not to make war inevitable but to make it an irrational choice. This is the fundamental logic of deterrence: not to make war inevitable but to make it an irrational choice . The agreement also reflects a broader shift in how countries across the region view their security responsibilities. For decades, Middle Eastern security arrangements have relied heavily on external powers, particularly the US. While such partnerships remain important, successive conflicts have encouraged regional states to develop greater capacity to protect their own interests and contribute to regional security. Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan bring different but complementary strengths to this partnership. Saudi Arabia has enormous economic weight, strategic geography and growing diplomatic influence. Turkiye possesses one of the region's most capable conventional militaries, substantial defense-industrial capabilities and the strategic experience of NATO membership. Pakistan brings extensive military experience, a large armed force and long-standing strategic ties with Saudi Arabia. Together, they represent three important centers of power in the Muslim world. Their cooperation does not have to mean confron-

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tation with anyone. On the contrary, a credible regional security framework can create more room for diplomacy by ensuring that political dialogue takes place alongside credible deterrence. Peace cannot depend solely on goodwill or declarations. It also requires convincing those who might contemplate aggression that military escalation will not produce easy gains. The Middle East has suffered greatly from the tendency to interpret every security partnership as preparation for confrontation. When one alliance is immediately treated as a threat, others respond by creating counteralliances. The result is a cycle of suspicion, arms competition and strategic polarization. The region does not need another such cycle. The Makkah Agreement should instead be viewed as an opportunity to promote a different principle: that regional states can take greater responsibility for their own security without automatically defining themselves against others. This is particularly important because Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan do not share identical foreign policy positions on every regional issue. They have different interests, relationships and diplomatic channels. That diversity could make the agreement more useful. Rather than becoming another dividing line, it could serve as a bridge between different parts of the region and the wider Muslim world. The Middle East has had enough alliances defined by fear and conflicts driven by miscalculation. If the agreement is presented as an "Islamic NATO" aimed at a particular adversary, it will inevitably generate suspicion and encourage countermeasures. If it is consistently presented as a defensive framework committed to sovereignty, stability and peace, it can acquire much broader legitimacy. This raises an important question for countries that are already expressing concern about the agreement: Why oppose or criticize a regional security arrangement before seeing what it can become? Why not engage with it instead? That does not mean every country must immediately become a member, nor does it require states to abandon their independent foreign policies. It simply means that the door should remain open to countries willing to support sovereignty, nonaggression and the peaceful resolution of disputes. There is nothing contradictory about building military strength while pursuing peace. A country or alliance that possesses credible defensive capabilities can be better positioned to negotiate because potential adversaries understand that coercion will not produce easy victories. But strength must be accompanied by responsibility. The symbolism of signing the agreement in Makkah reinforces that responsibility. Makkah represents unity and spiritual connection for Muslims across the world. An agreement signed there should aspire to communicate something greater than military cooperation: a commitment to protecting life, sovereignty and peace. The Middle East has had enough alliances defined by fear and conflicts drive by miscalculation. What it needs is a security environment in which countries understand that their stability is interconnected and that war is ultimately a failure of regional politics. The Makkah Agreement should therefore be judged not by whom it might confront but by what it prevents. Its greatest success would be the crisis that never becomes a war, the attack that is never launched and the political dispute that is resolved before military force becomes the answer. The Makkah Agreement should not be seen as an alliance against someone. It is an alliance to prevent another war. And rather than rushing to criticize it, other countries should consider a more constructive alternative: engage with it, help shape it and, where their interests and commitments permit, join it in building a more stable regional security order.

From Crushing Iran to Avoiding Economic Catastrophe in the USA

Qamar Bashir



Trump acknowledged this danger while defending his diplomatic approach. He linked expectations of peace with gains in the stock market and warned that continuing the conflict could produce a severe economic downturn. Trump said he “didn’t want to see economic catastrophe” and suggested that prolonged warfare could have created something resembling an international depression. That statement represents a remarkable reversal. At the beginning, the administration projected

NEARLY six months later, President Donald Trump is no longer speaking confidently about unconditional victory. He is talking about negotiations and the danger of an “economic catastrophe” for the USA and its people if the conflict continues. This is more than a change in language. It is a strategic admission that the economic pressure intended to break Iran has recoiled upon the United States and the wider world. The war has damaged Iran enormously, but it has also depleted American munitions, disrupted energy supplies, raised fuel and consumer prices, unsettled financial markets and exposed the limits of Washington’s military power. Trump acknowledged this danger while defending his diplomatic approach. He linked expectations of peace with gains in the stock market and warned that continuing the conflict could produce a severe economic downturn. Trump said he “didn’t want to see economic catastrophe” and suggested that prolonged warfare could have created something resembling an international depression. That statement represents a remarkable reversal. At the beginning, the administration projected the war as a demonstration of irresistible American power. Iran would supposedly lose its leadership, missile forces, nuclear infrastructure, economy and ability to influence the region. Now Washington is seeking an exit partly because the economic consequences have become intolerable for Americans themselves. The Strait of Hormuz has transformed the entire strategic equation. Before the war, ships passed through the waterway without paying Iran for access. Today, Tehran’s ability to disrupt or regulate traffic has turned the strait into its greatest bargaining instrument. Every interruption raises oil prices, transportation costs and inflationary pressure throughout the world. Iran can therefore impose economic costs far beyond the damage inflicted on its own territory. Trump says the United States is “semi-negotiating,” apparently relying upon economic pressure to force Tehran into an agreement. Iranian officials deny conducting direct negotiations and say messages are being exchanged through intermediaries, particularly Oman. Tehran is demanding an end to the American naval blockade, sanctions relief, access to frozen assets and compensation for wartime destruction. Whether all these demands survive negotiations is uncertain, but Iran is negotiating from a position few anticipated when the war began. Some American lawmakers have suggested that even a bad agreement is now preferable to continuing a disastrous war. That assessment reflects the uncomfortable reality confronting Washington: the price of reopening the Strait of Hormuz increases with every passing day. The longer Iran demonstrates that it can endure military pressure while disrupting the global econo-

my, the stronger its negotiating position becomes. Trump has responded to Iran’s demand for war reparations by insisting that Tehran compensate Americans for alleged damage caused over several decades. The demand may have domestic political appeal, but it does little to resolve the immediate crisis. If both countries begin calculating every death, intervention, sanction, covert operation and destroyed asset over the past half-century, the resulting claims would be immeasurable. Such historical accounting would produce endless confrontation rather than peace. The more serious obstacle may be the growing divergence between Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The United States increasingly needs de-escalation to protect its economy, military readiness and political stability. Netanyahu, however, continues taking steps that risk expanding regional conflict. Israel’s latest attack on Hezbollah targets in Beirut, which killed and wounded several people, complicated negotiations and reportedly angered Trump at a particularly sensitive moment. Netanyahu has also publicly rejected Trump’s 15-point Gaza peace framework. The proposal envisages Hamas’s disarmament, a phased Israeli withdrawal, an international stabilization force and a Palestinian administrative structure. Netanyahu insists that Hamas must disarm completely before Israel withdraws and has declared that no Palestinian state will emerge in Gaza or the West Bank while he remains prime minister. This is a revealing fracture. As long as Washington financed, armed and diplomatically protected Israel while confronting Israel’s regional enemies, the alliance appeared harmonious. But now that American economic and strategic interests require restraint, Netanyahu is demonstrating that Israeli priorities do not necessarily coincide with American ones. Trump built his political identity around “America First,” yet his Middle East policy has repeatedly appeared to place Israel’s objectives above America’s long-term interests. Even while seeking an escape from a war that has burdened American families, depleted military inventories and weakened global readiness, he continues attacking domestic political figures on the basis of their criticism of Israel. His reaction to the political rise of Michigan Democrat Abdul El-Sayed is illustrative. Instead of concentrating on why voters may be turning toward candidates who oppose foreign wars and challenge established power, Trump has portrayed criticism of Israel as hostility toward America. That framing ignores a fundamental distinction: Americans are entitled to question whether unconditional support for another government serves their own national interest. The Iran war has made that question unavoidable. The United States has used enor-

mous quantities of advanced missiles and defensive interceptors that cannot be replaced quickly. Its Strategic Petroleum Reserve has fallen to historically low levels. Energy shocks have affected household budgets, agricultural costs and business confidence. Financial markets now rise on expectations of peace and fall when diplomacy appears to collapse. Few American allies have shown enthusiasm for joining another open-ended Middle Eastern war. Netanyahu’s defiance should therefore compel Washington to reconsider the structure of the relationship. An alliance cannot mean that one party initiates or expands conflicts while the other supplies weapons, money, diplomatic protection and soldiers—and then absorbs the economic and political consequences. Friendship between states must remain subordinate to national interest, law and democratic accountability . It would be premature to claim that Iran has achieved a complete military victory. Iran has suffered extensive destruction, casualties and economic hardship. But strategic victory is not determined solely by the number of targets bombed. It is measured by whether the initiating powers achieve their political objectives at an acceptable cost. Iran remains intact, its leadership has been reorganized, its missile and drone capabilities have not disappeared, and it possesses decisive leverage over the Strait of Hormuz. Trump’s shift toward negotiations is therefore not simply tactical flexibility. It is an acknowledgment that military escalation has reached its economic and strategic limits. Calling the approach “low-key” cannot conceal the fact that Washington now needs an agreement it once believed Iran would be forced to accept unconditionally. Sanity requires restoring conditions as close as possible to those existing before the war: reopening the strait, ending the blockade, establishing verifiable security arrangements, preventing nuclear proliferation and addressing reparations through negotiations rather than retaliatory arithmetic. Congress, the media and financial institutions must also evaluate Middle East policy through the interests of the American people—not through fear of challenging Israel. The war intended to demonstrate American dominance has instead exposed American vulnerability. Trump may call it negotiation, de-escalation or strategic patience. In reality, his warning of economic catastrophe amounts to an honest admission: continuing Israel’s war at America’s expense is no longer sustainable. —The Writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France Former Press Attaché to Malaysia Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

Beyond the Burden of History

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Bengalis fought for their own liberty. India saw an opening to cut its rival in half and took it, then spent fifty years insisting the second motive was the only one. Both Dhaka and Islamabad have paid the price for believing that story, because it kept them looking at each other through India’s frame instead of their own. Pakistan and Bangladesh share a birth certificate. In 1947, Bengali Muslims voted overwhelmingly for the Muslim League and for a homeland built on faith

PAKISTAN is set to celebrate its Independence Day on 14 August, marking 79 years since the country emerged from the partition of British India, with a heavy heart over the legacy of 1971 but with renewed possibilities ahead. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in a 2024 speech in Indian Lok Sabha, said that Indira Gandhi never bent to Washington, that she “divided Pakistan into two parts and created Bangladesh.” The sequence deserves more attention than it has received in Dhaka or Islamabad. Division came first. Creation came second. For fifty years the subcontinent has been taught that 1971 was a rescue mission, that India bled for Bengali freedom out of moral conviction. Congress’s own commemorative language, repeated in Parliament and on social media this year, tells a plainer story. The goal was to break Pakistan. Bangladesh’s independence was the instrument, not the purpose. This is not a call to relitigate the Liberation War or diminish the sacrifice of Bengalis who paid for their freedom with their lives. It is a call to stop outsourcing the memory of that war to New Delhi’s script. Every time an Indian politician boasts of having split Pakistan, Dhaka should hear it for what it is: an admission that Bangladesh’s birth was, from India’s chair, a strategic amputation of a regional rival, dressed up afterward as an act of charity. Bengalis fought for their own liberty. India saw an opening to cut its rival in half and took it, then spent fifty years insisting the second motive was the only one. Both Dhaka and Islamabad have paid the price for believing that story, because it kept them looking at each other through India’s frame instead of their own. Pakistan and Bangladesh share a birth certificate. In 1947, Bengali Muslims voted overwhelmingly for the Muslim League and for a homeland built on faith, not language or geography. That union came apart within a generation, weakened by an unequal distribution of power between the two wings, by the delay in recognizing Bengali as a state language, and by the political deadlock that followed the Awami League’s outright victory in the 1970 election. The 1971 war was tragic for everyone caught in it, Bengali and non-Bengali alike, and it remains a wound that both nations still carry in different ways. But the war’s end did not have to mean the end of the relationship. It produced two neighbors with a shared origin and, for decades, a shared reluctance to move past it. Pakistan recognized Bangladesh in 1974, under the shadow of the Simla Agreement and the Delhi Tripartite Accord,

and diplomatic ties resumed. Relations moved in cycles ever since, warmer when Dhaka’s government leaned nationalist, colder when it leaned toward New Delhi. Ziaur Rahman and later Khaleda Zia’s BNP treated Islamabad as a natural counterweight to Indian dominance. Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League, by contrast, built its legitimacy on a version of 1971 that required permanent distance from Pakistan and permanent gratitude toward India. Fifteen years of her uninterrupted rule froze the relationship into near irrelevance, even as trade, defense cooperation, and people-to-people contact withered. What is striking is how much both countries have thrown away in the process, not through malice but through inertia. Call them superstitions, because that is what they have become: inherited habits repeated without fresh scrutiny, treated as permanent facts of geopolitics rather than choices that can be unmade. Bangladesh, for years, let its education system teach a single-lens history of the region that left little room for a mature, forward-looking relationship with Islamabad, even as it built extensive trade and connectivity with India despite the shorter, more natural maritime and air routes to Karachi and beyond. Dhaka slow-walked visa processing for Pakistani businessmen and academics long after 1971 had ceased to be an urgent security question. Pakistan, for its part, allowed Bangladesh to slip to the margins of its foreign policy, consumed as it was by Kashmir and the Indian border, and rarely invested the diplomatic energy a market of a hundred and seventy million people deserved. Islamabad’s textile and garment sectors compete directly with Bangladesh’s in Western markets instead of exploring the obvious complementarities in yarn, fabric, and finished goods that could benefit both. Neither government treated the stranded Biharis and their mirror population in Pakistan as a solvable humanitarian file; both let roughly three hundred thousand people on each side sit in legal limbo for decades, citizens of nowhere in practice, because resolving it required political will neither side wanted to spend. Reparations and formal acknowledgment of the past have been raised and shelved by successive governments, tied to a disputed accounting of pre-1971 assets that both sides have let gather dust rather than negotiate, when a joint commission could have settled it years ago. None of this was inevitable. What kept it frozen was political psychology, particularly inside Bangladesh, where the Awami League’s legitimacy

depended on permanent hostility toward Pakistan. To normalise relations with Islamabad was, for that party, to undercut its own founding myth. Opposition forces sometimes overcorrected into an uncritical nostalgia for Pakistan that ignored real, unresolved grievances. Both instincts served domestic politics far more than they served the Bangladeshi or Pakistani people, and both ignored the strategic logic sitting in plain sight: two Muslim-majority states, wary of the same regional hegemon, with complementary economies and a shared interest in containing extremist ideology, whose suspicion over cooperation for half a century. Strip away the party politics and the fraternity is still visible. Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslims share liturgical rhythm, culinary instinct, a common devotion to cricket that turns into genuine warmth whenever the two teams meet, and a folk memory of solidarity that predates any of the twentieth century’s borders. Pakistani students still discuss Nazrul and Tagore. Bangladeshi households still cook biryani with the same reverence as any Lahori kitchen. This is not manufactured sentiment. It survived fifty years of state-level coldness because it never depended on the state to begin with. Sheikh Hasina’s fall in August 2024 cracked open a door that had been welded shut for a decade and a half. The former interim government under Muhammad Yunus has visibly warmed toward Islamabad: direct flights resumed, visa restrictions eased, trade delegations exchanged, and quiet security consultations begun on shared concerns, from India’s regional dominance to the containment of extremist ideology, including the Taliban’s ideological pull, that neither Dhaka nor Islamabad wants spreading unchecked within their own borders. Both governments should jointly resolve the stranded-persons question through expedited citizenship, not further study. Trade and direct connectivity should expand without waiting for a full political reconciliation to be declared first. A joint commission on reparations and the record of 1971 would remove a psychological weight that has hung over three generations, and would cost both sides less than another fifty years of silence. Both sides should resist the temptation to let this rapprochement be read, or driven, as an anti-India project. It should stand on its own logic of shared interest, not on spite toward a third country. Neither Dhaka nor Islamabad should allow domestic politics to hold the relationship hostage again, the way narrow political interests did for much of the last five decades. And it may be the time for Islamabad and Dhaka to stop allowing the wounds of the past to define the possibilities of the future.

Briefs

Defence Minister Asif says US, Iran close...

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have been killed – mainly in Iran and Lebanon – since US and Israeli attacks on Iran on February 28. Iran has hit back by striking US assets and infrastructure in countries including Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Oil fell back on Tuesday after hitting a one-week high earlier in trading although it remains much higher than before the war. Iran said on Sunday it was nearing a final pact with Oman defining new shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz, which runs between them, but said that in itself would not open the waterway unless the US met certain conditions. Those conditions were largely in line with a memorandum of understanding to end the conflict that was reached between Washington and Tehran in June and included compensation and an end to sanctions and military threats. Iranian FM Araghchi said on Sunday that Tehran and Washington were not holding direct talks, but that messages were being exchanged through intermediaries. US President Donald Trump responded on Monday night, making new demands, saying he was seeking his own reparations from Tehran, seemingly leaving the two sides deadlocked.

Man shot dead after ‘opening...

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protest, and today, the entire nation has witnessed their nefarious aims and objectives,” Tarar asserted, noting that the security personnel were targeted “in public in broad daylight”. “This is their ideology; they believe in violence and such incidents. The PTI has always done politics of violence, and not a single one of their protests has been peaceful,” Tarar alleged. Noting that a PTI flag and “other documents” were recovered from the alleged attacker in today’s incident, he claimed that the PTI’s aim was only to “spread anarchy in the country and ruin the law and order”. The minister stressed that the PTI’s announcement of a long march came right after Pakistan was praised internationally after signing a joint defence pact with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. “Whenever Pakistan makes progress and garners respect, this is not digested by the PTI,” Tarar remarked, recalling a previous instance of the party announcing protests coinciding with the arrival of foreign leaders. The minister reiterated his claim that the objective of “every PTI protest was to come equipped with weapons, open fire, pile up bodies, destroy law and order, and damage the country”.

Former Syrian President given death penalty

FROM PAGE 01
Assad over the crimes of “premeditated and intentional murder of more than one person and of children, torture, arbitrary arrest and crimes against humanity”. Atef Najib, a security official under Assad, was also sentenced to death. Assad, who was born in 1965, became president in 2000 after his father Hafez died. He maintained the family’s rule and the dominance of their Alawite sect in the Sunni Muslim-majority country and Syria’s status as an Iranian ally hostile to Israel and the US. Shaped in its early years by the Iraq war and crisis in Lebanon, Assad’s rule was defined by civil war, which spiralled out of the 2011 Arab Spring, when Syrians demanding democracy took to the streets, to be met with deadly force.

Dar chairs meeting to review 14th South Asia Games

DPM/FM directed the establishment of subcommittees tasked with overseeing key aspects of the Games, including financing, infrastructure development and upgradation, athletes’ training and preparation, and logistical arrangements

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting to review preparations for the 14th South Asian Games, which Pakistan will host in March 2027. DPM/FM directed the establishment of subcommittees tasked with overseeing key aspects of the Games, including financing, infrastructure development and upgradation, athletes’ training and preparation, and logistical arrangements. He stressed the importance of timely planning and close coordination among all stakeholders to ensure that Pakistan hosts the Games to the highest standards. He emphasized that the 14th South Asian Games provide Pakistan with an important opportunity to showcase its sporting talent, hospitality and organizational capacity, while conveying to the world a message of peace, friendship, goodwill and harmony. The meeting was attended by SAPM Tariq Bajwa, President of the Pakistan Olympic Association Mr. Arif Saeed, Secretary IPC, Director General Pakistan Sports Board, officials of the Ministry of Finance, and representatives of the Governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Don Nelson, the visionary who saw the NBA’s future, dies at 86

DUBAI: Hall of Fame coach Don Nelson, one of basketball’s great innovators whose ideas helped shape the modern NBA, has died at the age of 86. Nelson died peacefully on Sunday surrounded by family, bringing to a close a remarkable life in basketball that stretched across more than six decades as a player, coach and executive. Across 31 seasons as an NBA head coach between 1976 and 2010, “Nellie” recorded 1,335 regular-season victories with the Milwaukee Bucks, Golden State Warriors, New York Knicks and Dallas Mavericks. He retired in 2010 as the coach with the most wins in NBA history, a record he held until Gregg Popovich surpassed him in

2022. Nelson remains second on the all-time list. He was named NBA Coach of the Year three times and reached the playoffs 18 times. Before moving to the sidelines, he played 14 NBA seasons from 1962 to 1976 and won five championships with the Boston Celtics. Yet for all those achievements, Nelson never reached the NBA Finals as a head coach. His legacy instead can be found in something bigger: the way basketball is played today. Long before “small ball” and positionless basketball became part of the NBA vocabulary, Nelson was experimenting with unconventional lineups and challenging traditional ideas about how the game should be played. During his 11 seasons

coaching the Milwaukee Bucks from 1976 to 1987, Nelson helped popularize the concept of the “point forward.” In the mid-1980s, he put the ball in the hands of 6-foot-5 forward Paul Pressey, allowing him to initiate the offense and create for teammates in a role traditionally reserved for guards. The concept became increasingly prominent in the decades that followed, with players such as Scottie Pippen, LeBron James and Giannis Antetokounmpo showing how effective an offense could be when a bigger player was also its primary playmaker. Nelson continued experimenting after taking over Golden State in 1988. From 1989 to 1991, his high-scoring “Run TMC”

trio of Tim Hardaway, Mitch Richmond and Chris Mullin became one of the league’s most entertaining offensive units, playing at a pace that suited Nelson’s preference for smaller and more versatile lineups. He even encouraged 7-foot-7 center Manute Bol to shoot from 3-point range during the early 1990s, when centers operating on the perimeter was still highly unusual. Today, forwards regularly run offenses, centers shoot from long range and coaches sacrifice size for shooting, speed and versatility. Nelson was exploring those possibilities more than three decades ago. Golden State coach Steve Kerr described him as a “true innovator” following his death. – APP

Afghanistan seal 2027 World Cup berth

KABUL: Afghanistan secured automatic qualification for the 2027 World Cup with a win over Ireland on Monday, leaving twice champions West Indies to go through qualifiers for the third successive edition of the 50-overs tournament. The top eight teams in the one-day rankings on September 30, excluding co-hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe, qualify directly for the event. Afghanistan’s win in Belfast ensured they will finish among those teams, joining Australia, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England and Bangladesh. The West Indies are ranked 10th and cannot make up enough ground to qualify directly despite having two ODIs against India left to play before the cut-off date. The Caribbean side failed to seal an automatic spot at the 2023 edition and lost in the qualifiers, resulting in their absence from a men’s 50-overs World Cup for the first time. They successfully negotiated the qualifiers to play at the 2019 edition. Under the new format for 2027, the winner of the qualifier will advance directly to the second stage of the World Cup, while the teams placing second, third and fourth will play in the first round known as the Super Series. The 2027 event will be played in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The full tournament schedule has yet to be released. – APP

‘Houthi attacks will not go without consequence’

DNA

SANA: Chairman of Yemen’s Presidential Leadership Council Dr. Rashad al-Alimi said on Monday that the latest escalation by the Iran-backed terrorist Houthi group was a new test to the international community’s commitment to protecting peace in the country. During a meeting in Riyadh with ambassadors whose countries are sponsoring the peace process in Yemen, he stressed that the legitimate government “did not start the escalation and did not seek it”. The government “will not allow its commitment to peace to be exploited by the Houthis to launch attacks and then later be confronted with calls for restraint when it chooses to retaliate”, he declared. Al-Alimi briefed the envoys on the Houthi ballistic missile and drone attacks on al-Mokha port on Yemen’s west coast. He said the attack, which claimed civilian lives including women and children, targeted civilian and services infrastructure, not a military position. The attack was the latest in a weekslong Houthi escalation that started with the militants’ attempt to operate flights for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps at Sanaa International Airport, he went on to say. That was followed by the Houthis’ targeting of commercial vessels and civilian locations in neighboring Saudi Arabia, he added.

Colombia recognizes Israeli claim over the Golan Heights

“The Government of Colombia recognizes Israeli sovereignty over this territory, as well as that State’s right to protect itself against external threats,” read a statement published on X

BOGOTA: Colombia’s newly appointed hard-right government on Monday recognized Israel’s claim over the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria in 1967. The United States was until now the only country to recognize Israel’s annexation of the territory in 1981. Colombian President Abelardo de la Esparriella took power on Friday, following a bombastic campaign during which he promised tight relations with the US and Israel as a way to combat armed groups in his own country. His foreign ministry announced recognition of Israel’s claim on the same day that a powerful earthquake struck western Colombia, killing at least 111 people and injuring dozens more. “The Government of Colombia recognizes Israeli sovereignty over this territory, as well as that State’s right to protect itself against external threats,” read a statement

published on X. “Colombia recognizes that maintaining Israel’s control and sovereignty over the Golan Heights is an essential component of its national defense,” it added. The United Nations maintains that the plateau is Syrian territory under Israeli military occupation. Israel’s Foreign Minister Gideon Saar thanked his “good friend” De la Esparriella for the recognition. The pair had agreed on the move in the Colombian city of Barranquilla, he said, one day before De la Esparriella’s inauguration. “Defensible borders are essential to guarantee the continued existence of the Jewish people in our historic homeland,” Saar, who attended the swearing-in, posted on X. Last month, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres reiterated that the Golan Heights were part of Syria, describing Israeli occupation as “totally unacceptable.” De la Esparriella’s leftist predecessor Gustavo Petro had ardently criticized Israel’s offensive in the Gaza Strip, severing diplomatic relations and halting Israeli arms imports into Colombia. The US-backed millionaire now in office has promised to restore ties. Last month, he said he planned to open a Colombian embassy in Jerusalem – which Israel regards as its capital, including the occupied Palestinian part. This is not recognized internationally, however, and most countries conduct their diplomatic missions from Tel Aviv. – APP

Trump says would be ‘terrible mistake’ to replace Fifa’s Infantino

"If he is gone, it [Fifa World Cup] will never be as successful or profitable again," says US president

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Monday backed Fifa president Gianni Infantino, who is in hot water over allegations of a workplace affair and criticism of a failed private investment scheme. “Fifa would be making a terrible mistake if, for any reason, they even considered replacing President Gianni Infantino,” Trump said in a Truth Social post, calling the Italian-Swiss lawyer “fantastic” and saying he “presided over the most successful World Cup, by four times, ever presented.” “If he is gone, it will never be as successful or profitable again!” Trump’s backing of Infantino contrasts with the response of US Soccer, which issued a statement critiquing the Fifa leader alongside Canada Soccer and football organisations in Central America and the Caribbean. Infantino, who faces reelection next March, has denied allegations of wrongdoing, and Fifa, for its part, has backed its besieged president, calling the backlash “a concerted and ongoing effort by some to undermine” the organisation. Other football organisations, including the Confederation of African Football and South American governing body Conmebol, share Trump’s position in supporting Infantino. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Uefa and Concacaf have jointly accused Fifa leadership of a “fundamental breach of trust” over a now-abandoned pro-

posal to sell an interest in the commercial rights to the Fifa World Cup, calling for an independent investigation into how the plan was developed and presented. In an unusually forceful open letter addressed to the football family, the presidents and general secretaries of the three confederations said the controversy was not primarily about money but about the integrity of the game and the integrity of those elected to lead it. The letter was signed by AFC President Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khal-

ifa, Concacaf President Victor Montagliani and Uefa President Aleksander Ceferin, along with the three confederations’ general secretaries. The three confederations said leadership in football should be regarded as a duty of service rather than the possession or exercise of power. They said that when trust is broken through deception, or when an individual places himself above the collective that entrusted him with authority, the responsibility of leadership has been abandoned. The statement did not name Fifa



President Gianni Infantino directly in the text, but its criticism comes after Fifa’s proposal to establish a new commercial entity, Fifa Forward Enterprise, which would have brought together Fifa’s commercial rights and tournament operations. The confederations said Fifa’s recent communication to its vice-presidents and 211 member associations acknowledged mistakes but characterised the issue as a failure of communication. “We believe what football witnessed was a failure of judgment,” they said, arguing that the proposal had been advanced on a compressed timeline, without meaningful consultation and towards a deadline before member associations could properly examine its terms. They went further, saying there had been no acknowledgement that the proposal itself was fundamentally wrong. The attempt to sell an interest in the Fifa World Cup, they said, was “a profound failure of judgment” and not merely a procedural mistake but a fundamental breach of trust with the institutions Fifa exists to serve. The three confederations have also rejected Fifa’s plan to conduct an internal review of the episode. Fifa has committed to presenting a report on the events to the Fifa Council, but the AFC, Uefa and Concacaf said that, given the seriousness of the matter, any review should instead be conducted by a fully independent third party. – APP

Japan provides grant aid human resource...

FROM PAGE 01

Senior Joint Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs. The JDS Program, which is launched in 2018, is part of Japan’s commitment to strengthen the administrative capacities of the Government of Pakistan. The program offers highly capable Pakistani government officers the opportunity to pursue Master’s and Ph.D. degrees at leading Japanese universities. These officers are selected from those involved in planning and implementing social and economic development policies. The JDS Program also seeks to promote mutual understanding and further strengthen the longstanding friendship and cooperative relationship between Japan and Pakistan by fostering future leaders who will serve as bridges between the two countries. Through the JDS Program, JICA has so far dispatched more than 100 government officers to Japan. To date more than 80 scholars have successfully completed their studies and returned to Pakistan, contributing their enhanced knowledge and skills to the country’s development. On this occasion, H.E. Mr. AKAMAT-SU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, stated: “At its core, this program is built on a simple but powerful belief – that investing in people is the most sustainable investment a nation can make. When we support a young civil servant to pursue a Master’s or doctoral degree at a leading Japanese university, we are not simply funding an academic qualification. We are helping to shape a future leader – someone who will return to Pakistan with new knowledge, new perspectives, and a deepened understanding of Japan, its people, its culture, and its values. It is these human bridges – built one scholar at a time – that sustain and strengthen the longstanding friendship between our two nations. Japan deeply values its relationship with Pakistan, and the JDS Program is one of the most personal and enduring ways we invest in that relationship.” Mr. SHINOZAKI Yusuke, Chief Representative of JICA Pakistan Office, added: “I sincerely hope that the JICA’s cooperation through this project will support the Government of Pakistan to enhance institutional capacity, thereby contributing to Pakistan’s sustainable development. The third phase aims to continue strengthening the capacities of Pakistani government officials and further deepen the longstanding partnership between Japan and Pakistan. This initiative indirectly meet one of the priority area objectives of JICA’s country assistant policy which is balanced and stable regional development by supporting human resource development.”

PM for audit of bonded warehouses

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It was informed that, on the Prime Minister’s direction, physical stock verification of customs bonded warehouses would be carried out across the country. The meeting was informed that measures are being taken to ensure licensing and security of customs bonded warehouses.

12 dead as wedding party falls into canal

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Canal near Sheikhso Sugar Mills in Sanawan. A rescue operation was launched after three people climbed out of the canal on their own and alerted Rescue 1122 on Monday. Subsequently, the local community, along with Rescue 1122, pulled out six people alive and recovered three bodies. On Tuesday, as the operation continued, Kot Addu Rescue in-charge Osama Zeeshan told Dawn that nine more bodies had been recovered from the canal, taking the total toll to 12.

Briefs

Gold price rises Rs2,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of gold in the country witnessed an upward trend on Tuesday, with the price of 24-karat gold increasing by Rs2,400 per tola to Rs459,736, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. The price of 24-karat gold of 10 grams increased by Rs2,058 to Rs394,149, while the price of 22-karat gold of 10 grams rose by Rs1,887 to Rs361,316. In the international market, gold was quoted at \$4,373 per ounce, showing an increase of \$24. Meanwhile, the price of silver also witnessed an increase, with 24-karat silver rising by Rs62 per tola to Rs6,965. The price of 24-karat silver for 10 grams increased by Rs53 to Rs5,971, while international silver was quoted at \$64.86 per ounce, up by \$0.62. The gold rates were based on interbank exchange rates, with purity set at 999.1 for 24-karat gold, the association said.—APP

Swiss govt rejects rigid interpretation of neutrality

ZURICH: The Swiss government on Tuesday rejected a rigid interpretation of the country's neutrality which campaigners want to enshrine in the constitution if they win a referendum next month. Campaigners say Swiss neutrality, which dates back to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, has been stretched after Bern imposed economic sanctions on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine and also sealed closer ties with NATO in areas such as training. Currently the Swiss constitution has no fixed definition of neutrality, which campaigners want to replace with a pledge that Swiss neutrality will be perpetual and armed, and that the country would not join any military alliances. They also want to guarantee that Switzerland does not take part in conflicts between third countries or impose sanctions against warring countries unless decided by the United Nations. Campaigners gathered more than 100,000 signatures to trigger the vote, which takes place under the Swiss tradition of direct democracy. If approved, the constitution would have to be amended. The referendum, which is backed by the right-wing Swiss People's Party, will take place on September 27. In a Tamedia poll in June, only 34 percent of people were in favor of the initiative with 54 percent against. Launching the government's campaign against the initiative, Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis on Tuesday said there was no need to change the current approach with a more restrictive concept of neutrality.—APP

At UN, PaIndonesian designers to join Saudi fashion expo

JAKARTA: Ten Indonesian designers and fashion companies will represent the country at the Saudi Fashiontex Expo in Jeddah next month, as they seek to tap into the Kingdom's booming \$18 billion-plus clothing market. Thousands of international visitors are expected to join the Fourth Saudi Fashiontex Expo from Sept. 24-27, which will feature hundreds of exhibitors from at least two dozen countries. Indonesia's Ministry of Trade has curated a group of 10 fashion companies to take part in the upcoming Saudi expo, following a selection process that involved more than 180 brands from across the country. "Saudi Arabia is a potential market for high-quality fashion products, including modest fashion—one of the sectors where Indonesia excels," the ministry said in a statement. Indonesia ranked first globally in the modest fashion sector, according to the 2025/26 State of the Global Islamic Economy Report, in which Saudi Arabia is identified as the third-largest modest fashion consumer market, just behind Iran and Türkiye. GMI Research.—APP

MoITT, Meta, starts small business growth academy

Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Khawaja highlighted that empowering Pakistan's SMEs with digital and AI capabilities was essential to building a more inclusive, innovative and competitive economy. "Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and empowering them with digital and AI capabilities is central to the Prime Minister's vision of an inclusive, innovation-driven future

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT), in partnership with Meta, launched the Small Business Growth Academy in Pakistan, a landmark initiative aimed at accelerating the digital transformation of small and medium-sized businesses and enabling entrepreneurs to harness digital and AI-enabled technologies for growth, innovation and access to domestic and international markets. The initiative is aligned with the Government's vision of building an inclusive, digitally empowered economy in which businesses—particularly small enterprises and women-led ventures—can leverage technology to enhance productivity, expand their customer base and compete more effectively in the global digital marketplace. The Small Business Growth Academy will provide practical, market-oriented training on Meta's digital platforms and AI-enabled tools. The programme will be delivered in collaboration with Meta, implemented by AtomCamp, and supported by Ignite National Technology Fund, Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA), Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), and DialZero. The programme aims to reach more than 1,000 small businesses across Pakistan through in-person and virtual workshops, structured learning modules and partner-led training. The training will focus on enabling entrepreneurs to build and strengthen their digital presence, reach new customers, enhance marketing effectiveness, automate customer interactions, improve productivity and identify opportunities for expansion in local and international markets. Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Khawaja highlighted that empowering Pakistan's SMEs with digital and AI capabilities was essential to building a more inclusive, in-



novative and competitive economy. "Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and empowering them with digital and AI capabilities is central to the Prime Minister's vision of an inclusive, innovation-driven future. This partnership with Meta reflects our commitment to fostering meaningful public-private collaboration that creates opportunities for businesses, strengthens digital skills, and accelerates Pakistan's journey towards a Digital Nation Pakistan." The Minister further emphasized the importance of collaboration between the government, technology companies and industry stakeholders

in ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation reach businesses across Pakistan. Tehara Punchihewa, Associate Public Policy Manager for Asia-Pacific at Meta, said: "At Meta, we see every day how small businesses use our AI-enabled tools to reach customers and grow. The Small Business Growth Academy is about giving more entrepreneurs the practical skills and support they need to use these tools confidently, compete more effectively, and take part in the opportunities being created by the digital economy." The programme will be implemented across major cities, including Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Multan,

Hyderabad, Peshawar and Quetta, with particular emphasis on supporting women-led businesses and entrepreneurs in key sectors including textiles, handicrafts and IT services. The Small Business Growth Academy is being rolled out across 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, with the initial objective of supporting businesses across the region. In Pakistan, the programme will be tailored to local market requirements, with a focus on practical digital capabilities that can translate directly into business growth, improved market access and increased competitiveness.—APP

Chinese Honglian Hybrid rice powers Pakistani agriculture

BEIJING: The 2nd International Symposium on Improved-Variety Breeding of Honglian Type Hybrid Rice was held in Luotian, Hubei from August 8 to 10, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. During the event, Chinese and Pakistani professionals highlighted their joint rice research achievements and the tangible economic benefits that Honglian hybrid rice brings to Pakistani growers. Honglian hybrid rice is a pioneering breakthrough developed by the late academian Zhu Yingguo of Wuhan University, ranking among the world's three major cytoplasmic male sterility systems alongside China's Wild Abortive type and Japan's BT type. Boasting inherent genetic advantages such as heat tolerance, wide adaptability, and premium grain quality, Honglian hybrid rice is widely grown across South China, as well as Belt and Road nations including Pakistan, Malaysia and the Philippines. Qu Wenqian, Deputy Party Secretary of Wuhan University, noted that Honglian hybrid rice has generated over RMB 9 billion in direct economic benefits in China and Belt and Road partner countries so far. Professor Zhu Renshan of Wuhan University stressed that the Luotian base safeguards domestic seed security and shares its strengths to secure food supplies for global partners. According to Dr. Muhammad Ashfaq from the University of the Punjab, about one-third of the rice cultivation area in Pakistan is dedicated to coarse rice, the production of which can be doubled if replaced with hybrid rice. "There is scope for hybrid rice in Sindh, Balochistan and southern Punjab. With the adoption of Honglian Type hybrid rice, production will increase manifold, adding billions of rupees to the income of farmers and the economy of Pakistan," he said at the symposium. A Joint Research Center of Honglian Type Hybrid Rice was established by Wuhan University and the University of the Punjab in 2020. After multi-location trials across Pakistan's four rice zones, the Honglian hybrid rice variety HP4—one of nine hybrid lines tested—was officially registered in Pakistan as PU-786 in 2025. Following national commercial approval, it launched commercial cultivation nationwide in 2026, standing out for its heat tolerance, pest and disease resistance, and broad adaptability to the water shortages and degraded soil plaguing local farms.—APP

Egypt plans first tax sukuk issuance

RIYADH: Egypt plans to issue the first tax sukuk in its history during the current fiscal year, offering returns that are fully exempt from taxes. The value of the sukuk and the return due on it will later be used to settle taxes owed by the taxpayer, according to two government officials who spoke to Asharq Bloomberg. A government official, who asked not to be named, said the first issuance will target all taxpayers, including individuals and public- and private-sector companies. These may include major state-owned authorities and corporations. A statement issued by the Egyptian presidency on Aug. 10 revealed that Egypt intends to issue tax sukuk for the first time. The instruments will be funded by taxpayers, with both their principal value and accrued returns to be used to settle the taxes they owe. Egypt's fiscal year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year. A second government official, who also requested anonymity,

told Asharq Bloomberg that the tax sukuk will have a one-year maturity and will be offered for subscription by the Central Bank of Egypt on behalf of the Ministry of Finance. Another source at the Ministry of Finance told Asharq Bloomberg that the ministry will issue, within three weeks, the rules and procedures governing the first tax sukuk issuance. Egypt's Income Tax Law gives the finance minister the authority to issue tax sukuk that taxpayers may subscribe to, offering a tax-exempt return determined by the minister. The value of the sukuk and the return due on it are then used to settle the taxpayer's tax liabilities, in accordance with Article 115 of Income Tax Law No. 91 of 2005. For example, if a taxpayer subscribes to a sukuk worth \$1.99 million with a hypothetical return of 20 percent, the taxpayer would be entitled to 2.38 million at the end of the sukuk's term. That amount could then be used to pay taxes owed.—APP

Qatar's economy expands 2.9% in 2025

JEDDAH: Qatar's economy grew 2.9 percent in 2025, with non-hydrocarbon activity driving expansion as inflation remained contained and the country maintained a strong external position and resilient financial markets, according to official data. Non-hydrocarbon GDP grew 4.8 percent over the year, exceeding the country's national development strategy's annual growth target of 4 percent. The growth reflected the continued expansion of Qatar's economic base, with non-hydrocarbon sectors and activities becoming increasingly important in supporting economic activity and strengthening the country's ability to achieve more diversified and sustainable growth, according to Qatar News Agency. The growth came amid a broader economic expansion across the Gulf, although the pace varied in

the region. The UAE recorded the strongest growth among GCC economies at 6.2 percent, followed by Saudi Arabia at 4.5 percent and Bahrain at 3.5 percent, while Kuwait and Oman grew 2.7 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively. Globally, the economy grew an estimated 2.9 percent in 2025, according to the World Bank. In its 2025 Annual Macroeconomic Review, the Qatar Central Bank said the economic growth "reaffirms the resilience of Qatar's economy and its ability to withstand challenges and sustain economic stability." Inflation remained contained in 2025, with the average rate standing at 0.5 percent, with price pressures largely limited to selected categories, including jewelry and related goods. Real estate prices also remained stable during the year, indicating orderly market conditions

and no signs of overheating, according to the review. The tourism sector continued to strengthen, with visitor numbers reaching 5.1 million in 2025, compared with around 4.9 million in 2024 and 4 million in 2023. The increase reinforced Qatar's position as a prominent regional tourism destination as the country continued developing the sector and diversifying activities and events aimed at attracting visitors, QNA reported. In the non-oil private sector, economic activity remained in expansion territory, with the Purchasing Managers' Index averaging 51.2 points in 2025, above the 50-point threshold separating expansion from contraction. The reading indicated continued expansion in non-oil private-sector activity and highlighted its growing role in supporting economic activity and diversifying sources of growth, QNA said.—APP

China activates flood emergency response for 4 regions

BEIJING: China's Ministry of Water Resources activated a Level-IV emergency flood response for four provincial regions, as heavy rainfall brought about by Typhoon Dolphin and a cold air mass is expected in central and northern parts of the country.

The four provinces of Hubei, Henan, Hebei and Shandong will see downpours from Aug. 10 to Aug. 16 amid the 13th typhoon of 2026, with heavy rainstorms expected in some areas, according to forecasts.

To cope with the situation, the ministry has instructed local authorities to strengthen monitoring and research efforts and step up patrols to detect and address potential hazards.—APP

US troops prepare to leave Iraqi Kurdistan by Sept. 30, report

DUBAI: Iraq's government has confirmed that the US-led military coalition is preparing to withdraw its forces from the Kurdistan region and transfer bases to Iraqi forces before a deadline of Sept. 30. "The work is proceeding at an organised pace towards completing this file on September 30 and these sites will be in the custody of Iraqi security agencies," Government spokesperson, Haider Al Aboudi, told reporters on Monday. No US officials have confirmed the statement, Arab News contacted several on Tuesday but none are yet to respond. The September 30 deadline was agreed by Baghdad and Washington in 2024 as part of a wider deal to shift the US-led coalition's mission in Iraq away from combat and advisory operations and towards bilateral security cooperation. The Kurdistan region hosts several key coalition sites used for training, logistics and air operations targeting Daesh remnants. His comments echoed previous remarks by Prime Minister, Ali Al Zaidi, who reportedly told several EU ambassadors to Baghdad that Iraq was taking practical steps to complete the withdrawal by the deadline. According to Hannan Hussain, a senior expert at Initiate Futures, a global policy think tank, the withdrawal is seen by Iraqi authorities as being part of the state's ambition to present itself as in control of arms.—APP

Sudan paramilitary launches fresh attack near Ethiopian border

KHARTOUM: Paramilitary forces attacked a Sudanese border town Tuesday, they and local authorities said, in what an army source told AFP was the latest attack launched "from inside Ethiopian territory." Sudan's army-aligned government has for months accused their rivals, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, of launching attacks from Ethiopian soil. Authorities in the town of Geissan said the RSF and their allies, a faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, attacked the town and its surrounding farms on Tuesday morning. "Our forces are confronting them and have inflicted heavy losses on their ranks," the military source said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media. There was no immediate comment from Ethiopian authorities. In a statement, the RSF's self-declared government—based across the country in Darfur—said its forces had "liberated the strategic city of Geissan" and inflicted "heavy losses" on army troops. AFP could not independently verify either claim. Blue Nile state has in recent months become a key front in the war, with the RSF launching land offensives and intensifying drone strikes to challenge army control in southeastern Sudan.—APP

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Briefs

Farmers
call for
Punjab CM
resignation

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) has demanded immediate resignation of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, warning of a historic, nationwide 'Million March' on Rawalpindi starting Sept 25 if their demand is not met. Addressing a press conference alongside PKI President Mian Umair Masood and Chairman Khalid Hussain Bath, stated that the farming community faces total devastation if the incumbent chief minister remains in office for another two and a half years.

They clarified that the PKI harbours no enmity towards the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as a party, but is strictly seeking Maryam Nawaz's resignation, whom they accused of lacking political acumen and of treating agricultural projects as mere contracts for the favoured few.

The farmer leadership painted a grim picture of the agrarian economy, alleging that growers suffered a staggering Rs2,200 billion loss due to the provincial government's refusal to procure wheat. They condemned the federal decision to import 3.5 million tonnes of wheat precisely when the local crop was ready for harvest. Compounding these losses, potato farmers have faced deficits of Rs250,000 per acre, while cotton yields have plummeted from 60 maunds to a mere 12 maunds per acre. Agricultural input costs have spiralled out of control, leaving the growers economically crippled. The PKI leadership pointed out that a bag of DAP fertiliser, which cost Rs2,400 in 2016, has now surged to Rs16,600.

President okays additional judges appointments

President approves amendments governing high court judges' leave, pensions and service benefits

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday approved the appointment of additional judges to five high courts and confirmed several additional judges as permanent judges, according to an official statement. The president approved the appointment of additional judges to the Lahore High Court (LHC), Sindh High Court (SHC), Peshawar High Court (PHC), Islamabad High Court (IHC) and Balochistan High Court (BHC). He also approved the confirmation of a number of additional judges of the LHC and SHC as permanent judges. The approvals came a day after the IHC sought responses from the president and the prime minister over a delay in the approval of a summary relating to judicial appointments. During a hearing on Monday, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir questioned the status of the summary and observed that more than 18 days had passed since it had been forwarded for approval.



The court also issued notices to the president and the prime minister through their respective secretaries and sought replies by Tuesday. The proceedings stemmed from a petition filed by advocate Luqman Zafar, who argued that nominations for high court judges approved by the Judicial

Commission of Pakistan (JCP) during its meetings on July 20 and 21 had been forwarded to the president through the prime minister under Article 175A(8) of the Constitution but remained pending. In a written order issued after the hearing, the court directed the federal government and the Ministry of Law to submit reports detailing when the summary was forwarded to the president and what action, if any, had been taken thereafter. It also sought an explanation of the constitutional implications of leaving advice relating to judicial appointments pending beyond the prescribed period. Separately, President Zardari approved measures to bring the salaries, allowances and pensions of Supreme Court (SC) judges in line with those of judges serving in the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC). He also approved amendments to the 1997 order relating to leave, pensions and other benefits for high court judges. In a separate decision, the president approved the appointment of Haroon Akhtar as Adviser to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, the statement added.

World Bank
unhappy over
diversion of funds

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Expressing serious displeasure over reputational challenges, the World Bank has warned that redirecting funds from a multi-billion-rupee resilient housing programme for the flood-affected population to infrastructure projects would further aggravate poverty in Balochistan. "Based on the socio-economic profile of the eligible household, the risk is not simply that households remain without housing assistance; rather, it is that existing vulnerabilities become mutually reinforcing and deepen over time," the World Bank said in detailed communication to the federal and Balochistan governments. In this case, 84 per cent of eligible beneficiaries are ultra-poor and vulnerable, with 28pc earning less than \$30 and another 26pc earning between \$31 and \$70 per month, while 39pc are tenants, 37pc are daily-wage labourers and 8pc are small farmers. These groups typically have limited savings, weak access to formal credit, few productive assets and low capacity to absorb shocks, WB said. After meetings with the federal minister for planning, the chief minister of Balochistan and others following the capping of housing support at 62,966 first-tranche beneficiaries as of June 22, 2026, and subsidy support to 97,000, World Bank's country director Boloromaa Amgaabazar expressed concern over the decision as well as the handling of issues pertaining to fraud and corruption. Cautions exclusion could deepen poverty, disaster risks, social tensions.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif awards the religious minorities of Pakistan during an event held in Islamabad. – DNA

Russia condemns terror
attack by Ukraine

MOSCOW: The Russian Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the terrorist attack carried out by Ukrainian militants against civilian sites in Nizhnekamsk, Tatarstan, which left at least 13 people dead, most of them foreign nationals.

According to preliminary reports, the victims included eight citizens of Uzbekistan and one citizen of Tajikistan, while approximately 20 foreign nationals were wounded. Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova stated that the "Kiev neo-Nazis deliberately targeted facilities where people from our friendly countries live and work, aiming to drive a wedge between our nations and undermine our brotherly relations." She emphasized that such terrorist attacks have claimed the lives of not only Russian civilians but also foreign nationals, underscoring the indiscriminate nature of the violence. Zakharova expressed sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the wounded. She further called on the international community to condemn what she described as the "barbaric crimes of the Ukrainian Nazis." – DNA

Ishaq Dar says protection
of minorities rights priority

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of National Minorities Day, the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the vision of the Founding Father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, for a nation where the rights, dignity, and freedoms of all citizens are fully protected. The Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister emphasized that the protection of minorities is deeply rooted in the teachings of Islam, which enjoin justice, equality, and respect for all communities. He noted that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal political, economic, and social rights to minorities, ensuring their full citizenship. Highlighting Pakistan's obligations as a State Party to core international human rights treaties, he reit-

erated the country's dedication to safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, without discrimination on the basis of religion, race, or creed. The Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister paid tribute to the invaluable contributions of minority communities to Pakistan's national life, acknowledging their role in enriching the country's social, economic, cultural, and political development. He stated that their contributions have strengthened the fabric of society and enriched Pakistan's shared heritage. On this occasion, he reaffirmed the Government's resolve to ensure that every citizen enjoys equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal protection under the law. He concluded by pledging continued efforts to build a Pakistan where every citizen can live with dignity, security, and a sense of belonging, and contribute fully to the progress and prosperity of the nation.

JI sends
notice to
ex-FBR chief

KARACHI: Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) has sent a legal notice to former Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman Shabbar Zaidi and sought Rs1 billion in damages over allegations that the party received money to suppress public protests, according to a statement by the JI. The statement said the legal notice was sent on July 27 through Advocate Tahir Iqbal Malik on the directives of the party's Karachi General Secretary Tau-fiquddin Siddiqui. When Dawn contacted Zaidi for his comment on Tuesday, the former FBR chief said he had forwarded the notice to his lawyer for legal advice. The JI's statement, citing the party's notice, said Zaidi made serious allegations against the party during a podcast interview and subsequently in statements circulated on YouTube, Facebook, X, TikTok, WhatsApp and other social media platforms. The notice alleged that the former FBR chairman described the party as the "establishment's firewall" for "diluting" public issues and protests. In the notice, the statement said, JI's lawyer contended that Zaidi's statements amounted to "serious allegations against the party, including secret funding, bribery, corruption, political deception, betrayal of public interests, and alleged collusion with state elements". – APP

Ebola deaths
surpass
2,000

DAKAR: Democratic Republic of Congo said on Tuesday that confirmed Ebola deaths had reached 2,011, the latest grim milestone in what health officials have described as the fastest-spreading outbreak on record. The latest data from Congo's public health institute, seen by Reuters, also reported 4,381 confirmed cases across five provinces. Delayed detection, conflict and strained health services have helped the virus spread more rapidly than in previous outbreaks. The current outbreak, Congo's 17th, is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, for which there are no approved vaccines or treatments. The World Health Organization has declared the outbreak, which has also led to cases in neighboring Uganda, a public health emergency of international concern. A study published last month in the journal Science found that transmission may have begun in January or earlier in Ituri province, identifying more than 500 suspected cases between mid-January and May 15. – APP

Colombia rescue efforts
press on after quake,
death toll expected to rise

7.4-magnitude deadly quake collapses several buildings, killing over 150 while 188 reported missing

NEWS DESK

BOGOTA: Rescue efforts across western Colombia carried into a second day on Tuesday as emergency workers dug through collapsed buildings and flattened homes, amid expectations that the death toll from the country's most powerful earthquake in decades could rise. The 7.4-magnitude earthquake tore through Colombia's coffee-growing heartland early on Monday, killing at least 164 people. The quake reduced multi-story buildings to rubble in cities such as Pereira and Cali, and cracked apart one of the towers of a historic cathedral in the city of Manizales. A rescue worker raises his fists to call for silence to locate victims under the rubble at the site of a collapsed building following an earthquake, in Cali, Colombia, August 10, 2026.— Reuters Emergency teams aided by police, soldiers and volunteers worked through the night with excavators and, at times, their bare hands, hunting for survivors beneath debris. In Cali, home to about 2.2 million people, at least 85 people were killed. Dozens of buildings were left leaning precariously or destroyed outright, forcing residents into the streets. Several of the top floors of one of the city's hospitals – some dedicated to pediatric care – collapsed upon themselves, leaving some patients trapped and forcing some 600 others to be tended to on a street strewn with rubble, hospital director Irne Torres Castro told Caracol television. Carmen Yasmin Garcia, 43, a Cali resident volunteering with rescue teams, said on Monday afternoon that her group had freed seven people from a collapsed building, but four others and a dog remained trapped. "A moment ago there was scratching but now we can't hear anything, we still have faith that the dog is alive and we can get these people out," Garcia said. "We need people with sticks and spades, the more people lending a hand the better." In Pereira, capital of the hard-hit state of Risaralda, authorities reported 66 dead. The city also bore some of the most visible destruction, with entire residential blocks reduced to piles of concrete and twisted steel. Video posted on social media and verified by Reuters showed the city's airport violently swaying during the quake, with large chunks of the ceiling collapsing as people sheltered.

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بغیر کسی ذات یا مذہب کی تفریق کے
قائداعظم محمد علی جناح (11 اگست 1947)

پاکستان کی ترقی و خوشحالی
میں اہم کردار ادا کرنے پر

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سلام

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