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US President to revoke visas of asylum seekers

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Pakistan seeks US funding to reduce China reliance

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Briefs

Feasibility study started on strategic reserves

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government on Tuesday kicked off a feasibility study regarding strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) through international consultancy firm Wood McKenzie. Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik today chaired the kick-off meeting with Wood Mackenzie, which was selected to undertake the study following a competitive tender process that attracted four bids. Wood Mackenzie Vice President Christopher Darry, Director Chris Brown, Principal Consultant Jordan Macdonald and Senior Vice President Aamir Malik attended the meeting. Representatives of Attack Refinery Limited, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Government Holdings (Private) Limited, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Pakistan LNG Limited were also present. "The minister was briefed on the scope and objectives of the study, following which the meeting discussed and agreed on the timelines and overall architecture for assignment," an official statement by the information ministry said.

India rebuked by UN discrimination watchdogs

APP

INDIA must better protect tribal peoples and disadvantaged castes subjected to extrajudicial killings, torture and violence by law enforcement, a United Nations watchdog said on Tuesday. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) said the world's most populous country also urgently needed to address hate crimes against Bengali-speaking Muslims. "The committee was gravely concerned about reports of large-scale violations perpetrated by law enforcement officials against ethnic and ethno-religious groups, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, including Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, particularly Dalits, and non-citizens," it said in a statement on its findings. "These included racially motivated violence, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary and prolonged detention without due process, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence."

Body of minor girl recovered from Haripur: police

APP

PESHAWAR: Police and rescue officials on Monday night recovered the body of a girl who had gone missing from outside her home in a semi-urban area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Haripur district two weeks ago. According to rescue and medical sources, the body was buried after an autopsy. The detailed post-mortem report was awaited. District Headquarters Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Munawar Afridi said the board of female doctors that conducted the autopsy was still compiling the post-mortem report. "It would therefore be premature to determine the nature of injuries sustained by the victim or the exact cause of her death," he told Dawn. Speaking to the media at a press conference in Haripur on Tuesday,

Five labourers gunned down in Balochistan

FIR registered under charges including terrorism, murder and attempted murder, says CTD

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: A case has been registered at the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) police station over the firing incident in Saranan town of Balochistan's Pishin district, in which five workers were killed, officials said on Tuesday. According to CTD officials, the first information report (FIR) was registered against unidentified suspects under charges including terrorism, murder and attempted murder. Meanwhile, rescue officials said that the bodies have been brought to Quetta, with rescue sources saying they will be transported to their native areas today for burial. The firing incident took place on Monday when unidentified armed men opened fire on workers engaged in road construction in the Sulaiman Zai area, according to The News. The assailants also opened fire on machinery being used for the construction work before fleeing the scene. Police shifted the bodies of the deceased and the injured to a nearby hospital, and said that the victims were reportedly from Punjab. Following the attack, a heavy contingent of police and other law-enforcement agencies reached the area, cordoned

it off and launched a search operation to trace the attackers. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti condemned the attack, saying the killing of civilians was a clear manifestation of the terrorists' brutal mindset. He said that the labourers were working to earn a livelihood for their families while contributing to the development of the country and Balochistan. "Those responsible for shedding the blood of innocent citizens and workers deserve no leniency." He said that state institutions would continue operations against terrorist elements with full force to ensure peace, development and protection of people. The terrorists and their facilitators would be brought to justice, and there would be no place in Balochistan for those involved in killing innocent citizens, he added. Balochistan CM's Special Aide on Media and Political Affairs Shahid Rind also condemned the attack and expressed sorrow over the loss of lives. He said that targeting innocent labourers was a manifestation of the brutality of terrorists, adding that such attacks cannot undermine the resolve of the people of Balochistan or derail the province's journey towards peace and development.

Muslim bloc in the offing

Bangladesh keen to join Makkah defence agreement

Pak, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia signed the joint defence agreement at a trilateral summit in Makkah on August 7, pledging to strengthen collective security, deepen defence cooperation and promote peace and stability in the region and beyond

NEWS DESK

DHAKA: Bangladesh has expressed interest in participating in the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye, a top diplomat said Monday. "We have expressed our interest in the Makkah Defence pact [...] Bangladesh is now a country of recognition. The partners in West Asia (Middle East), the partners in the Muslim world around the globe are now inviting the leadership of Bangladesh, especially the leadership of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, to be with them in many places," said Humayun Kabir, who was appointed as state minister for foreign affairs last week. "If there is one [agreement] in West

Asia, if there is a security agreement between Islamic countries, then it is not unusual to go there. Let's see. The matter is being viewed positively," said Kabir, who previously served as an adviser to Rahman. Pakistan, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia signed the joint defence agreement at a trilateral summit in Makkah on August 7, pledging to strengthen collective security, deepen defence cooperation and promote peace and stability in the region and beyond. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement was signed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during the summit held at Al-Safa Palace.

Supreme Court returns contempt plea over Imran hospital transfer

Dr Uzma had filed petition over alleged violation of SC order regarding PTI founder's transfer to Shifa Int'l Hospital

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Registrar's Office on Tuesday returned a contempt of court petition filed by the sister of jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan over his hospital transfer. The Registrar's Office returned Dr Uzma Khan's plea after raising objections, with sources saying it did not include a list of allegations against the respondents. Dr Uzma had filed the petition at the Supreme Court against the alleged violation of the court's order regarding the jailed PTI founder's transfer to Shifa International Hospital. In the petition filed on August 22, the PTI founder's sister sought initiation of contempt proceedings against those allegedly responsible, along with show-cause notices and directions for their personal appearance before the court. PTI Secretary-General Salman Akram Raja and Uzair Bhandari filed the petition on behalf of Uzma. The Supreme Court, in its August 18 order, had directed the authorities to transfer the former premier, incarcerated at Adiala Jail, to Shifa International Hospital for a medical examination. However, he was instead taken to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), where doctors from Shifa Interna-

tional Hospital were also present, according to Information Minister Attaullah Tarar. Khan has remained in prison since August 2023 following convictions he and his party describe as politically motivated. Since his ouster in April 2022 following a no-confidence vote, he has faced multiple legal cases. A day after the August 18 order, the federal government filed a review petition against it in the Supreme Court. However, it was returned by the Registrar's Office with objections. The Islamabad chief commissioner later filed another petition seeking an early hearing of the review petition against the court's order. While the PTI decried violation of the court's order regarding the party founder's transfer to Shifa International Hospital, the government defended the decision, saying the move was purely based on the security situation. Speaking on Geo News programme 'Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath', Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the decision to take Khan to Pims was made by the administration and had nothing to do with the Punjab government. The PTI founder's treatment and security were both of paramount importance, he said, adding that the government was aware that taking him to Pims instead of Shifa would cause an uproar. "Imran's security was the priority, which is why the decision was made," he said.



ISLAMABAD: A high-level Saudi business delegation, led by Prince Mansour bin Mohammad Al Saud, Chairman of the Saudi-Pak Joint Business Council, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the PM House. — DNA

PM Shehbaz for enhanced investment ties with Saudi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Saudi business delegation, led by His Highness Prince Mansour bin Mohammad Al Saud, Chairman of the Saudi-Pak Joint Business Council, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the PM House today. During the warm and cordial meeting the Prime Minister conveyed his respectful regards to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and to Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman. While recalling the longstanding brotherly ties between Pakistan and the Kingdom, the Prime Minister discussed avenues for expanding

Continued on Page 06

AJK Speaker, deputy speaker take oath

APP

MUZAFFARABAD: Chaudhary Tariq Farooq of the PML-N was elected the 16th speaker of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly, while party colleague Muhammad Ahmed Raza Qadri was elected deputy speaker, in elections to both offices held on Tuesday. The session started at 2:30pm, with outgoing Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar of the PPP in the chair. Akbar could not retain his seat in the recent general elections. The PPP had fielded Chaudhry Qasim Majeed and Aamir Abdul Ghafar Lone for the two offices. All 46 legislators — 32 from the PML-N and its ally and

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Middle East tensions

China says will 'safeguard own interests' after US vows Iran sanctions

The remarks come after Washington unveiled new sanctions targeting Iran's energy and financial sectors. Beijing reiterated its position that legitimate trade and cooperation between sovereign states must be respected

DNA

BEIJING/TEHRAN: China has stated that its cooperation with Iran should not be disrupted following the latest round of U.S. sanctions announced against Tehran. Chinese officials emphasized that all cooperation is conducted within the framework of international law and international obligations. The remarks come after Washington unveiled new sanctions targeting Iran's energy and financial sectors. Beijing reiterated its position that legitimate trade and cooperation between sovereign states must be respected. Meanwhile, global oil prices extended their

decline as investors appeared to shrug off the impact of the new U.S. sanctions on Iran. Analysts noted that market sentiment remains focused on broader supply-demand dynamics rather than geopolitical developments.

China's cooperation with Iran is conducted within the framework of international law and should not be interfered with or disrupted, a foreign ministry spokesperson says, when asked about new US sanctions related to Iran, Reuters reports. China is closely monitoring the developments and will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests, ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a press conference.

Iran says field marshal visit quite successful

Syed Mehdi Tabatabai described the visit as a "valuable diplomatic success," noting that Pakistan and Iran's relations have entered a new phase of mutual trust and progress

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's recent visit to Iran has been hailed as highly productive and beneficial by the Iranian government. According to a statement from the Iranian Presidential Office, the visit

marked a significant step forward in strengthening bilateral ties and fostering regional cooperation. The Presidential Office emphasized that the visit was not only a symbol of friendship but also a practical move toward enhancing peace and stability in the region.

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Wajiha focuses Pakistan-China relations

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training Ms. Wajiha Qamar, focused on Pakistan-China relations, saying that the friendship between the two countries is not merely a slogan but a relationship built on equality, mutual trust, non-interference, peace and dignity. She expressed these views as chief guest, while participating in China-Pakistan Youth Forum titled "Echo: Youth in Action" organised by Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan, in collaboration with the China Media Group (CMG), as part of activities commemorating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Other Participants included Chairman HEC Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, Executive Director HEC Dr Zia Ul Haq, Director General Human Resource Development and Global Engagement Divisions HEC Ms. Aayesha Ikram, Cultural Counsellor Embassy of China Mr. Cheng Peng, representatives of China Media Group, academics, students and other stakeholders attended the forum. The objective of the forum was to provide a platform for meaningful engagement among Pakistani youth, academics, students and other relevant stakeholders. The programme encompassed screening of CMG's documentary named Echo, sharing experience of Pakistani alumni in Chinese universities, and a discussion on youth and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). While

addressing the audience, Minister of State underscored that Pakistan-China relations transcended geographical boundaries and withstood the test of changing times and global circumstances. Highlighting the success of CPEC, she said the next great chapter of Pakistan-China relations must be written through education, skills, universities, research, and science and technology. "No country can rise without the quality of education," she underlined, stressing the need to equip young people not merely with degrees but with skills, discipline, confidence and opportunities to become productive professionals, leaders and creators of opportunities. The Minister emphasised that the future of Pakistan-China relations could not be safeguarded by governments alone, but would also depend on the youth, scholars, researchers and professionals of the two countries. She urged the younger generation not to inherit this relationship passively but to understand it, enrich it with sincerity and carry it forward with courage and commitment. In his remarks, Chairman HEC Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar highlighted the vast potential for expanding collaboration between Pakistani and Chinese higher education institutions. He said Pakistani universities have signed agreements with a number of Chinese universities under the CPEC Consortium of Universities to promote academic and research cooperation. He said HEC is committed to translating such arrangements into practical and

effective collaborations. Highlighting the potential of Pakistani youth, he encouraged students to explore opportunities for higher education in Chinese universities and benefit from exposure to the latest technologies. He emphasised that there should be no boundaries between Pakistan and China in the fields of education and knowledge. Referring to the 75 years of cordial relations, he said the friendship is strengthened by mutual love and respect. On this occasion, Ms. Aayesha Ikram highlighted the significance of 75 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, describing the partnership as one rooted in shared history, mutual trust and strong people-to-people connectivity. She described education as an ultimate bridge between nations and said Pakistani students studying in Chinese universities are contributing to stronger people-to-people relations and mutual understanding. She said student exchange programmes, complemented by joint research projects in various fields, are creating opportunities for youth and academics to learn from one another and co-create solutions to shared challenges. Cultural Counsellor Mr. Cheng Peng said Pakistan and China share a special friendship built on deep bonds between their people.

He expressed confidence that the longstanding friendship will continue to grow and lead towards a brighter future for both nations.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, Ms. Rita Dhital - Ambassador of Nepal, and honorable parliamentarians in a group photo at the Pakistan-Nepal-Bhutan Parliamentary Friendship Group meeting at Parliament House

Five social sector schemes completed in Malakand

ISLAMABAD: Five social-sector schemes have been completed under the Saudi-funded Malakand Infrastructure Programme in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while work is progressing on a strategic 26-kilometre road in Chitral district. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the programme, financed by the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), is aimed at developing and rehabilitating infrastructure damaged in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The five completed social-sector schemes include rehabilitation of the Agriculture Research Institute in Swat, construction of educational facilities for special children, upgradation of a basic health unit to a Category-D hospital, construction of a thalassaemia department and rehabilitation of a veterinary research facility. The Agriculture Research Institute in Swat has been rehabilitated at an approved cost of Rs191.95 million. The documents show expenditure of Rs189.67 million on the scheme, with physical progress recorded at 100%. Construction of a Special Children School along with a Special Children Teacher Training School in Swat has also achieved 100% physical progress. The scheme had an approved cost of Rs217.55 million, against which expenditure of Rs214.44 million has been recorded. In Lower Dir, the upgradation of the Basic Health Unit Hayasari to a Category-D hospital has been completed at an approved cost of Rs627.57 million.—APP

Jirga convinces vaccine refusing community

PESHAWAR: A trust-based and respectful dialogue approach, rooted in the traditional Pashtun jirga system, helped bring a community in Akhooabad Union Council of Peshawar back into the immunization fold after a six-year gap in childhood vaccination caused by persistent resistance. "The breakthrough was achieved by field team of MERF (Medical Emergency Resilience Foundation), with the support of District Health Officer, Peshawar district and other stakeholders" says Dr. Abdul Basit, Programme Manager MERF.

The refusal had become deeply entrenched within the community with households collectively restricting access of both Polio and routine immunization teams to the area. "Previous efforts not only included community engagement efforts but also stricter legal actions against the refusing families including registration of First Information Reports (FIRs) against some family members, however, these measures did not result in acceptance of vaccination," Basit shared. The persistence of refusals demonstrated that conver-

tional campaign based, behavioral, and administrative approaches were insufficient to address the underlying concerns and resistance, he added. Given the local social and cultural context, the vaccination team adopted a trust-first, relationship based and community-led approach, drawing on the importance of personal relationships, respectful dialogue and Jirga-based engagement within Pashtun culture. A multidisciplinary team comprising of medical officer, vaccinator, local influential and a religious leader was constituted. It was decided to adopt a direct face-to-face visit to demonstrate seriousness, respect and willingness to listen. For female members an all-female Jirga interaction was used accommodating local cultural norms and Purdah considerations.—APP

Diplomatic Enclave development reviewed

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday visited the Diplomatic Enclave to review ongoing development work and assess progress on key infrastructure projects. During the visit, the minister inspected construction activities and directed officials to speed up work while ensuring environmental protection and improved facilities for residents. The minister reviewed progress on the boundary wall, remodeling of security checkpoints, cycling track, and walking track being developed inside the Diplomatic Enclave. He stressed that construction on the boundary wall should continue without interruption and instructed authorities to ensure that no trees are cut during the execution of the projects. Mohsin Naqvi also directed officials to develop the cycling and walking tracks according to modern planning standards to provide better recreational facilities within the enclave. He further instructed the concerned departments to widen roads in the area to improve traffic flow and accessibility. During the visit, the interior minister asked the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Security to prepare a revised and comprehensive security plan for the Diplomatic Enclave. He said the enclave should have a security framework that meets current requirements while supporting the needs of diplomatic missions and residents. The minister announced that parks within the Diplomatic Enclave would also be restored and upgraded. He said the government aims to transform the enclave into a secure and well-managed diplomatic zone with improved public spaces and infrastructure.—APP

Zero-tolerance policy against targeting women, kids

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has ordered strict action against corrupt police officials and directed Inspector General of Police Punjab to complete the process of identifying and removing corrupt elements from the force within one week. Chairing a special meeting on law and order, here on Tuesday, the chief minister ordered that police officers known for corruption should not be appointed as station house officers (SHOs). She directed the police authorities to adopt a strict approach towards corrupt officials and ensure accountability across the force. The CM also sought a comprehensive plan for the complete control of crimes against women and children and ordered a zero-tolerance policy against those involved in such offences. "Children

and women are my red line. No one involved in crimes against them will be spared," Maryam Nawaz said, adding that maintaining law and order was the government's first priority. She directed the police to take effective measures to reduce burglary incidents and ordered a comprehensive cleanup operation for the complete elimination of crime in Sheikhupura. She further ordered that district police officers (DPOs) in areas with high crime rates would be held accountable. The meeting was informed that the overall crime situation in Punjab was showing a clear declining trend. According to the briefing, robbery incidents had declined by 54 per cent, murder by 35 per cent, car snatching by 46 per cent and motorcycle theft by 53 per cent. In Lahore, murder cases decreased by 43 per cent,

robberies by 32 per cent, car snatching by 43 per cent and motorcycle theft by 54 per cent. The meeting also decided to link the operational control of Dolphin Police with the respective police stations to improve coordination and response. The chief minister set September 30 as the deadline for equipping Punjab Police personnel with body cameras. She also approved the installation of GPS trackers and cameras in prisoners' vans and ordered strict action to prevent incidents involving prisoners escaping from custody. CM Maryam Nawaz said the protection of life and property of citizens was the government's fundamental responsibility and directed the police to further strengthen measures for maintaining peace and security across the province.—APP

CM visits milestones centre for language uplift

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah visited the Milestones Centre for Cognitive and Language Development, a valued partner organisation of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Sindh Government, where he reviewed various facilities and educational programmes being provided to children with special needs. Upon his arrival at the centre at Clifton, Secretary of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Tauha Farooqi, and Milestones Trustee Ms Fauzia Javed Hussain welcomed the Chief Minister. During the visit, the Chief Minister toured different sections of the institution and assessed the educational, therapeutic, and rehabilitation services being offered to neurodivergent children. The Chief Minister also interacted with students and teachers, showing keen interest in their activities and achievements. He appreciated the efforts of the institution in providing quality education, therapy and rehabilitation services to the children with special needs. Briefing the Chief Minister, Milestones Trustee Ms Fauzia Javed said that Milestones was established in 1998 and is committed to empowering individuals with special needs, including Down syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Developmental delay and Fragile X syndrome, through inclusive education and support, helping them lead fulfilling lives. The centre provides a complete academic and rehabilitative program individually designed for every child. Unlike other institutes, all our services are provided free of cost to deserving students. On the occasion, Murad Ali Shah said that Milestones has been playing a commendable role in the education, training, and rehabilitation of special children. He reiterated that the Sindh Government would continue extending full support for the education, rehabilitation, and empowerment of persons with disabilities. Addressing a ceremony organised by the Milestone Charitable Trust, the Chief Minister said that the Trust has been serving children and families since 1998 and has emerged as a model institution in the field of inclusive education. He noted that Milestones is the first bilingual school in Pakistan dedicated to neurodivergent children, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), ADHD, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, and other developmental challenges. "Every child deserves access to quality education, therapy, and equal opportunities to succeed," the Chief Minister said, adding that the institution's initiative of providing fee concessions to deserving families was highly commendable.—DNA

Mushaal, Raja Omar congrats FPCCI President Atif for Tamgha-e-Imtiaz



ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Malik and Raja Omar Kamran met FPCCI president Atif Ikram Sheikh Islamabad. Mushaal Hussain Malik chairperson of the peace and culture organization, former advisor to the prime minister of Pakistan and Raja Omar Kamran political and social activists met and congratulated FPCCI president Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh on being nominated for the national award Tamgha-e-Imtiaz by the Government of Pakistan at FPCCI capital office Islamabad. They highlighted the essential role of soft power, art and culture awareness about human rights and peace initiatives. Mr. Tariq Khan Jadoon vice president FPCCI, Ms Razia Sultan, Ms Hiba Fawad Chaudhry, Mr Asif Janjua, Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chinese dignitary were also present.

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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

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Cantonment Board 9270151-3

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Corporation.....9209224

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Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pak, Philippines discuss Promotion of Tourism

The meeting also discussed possible joint initiatives, exchange of experiences in the tourism sector and measures to strengthen ties between the people of Pakistan and the Philippines. Both sides expressed their commitment to exploring opportunities for greater cooperation in tourism and other areas of mutual interest



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Al-Sadat Group, Sadat Hussain Shah, met with Philippine Ambassador Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez at the Philippine Embassy, where they discussed prospects for promoting tourism, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts between Pakistan and the Philippines. During the meeting, Sadat Hussain Shah said there was a need to further expand tourism cooperation between the two countries. He noted that Pakistan and the Philippines could promote mutual tourism by highlighting their diverse

cultural heritage, natural beauty and tourism potential. He said the private sector could play an important role in strengthening tourism and people-to-people relations between the two countries and expressed his willingness to contribute to initiatives aimed at promoting bilateral tourism. The meeting also discussed possible joint initiatives, exchange of experiences in the tourism sector and measures to strengthen ties between the people of Pakistan and the Philippines. Both sides expressed their commitment to exploring opportunities for greater cooperation in tourism and other areas of mutual interest.

Resolution passed for Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution calling on the federal and provincial governments to celebrate the blessed occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) through national programmes at the highest level. The resolution, moved by Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhary, called for the illumination and decoration of highways and roads to mark the occasion. It urged all government institutions, including educational and business institutions and media houses, to fully participate in the celebrations. The resolution called for promoting peace, tolerance and brotherhood in accordance with the teachings of Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa Ahmad Mujtaba, Khatim-un-Nabiyeen (PBUH). It said the House resolved to promote the Sunnah and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The resolution also appealed to the nation to celebrate the blessed occasion with utmost devotion, respect and unity. —APP

Sharmila seeks funds for Sukkur-Hyderabad M-6 project

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) leader Sharmila Farooqi on Tuesday called for adequate federal funding for the Sukkur-Hyderabad M-6 Motorway project, saying the strategic project had faced delays for several years. Speaking in the National Assembly on a point of order, she said the PPPP had been raising the issue of funding for the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway for several months. She said the M-6 was a strategic missing link connecting Karachi with Peshawar and stressed the need to complete the project. Farooqi said the issue had been raised in the National Assembly as well as parliamentary committees. Following these efforts, around Rs30 billion was allocated as a token amount out of the Rs70 billion required for the project. She said the issue was discussed at a meeting held on August 22 under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.—APP

WPC seeks stronger action to protect women

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC), led by Secretary Dr Shahida Rehmani, visited the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in Islamabad to review women's rights initiatives, push for stronger implementation of laws at the grassroots level and seek institutional action on violence against women, climate related vulnerabilities and gender inequality. Interim NCSW Chairperson Noureen Bano Lehri briefed the delegation on the commission's ongoing initiatives and priorities, including its Strategic Plan 2026-2029, National Gender Parity Dashboard, bilingual awareness material on women's rights and the longstanding issue of pending appointments to the commission. Dr Rehmani stressed that legislation and policies would have little impact unless they translated into tangible relief and protection for women, particularly those living in underserved and vulnerable communities. She also strongly condemned the recent murder of Hina Javed, an employee

of the National Information Technology Board deputed to the National Assembly Secretariat, allegedly by her husband and a domestic worker at her in laws' residence. The WPC secretary said the caucus is committed to pursuing justice for Ms Javed and called for a free, fair, transparent and impartial investigation. She said the WPC is taking the NCSW on board to ensure that all relevant institutional mechanisms were engaged and those found responsible were brought to justice and punished in accordance with the law. The delegation called for stronger coordination between the NCSW and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), particularly to address the disproportionate impact of climate change and natural disasters on women. The members urged authorities to incorporate women's specific needs into disaster preparedness, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, while calling for reliable gender disaggregated data to support evidence based legislation, policy making, budgeting

and monitoring. The WPC members also pressed for targeted measures for rural women to improve their access to education, healthcare, justice, economic opportunities and information about their legal rights. They proposed introducing awareness of women's rights and gender equality at the primary school level and strengthening awareness of women's legal protections through the Nikahnama at the time of marriage. Ms Lehri welcomed the WPC's engagement and underscored the importance of institutional coordination, reliable gender data, accountability and effective implementation. The delegation comprised MNAs Sofia Saeed Shah, Huma Akhtar Chughtai, Zahra Wadood Fatemi, Naeema Kishwar Khan, Tamkeen Akhtar Niazi, Mah Jabeen Abbasi, Neelum, Asia Naz Tanoli and Akhtar Bibi. The meeting concluded with a shared emphasis that legislation alone could not deliver meaningful change unless backed by public awareness, reliable data, institutional coordination and effective enforcement.—APP

Federal, KP govts sign Rail partnership deal

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi said on Tuesday that a framework agreement between the federal government and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would pave the way for upgrading around 240 kilometres of suburban railway lines and constructing a 192km strategic rail link from Kohat through Thall to Kharlachi, strengthening connectivity, trade and passenger services in the province under the prime minister's vision of modernising Pakistan Railways. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr Abbasi thanked the KP government and Chief Minister for their cooperation in turning the framework agreement into a practical partnership between the federation and province. He said the agreement marked an important step towards strengthening federal provincial cooperation and bringing Pakistan Railways into a new era of development, rehabilitation and modernisation. Mr Abbasi said the agreement had been reached under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's guidance and vision, with the prime minister seeking stronger federal provincial partnerships for the revival and modernisation of the railway system. "Through this partnership, the railway system can be made more efficient, safe and modern while providing better travelling facilities to the people," he said. The minister said that in the 79 year history of Pakistan Railways, this was the first time that cooperation at such a level was emerging between the federation and all four provinces for railway development. He said Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and KP were working with Pakistan Railways on projects covering infrastructure, passenger facilities, connectivity and safety, adding that the federal provincial partnership would open a new chapter in the history of the national railway system. Under the agreement, around 240km of suburban railway lines in KP will be upgraded. The proposed projects include the 62km Peshawar Nowshera Jahangira route, 65km Nowshera Mardan Dargai route, 51km Nowshera Mardan Charsadda route, 30km Nasirpur (Chamkani) Jamrud route and 32km Jamrud Landi Kotal Safari Railway route Mr Abbasi said the projects would improve connectivity between different parts of KP, modernise passenger facilities and make daily commuting easier for people. He said other routes and alignments for new railway lines would also be considered according to need and through mutual consultation. Different funding options for new routes would also be explored jointly. The minister described the proposed 192km new strategic railway line from Kohat through Thall to Kharlachi as another major component of the agreement. He said the Kharlachi rail link under the UAPRC would promote regional connectivity and create new opportunities for trade.—APP

IPRI holds strategic communications workshop

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) held a two-day Strategic Communications Workshop on 24-25 August 2026, designed to bridge theory and practice in the field of strategic communication. The workshop featured trainers including Aamir Ghauri, Ms Amber Shamsi, Usama Bakhtiar, Talha Ahad, Awais Abbasi and Ehtasham Abbas, said a press release issued on Tuesday. The workshop was organized by IPRI's Advocacy and Communication Team and brought together policymakers, researchers, communication professionals, academics and media practitioners to build their skills for navigating the evolving information landscape. The programme combined discussions with practical exercises, reflecting IPRI's commitment to translating policy research into learning and practice. The workshop opened with remarks by Lt Gen (R) Majid Ehsan, President of IPRI, who stated, "Strategic communication can no longer be understood simply as the articulation of policy or the management of public perception. It increasingly sits at the intersection of information, perception, behaviour and national power." He emphasized that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is accelerating the transformation of strategic commu-

nications. The Director of Advocacy and Communications, Siddique Humayun, highlighted the need to balance technical skills with deeper wisdom. Drawing on Iain McGilchrist's The Master and His Emissary, he argued that effective strategic communication must recover holistic understanding alongside rigorous technique. He stated, "Strategic Communications is long-term. It is target-audience-driven. It is relentlessly impact-focused. It requires the deliberate alignment of words, images, symbols, actions and, sometimes, most importantly, silence, to advance defined objectives across any stratum of life." The workshop pursued four key objectives. First, it aimed to develop participants' understanding of strategic communication as an instrument of national security, diplomacy, governance and public policy. Second, it examined trends shaping the information environment, including artificial intelligence, disinformation, digital influence, cognitive warfare and evolving media ecosystems. Third, it sought to strengthen participants' capabilities in designing communication strategies, responding to information crises and countering disinformation. Finally, it applied tools of government communication, public diplomacy, media engagement,

digital campaigns and behavioural insights to engage and influence audiences. On the first day, the opening session addressed information as an instrument of national power, examining strategic narratives, perception management and the role of communication in foreign and security policy, with contributions from Mr Aamir Ghauri, Ms Amber Shamsi and Mr Siddique Humayun. The second session, led by Mr Usama Bakhtiar, focused on advocacy for policy impact, covering policy ecosystems, advocacy for change and impact measurement. The third session, led by Mr Talha Ahad, Founder of TCM, addressed AI, digital media and digital storytelling. It covered narrative construction across platforms, stakeholder and platform dynamics, and emerging trends such as algorithm-driven content distribution and generative SEO. On the second day, the fourth session, led by Mr Awais Abbasi, addressed strategic communication in practice, covering government communication, public diplomacy, media engagement, digital campaigns and behavioural insights into audience influence. The fifth session, led by Mr Ehtasham Abbas, focused on disinformation, information warfare and crisis communication. It covered disinformation ecosystems, information warfare, counter-disinformation strategies, crisis communication frameworks and case studies. The workshop took place against the backdrop of a rapidly transforming information environment, driven by artificial intelligence, algorithmic content distribution and disinformation campaigns. By bringing together voices from government, media, academia.—APP

Chairman PVARA outlines Pak's AI and tokenisation vision

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State and Chairman Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) Bilal Bin Saqib on Tuesday said that the artificial intelligence (AI), tokenisation and digital assets are reshaping financial institutions, capital markets and the global movement of value. Speaking at the inaugural Silk Road Finance and Technology Forum in Tashkent during a session titled "Regulating the Frontier: AI & Tokenization Spotlight," alongside senior central bank leaders from Cambodia and Azerbaijan, the PVARA chairman argued that governments must build regulatory institutions capable of keeping pace with technologies developing far faster than traditional policy cycles, said a news release. He highlighted Pakistan's transition from restricting virtual assets to establishing a dedicated regulatory framework, describing it as part of a broader effort to position the country for the next generation of digital finance. Chairman PVARA noted that Pakistan's 2018 restrictions on virtual assets did not eliminate market activity, but pushed significant activity toward offshore platforms and peer-to-peer channels, reducing regulatory visibility and leaving consumers with limited protection or recourse. Pakistan has since enacted the Virtual Assets Act, 2026, establishing PVARA as the country's dedicated virtual assets regulator. PVARA has notified its licensing regulations and opened its licensing portal, creating a formal pathway for virtual asset service providers to operate within a reg-

ulated environment. He also highlighted the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Circular 10, which enables regulated banks to provide accounts to licensed virtual asset service providers, including segregated client-money accounts. The transition demonstrates Pakistan's broader approach to frontier technologies: bring innovation within the regulatory perimeter rather than allowing technological adoption to develop beyond the visibility of the state. The chairman said AI would increasingly change not only financial products, but the institutions responsible for supervising them. As financial markets become faster, more digital and increasingly automated, regulators would need to use technology to strengthen supervision, compliance, risk detection and institutional decision-making. He stressed that the next generation of regulators must themselves become more technology-enabled, capable of supervising markets operating at digital speed while maintaining consumer protection, financial integrity and systemic stability. Saqib highlighted tokenisation as a potentially significant evolution in how financial assets are issued, distributed, settled and owned. He outlined Pakistan's interest in applying tokenisation to sovereign investment products, particularly to improve access for the Pakistani diaspora. PVARA and the SBP are studying a model for a digitally native sovereign note that could be issued on regulated blockchain infrastructure, settle on the same day and remain interoperable with Pakistan's existing financial system.—APP

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Briefs

Seerah carries eternal message of peace, love

ISLAMABAD: President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) and Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Tuesday extended greetings to the nation and Muslim Ummah on the auspicious occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH). In his message, the federal minister said the 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal was a blessed day commemorating the birth of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (PBUH) and served as a reminder to follow his teachings and noble example, said a press release. He said that the blessed life and Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) carries an eternal message of peace, love, brotherhood, justice, equality and tolerance for humanity. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) gave humanity a practical lesson in justice, equality, patience and brotherhood and by following these principles, the foundation of a peaceful and exemplary society can be laid. The minister said that we must shape our individual and collective lives in accordance with the golden principles of the Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). He said that only by following the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) can peace, tolerance, unity and mutual love be promoted in society. The IPP President said that the blessed occasion of 12th Rabi-ul-Awwal teaches us to promote unity among the Ummah, brotherhood and mutual love. He reaffirmed that building Pakistan as a peaceful and prosperous society based on equality and the principles of a welfare state remains our commitment. Abdul Aleem Khan said that on this blessed occasion, we also pay tribute to the great sacrifices of the martyrs of the nation. He said that the country's peace and stability are the result of the invaluable sacrifices rendered by our martyrs, and the nation will always hold their sacrifices in the highest regard and respect. The minister urged the nation to offer special prayers on the occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) for the progress, prosperity, peace, security, unity and stability of the country. He said that following the Seerah and teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is the true path to success in this world and the Hereafter. Aleem Khan prayed that Allah Almighty bless Pakistan with peace, stability, progress and prosperity, protect the country from all kinds of challenges, and bless the entire Muslim Ummah with unity, brotherhood and mutual love.—APP

ITP acts against over 1,200 traffic violators

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has taken legal action against more than 1,200 road users during August, including over 200 one-wheelers and 1,000 motorists for one-way violations, as part of intensified enforcement against dangerous road behaviour. An ITP official told APP on Tuesday that the action was being carried out on the directions of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Kainat Azhar Khan, who ordered strict enforcement under a zero-tolerance policy against one-wheeling and one-way violations. The CTO Kainat said both violations posed a serious threat to the lives and property of citizens, adding that wrong-way driving could lead to traffic accidents while one-wheeling put young riders and other road users at risk. She directed traffic police teams to further strengthen action against one-wheeling and ensure effective enforcement of traffic laws on major roads. Kainat also appealed to parents to educate their children about the dangers of one-wheeling and discourage them from engaging in the risky practice. She urged young motorcyclists to avoid one-wheeling and asked all road users to travel only in the designated direction. The CTO Kainat said ITP was taking action against traffic violations without discrimination to ensure safer travel and better road discipline across the federal capital.—APP

Kyrgyz perspective on SCO's 25 years discussed at IRS

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Shahid Ilyas, Head of the Turkiye and Azerbaijan Program at IRS, said the SCO's 25th anniversary should serve as an opportunity to evaluate the organisation's effectiveness and strengthen implementation. He underscored the importance of translating broad political commitments into practical outcomes while ensuring that the perspectives and priorities of the Central Asian states remained integral to the SCO

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, hosted a webinar titled "The Kyrgyz Perspective on the SCO at 25: Summitry and Pakistan's Chairmanship," in collaboration with the Aplicata Center for Strategic Studies and the Institute for Strategic and Academic Studies (ISAS), Bishkek. The discussion reviewed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) evolution over 25 years, Kyrgyzstan's outgoing chairmanship, and priorities for Pakistan as it assumes the SCO chairmanship in September and prepares to host the SCO Summit in Islamabad in 2027. President IRS, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, said the SCO's 25th anniversary offered an opportunity to assess its achievements and future direction rather than merely commemorate its history. He noted that the organisation had evolved from a predominantly security-focused grouping into a broader platform for political dialogue, economic cooperation,

connectivity and people-to-people exchanges. Its continued relevance, he observed, would depend on effectively balancing the interests of major powers with those of the smaller member states. Ambassador Saleem said Pakistan regarded the SCO as an important platform for advancing regional stability, connectivity and economic cooperation. He highlighted Pakistan's ports, transport infrastructure and experience under CPEC as potential enablers of stronger Central Asia–South Asia linkages. He said Pakistan's chairmanship would prioritise connectivity, trade, security cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, while drawing on its experience in chairing the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) during 2025–2026. Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Kubatbek Rakhimov, Executive Director of the Aplicata Center for Strategic Studies and co-founder of ISAS, Bishkek, reviewed Kyrgyzstan's year-long SCO chairmanship. He identified security, connectivity, digitalisation and progress towards establishing the long-dis-

cussed SCO Development Bank and Development Fund among Kyrgyzstan's priorities. Several of these objectives, he noted, remained only partially realised—a challenge common to SCO chairmanships rather than one specific to Kyrgyzstan. Dr. Rakhimov also stressed the importance of sustained follow-up to translate summit-level agreements into tangible trade and investment outcomes. He cited the first direct road crossing by a Kyrgyz vehicle into Pakistan through the Khunjerab Pass and the completion of the respective Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan sections of the CASA-1000 power transmission project as examples of practical cooperation advancing alongside high-level political engagement. Proposing a Chairmanship Continuity Mechanism, Dr. Rakhimov suggested a three-chair framework involving Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and incoming chair Russia, jointly supported by ISAS, Bishkek, and IRS, Islamabad. The proposed mechanism would provide for an annual handover report, quarterly online and annual in-person consultations, and a joint monograph to facilitate the sys-

tematic transfer of institutional experience between successive SCO chairs. He said a working document on the proposal would be prepared by the end of October. Mr. Pavel Fesunov, Research Fellow at ISAS, outlined the proposed mechanism's practical implementation. He said the two institutes would jointly prepare an approximately 100-page report over the next two months, assessing the outcomes of Kyrgyzstan's chairmanship and offering recommendations for Pakistan's tenure. The initiative would subsequently be expanded to include a Russian partner institution and result in a further joint publication. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Shahid Ilyas, Head of the Turkiye and Azerbaijan Program at IRS, said the SCO's 25th anniversary should serve as an opportunity to evaluate the organisation's effectiveness and strengthen implementation. He underscored the importance of translating broad political commitments into practical outcomes while ensuring that the perspectives and priorities of the Central Asian states remained integral to the SCO.

NA refers Layyah river erosion issue to committee

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah on Tuesday referred a calling attention notice regarding continuous river erosion and the resulting flood threat in District Layyah, Punjab, to the relevant committee. Responding to the calling attention notice, Federal Minister for Water Resources Muhammad Mueen Wattoo said around 300,000 cusecs of water was currently flowing due to the high water flow. He said all necessary measures would be taken once the water level receded. He added that the administration was vigilant and actively working on the situation. The minister said he fully understood and respected the concerns raised by the member regarding the affected people. He assured the House that compensation had been provided to people affected by erosion and other damages during previous floods. "If any compensation remains unpaid, I will find out about it and ensure that the complaint is addressed," he said. Responding to another question about funds, the minister said the current situation was difficult due to the exceptionally high water flow, which was around 350,000 cusecs. He said provincial governments had provided compensation from their own resources. However, further details about the funds could be provided after reviewing the matter.—APP

IRSA releases 302,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 302,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 319,400 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 208,200 cusecs each. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1217.50 feet, which was 167.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 24,500 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 366,100, 362,300, 379,500, and 200,100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 34,400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 33,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Professor Endo delivers lecture on japanese diplomacy

ISLAMABAD: Professor ENDO Ken, Chair and Professor of International Politics at the Faculty of Law, the University of Tokyo, delivered a lecture entitled "Japan's FOIP 3.0 and the Future of Middle-Power Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific" at the SPIR Seminar Hall of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU). The event was attended by Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Vice-Chancellor of QAU, and Dr. Muhammad Na-deem Mirza, Director of the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR), who delivered welcoming remarks at the outset of the event. H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU



Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, also attended the event and delivered the opening address. Faculty members and students of QAU lis-

tened attentively to Professor Endo's lecture, which provided valuable insights into Japan's foreign policy and its approach to the Indo-Pacific region. The

lecture was followed by a lively question-and-answer session, during which participants engaged in an active exchange of views with Professor Endo.—APP

Rs380m annual saving in coal procurement

ISLAMABAD: In a major step to reduce the cost of electricity for consumers, the Power Division has identified significant inefficiencies in the procurement of imported coal by power plants and has issued policy guidelines for corrective action that could save the national exchequer up to PKR 380 Million annually. The revelation came across during a series of high-level meetings chaired by Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari, where officials reviewed actual data, contractual arrangements and market practices rather than relying on reports or external inquiries, said a press release issued on Tuesday. Pakistan has a significant fleet of coal-fired power plants with a combined capacity of approximately 5,280 megawatts that rely wholly or partly on imported coal. These include three major 1,320 MW plants at Port Qasim, Hub Power and Sahiwal, as well as the Lucky and Jamshoro plants which also have the capability to use imported coal. To keep these plants running, they must enter into Coal Supply Agreements with international suppliers. The price of imported coal is generally linked to internationally recognized benchmarks such as the API-4 index, which reflects the market price of coal traded in global markets. However, the price that a power plant ultimately pays depends not only on this benchmark but also on the discount it is able to negotiate with the supplier. The analysis revealed a significant discrepancy. Different power plants were purchasing coal from the same suppliers, using the same international pricing benchmark, yet receiving materially different discounts ranging from USD 0.25 to USD7.12 per metric ton. The review also found that the same supplier had offered substantially different discounts to different power plants. In some cases, backup supply arrangements were negotiated at lower discounts than the main supply agreements. There were also instances where coal was being received from a supplier offering a lower discount even though another supplier offering a higher discount remained under contract. This discrepancy matters because the cost of fuel is ultimately passed on to electricity consumers through the tariff. Any avoidable difference in fuel procurement cost directly increases the burden on households and businesses across Pakistan. As an immediate measure, the Power Division has moved decisively to strengthen the regulatory framework. Policy guidelines are being formally issued to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority to enforce greater transparency, consistency and competition in coal procurement.—APP

Steps to regulate medical college fees, NA told

ISLAMABAD: The government is taking steps to regulate medical college fees and protect students from excessive charges. Parliamentary Secretary for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Nelson Azeem told the National Assembly on Tuesday. Responding to a calling attention notice about high fees and charges at medical colleges and private hospitals in Islamabad, he said a committee formed under the chairmanship of the prime minister had reviewed the fees charged by medical colleges. The committee initially fixed the fee at Rs1.8 million per student. Some colleges challenged the decision, saying they offered better facilities and services and faced higher expenses. The committee asked them to justify their demands based on their facilities and expenses. A total of 61 medical colleges submitted appeals along with relevant documents. After reviewing the appeals, the committee found the cases of 35 institutions justified and allowed them to charge Rs2.1 million. Azeem said a portal had also been established for students and their parents to submit complaints against medical colleges. He said notices had been issued to 45 institutions. Action would be taken against them if they failed to submit the required taxes or justify their fees. He said private medical colleges were required to follow the fee structure determined by the committee. Another committee had also been formed to take action against institutions that failed to implement the decisions. Meanwhile, Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal told the house that 65 per cent of the country's medical seats were in the private sector, while 35 per cent were in government medical colleges. He said there were around 22,000 medical seats in the country. Around 96,000 students passed the MDCAT last year, but only about 22,000 secured admission to medical colleges. Mustafa Kamal said many Pakistani students subsequently travelled abroad for medical education, particularly to Central Asian countries, where the quality of education was not always satisfactory. He said the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) had published a list of recognised foreign medical colleges on its website to guide students. The minister said students who had passed the MDCAT should be given preference for medical education abroad. He said Pakistani students spend around \$800 million in foreign exchange on medical education abroad. Mustafa Kamal said government medical seats were limited, while the government had imposed a three-year moratorium on establishing new private medical colleges. He clarified that the moratorium did not apply to government medical colleges. He said government medical colleges were increasing their seats as they expanded their infrastructure. He stressed that private medical colleges train 65 per cent of the approximately 22,000 students admitted every year. Azeem said the government was facilitating students through government-recognised seats. Students applying to private medical colleges are allocated institutions according to their preferences in their admission forms. He said many students graduating from medical colleges in Pakistan prefer to move abroad, including to the United States and the United Kingdom. He added that doctors who remain in Pakistan continue to serve the people. Doctors trained abroad are required to pass a test conducted by the PMDC before they can practise in Pakistan. He said the test was necessary to protect patients' lives and ensure that doctors met the required standards. Those who qualify are issued certificates and can also work in government institutions.—APP

Pakistan to introduce high-yield crop seeds from China

China and Pakistan are continuing to collaborate on the research and development of hybrid wheat, which has the potential to boost yields by 20% to 70%

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is moving to expand access to high-yield crop seeds from China as it seeks to raise agricultural productivity, strengthen food security and ease mounting pressure on food prices. In the latest development, Pakistan's Federal Seed Analyst Waqas Amjad signed an agreement with a seed company in Chongqing, China, to facilitate the introduction of additional Chinese crop varieties, including rice, rapeseed, corn, soybeans and vegetables, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. The move came as Amjad concluded a training programme in China, where he explored cooperation in seed technology and agricultural development. Pakistan is also considering a series of measures to make it easier for Chinese seed companies to enter the Pakistani market and accelerate the commercialisation of new varieties, Amjad told China Economic Net. Under the proposed measures, the adaptation testing period for imported seed varieties could be reduced from two years to one, allowing new varieties to reach farmers more quickly. Import permissions could also be broadened, enabling more registered Chinese seed companies to directly conduct business in Pakistan rather than limiting sample imports to designated companies. "Pakistan is further encouraging Chinese companies to partner with local firms through joint ventures, a move aimed at lowering barriers to market entry and facilitating the commercial deployment of improved seed varieties," Waqas said. The push comes at a time when Pakistan is facing renewed pressure on food prices. The country's Sensitive Price Indicator, a measure of short-term inflation, rose 9.66 percent year on year in the week ended August 20, according to figures cited from the Pakistan Bureau of Sta-

tistics. Wheat and flour have been among the main drivers of the increase. In early August, the national average price of a 20-kilogram bag of flour had risen to between 2,200 and 3,133 rupees, rising 62.25% year-on-year. This comes after a 78% surge in July. To ease price pressures, the federal government has decided to import 1 million tonnes of wheat. Onions and tomatoes also recorded sharp price increases. In the week ending August 20, onion prices jumped 132.52% year on year, while tomato prices rose 93.21%. Rising fuel costs have further exacerbated food inflation, with gasoline and diesel prices increasing by 27.65% and 33.08%, respectively, from a year earlier, pushing up transportation and distribution costs. "Pakistan's seed sector faces a significant supply gap," Waqas said. The Pakistan Economic Survey 2025-26 puts certified seed availability at about 767.9 thousand tonnes against estimated requirements of 2.06 million tonnes across major crops. Chinese seed technology has already produced tangible results in Pakistan. "One of the most prominent examples is hybrid rice. Chinese hybrid rice technology has helped raise yields in demonstration fields from around 7.5 tonnes per hectare to 13.5 tonnes per hectare — an increase of about 80%. Farmers involved in the programme have reported that the additional income from a single harvest can cover the cost of the hybrid seed, highlighting the commercial appeal of higher-yield varieties," Amjad said. A new disease-resistant wheat variety developed using molecular breeding technology has also been successfully bred for conditions in northern Pakistan, increasing yields by 8% to 10%. China and Pakistan are continuing to collaborate on the research and development of hybrid wheat, which has the potential to boost yields by 20% to 70%.—DNA



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French-Saudi partnership seeks to promote stability

ON the occasion of his visit to France, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This visit takes place in a meaningful year, as France and Saudi Arabia celebrate the centenary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations. A century of dialogue, friendship, and cooperation has created a relationship built on trust, mutual respect, and a shared willingness to look to the future. The visit of President Emmanuel Macron to Saudi Arabia in December 2024 was a milestone. It gave fresh momentum to our cooperation and reflected the ambition to make it global. The crown prince's visit to Paris is another opportunity to take new initiatives in the context of the first meeting of the French-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council. This council provides a framework for stronger cooperation in diplomacy, security and defense, investment, energy, culture, technology, and education. It also reflects the increasingly close political dialogue between France and Saudi Arabia at a time of profound changes in the world and the Middle East. Our two countries share one clear principle: Lasting stability can only be rooted in the sovereignty of states, the respect of international law, and the pursuit of political solutions. The crown prince's visit to Paris reflects the increasingly close political dialogue between France and Saudi Arabia at a time of profound changes in the world and the Middle East. **Patrick Maisonnave:** We both share the objective of peace and stability for the region. Defending freedom of navigation embodies this common stance. Attacks on vessels and threats to maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea are unacceptable. Restoring normal navigation, free of unlawful restrictions, tolls or interference, is essential for the Gulf and the global economy. France and Saudi Arabia have worked closely together to restore a political horizon and make the two-state solution a concrete objective rather than a distant aspiration. We believe it is the only path to end the tragedy of the Palestinian people which remains at the heart of our concerns. These efforts were embodied by the New York Declaration of July 2025, which displayed the leading role our countries play when they unite their forces. Across the region, our countries remain equally committed to political solutions. In Yemen, we support UN efforts toward an inclusive settlement and we condemn Houthi attacks on Saudi territory and international shipping. In Sudan, we call for an end to the conflict and foreign interference, while preserving the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Anxious times test both nations and men. Most countries tend to retreat before the storm, settling for attempts to limit the damage, while accepting a future existence in a world shaped by others. Other countries choose to rise to their national and international responsibilities, participating in the effort to emerge from the tensions and shape the world that follows. This requires an accurate reading of the root causes of crises and the effective management of leverage, all within a vision that aligns with the people's aspirations for stability, progress, and prosperity. The state visit by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to France falls

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within the choice of not surrendering to the storm and seeking pillars of stability, in pursuit of a less anxious world in both the Middle East and Europe, as interests and destinies are interconnected between the two regions. Today, the world resembles a giant airplane that has slipped into a long stretch of unprecedented turbulence. The most difficult aspect of the journey is the absence of safety valves. International legitimacy watches helplessly as major threats loom over security, stability, and the global economy. This is accompanied by the absence of a minimum consensus within the club of major powers, particularly after two of its members became embroiled in wars that are difficult to resolve by military means alone. In Paris, a visitor senses that Europe and the Middle East share a deep anxiety over the current international landscape, which forebodes exceptional risks. Europe is living through its most difficult experience since the Second World War. Five years ago, Russian forces invaded Ukraine, and all efforts to achieve a ceasefire have so far failed. It is a war that has forced the old continent to reconsider Russia as no longer a reliable partner, nor one whose ambitions can be predicted. For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the phrase “the Russian threat” has reappeared in discussions among diplomats and generals. A French diplomat who worked for a long time in the Middle East believes that Donald Trump's return to the White House shook the system of international relations due to his approach based on surprises, deals, shocks, and shifts outside the previous lexicon and its constraints. He pointed to the stinging remarks Trump directed at the NATO alliance and Europe, as well as a series of disputes with its major countries. Thus, Europe discovered that it no longer has the right to sleep soundly on the American pillow if its security is threatened, and that it must modernize its arsenals and go far in spending on them. Added to Europe's anxiety over its security and relations with the US is deep international concern over the continuous flow of oil and gas and global trade routes. Turning the Strait of Hormuz into a hostage in the hands of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps generals is an extremely dangerous development for regional countries and the entire global economy. Furthermore, the ambiguity surrounding the US-Iran confrontation and its potential outcomes reinforces fears of establishing new norms that could lead to permanent instability. The diplomat said that Europe is questioning its future position in light of American behavior, Russian hard-lining, and the rise of China. It is questioning its position alongside its security, economy, ability to compete, and the protection of its interests. He considered it natural for Middle Eastern countries to also question their future amid Iran's destabilization project, the reckless policy of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, economic failure in some countries, and the problems of fractured states elsewhere. He noted that the talks between the Saudi crown prince and French President Emmanuel Macron are of exceptional importance, especially as they come during a difficult time internationally, and across Europe and the Middle East. In recent years, Riyadh and Paris have demonstrated a mutual eagerness to deepen their existing relationship. This is natural, as both countries recognize each other's importance and what they can offer across various fields. France is an advanced industrial nation racing against time in the era of artificial intelligence and successive technological revolutions. It is a nuclear power that consolidates its leading role in Europe.

The Dangerous Myth of an “Islamic NATO”

Qamar Bashir



The consequences extend far beyond military affairs. The Strait of Hormuz has demonstrated once again how vulnerable the global economy remains to Middle Eastern conflict. At the other end of the Arabian Peninsula, insecurity around the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb has reinforced the same lesson. Energy security can no longer be separated from military security. Importing nations consequently have powerful incentives to diversify suppliers, shipping routes, strategic reserves and transportation infrastructure. Meanwhile, the United States itself is confronting growing fiscal pressure

ONE of the most consequential outcomes of the Iran war has been the emergence of new security arrangements across the Middle East and its surrounding regions. Among them, the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye deserves particular attention. Yet describing this arrangement as an “Islamic NATO” is misleading, unnecessarily provocative and potentially dangerous. It converts a developing defensive arrangement among three sovereign states into an ideological and religious bloc that its signatories themselves have not formally created. The agreement signed in Makkah on August 7 is certainly significant. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye have committed themselves to collective deterrence, including the important principle that an armed attack against one will be regarded as an attack against all three. Their official statement speaks of historical ties, Islamic solidarity, shared strategic interests and defence cooperation. But its declared objectives are collective security, deterrence, peace and regional stability. It is formally called the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement—not Islamic NATO. That distinction matters. Calling it an Islamic NATO immediately injects religion into what should primarily be understood as a strategic security arrangement. If this alliance must be called “Islamic NATO” because its three members are Muslim-majority countries, should NATO itself be described as “Christian NATO” because most of its members historically have Christian-majority populations? Clearly not. Modern alliances are normally defined by strategic interests, geography and shared security concerns rather than the religions practiced by their populations. The Makkah agreement should therefore be viewed in the extraordinary geopolitical environment from which it emerged. The Iran war has profoundly disturbed assumptions about security across the Middle East. Countries that once believed distant great powers could guarantee their security have been forced to reconsider how much strategic autonomy they require. Old relationships have been tested, new partnerships accelerated and previously improbable security arrangements have become conceivable. The transformation is especially visible in Syria. Türkiye's growing influence there has increasingly intersected with Israel's security calculations. Israeli strikes, Turkish objections and disputes over possible Turkish military activity have created an entirely new potential flash-point. An Israeli strike on Syria's Abu al-Duhur airbase this month produced sharp exchanges between Ankara and Israel, while Washington has been attempting to establish mechanisms preventing their competition inside Syria from escalating into direct confrontation. Only days later, Syria and Israel were again engaged in American-mediated talks intended to reduce tensions, including the danger that Israeli-Turkish rivalry could

spill further into Syrian territory. This illustrates just how dramatically the regional chessboard has changed: Syria is no longer merely an arena of the old Iran-Israel confrontation but increasingly a junction where Turkish, Israeli, Syrian, Arab and American security interests overlap. The war has simultaneously returned the Palestinian question to the centre of regional diplomacy and exposed tensions within relationships previously regarded as almost immune from strategic disagreement. It has forced governments from the Gulf to South Asia to reconsider whether traditional bilateral security relationships remain sufficient in an era of missiles, drones, cyberwarfare, disrupted shipping and rapidly shifting alliances. The consequences extend far beyond military affairs. The Strait of Hormuz has demonstrated once again how vulnerable the global economy remains to Middle Eastern conflict. At the other end of the Arabian Peninsula, insecurity around the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb has reinforced the same lesson. Energy security can no longer be separated from military security. Importing nations consequently have powerful incentives to diversify suppliers, shipping routes, strategic reserves and transportation infrastructure. Meanwhile, the United States itself is confronting growing fiscal pressure. Federal debt crossed \$40 trillion in August, according to Treasury data. Long-term borrowing costs have also risen sharply. The 10-year Treasury yield recently stood around 4.7%, while the 30-year moved above 5%. The average American 30-year fixed mortgage is approximately 6.7%. These are nevertheless painful levels for households purchasing homes and for businesses financing investment. War expenditure, energy prices, inflation expectations, fiscal deficits and debt-servicing costs can therefore reinforce one another. The geopolitical struggle is not taking place separately from economics; economics increasingly constitutes another battlefield. The international financial system is undergoing change as well. BRICS members and other countries have increasingly explored settlements using national currencies and alternative payment mechanisms. This greater diversification could gradually reduce Washington's extraordinary ability to translate control over financial networks into geopolitical leverage. This wider transformation helps explain why the Makkah agreement has attracted so much attention. Pakistan contributes nuclear deterrence, a large professional military and substantial operational experience. Türkiye possesses NATO's second-largest military and a rapidly expanding indigenous defence industry. Saudi Arabia contributes immense financial capacity, strategic geography and political weight in both the Arab and Islamic worlds. Together they represent a potentially formidable combination. But potential should not be confused with maturity. NATO has existed for more than seven decades. It possesses integrated military planning, command struc-

tures, interoperability standards, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, permanent institutions and decades of combined exercises. The Makkah arrangement is at the beginning of its institutional development. Treating the two as equivalent therefore exaggerates the capabilities of the new agreement while simultaneously misrepresenting its purpose. Indeed, serious strategic analysis has described the agreement as evidence of a broader regional realignment while also emphasizing unresolved questions about how its collective-defence commitment would operate in practice. Its members should now remove those ambiguities. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye should publicly define the agreement's defensive character, institutional mechanisms and geographical scope. They should make clear that it is directed neither against Iran nor Israel, neither against the United States nor Europe, and certainly not against Christianity, Judaism or any other religion. Where their strategic interests permit, cooperation with additional states should be based on common security requirements rather than religious identity. If Muslim states someday wish to construct an explicitly religion-based collective security architecture, the logical political forum for debating such an undertaking would be the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Makkah agreement is something different: a strategic defence arrangement among three sovereign countries responding to an increasingly unstable security environment. That distinction must be protected. The Iran war has accelerated changes already developing throughout the international system: greater strategic autonomy, new regional partnerships, competition over energy corridors, pressure on American fiscal power, experimentation with alternative financial arrangements, new tensions surrounding Syria and reassessment of traditional security guarantees. The Saudi-Pakistan-Türkiye agreement belongs within this much larger geopolitical transformation. Branding it an “Islamic NATO” reduces that complicated strategic evolution to religion. Worse, it risks manufacturing the very confrontation the agreement should help prevent—an imaginary world of Muslim alliances confronting Christian or Jewish alliances. The international media should exercise the same responsibility. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement deserves scrutiny, debate and even criticism. But it should be judged by its provisions, capabilities and conduct—not assigned a religious identity that its official name does not carry. The world already has enough geopolitical fault lines. It does not need another one manufactured between religions.

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

French-Saudi partnership seeks to promote stability

Patrick Maisonnave

This relationship has become a genuine strategic partnership. The visit of President Emmanuel Macron to Saudi Arabia in December 2024 was a milestone. It gave fresh momentum to our cooperation and reflected the ambition to make it global. The crown prince's visit to Paris is another opportunity to take new initiatives in the context of the first meeting of the French-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council. This council provides a framework for stronger cooperation in diplomacy, security and defense, investment, energy...

ON the occasion of his visit to France, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This visit takes place in a meaningful year, as France and Saudi Arabia celebrate the centenary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations. A century of dialogue, friendship, and cooperation has created a relationship built on trust, mutual respect, and a shared willingness to look to the future. This relationship has become a genuine strategic partnership. The visit of President Emmanuel Macron to Saudi Arabia in December 2024 was a milestone. It gave fresh momentum to our cooperation and reflected the ambition to make it global. The crown prince's visit to Paris is another opportunity to take new initiatives in the context of the first meeting of the French-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council. This council provides a framework for stronger cooperation in diplomacy, security and defense, investment, energy, culture, technology, and education. It also reflects the increasingly close political dialogue between France and Saudi Arabia at a time of profound changes in the world and the Middle East. Our two countries share one clear principle: Lasting stability can only be rooted in the sovereignty of states, the respect of international law, and the pursuit of political solutions. The crown prince's visit to Paris reflects the increasingly close political dialogue between France and Saudi Arabia at a time of profound changes in the world and the Middle East. We both share the objective of peace and stability for the region. Defending freedom of navigation embodies this common stance. Attacks on vessels and threats to maritime traffic in the Strait

of Hormuz and the Red Sea are unacceptable. Restoring normal navigation, free of unlawful restrictions, tolls or interference, is essential for the Gulf and the global economy. France and Saudi Arabia have worked closely together to restore a political horizon and make the two-state solution a concrete objective rather than a distant aspiration. We believe it is the only path to end the tragedy of the Palestinian people which remains at the heart of our concerns. These efforts were embodied by the New York Declaration of July 2025, which displayed the leading role our countries play when they unite their forces. Across the region, our countries remain equally committed to political solutions. In Yemen, we support UN efforts toward an inclusive settlement and we condemn Houthi attacks on Saudi territory and international shipping. In Sudan, we call for an end to the conflict and foreign interference, while preserving the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In Syria, we support unity, stability, and economic recovery, including through practical initiatives such as the new Saudi-Syrian-French business council. Last, but not least, we are cooperating to find a durable solution for the benefit of the Lebanese people, which can only be achieved by strengthening the state, disarming nonstate actors, and dismissing external interference. Our partnership, however, is not only defined by regional crises. It is, first and foremost, a partnership for growth and prosperity. France and Saudi Arabia have worked closely together to restore a political horizon and make the two-state solution a concrete objective rather than a distant aspiration.

Bilateral trade reached 8.3 billion (SR36 billion) in 2025, reflecting the strength and diversity of our economic relationship. Vision 2030 has opened new opportunities in defense, infrastructure, energy, tourism, culture, transport, healthcare, and technology. I commend the dedication of French companies to the Kingdom's transformation. Thanks to their continuously growing investments, they have become a major employer for the Saudi youth. The Riyadh Expo 2030 will offer another exceptional opportunity. France will be proud to participate and intends to make its commitment a major moment in our bilateral relationship, mobilizing French companies, institutions, expertise, and creativity on the way to the event and during this amazing moment to come. Political trust between our two countries and personal confidence between the French president and Saudi crown prince have made these outstanding results possible. I am especially proud that the French Republic and the Kingdom have become strong allies acting together wherever regional and international challenges are at stake. As we mark 100 years of diplomatic relations, France and Saudi Arabia are not only celebrating where they come from. We are also looking ahead. Challenges are great, indeed. But our partnership aims at building the next chapter, promoting stability, supporting economic transformation, strengthening dialogue between our peoples, and ambitiously contributing to a more peaceful and more prosperous region for the benefit of the world.

– Patrick Maisonnave is the Ambassador of France to Saudi Arabia

Briefs

PM Shehbaz
for enhanced
investment...

FROM PAGE 01
economic cooperation and investment between the two brotherly countries. Welcoming the Saudi delegation, the Prime Minister said that in line with the vision of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Pakistan was keen to elevate its economic relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia into a mutually beneficial strategic economic partnership. In this regard, he recalled Prince Mansour's earlier visits to Pakistan and expressed the hope that the current visit would build on those discussions and culminate in the signing of MoUs and agreements across multiple sectors. The Saudi side conveyed interest in investment opportunities in agriculture, ports, highways, and airport outsourcing, real estate sector as well as in the energy, power distribution, and information technology sectors. The Prime Minister welcomed Saudi interest in investments in these priority areas and conveyed that this was the most opportune time for joint collaboration between the two countries, both in G2G as well as B2B cooperation. Prince Mansour thanked the Prime Minister for the warm reception and reaffirmed the Saudi government's and business community's continued interest in deepening business-to-business engagement with Pakistan. The delegation is meeting with a number of senior government representatives and private-sector stakeholders during its stay in Pakistan. Federal Ministers Rana Tanveer Hussain, Dr. Musadik Malik, Jam Kamal Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Attaullah Tarar, Junaid Anwar Chaudhury, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Sardar Awais Ahmed Leghari, and Muhammad Hanif Abbasi; Advisors Muhammad Ali and Haroon Akhtar Khan; Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani; SAPM Tariq Fatemi; and senior government officials attended the meeting.

AJK Speaker,
deputy
speaker
take oath

FROM PAGE 01
14 from the PPP – who had taken oath on Monday participated in the polling. Farooq, elected from LA-7 (Bhimber City), secured 32 votes, while Majeed, elected from LA-2 (Chakswari), received 13 votes, with one PPP vote being rejected. The rejected vote was reportedly cast by PPP lawmaker ZobiaKhurshid Raja, who was elected to a women's reserved seat through a draw of lots after her votes had equalled those of PML-N candidate Rif-fatAbid. After Majeed and some other PPP lawmakers pointed out that Raja's vote had been rejected, she reportedly told a colleague that she had marked a tick rather than a cross on the ballot paper. Farooq was then administered the oath by his predecessor. PML-N leader Raja FarooqHaider, whose camaraderie with Akbar is well known, paid rich tribute to him for running the House smoothly. He highlighted that he and Akbar were the last members of the outgoing Assembly who had also been elected in 1985, following the restoration of democracy in AJK and Pakistan. PPP regional president Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin also paid what he described as a "big tribute" to Akbar, praising his unflinching commitment to the PPP and democracy. Farooq later conducted the election for deputy speaker, which was won by Qadri with 32 votes. Interestingly, Lone also secured 13 votes, with one PPP vote being rejected again, prompting speculation within the party about whether the rejection was deliberate rather than accidental. Farooq then administered the oath to Qadri as deputy speaker. Both Qadri and Lone belong to Kashmiri refugee constituencies – the former from Rawalpindi and the latter from Karachi. The PML-N had reportedly earlier decided to field Raja Asif of LA-11 (Sehnsa) for the slot, but he declined the offer.

England drop Carse for
2nd Test against Pakistan

"Cricket Regulator will investigate events on Saturday night in Derby," says ECB

DNA

LONDON: England fast bowler Brydon Carse has been dropped from the squad for the second Test against Pakistan following an investigation into an incident at a club in Derby, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Monday. "Following a referral from the ECB, the Cricket Regulator has confirmed that they will investigate events on Saturday night in Derby," the ECB said in a statement. "Brydon Carse will no longer be available for selection for the second men's test while this investigation is ongoing and the full facts are obtained." Carse, who did not play in the opening test victory at Headingley, will be replaced by Sonny Baker. Videos circulated on social media appearing to show the 31-year-old Durham bowler in handcuffs being spoken to by police officers outside a venue. According to reports, Carse was not arrested and no charges were brought. It has been a busy summer for England's Cricket Regulator, the body set up to investigate matters where there is an allegation of a breach of the ECB's code of conduct.



In June it concluded an investigation into former test captain Ben Stokes and fast bowler Gus Atkinson after a nightclub incident following the first test against New Zealand. Both were left out of the second test before the Regulator ruled that there was insufficient evidence to establish that any regulatory breach occurred. The latest investigation comes five days after England's returning test captain Joe Root spoke of the players being "really good role models and human beings" following a series of incidents and accusations of a drinking culture. Controversy has followed England around in recent times with off-field issues during last winter's tours, including Harry Brook being fined £30,000 (\$41,000) following an altercation in Wellington as well as reports of drinking during a mid-Ashes series trip to Noosa. Stokes retired from international cricket after returning for the third test against New Zealand and Brendon McCullum was sacked as test coach.

Double Dutch delight as Bergwijn
nets hat-trick and Reijnders bags
first Saudi Pro League goal

RIYADH: On Friday, much of the talk in Saudi football was about the apparent return of Al-Ittihad's fighting spirit. A 1-0 away win against Al-Qadsiah, despite playing half the match with 10 men, was unexpected even among the Tigers fans. The victory rekindled their hopes after a 1-1 home draw in the opening game of the Saudi Pro League season, against Al-Khoolod, had sparked fears of a repeat of their dreadful start to last season. They were back in action on Monday night, in front of a reenergized home crowd, but although they claimed all three points with 3-2 victory over Al-Hazem, they had to fight tooth and nail for them. Al-Ittihad started the match in complete control, exploiting gaps either side of the Al-Hazem center-backs to deliver precise through balls to Marwan Al-Sahafi and Youssef En-Nesyri. One of En-Nesyri's at-

tempts was ruled out for offside and he spurned another when inside. Yet for all their dominance, the first goal did not come from the men in yellow and black. It took just a moment for Al-Ittihad's shape to unravel. Al-Hazem's midfield pounced on a clearance and striker Afimico Puluu received the ball on the flank, drawing Danilo Pereira out of position before delivering a low cross for Abdulaziz Al-Dwehe to tap home in the 18th minute. Al-Ittihad were patient in the build-up as they searched for an equalizer, before their trademark through passes into the channels carried them to a 2-1 lead before half-time. The first goal came after Houssein Aouar released Steven Bergwijn in the 34th minute and the Dutchman finished powerfully to level the scores. Seven minutes later, Al-Sahafi was slipped through on goal only to be

brought down for a penalty. Bergwijn stepped up and converted it for his brace. Al-Ittihad manager Jens Wissing made two half-time changes but the move initially seemed to backfire. Al-Hazem dominated the opening stages of the second half, during which they had a goal ruled out for offside in the 49th minute, before drawing level on the hour mark when Jan-Carlo Simic was beaten in the air to a cross by Sofiane Bendekka. In-form George Ilenikhena and Saudi national team striker Saleh Al-Shehri came on for Al-Ittihad soon after, but it was a defensive error from Al-Hazem that handed them their third. As Danilo rose for a header, the ball struck Abdulrahman Al-Dakheel's hand, prompting a review by the video assistant referee that ultimately confirmed a second penalty for the Tigers in the 81st minute.

The decision was a talking point on social media; it was not the first or even second match this season in which a team had received two or more penalties. Bergwijn once again stepped up to complete his hat-trick, driving home a powerful penalty a la Dominik Szoboszlai, and seal victory for the Tigers. Al-Qadsiah, meanwhile, bounced back after their defeat on Friday with a 2-0 victory over Neom, in what amounted to a battle of new-era clubs, both of which have recorded top-half finishes since joining the top flight. Tijani Reijnders opened his account for Al-Qadsiah on his first full appearance. In the 29th minute, Gaston Alvarez evaded pressure with a moment of skill before releasing Reijnders in the final third, and the Dutch international struck from outside the box to give Brendan Rodgers' side the lead. –APP

12,000 athletes
expected for Jiu-Jitsu
Championship

ABU DHABI: Over 12,000 international athletes are expected to take part in the 18th Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship from Nov. 9 to 21. Preparations are currently underway, with the organizing committee overseeing registration and accreditation before attention turns to competition, warm-up areas, medical services, crowd management, and security. Fans can expect expanded activities for families and children, alongside new initiatives and interactive experiences. The Fitness District and other features from previous editions will return with further additions. Mohamed Salem Al-Dhaheeri, vice chairman of the UAE Jiu-Jitsu and Mixed Martial Arts Federation and chairman of the organizing committee, said preparations are at an advanced stage. "The strong interest in registration shows the global standing of the championship. It also gives us a greater responsibility to continue improving the event and providing the best possible experience for athletes, academics and fans," he said. "We are working closely with our partners across all areas, including security and safety, medical services, media operations and the fan experience," Al-Dhaheeri added. "Early planning and close coordination are very important for an event that runs for 13 days." He said the competition has grown over "nearly two decades and has become an important event for generations of athletes and academics. It has also played an important role in strengthening Abu Dhabi's position as the world capital of jiu-jitsu." Mohammed Al-Marzooqi, board member of the federation and vice chairman of the organizing committee, said: "We are working with our partners on new initiatives to improve the experience for athletes and fans." He added: "Responsibilities have been assigned, and we have clear processes in place to monitor preparations and make sure all areas are ready." – APP

Iran says
field
marshal
visit quite
successful

FROM PAGE 01

During the meetings, both sides agreed to expand collaboration in defense, trade, and cultural sectors, laying the groundwork for long-term cooperation. Syed Mehdi Tabatabai described the visit as a "valuable diplomatic success," noting that Pakistan and Iran's relations have entered a new phase of mutual trust and progress. He further added that the outcomes of the visit will soon begin to materialize, particularly in areas such as economic partnerships, energy projects, and security coordination. This visit comes at a crucial time when shifting geopolitical dynamics in the region demand stronger alliances. Analysts believe that the diplomatic achievements of Field Marshal Munir's trip will not only strengthen Pakistan-Iran relations but also contribute to broader regional peace and development.

Saudi
Arabia's trade
surplus holds
at \$4.8b

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia retained a merchandise trade surplus of about \$R18 billion (\$4.8 billion) in June, as a decline in imports partly cushioned a slowdown in exports, official data showed. The General Authority for Statistics reported that merchandise exports fell 4.5 percent in June from a year earlier, while imports declined 3 percent. The merchandise trade surplus narrowed 10 percent from June 2025. Oil exports, which accounted for 72 percent of total exports, fell 2.3 percent, while their share of the export mix rose from 70.4 percent a year earlier. The figures came as Saudi Arabia adapted its trade and energy flows to a major regional disruption. With the conflict between the US and Iran affecting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the Kingdom increased use of alternative routes, including its Red Sea infrastructure.

In its latest report, GASTAT stated: "Non-oil exports, including re-exports, recorded a decrease of 9.7 percent compared to June 2025, while national non-oil exports, excluding re-exports, decreased by 11.4 percent." The value of re-exported goods fell 6.7 percent in June, driven largely by a 41.7 percent drop in machinery, electrical equipment and parts, which accounted for 36.1 percent of total re-exports. Among non-oil goods, plastics, rubber and related articles remained the largest export category, accounting for 20.7 percent of total non-oil exports, although shipments fell 12.8 percent from a year earlier. Chemical products and allied industries accounted for 19.2 percent and declined 30.4 percent. On the import side, machinery, electrical equipment and parts was the largest category at 25.7 percent of total imports, down 20.4 percent from June 2025. Chemical products and allied industries followed at 11.2 percent, rising 30.5 percent year on year. – APP

UAE debt
market hits
\$320b: Fitch

RIYADH: The UAE's debt capital market grew 3 percent year on year to about \$320 billion outstanding at the end of the first half of 2026, while US dollar debt issuance reached \$24 billion, according to Fitch Ratings. US dollar issuance during the six-month period was 40 percent higher than in the second half of 2025. Fitch expects the market to expand moderately over the remainder of 2026 and in 2027, supported by funding diversification, financing needs across sectors and regulatory reforms. Fitch forecasts consolidated UAE government debt to rise to 25 percent of gross domestic product in 2026 from 22.7 percent in 2025, while banks and corporates are expected to continue issuing opportunistically. The UAE's debt-market expansion comes amid continued growth in Gulf capital markets, as governments and companies turn to bonds and sukuk to diversify funding sources and meet financing needs. –APP

Abu Dhabi to host first Euroleague
Basketball Super Cup

ABU DHABI: The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi and Euroleague Basketball have announced the launch of the Euroleague Basketball SuperCup, a new competition that will officially open the European club basketball season. The first edition will take place at Etihad Arena on Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, on Sept. 18-19. The SuperCup is an exciting addition to Euroleague Basketball's competition portfolio, creating an annual event featuring elite European club basketball while further expanding the league's global footprint. Hosting the first competition in Abu Dhabi highlights the emirate's growing involvement in international basketball. The inaugural SuperCup will bring together four top clubs – reigning EuroLeague champions Olympiacos Piraeus, 2025 EuroLeague champions Fenerbahce Tarfin Istanbul, 2026 finalists Real Madrid and Dubai Basketball, representing the UAE, for a two-day event that will officially open the European club basketball season. The competition will follow a final four format, with two games each day. On Friday, Sept. 18, Olympiacos Piraeus will take on Fenerbahce Tarfin Istanbul at 6 p.m. with Dubai Basketball facing Real Madrid at 9 p.m. The tournament concludes on Saturday, Sept. 19 with the game to determine

third place beginning at 6 p.m. and the first EuroLeague Basketball SuperCup Final taking place at 9 p.m. All timings given are Gulf Standard Time. Director-General for Tourism at the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi Saleh Mohamed Al-Geziry, said: "The first edition of the Euroleague Basketball SuperCup is another milestone in Abu Dhabi's long-term partnership with Euroleague Basketball and reflects our shared ambition to grow the game while creating world-class experiences for fans. "Bringing four elite clubs to Abu Dhabi to open the new season further strengthens the emirate's position as a global destination for elite sporting events, while generating lasting value for our visitor economy, local businesses and communities. As we continue to expand our international sporting calendar, events such as the SuperCup play an important role in inspiring the next generation of players and bringing global audiences to Abu Dhabi." Building on the success of the EuroLeague Final Four in Abu Dhabi, the new SuperCup represents the next chapter in the long-term partnership between Euroleague Basketball and DCT Abu Dhabi. Dejan Bodiroga, president of Euroleague Basketball, said: "The launch of the Euroleague Basketball SuperCup marks an exciting new chapter for European club basketball. – DNA

Canada to announce retaliatory tariffs

TORONTO: Canada will announce retaliatory tariffs against the United States on Tuesday after relations deteriorated sharply Monday, with President Donald Trump telling Canadian leaders to "fall in line" or face consequences "far WORSE" than existing tariffs and Prime Minister Mark Carney accusing Washington of trying to subordinate Canada. Trump also threatened new 50 percent tariffs on Canadian vehicles, auto parts and steel, while Carney said US trade demands showed Washington wanted to "destroy our major industries," including autos, steel and aluminum. Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne and three other Cabinet ministers are scheduled to unveil Canada's response Tuesday morning. Carney said earlier Monday that Canada may need to move away from matching US tariffs dollar for dollar and instead use more targeted retaliation aimed at protecting Canadian workers and businesses. "An attitude at the negotiation table that Canada is a subsidiary of the United States" is "not something we're going to accept," Carney said. Carney was even more blunt in French. "We learned during the negotiations that the Americans want to destroy our major industries, including autos, steel and aluminum," Carney said. "That was one of the main reasons we said no. It was a bad deal." The fiery words from both sides show how US-Canada relations have deteriorated since Carney walked away from trade negotiations with the Trump administration late Friday, triggering the president's threatened 50 percent tariffs the next day on about \$20 billion worth of Canadian goods.

Canada and the United States share one of the world's largest trading relationships, with deeply integrated supply chains across autos, energy, agriculture and manufacturing, making a prolonged trade fight potentially costly for businesses and workers on both sides of the border. Carney cast doubt on the US's dependability, saying Canada was finding reliable partners "everywhere in the world, except in the United States. Except in the United States. And Russia." Trump unleashes personal attacks on Canadian leaders On Monday, Trump came back with further tariffs, warning that he would impose them on Canada's auto industry beginning next year. "Canada has been ripping off the United States of America for years," Trump wrote on social media, criticizing what he called the country's "ridiculously high tariffs" on American farmers. Carney said Washington's auto-sector proposals would gradually have the effect of dismantling Canadian production. "This is the most successful automotive partnership in history," Carney said, referring to the deeply integrated Canada-US industry. Meanwhile, Ontario Premier Doug Ford unleashed his own tirade. In an interview with The Associated Press, he said Trump had underestimated Canadians' willingness to endure economic pain rather than give in to US pressure. "We're all in," Ford said. "Up here, we're at a fever pitch; everyone's in for an economic war. They know they're going to have to sacrifice." Trump responded in a social media post by attacking Ford personally, calling him "the less charismatic, intelligent, and overall un-

impressive brother of the late, great, Rob Ford," and once again referring to Canada's prime minister as "Governor Carney." Ford dismissed the insults: "If you think an insult from him hurts me? Well, bring it on, buddy, I'm ready." Ford is a Progressive Conservative whose party differs from that of Carney, a Liberal, but the two underscore broad political unity in Canada over the trade fight with Trump. Ford threatens critical minerals and electricity Ford said "everything is on the table" if the dispute worsens, including cutting off electricity and critical minerals from Ontario. Critical minerals are increasingly important to US national security and manufacturing. The Pentagon has sought more secure supplies of minerals used in military aircraft, missiles, munitions and electronics as Washington tries to reduce reliance on China, which dominates the mining or processing of several strategically important minerals. Ford said Canada should also consider increasingly severe retaliation if Trump continues targeting Canadian industries, including oil and potash, while Ontario could raise electricity prices or stop sending power south. "We power 1.5 million homes and businesses," Ford said. "Everything's on the table. I'll do whatever it takes." Ford has used electricity as leverage before. During an earlier phase of the dispute, Ontario imposed a 25 percent surcharge on electricity exported to Michigan, Minnesota and New York. Trump responded by threatening to double tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum before both sides backed away. Auto industry becomes a cen-

tral battleground Ford accused Trump of not simply seeking a better trade deal but aiming to hollow out Canadian industries and move production south. Ford said Trump wants to make Canada a vassal state. "He wants to bleed out every single sector and bring them down to the US," Ford said. The auto sector is especially important to Ontario, the center of Canada's vehicle manufacturing industry. Plants and suppliers in Ontario are tightly integrated with factories in Michigan and other US states, with parts routinely crossing the border multiple times during production. Automakers including Ford, General Motors and Stellantis operate major assembly plants in Ontario, and the wider supply chain supports tens of thousands of jobs. Trump's new threat of a 50 percent tariff on Canadian vehicles and parts puts that sector directly at the center of the escalating dispute. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said Monday that "the only reason Canada has auto production in the first place" was because of the 1960s Auto Pact, under which Canada used access to its market to encourage vehicle production north of the border. Ford says he opposed preliminary deal Ford also disclosed that he had opposed the preliminary agreement Carney was considering before Canada walked away from negotiations, and that he was unwilling to restore American liquor to Ontario store shelves as part of an agreement. "I wasn't going to put the booze back on the shelves," Ford said. "I was ready to go out there and call a press conference ... and say I'm not buckling over." – APP

Briefs

Indonesians
brave
choking
smoke to
pray for rain

PALEMBANG: Authorities in Indonesia's South Sumatra, the province with the highest number of wildfire hot spots, turned to spiritual measures on Tuesday as huge blazes in central and western regions scorched wide areas of forests and peatland, creating a choking haze that blanketed some cities in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country. The prayer gathering initiative comes as the province faces prolonged dry weather that has heightened the risk of forest and peatland fires. The latest satellite data from the Environment Ministry showed South Sumatra recorded the highest number of hot spots nationwide with 1,429, followed by West Kalimantan with 1,226 and Central Kalimantan with 811. Forestry Ministry data indicated that nearly 940 square kilometers (363 square miles) were burned in July alone, including over 20 square kilometers (8 square miles) in South Sumatra province. About 3,000 residents gathered in Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra province, to perform a special Islamic prayer for rain, known as "salat istisqa." They prayed shoulder to shoulder in the courtyard of the governor's office as thick smoke shrouded roads, buildings and public facilities, reducing visibility and forcing motorists to drive with their headlights on during the day. "We have done everything we can and worked closely with all relevant parties," South Sumatra Gov. Herman Deru said before the prayer. "As people of faith, we are also praying to God to send rain so that life can return to normal." He also said the public prayer would complement ongoing fire-fighting and drought-mitigation measures and serve as a moment for residents to unite in confronting the environmental challenges facing the province. Emergency services have been battling fires driven by an intensifying El Nino pattern and a prolonged dry season, generating dense smoke that crossed into Malaysia and Brunei, according to the National Disaster Management Agency.—APP

Tornado
tears through
French village,
dozens injured

POMAS, FRANCE: A tornado tore through a village in southwestern France on Monday, injuring 41 people and damaging hundreds of homes, authorities said. French authorities had placed swathes of the country's southwest on orange alert for storms, and numerous areas were hit by power outages and transport chaos. In the Aude department, officials cancelled the third stage of the Vuelta a Espana cycling race, which was being held in the area, when a hailstorm forced riders to seek shelter. The tornado hit hardest in the village of Pomas, population 1,000, damaging an estimated 300 homes, in some cases ripping their roofs off. More than 120 emergency workers were deployed to the scene, local authorities said. Fifteen of the injured were taken to hospital. They included a pregnant woman who was hurt when her house collapsed on her, her husband told AFP. The national weather service, Météo-France, said winds had reached up to 117 kilometres (73 miles) per hour in the nearby village of Arquettes-en-Val. Storms across southern France upended the transportation network, delaying trains, forcing road closures, and causing delays and cancellations at airports in Bordeaux, Marseille, Nice, Toulouse and even Paris to the north, said Transport Minister Philippe Tabarot. An estimated 2,800 homes were left without electricity across 10 villages, officials said. France sees several dozen tornadoes per year on average. The impact of global warming on their frequency and intensity is unclear, according to Météo-France.—APP

Jam directs stronger efforts
to expand Pak's exports

Jam Kamal Khan directed the Foreign Trade Wings to prepare country-specific action plans covering priority products, market-access barriers, logistics and banking challenges, potential buyers and pending institutional engagements. He stressed that trade agreements must provide balanced and commercially meaningful benefits to Pakistan. Existing arrangements should be regularly evaluated, while pending Joint Trade Committee and Joint Working Group meetings should be expedited

DNA

ISLAMABAD:: Pakistan's commerce minister on Tuesday ordered officials to draw up country-specific plans to expand exports, targeting new buyers and bottlenecks ranging from market access to banking and logistics as Islamabad seeks to diversify its overseas trade. The plans will identify priority products for individual markets, potential buyers and barriers facing Pakistani exporters, while the government will also review existing trade agreements and accelerate pending talks with partner countries, the commerce ministry said. "Pakistan's exporters have demonstrated strong potential in both traditional and emerging markets," Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan said in a statement. "Our focus must be on removing barriers, diversifying exports and converting every trade engagement into measurable economic gains." The directives came during a review of Pakistan's export performance, bilateral trade engagements and progress on trade agreements with the commerce ministry's Foreign Trade Wings. Pakistan has long sought to broaden an export base dominated by a relatively small number of products and markets, leaving overseas earnings vulnerable to shifts in demand and costs in key destinations. The latest push comes as exporters also grapple with higher costs of reaching overseas markets amid regional trade and shipping disruptions. Khan said officials should seek new



opportunities for Pakistani rice, textiles, agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, processed food, light engineering goods and services. The country-specific plans would assess market-access barriers and logistics and banking problems alongside potential buyers and outstanding government-to-government trade engagements, according to the ministry. The minister

also ordered officials to examine whether Pakistan's existing trade agreements were delivering balanced and commercially meaningful benefits. Pending meetings of Joint Trade Committees and Joint Working Groups with trading partners should be expedited, the ministry said, without identifying the countries involved or giving a timetable. The government has increasingly sought to use bilateral diplo-

macy to open markets for Pakistani goods and attract investment as it attempts to generate more foreign exchange through exports rather than rely on external financing. Khan called for closer coordination between the commerce and foreign ministries, Pakistani missions overseas, chambers of commerce and trade associations to turn diplomatic engagements into export and investment opportunities.

Moody's upgrade signals
growing global confidence: RCCI

RAWALPINDI: President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaukat, has welcomed Moody's Ratings' decision to upgrade Pakistan's sovereign credit rating from Caa1 to B3, terming it an encouraging sign of growing international confidence in the country's economic policies and reform agenda. In a statement on Tuesday, RCCI President Usman Shaukat said that the upgrade was particularly encouraging despite the enormous challenges posed by multilateral and global uncertainty, including the ongoing conflict in the region and tensions involving Iran and the United States. He said the recognition of Pakistan's improving economic conditions by leading international financial institutions and credit rating agencies was a welcome development and could help strengthen investor confidence, improve access to international financing and create greater opportunities for the private sector. "Moody's upgrade reflects the progress made toward macroeconomic stabilization, improved fiscal management and strengthening of Pakistan's external position", Usman observed and termed it a positive signal as the international financial community is taking note of these developments. He underlined that Moody's had highlighted the steady buildup of foreign exchange reserves, lower domestic financing costs following monetary easing and improvements in fiscal conditions as key factors behind the upgrade. Usman said that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves reached around \$17 billion by the end of July 2026, compared with approximately \$14 billion a year earlier. He emphasized that the upgrade should not lead to complacency. "Pakistan must continue implementing structural reforms, broaden its tax base, improve governance, enhance debt affordability and create an environment conducive to private investment and high-productivity economic growth", he urged. The RCCI President expressed hope that continued economic reforms and policy consistency would lead to further improvements in Pakistan's credit profile and reinforce international confidence in the country's economic future.—DNA

CCP approves IGI
investments

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the acquisition of shareholding in Akzo Nobel Pakistan Limited by IGI Investments (Private) Limited from ICI Omicron B.V., following a Phase-I competition assessment. IGI Investments, a wholly owned subsidiary of IGI Holdings Limited, is incorporated in Pakistan and serves as the strategic investment arm of the IGI Group. It serves as the Group's strategic investment arm and manages key investments, including the acquisition and holding of equity and debt securities, said a release issued here on Tuesday. Akzo Nobel Pakistan Limited is engaged in the manufacture and sale of coatings in Pakistan. For the purpose of its assessment, the CCP identified decorative coatings (paint) and industrial coatings as the relevant product markets, with Pakistan as the relevant geographic market. The seller, ICI Omicron B.V., is a private limited liability company incorporated in the Netherlands and a subsidiary of Akzo Nobel N.V. It serves as a holding investment vehicle for investments in the decorative and industrial coatings markets. The CCP's assessment found that the proposed transaction would not give rise to any horizontal overlap or vertical relationship in the relevant markets in Pakistan. Consequently, the transaction would not result in any increase in market share or market concentration. The Commission further observed that the relevant market is fragmented and the transaction is unlikely to create entry barriers, materially enhance the market power of the merger parties, impede existing or potential competitors, or result in the exclusion of competitors or a substantial lessening of competition. Accordingly, the Commission concluded that the transaction would not create or strengthen a dominant position in the relevant market and authorised it under Section 31 of the Competition Act, 2010. The Commission also noted that certain ancillary restrictions contained in the agreement may require exemption under Section 5 of the Competition Act, read with the Competition Commission (Exemption) Regulations, 2020.—DNA



BUKHARA: Presidents and First Ladies of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan visited Poi-Kalyan Complex in Bukhara.

Trees 'giving up': climate change
hammers gardens

HAMPTON COURT: At Hampton Court Palace, head gardener Graham Dillamore strode across the burnt beige grass in the spectacular formal gardens southwest of London, laid out in the 17th century. "If we have a summer like this next year, by God, it's going to be a struggle," said Dillamore, who has spent more than 20 years tending the gardens of the Baroque and Tudor red-brick palace where King Henry VIII once caroused. Created by master designers such as Lancelot "Capability" Brown and William Kent, the gardens of stately homes such as Hampton Court, Blenheim Palace, and Chatsworth House are among England's top visitor attractions. But their historic style of planting and ancient trees are being hammered by climate change — including record heatwaves and drought this summer. Gardeners told AFP they were not embarrassed by straw-like lawns — feeling visitors, also facing water restrictions, are understanding — but the concern is for the long-term consequences and keeping the spirit of their gardens alive. Mature trees that take decades to establish are drooping, and some have leaves turning brown in August in a stress reaction to excessive heat. "Some of these trees have actually given up. They're not going to come back, they're finished," said Dillamore, who also oversees gardens at Kensing-

ton Palace, the official London residence of Prince William and his wife, Catherine. "We're losing mature tree stock and that's tragic in a historic garden." "We've already lost trees," said Rosie Fyles, head of gardens at Chiswick House in west London, whose Kent-designed shady lawns dotted with statues and cedars of Lebanon date back to the 18th century. Suffering most are trees "we really associate with an English garden or an English landscape," she said: oaks, sycamores, birch, limes. "I think there's only so much stress they can withstand," said the gardener, who tends 1,800 trees. It is not practicable to water mature trees, gardeners explained. At Chiswick, staff were watering drooping camellias and lilacs, shrubs that normally thrive in sun. The garden has boosted its capacity to harvest rainwater, but its stocks ran out several months ago. "There's only so much we can intervene and control," said Fyles, admitting this was hard to accept as a professional gardener. "It's sobering. It means that we're having to think about what we plant going forward, what trees will be sustainable going forward in the future climate." I get the feeling we're in uncharted territory," said Dillamore. "I've never felt so uncertain about the future in historic gardens and landscapes as I do now." 'On the front line' Staff at historic gardens surveyed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund earli-

er this year all said climate change was having an impact — not just drought, but also heavy storms and excessive rain in winter that spawns fungus and bugs. Historic gardens are "really on the front line of climate change," said Drew Bannellick, the Heritage Fund's head of lands, seas and nature policy, and "the changes are happening actually quite quickly now." "We've seen sites that lost 80 percent of their tree cover," he told AFP. Climate modelling by researchers at the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew, a UNESCO World Heritage site, predicted that by 2090, 50 percent of their trees will be at risk of death. Historic gardens "must be protected and preserved," said Dillamore. "But they've also got to change over the next few years — otherwise we're going to lose them." And this calls for "some very, very difficult decisions," he admitted. Some are shifting to Mediterranean plants, Bannellick said, "more grasses, more herbaceous perennials that can survive the drought conditions." At Hampton Court, Dillamore pointed to vibrant pink flowers with bright green foliage. Garden designer Ann-Marie Powell created test beds of long-lived plants happy in high temperatures, including Siskiyou Pink plants, native to the southern United States. Planted in April, they look vigorous despite no automatic irrigation, as do other flowers such as daisy-like echinaceas from US prairies. **Agencies**

Israel threatens
to expel
Gazans over
kite-flying
'outrageous'

CAIRO: The United Nations on Tuesday slammed Israel's threat to expel people from areas where kites, drones and balloons are launched from in Gaza, lamenting "unacceptable rhetoric" coming from Israeli leaders. "On the threat of expulsion due to children's kite flying, I hope we can all agree that this is outrageous," UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva. Israel warned Hamas on Sunday that it would step up operations in Gaza if launches of kites, drones and balloons toward Israel continued, after a recent increase in such incidents. Hamas has denied responsibility. Israeli media reported that four kites were found in communities near the Gaza border on Saturday and one was shot down by the army on Sunday, bringing the total number recovered in recent days to around 10. The incidents have revived memories of waves of incendiary kites and balloons launched from Gaza in previous years, which sparked fires in agricultural lands in southern Israel. According to the reports, the Israeli military believes Hamas was behind the launches, which did not carry explosives, and may have been testing how Israel would respond. "Israel warns Hamas that if the launches toward Israel do not cease immediately, the IDF will take action to intensify targeted operations against those responsible. **Agencies**

Gaza
rescuers say
Israeli strikes
kill five,
including two
children

JERUSALEM: Gaza authorities said at least five people were killed by Israeli fire on Monday, including two children. Two Palestinians were killed at dawn when a tent was bombed in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, according to the civil defense rescue service, which operates under Hamas authority. A 10-year-old girl was also killed by Israeli artillery fire north of Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, according to the civil defense and the city's Nasser Hospital. The Israeli army told AFP it had no knowledge of the incidents. 0 seconds of 1 minute, 1 secondVolume 0%00:00 01:01 A four-year old was killed in an Israeli airstrike on Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, the civil defense said, adding that an "entire residential block was damaged as a result of the bombing" and that a mother and her child were rescued from under the rubble of another house. One person was killed and five others were injured in another airstrike in Khan Yunis, the rescue service told AFP.—**Agencies**

ME gas-fired
capacity
poised to
reach 530 GW

RIYADH: The Middle East is emerging as a major driver of the next global gas-turbine growth cycle, with the region's gas-fired capacity projected to rise from 385 gigawatts in 2025 to 530 GW by 2035, according to S&P Global Energy CERA. According to new data from S&P Global Energy CERA, the region's expansion is expected to outpace that of many other markets, supported by fuel switching, population growth and industrial expansion. While the US is leading the current surge in gas-turbine orders, the Middle East could shape the industry's long-term trajectory as electricity demand rises and power systems seek reliable capacity alongside growing renewable generation. That growth is underpinned by wider power-sector fundamentals. According to the International Energy Agency, gas-fired capacity across the Middle East and North Africa is on course to increase by more than 110 GW over the next decade, from about 350 GW in operation in 2024. Natural gas is expected to meet roughly half of the region's electricity-demand growth through 2035. —APP

Briefs

Punjab CM
departs for
Chian on a
four-day visit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, has departed on a four-day official visit to China. At the airport, Chinese Consul General Sun Yan was present to see her off. Upon arrival at Urumqi International Airport, she will be received by senior Chinese officials. Maryam Nawaz Sharif will begin her engagements at the Xinjiang State Guest House Conference Center, Kunlun Hall, where she will meet with a high-level delegation led by Chen Xiaojiang, Party Secretary of Xinjiang Province. She is also scheduled to hold meetings with He Zhongyu, Deputy Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Regional Committee, as well as representatives of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC). In honor of the Punjab delegation, a dinner will be hosted by He Zhongyu, Deputy Party Secretary and Political Commissioner of Xinjiang. During her stay, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif will reside at the Xinjiang State Guest House as an official guest of the Chinese government.

Gaza rescuers
say Israeli
strikes kill five

JERUSALEM: Gazan authorities said at least five people were killed by Israeli fire on Monday, including two children. Two Palestinians were killed at dawn when a tent was bombed in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, according to the civil defense rescue service, which operates under Hamas authority. A 10-year old girl was also killed by Israeli artillery fire north of Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, according to the civil defense and the city's Nasser Hospital. A four-year old was killed in an Israeli airstrike on Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, the civil defense said, adding that an "entire residential block was damaged as a result of the bombing" and that a mother and her child were rescued from under the rubble of another house. One person was killed and five others were injured in another airstrike in Khan Yunis, the rescue service told. In a separate incident, a security source in Gaza City told that "Israeli warplanes fired three missiles at a water desalination plant in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood ... destroying it." – APP

Three more Adiala
inmates seek
private treatment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At least three inmates of Adiala jail have approached the Islamabad High Court seeking treatment at private hospitals and greater access to their families, following the Supreme Court's recent order directing authorities to shift former prime minister Imran Khan to a private hospital for medical examination and treatment. The petitions before the IHC vindicate the government's concern that the SC order in Imran Khan's case could set a precedent for other prisoners to seek similar relief. The federal government, in its review petition before the Supreme Court, had argued that allowing a convict to receive treatment at a private hospital could disturb the existing prison system and trigger a "floodgate" of similar applications from other prisoners. The issue is now before the IHC, where Justice Muhammad Asif sought comments from the jail superintendent on petitions filed by prisoners Ilyas Khan, Muhammad Ismail Khan and Owais Altaf. The court also issued notices to prison authorities, and adjourned proceedings until Aug 27. During the hearing, Barrister Akhtar Chheena, representing Ismail Khan, said his client was suffering from haemophilia and had developed internal bleeding. He submitted that the prisoner had been taken to hospital around 10 times in the last two months, but his condition had not improved. According to the counsel, treatment for the particular condition was presently possible only at Shifa International Hospital. He relied upon the SC's recent ruling and argued that where a disease could not be treated at a government hospital, a prisoner could be shifted to a private facility, with the family bearing the cost of treatment. The counsel requested the court to constitute a medical board to determine whether the required treatment was available at a government hospital. He questioned whether a prisoner should be denied access to a private facility if a necessary procedure, including a liver transplant, was not available at a government hospital. The petition filed by Owais Altaf was also pressed before Justice Muhammad Asif. His lawyer, Syed Jafar, appeared through video link and submitted that the prisoner was suffering from fever and a heart ailment.

Pakistan seeks US funding in
shift from reliance on ChinaFinance minister outlines planned return to capital
markets borrowing to cut dependence on bilateral debt

MONITORING DESK

NEW YORK: Pakistan is focused on securing US financing as it plots a return to global capital markets, the country's finance minister has said, in a major shift after years of relying on state loans from China. Muhammad Aurangzeb told that the \$10bn swap line that Pakistan sought from Washington last month was intended to serve as "a confidence signal" to private investors, as Islamabad's military-backed government looks to capitalise on close ties to the Trump administration and accelerate international borrowing. He added that he saw a "very important role" for the Export-Import Bank of the United States (ExIm Bank) and the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), which he said had shown "risk appetite for Pakistan". "It's a combination of engagement with the US primarily to focus on trade and investment flows, and to help signalling with respect to international capital markets," he said. Aurangzeb said Islamabad had received "constructive engagement" from Washington over the \$10bn swap line and hoped to receive an answer "in the next couple of months". Cash-strapped Pakistan has reduced fiscal deficits, brought down inflation and rebuilt



reserves under the auspices of a \$7bn, three-year IMF programme approved in 2024. But GDP growth, estimated by the government at 3.7 per cent for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, remains insufficient to meet the needs of its fast-growing population and poverty levels have risen. Aurangzeb said the government wanted to stimulate exports to break the import-dependent country's perennial balance of payments crises. Pakistan's trade deficit

widened to a four-year high of \$39.5bn in the year to June, and exports fell.

"If you look at our last episode where we put the foot on the pedal by pumping liquidity, going for consumption-led growth. A former executive at Citibank and JPMorgan who has also run Pakistan's Habib Bank, Aurangzeb is keen to shift Pakistan's economy "from aid to trade and investment". He said ExIm Bank could finance sales of Boeing aircraft to the newly priva-

tised Pakistan International Airlines and help US companies to upgrade Pakistan's oil refineries, while DFC could take equity stakes in Pakistani conglomerates. Pakistan's armed forces chief and de facto leader Field Marshal Asim Munir has also forged a close personal bond with US President Donald Trump and helped facilitate peace talks with Iran – a link that Washington believes it can leverage to tilt Islamabad away from Beijing's orbit. China is by far Pakistan's largest creditor, holding 23 per cent of its \$129.7bn in total outstanding foreign debt as of 2024, according to World Bank figures published in December. Although Aurangzeb insisted that the choice between the US and China was "not an and-or discussion", he confirmed that Pakistan was not seeking additional financing from China at the moment. As part of the planned return to international borrowing, Pakistan last month appointed a consortium of banks with a three-year mandate to issue Eurobonds, another group to issue Islamic sukuk and a third to tap rupee-denominated, dollar-settled bonds. Standard Chartered and Citi are part of all three consortiums. Aurangzeb said Eurobond issuance would depend on the market pricing and maturity, but estimated Pakistan was "looking at \$1bn-\$2bn" this fiscal year.

Bitcoin rises above \$80,000 as
soft dollar, debasementfears
boost momentum

NEW YORK: Bitcoin rose above \$80,000 to hit a more than three-month high on Tuesday as a soft US dollar, in the wake of the moves by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to calm the bond market, revived momentum in the crypto sector. US President Donald Trump last week called on Congress to pass a bill that would bring clearer definitions to the growing cryptocurrency sector. Since then, bitcoin, the world's largest cryptocurrency, has risen 16 per cent. It was last at \$80,323.24 in Asian hours, having earlier touched \$81,237.94, its highest level since mid-May. Bitcoin is up 28pc so far in August, set for its biggest monthly gain since November 2024. Cryptocurrencies also got a big boost after the US Treasury last week unveiled plans to buy back more long-dated bonds to help cap the gains in the long-end yields, a move that has led to the US dollar bearing the brunt of investor angst. Tim Sun,

senior researcher at HashKey Group, said Bessent's messaging has reinforced the market's view that, at least through the midterm elections, US policymakers may have a lower tolerance for a further rise in long-end yields. "That would create a relatively supportive macro backdrop for assets such as bitcoin and gold," Sun said. Gold has been the other beneficiary of the dollar weakness, rising to a three-month high. The Treasury announcement is "exactly the type of thing bitcoin loves", Geoff Kendrick, global head of digital assets research at Standard Chartered, said in a note last week, adding that bitcoin was built to allow investors a way to avoid this type of intervention. The action stoked increased chatter around the so-called debasement trade, where the moves to prevent long-end yields from reaching market-clearing levels via buybacks lead the pressure to shift from the bond market to the currency market. – DNA

US removes Syria from state
sponsored terrorist list

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday delisted Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism, rescinding a decades-old designation that had severely impeded investment. The US Department of State also revoked its designation of al-Nusra Front – also known as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) – as a global terrorist organisation. The Treasury Department followed through with sanctions relief. "Today's action will help foster additional

investment in Syria to promote political and economic stability," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement. Treasury said the moves were "in line with President (Donald) Trump's promise to deliver sanctions relief to Syria." But the agency stressed that its removal of restrictions on Syria "does not change Treasury's posture with regards to countering global terrorism and our commitment to hold bad actors in Syria accountable." – APP

US to revoke visas
of asylum seekers

A State Department spokesman said it was coordinating with the Department of Homeland Security "to identify and revoke the non-immigrant visas of foreigners who have come to the United States claiming to be short-term visitors, but then file for asylum to stay here permanently"

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's administration said on Monday it planned to revoke the non-immigrant visas of foreigners who have applied for or are currently seeking asylum status in the US, marking its latest step in a sweeping immigration crackdown. A State Department spokesman said it was coordinating with the Department of Homeland Security "to identify and revoke the non-immigrant visas of foreigners who have come to the United States claiming to be short-term visitors, but then file for asylum to stay here permanently." The State Department statement did not specify the number of visas that will be revoked in the process.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Trump has pursued an aggressive immigration crackdown
- Rights groups say crackdown has violated free speech, due process rights
- State Dept says it will coordinate with DHS to revoke visas

The Associated Press put the number of foreigners whose business and tourism visas is planned to be revoked at up to 200,000, which if materialized, would be the largest single mass revocation of visas in US history. The AP cited State Department documents and two US officials. The State Department will revoke so-called

B1 and B2 visas issued between 2016 and 2026 whose holders have sought asylum or are now seeking asylum, the AP report added. The B1 and B2 non-immigrant visas are issued for business and tourism travel. The visa revocations would not necessarily result in immediate deportation, the media report said, adding that most of those with asylum cases currently pending would be re-categorized but would lose their status as business or tourism travelers. Earlier on Monday, Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau alleged on X that the American immigration system "has long been swamped by frivolous asylum claims." The State Department said earlier this month that under the Trump administration, it has revoked more than 175,000 visas of foreign nationals. Trump has pursued an immigration crackdown that includes revocations of visas and green cards and an aggressive deportation drive. He says the crackdown aims to improve domestic security. Rights groups say the crackdown has violated free speech and due process rights and created an unsafe environment, particularly for ethnic minorities, who have raised concerns about racial profiling. While Trump campaigned in 2024 on a platform of stopping illegal immigration, his administration has also made legal immigration more difficult – for example, by imposing new and expensive fees for applicants of certain work visas.

Indonesia
braves
chocking
smoke

DNA

PALEMBANG: Authorities in Indonesia's South Sumatra, the province with the highest number of wildfire hot spots, turned to spiritual measures on Tuesday as huge blazes in central and western regions scorched wide areas of forests and peatland, creating a choking haze that blanketed some cities in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country. The prayer gathering initiative comes as the province faces prolonged dry weather that has heightened the risk of forest and peatland fires. The latest satellite data from the Environment Ministry showed South Sumatra recorded the highest number of hot spots nationwide with 1,429, followed by West Kalimantan with 1,226 and Central Kalimantan with 811. Forestry Ministry data indicated that nearly 940 square kilometers (363 square miles) were burned in July alone, including over 20 square kilometers (8 square miles) in South Sumatra province. About 3,000 residents gathered in Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra province, to perform a special Islamic prayer for rain, known as "salat istisqa." They prayed shoulder to shoulder in the courtyard of the governor's office as thick smoke shrouded roads, buildings and public facilities, reducing visibility and forcing motorists to drive with their headlights on during the day.

Oil falls over
4% as investors
shrug off
US sanctions
on Iran

NEW YORK: Oil prices fell about 4% to a one-week low on Tuesday as traders shrugged off the latest U.S. sanctions campaign against Iran, viewing economic pressure as posing less risk to oil supplies than a military escalation. Brent crude futures were down \$3.83, or 4.2%, to \$88.34 a barrel by 11:44 a.m. EDT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell \$3.34, or 3.9%, to \$81.67. Both benchmarks hit their lowest levels since August 17. The shift from military conflict to economic pressure in the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran has reduced some of the oil market's anxiety, said Saxo Bank head of commodity strategy Ole Hansen, adding US sanctions announcement was not as forceful as some traders had expected. – APP

وہی قرآن، وہی فرقان
وہی یسین، وہی ظہر

"AND WE HAVE SENT YOU (O PROPHET ﷺ)
AS A MERCY TO ALL THE WORLDS."

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

حُسنُ اللہ
خاتم النبیین حضرت محمد ﷺ

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