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Jammu & Kashmir status

Pak vehemently rejects India's baseless claim

Official UN maps remain only cartographic representation of Jammu and Kashmir's legal status, says FO

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday rejected India's assertions regarding the map of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region, saying Delhi's claims were "contrary to internationally recognised facts". "India's unilateral actions and continued illegal occupation cannot alter the internationally recognised disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir," Foreign Office Spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said in a statement. His remarks came in response to a statement by the Indian foreign ministry, calling for depicting the disputed Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh regions in accordance with India's official map. The FO spokesperson said that official United Nations maps, which depict Jammu and Kashmir as a disputed territory, remain the only cartographic representation of its current legal status. "India's so-called official maps and unilateral claims of sovereignty have no bearing on the status of the disputed territory," Khan added.

According to the FO spokesperson, the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains one of the oldest unresolved, inter-

nationally recognised disputes on the agenda of the UN Security Council. "The relevant UN resolutions stipulate that its final disposition must be made in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the will of the Kashmiri people, expressed through a free and impartial plebiscite under UN auspices," he said. The FO spokesperson urged the international community to ensure that India immediately stops human rights violations in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and fulfils its commitment towards the realisation of the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people, in line with the relevant UNSC resolutions. The United Nations General Assembly on September 4 voted to adopt a new world map that makes the African continent bigger while shrinking North America and Europe, drawing ire from Washington.

Aimed at "a more accurate representation" of continental landmasses, the resolution was supported by 164 countries while the United States voted against it and six other states abstained. The new map — known as the Equal Earth cartographic projection — improves "the accuracy of the cartographic representation of the world," the resolution said.

Petrol price increased

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), acting under the revised petroleum pricing mechanism issued by the Federal Government, has announced an upward revision in the ex-depot prices of petroleum products. According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) on September 7, 2026, the new prices will take effect on September 8, 2026. The new rates (per liter) are as follows:

- Motor Spirit (MS / Petrol): The price has been increased by Rs. 12.90, bringing the revised price from the existing Rs. 345.87 to Rs. 358.77.
- High Speed Diesel (HSD): The price has been increased by Rs. 3.72, bringing the revised price from the existing Rs. 378.05 to Rs. 381.77.

These revisions are based on the current pricing structure set forth by the Federal Government to reflect market fluctuations. The new rates are applicable from tomorrow onward.

Death penalty for acid attack culprits on cards

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Interior on Monday passed a series of key criminal law amendments, including a bill proposing the death penalty for acid attacks, as it moved to strengthen protections for vulnerable groups and public safety. Chaired by Senator Faisal Saleem Rehman, the committee considered private members' bills relating to acid crimes, protection of domestic workers, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) safety, anti-rape legislation and consumer protection. The bills were passed despite opposition from State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry, with PPP lawmakers also voting in favour. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill moved by Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir, seeking to amend Section 336B of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) relating to hurt caused by corrosive substances, was passed in the absence of the mover. Citing "the recent incident of acid attack on a lady doctor in Quetta", the bill states that despite the 2011 amendment, acid attacks continue to cause lifelong disfigurement and trauma.

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US-Iran tensions

Iran to unfurl new restricted Hormuz zone

"The maps of a new international corridor which lies in Iranian and Omani waters and in which Iran will have management have been agreed and should be signed in the coming days"

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Iran said it will announce a new restricted zone in the Gulf in the coming days, along with maps of a new shipping corridor through the Strait of Hormuz, as a weekend exchange of strikes on shipping sent oil prices higher on Monday. The new restricted zone will begin from where the U.S. blockade of Iran begins and extend into areas of the Gulf, Mohsen Rezaei, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Sunday in an interview with state TV. Few details were provided on the plan, but Rezaei said any ship entering the new zone would be added to a sanctions list. In addition, maps detailing passage routes for the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy conduit largely closed to tanker traffic, would also be approved soon, Rezaei said. "The maps of a new international corridor which lies in Iranian and Omani waters and in which Iran will have management have been agreed and should be signed in the coming days," he said. "We will only commit to the Strait of Hormuz being open when they (the Americans) stop the sabotage, threats and attacks on Iran," Rezaei added. Six months after U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran sparked

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Saudi Arabia preparing to grant IAEA more intrusive powers

DNA

WASHINGTON: A planned US-Saudi atomic deal does not include Riyadh signing the Additional Protocol that gives the UN nuclear watchdog sweeping inspection powers, but something close to it on some points is in the works, the agency's chief said on Monday. The US and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement on civil nuclear power cooperation in July that would let Riyadh enrich uranium and build nuclear reactors using US technology. Non-proliferation groups, such as the Arms Control Association, have criticised the planned "123 agreement" for not including the Additional Protocol, which grants the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) extra powers such as the ability to carry out snap

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Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan sign landmark energy deal

The agreements cover the Kushk and Tirpul Contract Area, spanning approximately 23,317 square kilometers, a natural gas utilization programme for Herat and a framework for the proposed "CentGas - Corridor of Prosperity" a 700-kilometer regional gas transmission pipeline, a Delta statement said

TAHIR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Delta Energy Group, a Saudi Arabian energy group, Monday announced the signing of a series of agreements with Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines and Petroleum covering hydrocarbon exploration and production, natural gas utilization in Herat and the potential development of a regional gas transmission pipeline, according to Delta Company. The agreement was inked in Afghan capital Kabul and the ceremony was also attended by former American Special Envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad. The agreements cover the Kushk and Tirpul Contract Area, spanning approximately 23,317 square kilometers, a natural gas utilization programme for Herat and a framework for the proposed "CentGas - Corridor of Prosperity" a 700-kilometer regional gas transmission pipeline, a Delta statement said. The integrated programme represents a potential investment of approximately US\$50 billion over

twenty-five years, subject to exploration results, commercial viability, technical and economic studies, financing, regulatory approvals and subsequent investment decisions. Three-Part Energy Programme Under the Exploration and Production Sharing Contract (EPSC), Delta Energy will undertake geological and geophysical studies, seismic work, exploration drilling and reservoir evaluation across the Kushk and Tirpul area to determine the scale and commercial potential of its hydrocarbon resources. Separately, Delta Energy will finance and conduct an integrated study into the utilization of natural gas and related infrastructure serving Herat Industrial Park, Herat City and other approved areas, assessing potential applications including industrial activity, power generation and other energy requirements. A supplementary agreement establishes a framework for evaluating the proposed 700-kilometre CentGas - Corridor of Prosperity pipeline, connecting a

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BEIJING: Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani on Monday met Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Qiang in Beijing for talks on strengthening strategic ties between the two nation. DNA

Political wheeling-dealing

President Zardari shortens London visit

Bilawal and Bakhtawar will remain in London; The PPP, a key ally of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has strongly opposed any move to divide Sindh and maintains that no new province can be created without constitutional procedures, political consensus and public support

DNA

LONDON: President Asif Ali Zardari will return to Pakistan on September 8 after deciding to end his London visit earlier than planned, Geo News has learnt. Credible Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) sources said the president had initially planned to remain in London for another three to four days. However, he decided to return early to deal with the prevailing political situation and the growing debate over the creation of new provinces and administrative units. The debate intensified after Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal proposed dividing the country into 12 to 15 provinces and called for a national political dialogue on restructuring Pakistan's administrative system. The PPP, a key ally of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has strongly opposed any move to divide Sindh and maintains that no new province can be created without constitutional procedures, political consensus and public support. President Zardari arrived in London from Vienna on September 1 after spending five days in Austria on a private visit. He was accompanied by former federal minister Dr Asim Hussain and Senator Saleem Mandviwalla. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari joined their father in London two days later. Sources said both will remain in the British capital and will not travel back with President Zardari. They are expected to return after spending approximately another week in London.

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Briefs

Another factory catches fire in Karachi

DNA

KARACHI: Part of a factory building in Landhi's Export Processing Zone (EPZ) collapsed due to a fire on Monday, Rescue 1122 said, as efforts were underway for hours to extinguish the blaze. "Part of the factory collapsed due to the fire. Rescue 1122 teams are present at the scene and the rescue operation is under way," the Rescue 1122 spokesperson said in a statement. A video from a fire engulfing a factory in Karachi's Landhi area on Sept 7, 2026. — Courtesy of Rescue 1122. The fire had also spread to an adjacent factory, he added. No casualties or injuries have been reported so far. "As soon as the Rescue 1122 Central Command and Control received the information, a fire and rescue team was immediately dispatched to the site along with a fire brigade truck and an ambulance," Rescue 1122 said in an earlier statement.

'Prince Harry still non-working member of royal family'

DNA

LONDON: King Charles III has reiterated that Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, remain non-working members of the royal family following their return to the United Kingdom. A letter sent on behalf of the king to senior government officials said the couple will continue to refrain from using their royal titles as they have done since stepping back from official royal duties in 2020. Any charity work the couple undertakes will be carried out in a private capacity, and operational security decisions are matters for the relevant police agencies, the letter adds. The letter was sent by the Lord Chamberlain, the most senior official in the royal household, to senior officials in the government and military.

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Orders strict action Naqvi spots agents at CDA facilitation center

During their interaction with the Interior Minister, citizens complained that the system at the Facilitation Center was still manual and had not been fully digitized. They also pointed out that required documents were not provided on the scheduled date, forcing them to make repeated visits

ISLAMABAD : Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi made a surprise visit to the CDA Facilitation Center and directly inquired about the problems being faced by citizens. The Interior Minister took strict notice of the presence of agents at the Facilitation Center and ordered strong action against them. He directed that no agent should be seen inside the Facilitation Center. The Interior Minister also visited the Senior Citizen Counter and directed the authorities to immediately resolve the issues faced by elderly citizens. Mohsin Naqvi expressed displeasure over the long queues, overcrowding and waiting time at the counters. He directed that citizens visiting the Facilitation Center must be managed and facilitated in the best possible manner. The Interior Minister ordered the renovation of the building and establishment of new counters, directing that facilities for citizens be significantly improved. During their interaction with the Interior Minister, citizens complained

that the system at the Facilitation Center was still manual and had not been fully digitized. They also pointed out that required documents were not provided on the scheduled date, forcing them to make repeated visits. Mohsin Naqvi issued on-the-spot directions for the immediate resolution of citizens' grievances. The Interior Minister said that better and timely public services must be ensured and citizens should not have to face unnecessary waiting or inconvenience. He directed that the provision of documents on the scheduled date must be ensured. Mohsin Naqvi further directed that citizens' issues be resolved promptly and transparently through a digital system and ordered the complete digitization of the Facilitation Center's operations. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi assured the citizens that visible improvement would be ensured within one month.—DNA

KPCSW, UNFPA partner to boost gender data capacity in KP

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have agreed to enhance the capacity of Gender Focal Persons across government departments to improve the collection, analysis and use of gender-related data. The understanding was reached during a meeting between KPCSW Chairperson Dr Sumera Shams and a UNFPA delegation, where the proposed capacity-building programme was discussed in detail, said an official release issued here Monday. The initiative will focus on gender indicators and gender tagging of data, enabling government officers to better understand the importance of gender-disaggregated information and strengthen its systematic collection and reporting. Dr Sumera Shams said the commission would lead the compilation and publication of an annual Gender Parity Report for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, providing an evidence-based assessment of the status of women and gender equality in the province. She said improved gender data would support evidence-based policymaking and help government departments design more effective policies and programmes for women. The officials said the initiative would also contribute to Pakistan's reporting obligations under relevant international conventions and frameworks concerning women's rights and gender equality. The UNFPA delegation reaffirmed its support for KPCSW's efforts to promote gender-responsive governance and data-driven policymaking, while both sides agreed to continue collaboration on the capacity-building programme and preparation of the Gender Parity Report.

Lady teacher deprived of Rs150,000 in cyber fraud

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad-based lady teacher was allegedly deprived of Rs150,000 in a cyber fraud after an unidentified person impersonating her brother-in-law contacted her and sought urgent financial assistance for a baby purportedly admitted to a hospital. According to her complaint, the incident occurred on Saturday September 5, 2026, when the fraudster allegedly used the name and voice of her brother-in-law to convince her that he urgently needed money. A teacher at a school in Islam-

abad, the complainant said she initially asked the caller to contact her husband, Zubair Qureshi, a journalist and elder brother of the caller (impersonating), but the caller insisted that it was an emergency and repeatedly requested immediate financial assistance. Believing the caller to be her brother-in-law, she sought help from a colleague another lady teacher, who transferred a total of Rs150,000 in two instalments to an account provided by the caller. The account provided was that of the BankIslami. She later discovered that the caller was actually a fraud-

ster who had impersonated her brother-in-law and deceived her into arranging and transferring the money. She has lodged an online complaint through the cybercrime complaint portal and requested the FIA Cyber Crime Wing to investigate the matter, trace the beneficiary/account holder and the person responsible for the impersonation, and initiate appropriate legal action. The teacher has also sought recovery of the Rs150,000 allegedly obtained through the fraudulent transaction. She has also all the call details, messages, transaction receipts and other relevant evidence to assist investigators. The incident highlights the growing use of impersonation and social-engineering tactics in cyber fraud, where criminals exploit personal relationships and create a sense of urgency to persuade victims to transfer money. Such frauds are common these days unfortunately.

IRM showcases transformative impact of edu thru success stories

LAHORE: Institute of Rural Management (IRM) hosted the "From Hope to Achievement - IRM Success Stories" event, celebrating the educational journeys and achievements of students, teachers and vocational training graduates associated with IRM's education and skills development programmes. The event took place at the Avari Hotel, Mall Road, Lahore, said a press release issued on Monday. The event brought together IRM SMART School students, teachers, vocational training graduates and representatives of civil society to highlight how access to education and skills development can create pathways towards continued learning and better opportunities. A key highlight of the event was the sharing of success stories by five IRM SMART School alumni - three girls and two boys - who reflected on their educational journeys and achievements after transitioning from SMART Schools to secondary-level government schools. Their experiences highlighted the role of educational opportunities in enabling children to contin-

ue their studies and pursue their aspirations. Students also presented a welcome tableau and a thematic performance highlighting the

professional journeys and experiences under the programme, highlighting the role of teachers in supporting students and

the occasion, distinguished guests highlighted the importance of expanding access to education and skills development and creating



importance of education and its transformative role in young people's lives. A documentary on the IRM SMART School initiative, including its Brick Kiln Schools Programme, was also screened, showcasing IRM's efforts to expand educational opportunities for children from communities facing barriers to education. The event also featured selected IRM SMART School teachers, who shared their

strengthening learning opportunities within their communities. The programme further highlighted IRM's Vocational Training Programme, with some graduates sharing their experiences and success stories following their training. The segment underscored the importance of technical and vocational skills in creating opportunities for personal and economic development. Speaking on

greater opportunities for young people across Pakistan. They emphasized the transformative role education can play in helping individuals and communities build better futures. The event concluded with closing remarks and a vote of thanks, reaffirming IRM's commitment to empowering young people through education, skills development and opportunities for continued growth.



Islamabad: Federal Minister Dr Musadik Malik in meeting with Oddy Angelo UN Habitat Officer.

Women's empowerment crucial to national progress

ISLAMABAD: Acting Chairman Senate, Syedal Khan Nasir, on Monday said that empowering women and youth was essential for Pakistan's development, economic prosperity and sustainable growth. Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the 2WINSY Café in DHA Phase-II, Islamabad, as chief guest, he termed the entry of young women into the business sector on the occasion of Pakistan's Defence Day a highly encouraging and commendable initiative. He said that the young twin sisters, who have embarked on their entrepreneurial journey at the age of 19, were not only securing their own future but also contributing to the national economy. He emphasized that enabling women to achieve economic independence was a true manifestation of women's empowerment. Educated and economically empowered women, equipped with entrepreneurial skills, could also play a vital role in nurturing and shaping a better generation for the future. The Acting Chairman Senate congratulated the twin sisters on establishing 2WINSY Café and commended their parents, siblings and friends for encouraging and supporting them in pursuing their ambitions and making a mark of their own. He expressed hope that 2WINSY Café would achieve greater success in the future and expand its presence through multiple branches. Syedal Khan Nasir observed that women constitute more than half of Pakistan's population. If women continued to contribute to the country's economic and social development with the same determination and spirit, Pakistan could achieve rapid and sustainable progress. He underscored the importance of promoting small businesses, trade and investment as key drivers of a stronger and more vibrant national economy.—APP

Dignified Defense Day rally held

RAWALPINDI: A dignified rally was organized by the Murree district administration to pay tribute to the unforgettable sacrifices of the martyrs of the 1965 war and express solidarity with the Pak Army. The rally was led by Assis ant Commissioner (AC) Murree Captain (Retd) Arshad Iqbal and DSP Murree. Officers from various government departments, office-bearers of the traders' association, representatives of civil society and a large number of local residents participated in the event. The participants carried national flags and banners bearing messages of love for Pakistan and reverence for the martyrs. They also offered special prayers for the security, prosperity and stability of the country.—APP

CDA plantation drive continues in full swing

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The Capital Development Authority (CDA), through its Environment Wing, is continuing its plantation drive across Islamabad with full momentum to further enhance the capital's green character, more beautiful major roads and avenues, improve environmental quality, and promote a healthier and more sustainable urban environment. As part of the ongoing plantation campaign, the CDA Environment Wing has planted Sapium trees along 7th Avenue, in Islamabad to further strengthening the city's green landscape and adding to the natural beauty of one of Islamabad's important road corridors.

The plantation of trees along major avenues is part of CDA's broader efforts to enhance Islamabad's urban environment through systematic plantation, landscape improvement and expansion of green cover. The initiative aims not only to beautify the city but also to contribute towards a cleaner, healthier and more

environment-friendly capital. The Environment Wing CDA is undertaking plantation activities at carefully identified locations while ensuring appropriate landscaping and maintenance measures. The selection of suitable tree species is intended to strengthen Islamabad's existing green belt system and create an attractive and sustainable landscape along roads, medians, green areas and other public spaces. Trees play a vital role in improving the quality of urban life. Increased green cover helps absorb carbon dioxide, filter pollutants, provide shade, reduce the impact of urban heat, support biodiversity and contribute to a healthier atmosphere. A well maintained green landscape also enhances the visual appeal of the city and provides citizens with a more pleasant and refreshing environment. The CDA Environment Wing is therefore continuing plantation activities as a sustained and long term initiative rather than treating plantation as a seasonal exercise. Along with new plantation, emphasis is also being placed on the protection, upkeep and

maintenance of existing green areas so that the benefits of the plantation drive can be sustained over the years. The ongoing plantation drive reflects CDA's continued commitment to preserving Islamabad's unique identity as a green, planned and beautiful capital city. The CDA is working to further strengthen the capital's environmental character through coordinated efforts involving plantation, landscaping, horticultural development, maintenance of green belts and improvement of public spaces. The initiative also carries an important message for citizens regarding collective responsibility for environmental protection. Citizens are encouraged to support plantation activities, protect newly planted trees and play their part in keeping Islamabad clean, green and environmentally sustainable. The CDA Environment Wing will continue plantation and landscaping activities at different locations across the city in line with its broader vision of developing a greener, cleaner, more beautiful and sustainable Islamabad.

PN shattered adversary's invulnerability in 1965: Naval chief

Today, we pay our deepest tribute to the valiant Shuhada and Ghazis of Pakistan Navy, whose supreme and selfless sacrifices have ensured the sovereignty and security of our maritime frontiers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nations are not only defined by their geographical size or quantum of resources but also by the strength of their resolve. At the time of its inception, Pakistan Navy was fully cognizant of its limited resources, constrained operational capability and enemy's obdurate insistence to undermine the stability of our newly established state. Despite the modest material strength, Pakistan Navy, driven by an unshakeable commitment and staunch determination to defend the motherland, instilled in its men the spirit of sacrifice, professionalism, and valour, while relentlessly

striving to strengthen its operational capability. This steadfast resolve echoed as a resounding pronouncement on 8 September 1965, when Pakistan Navy executed the historic Operation SOMNATH, striking the adversary's coastal radar installations at Dwarka. The operation was not just a successful naval strike; it was a testament of Pakistan Navy's offensive capability as well as a demonstration of its strategic foresight and indomitable spirit. It shattered adversary's sense of invulnerability and demonstrated to the world that a resolute maritime force, driven by courage and conviction, could achieve decisive effects despite numerical

and material constraints. Operation SOMNATH thus, became an immortal chap-



ter in Pakistan's history, symbolizing the unwavering resolve of a nation that stands ready to defend its sovereignty against every challenge. The legacy of courage and conviction

established during Operation SOMNATH remains unyielding, reflected once again in Pakistan Navy's successful deterrence against the Indian Navy during Marka-e-Haq. The spirit of resilience reverberated beneath the waves through the legendary exploits of Pakistan Navy Submarine GHAZI, whose silent presence laid the foundations of Pakistan's undersea deterrence and demonstrated the strategic value of a fearsome Submarine Force. Building from strength to strength, that proud legacy has entered a new era with the induction of HANGOR Class Submarines, representing a significant leap in technological sophistication, com-

bat capability, and maritime deterrence. As Pakistan Navy embraces the future with modern platforms and evolving operational concepts, the spirit of ultimate sacrifice exhibited by our predecessors, remains as a luminous beacon. Today, we pay our deepest tribute to the valiant Shuhada and Ghazis of Pakistan Navy, whose supreme and selfless sacrifices have ensured the sovereignty and security of our maritime frontiers. Their courage continues to illuminate our path, while the heritage they created, enlightens and stimulates our youth. From GHAZI to HANGOR, the message is unequivocal:

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

SEPTEMBER

- Sept01/Libya Revolution Day
- Sept01/Tanzania Defence day
- Sept01/Uzbekistan Independence Day
- Sept07/Brazil Independence Day
- Sept09/DPR Korea National Day
- Sept09/Tajikistan Independence Day
- Sept16/Malaysia Armed Forces Day
- Sept16/Mexico National Day
- Sept16/Papua New Guinea Independence Day
- Sept18/Chile National Day
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Islamabad Metropolitan

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- Potohar Town.....9209224
- Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Mauritius envoy engages Capital’s travel, business community

During the session, High Commissioner Kurrimbaccus highlighted the immense tourism potential of Mauritius, describing it as an entirely safe country with almost zero crime and strong protections for visitors. He informed participants that the visa regime for Mauritius has been simplified, with processing times already reduced and further improvements underway

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Mauritius to Pakistan, H.E. Munsoo Kurrimbaccus, paid a significant visit to the Emirates office in Islamabad, where he held a productive and result-oriented interactive session with leading travel agents of the capital. The event was facilitated by Rana Tauseef, while Emirates Airlines Sales Manager Jawad Ahmad Qureshi briefed the audience about Emirates’ operations connecting Pakistan with Mauritius. Deputy Head of Mission of the Mauritius High Commission, Mr. R.A.L. Sewtohul, was also present on the occasion. During the session, High Commissioner Kurrimbaccus highlighted the immense tourism potential of Mauritius, describing it as an entirely safe country with almost zero crime and strong protections for visitors. He informed participants that the visa regime for Mauritius has been simplified, with processing times already reduced and further improvements underway. He extended a warm invitation to Pakistani travel agents to visit Mauritius and explore its opportunities firsthand. Responding to questions, he assured that connectivity between Pakistan and Mauritius is being enhanced to attract more tourists from the region. Ambassador Kurrimbaccus described Mauritius as a dynamic economy and a strategic gateway to Africa. He showcased the vast potential available



in Mauritius across trade, investment, tourism, and hospitality, encouraging Pakistani entrepreneurs to explore opportunities in these sectors. He emphasized the importance of establishing joint ventures, promoting business-to-business (B2B) linkages, and organizing regular exchange of trade

delegations to unlock the immense economic potential between the two countries. He observed that joint ventures between Mauritian and Pakistani businesses would not only strengthen bilateral economic relations but also enable both sides to access wider re-

gional and international markets. He termed Pakistan a peaceful country blessed with hospitable and welcoming people, expressing confidence that stronger commercial engagement would further cement the long-standing relations between the two nations.



Emphasizing continuity in engagement, the High Commissioner suggested that such interactions between the diplomatic community and the hospitality sector should be held at least twice a year to ensure effective follow-up and implementation of decisions and

proposals. His remarks underscored Mauritius’ commitment to deepening ties with Pakistan, both in tourism and trade, while opening new doors for collaboration in diverse sectors. The interactive session not only reinforced diplomatic goodwill but also

paved the way for deeper collaboration in tourism, trade, and investment, offering promising mutual benefits for both nations. The High Commissioner actively engaged with participants, responding to their questions and providing valuable insights that further enriched the dialogue.

Water quality varies sharply across Pakistan

The expert urged consumers to move beyond relying on a single TDS reading and obtain laboratory testing based on the water source and contamination risks of their area. She said a location-specific approach to water testing and treatment could help consumers avoid both under-treatment of contaminated water and unnecessary installation of expensive filtration systems

ISLAMABAD: Water quality and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) levels vary dramatically across Pakistan, with relatively low levels found in freshwater sources in mountainous regions and extremely high concentrations recorded in saline groundwater areas such as Cholistan, a water quality expert said. Talking to APP, Director, National Water Quality Laboratory, Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Saiga Imran, said that TDS primarily reflected the amount of dissolved salts and minerals present in water and differed according to the geographical location and source of water. “Higher salt content means a higher TDS level,” she said while talking to APP. She said water in Islamabad generally had TDS levels ranging from around 300 to 600 milligrams per litre, while freshwater in Hunza could have a TDS level of around 200 milligrams per litre. The situation was considerably different in parts of southern Punjab, where groundwater could contain much higher concentrations of dissolved salts. In Bahawalpur, groundwater could have high TDS levels, while in Cholistan, TDS could reach

around 25,000 to 30,000 milligrams per litre, she said. The expert said such regional variations demonstrated why water treatment requirements could not be determined simply by applying the same filtration approach everywhere. She said the National Drinking Water Quality Standard allowed TDS up to 1,000 milligrams per litre for drinking water, while the standard for bottled water was 500 milligrams per litre. However, she stressed that TDS was only one water quality parameter and did not establish overall drinking water safety. Water having an acceptable TDS level could still contain arsenic, nitrate, fluoride, heavy metals or microbial contaminants, she said. “Laboratory testing is necessary to determine whether these health-hazardous contaminants are present,” she added. Saiga Imran said PCRWR had conducted water quality monitoring in different parts of the country and had identified variations in the types of contamination prevalent in different regions. She said testing should therefore be tailored to local conditions. In Rawalpindi and Islamabad, nitrate

could be an important parameter for groundwater testing, while arsenic and other contaminants warranted attention in areas such as Lahore, Kasur, Bahawalpur and Multan. Similarly, she said fluoride and arsenic testing could be relevant in parts of Punjab and Sindh, depending on local water sources and known contamination patterns. She explained that microbial contamination was a separate concern and could occur irrespective of TDS levels. Bacteria and viruses could be controlled through appropriate disinfection methods such as chlorination, ultraviolet treatment and ozonation, while chemical contaminants required specific treatment technologies, she said. The expert urged consumers to move beyond relying on a single TDS reading and obtain laboratory testing based on the water source and contamination risks of their area. She said a location-specific approach to water testing and treatment could help consumers avoid both under-treatment of contaminated water and unnecessary installation of expensive filtration systems.—APP

Efforts seek for climate-vulnerable communities

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik on Monday called for a shift from lengthy procedures and policy jargon towards practical, community-based action to address the challenges faced by climate-vulnerable cities and poor communities. The minister made the remarks during a meeting with UN-Habitat Officer Oddy Angelo of Bolivia, where urban development, climate resilience, water and sanitation, flood management and interventions for vulnerable communities were discussed. Dr Malik criticised delays in development projects, saying international cooperation and policy initiatives must ultimately translate into work on the ground. “We need impactful work. Bring effective policy input, we will collaborate and get it done,” he said, urging stakeholders to reduce unnecessary delays and focus on implementation. He said Pakistan needed practical solutions, particularly for communities affected

by contaminated water, flooding, inadequate sanitation and poor urban infrastructure. “One project can change the lives of many,” the minister said, calling for community-based and self-sustaining projects that could be replicated across the country. Dr Malik noted that various institutions and development partners had already undertaken useful initiatives, but much of the work remained scattered and its impact had not been adequately demonstrated. He said successful interventions should be identified, their results documented and effective models scaled up to eventually become part of a national agenda. The minister highlighted the need for practical measures, including water treatment plants in areas affected by contaminated water, flood-resilience projects and improved basic urban services in vulnerable communities. Dr Malik also called for the National Urban Strategy to be fast-tracked from policy formulation to implementation, stressing the need for greater

coordination among government institutions, UN agencies, development partners, local authorities and communities. He proposed a business and innovation competition for Pakistani youth to generate solutions in areas such as climate change, public safety, vulnerable cities, flood management, technology, water and sanitation, invention and green industry. The minister said young people should be given opportunities to turn creative ideas into practical solutions to national challenges. He stressed that development resources must ultimately reach communities and that local populations should have a meaningful role in designing and sustaining projects. “Pakistan does not lack ideas or talent,” Dr Malik said, adding that the need was to move faster from ideas to implementation, from isolated projects to scalable models and from policy discussions to solutions that improve people’s lives. He said the success of development should be measured by “less delay, more delivery and tangible improvement” for vulnerable communities.—APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, in Islamabad Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Navy-1, Sowam Garden-I, Sowam Garden-II, from 7 am to 11 am, IT Park, Scheme-II, Kund Rajgan, King Hammad, Chatta Bakhtawar, from 8 am to 12 pm, Numbie, feeders. In Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, LTC, New Mandra, Old Mandra, Hamid Jhangi, Sagri, feeders. Similarly, in Attock Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Fawara Chowk, feeder. In Jhelum Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Hayat Sir road, Gujar Khan, from 6 am to 11 am, Nougarn, feeders. In Chakwal Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 11 am, Abdullah Pur, Jalal Pur, Sagharpur, CWO, Dharyala Jalip, Duffer, PD Khan, from 7 am to 2 pm, Talagang City, Tehi, Kot Saring, Dhoke Pathan, Dharabi, feeders. In GSO Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 09:00 am to 04:00 pm, 132kv AWC HMC Taxila and 132KV Sang-jani-Burhan, from 08:00 am to 06:00 pm, 132KV Kahuta City- Palandri, 132KV New Wah-Bahtermore along with related earth switch, and surrounding areas. IESCO apologized to consumers for the temporary inconvenience and said electricity supply would be restored before the scheduled time if the maintenance work was completed earlier than expected.—DNA

IRSA releases 226,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 226,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 234,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA on Sunday, 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 140,600 cusecs each. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1222.25 feet, which was 172.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 16,400 cusecs and 9,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 243,900, 227,600, 220,000 and 109,300 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 27,500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 22,900 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

HEC concludes AI training for around 400 faculty members

ISLAMABAD: National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan, has concluded a three-day Tier-I Faculty Training Programme on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Lecturers and Assistant Professors serving in public sector higher education institutions (HEIs). The programme titled “AI Literacy for Educators: Building AI-Ready Institutions,” aims to strengthen faculty capacity to understand, critically evaluate, and responsibly integrate AI into teaching, learning, research, assessment, and academic practice. NAHE has so far trained around 400 faculty members of universities, including 332 in cohort-I and nearly 64 in cohort-II. The programme has been specifically designed as a comprehensive professional development intervention, combining conceptual understanding, practical hands-on learning, critical reflection, and application of AI in diverse academic contexts. Managing Director NAHE (HEC) Dr Noor Anna Malik was the chief guest at the opening and closing ceremonies, attended by members of the NAHE team, resource faculty, and participating faculty members. Addressing the participants, Dr Noor Anna Malik highlighted the importance of ethical use of AI in higher education. She emphasised that AI is rapidly changing the ways in which knowledge is created, taught, assessed, researched, and applied. She underscored the need for faculty members to safeguard academic integrity, critically evaluate AI outputs, and protect privacy and intellectual property. Highlighting the importance of developing AI-ready institutions and noting that meaningful AI integration requires capable faculty she asked for developing institutional preparedness, appropriate governance mechanisms, ethical safeguards, and continuous professional development. The programme focuses on developing among the participants the foundational and applied understanding of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Large Language Models, and Generative AI.—APP

Briefs

Logistics support, police welfare steps reviewed

ISLAMABAD: Superintendent of Police (SP) Headquarters, Pari Gul Tareen on Monday reviewed administrative affairs, logistics support and police welfare measures during a meeting with in-charges of different branches of the Logistics Division. An official told APP that during the meeting, the SP Pari Gul reviewed the administrative matters of Police Headquarters and discussed measures to further improve logistics support for police officers. She also reviewed ongoing welfare measures for police personnel and issued directions for further improvement. SP Pari Gul directed the concerned branch in-charges to ensure better administrative arrangements and effective logistics support to facilitate police personnel in the performance of their duties.—APP

NUST extends warm welcome to Batch of 2026

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST) opened its doors to the Batch of 2026, welcoming as many as 1,823 new undergraduate students through a vibrant three-day orientation held from September 2 to 4. The campus buzzed with activity as the newest members of the NUST community embarked on their academic journey through an engaging mix of academic, social, and extracurricular experiences. Speaking at the opening ceremony, chief guest, Registrar NUST Dr. Nasir Rashid, warmly welcomed the incoming students and encouraged them to embrace the opportunities, challenges and experiences that lie ahead. He highlighted the importance of making the most of their time at NUST, fostering meaningful connections and becoming active members of the NUST community. The opening day featured a warm reception, a dedicated parents' session, documentation and registration, the societies' march, and the much-anticipated batch photograph. It also provided parents and guardians with an opportunity to gain a closer insight into life at NUST. The programme continued with academic orientation at the respective schools, alongside engaging activities under the NUST clubs and societies. It also featured the closing ceremony of NUST Summer School and a captivating drama by the NUST Dramatics Club (NDC). The programme culminated in Bazm Night followed by the closing ceremony, bringing the orientation to a memorable conclusion. Designed to ease the transition into university life, Orientation 2026 enabled students to explore NUST's academic ecosystem, build friendships, and experience the energy of campus life.—APP

Japan govt provides flood protection grant to Pakistan

It is about protecting lives, safeguarding livelihoods, and building a more resilient Sindh Province for future generations”



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Japan has extended a grant aid of 2.6 billion Japanese Yen to Pakistan for the Project for Flood Protection and Dike Improvement on Indus River in Sindh Province. Notes to this effect were signed and exchanged between H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and Mr. Muhammad Humair Karim, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, in Islamabad on September 7, 2026. Subsequently, Grant Agreement of the Project was also signed and exchanged between Mr. SUGAWARA Takayuki, Senior Representative of JICA Pakistan Office and Ms. Sabina Qureshi, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This project aims to reduce the risk of the dike

breaches and associated economic losses through the reinforcement of dike in the target section in Larkana region of Sindh Province. Riverbank erosion protection works and dike reinforcement will be carried out. The project adopts a stronger concrete-based embankment construction method, which remains relatively rare in Pakistan. This enhanced design is expected to further mitigate the risk of embankment breaches, thereby improving flood resilience in the target area. Pakistan is highly vulnerable to flooding, and the Larkana region is among the areas most at risk of large-scale flood damage. The project is expected to reduce flood risks for approximately 790,000 residents, while reducing inundation areas and flood-related economic losses in the target region. It will also help to protect local communities, agricultural land and infrastructure from future flood

disasters. In the face of natural disasters that are becoming more frequent and severe due to global warming, proactive disaster prevention measures that leverage Japan's experience and technology are of great significance not only for saving lives but also for protecting industry, farmland, and food supplies. Ambassador AKAMATSU stated: "In 2022, Pakistan experienced the most devastating flood in its history. To support the nation recovery and reconstruction, the Government of Japan has been fully committed to providing vital assistance. Japan places a strong emphasis on conducting practice disaster prevention measures taken decisively before natural disasters actually occur. This project aims to minimize the risk of dike breaches in these target sections, thereby protecting the region from devastating flood damage based on Japan's experience and exper-

tise. We recognize this project is a vital initiative along the line with is Pakistan's planning and policy efforts, contributing to building a resilient society capable of mitigating future disasters. I hope this project will provide reassurance to the people of Pakistan as a reliable safeguard against future floods." Mr. SUGAWARA Takayuki, Senior Representative of JICA Pakistan Office said "under this project, the dike will be rehabilitated with concrete reinforcement. While this is a relatively rare approach in Pakistan and requires higher initial investment costs, it is anticipated to deliver more sustainable and long-lasting development impacts. This project is not just about building stronger dikes. It is about protecting lives, safeguarding livelihoods, and building a more resilient Sindh Province for future generations".

Sh Tajammul remembered for lifelong services to Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD :Speakers at a reference held here on Monday on the fifth death anniversary of renowned journalist and Mohsin-i-Kashmir Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam paid rich tribute to his lifelong services to journalism and contributions to the Kashmir cause. The reference, organized by the United Kashmir Journalists Association (UKJA), was attended by senior Hurriyat leaders, journalists and activists. Speaking on the occasion, senior Hurriyat leader Muhammad Farooq Rehmani said Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam was a person of exceptional devotion and dedication who could have pursued a successful career in law and journalism in Kashmir but chose to devote his life to the Kashmir cause. He said Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam was a successful lawyer and journalist in Kashmir, but the political environment of the 1970s and 1980s prompted him to dedicate his abilities and career to the Kashmir cause. Rehmani said he had to migrate from Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu

and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) in view of the prevailing political circumstances and continued his struggle despite facing numerous hardships. He said after reaching Pakistan, Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam played a significant role in developing the Kashmir Media Service (KMS) into a vibrant platform for highlighting the Kashmir issue. He said Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam also made sustained efforts to document the Kashmir struggle through KMS, which developed into an important source of information and reference on Kashmir-related developments. Speaking on the occasion, Convenor of Mahaz-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir Dr Muhammad Inayatullah Andrabi paid rich tribute to Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam and said he had rendered valuable services throughout his life. He said the legacy of Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam should be carried forward, while stressing the need for greater intellectual and political engagement in addressing the Kashmir issue. Senior Hurriyat leader Shaikh Mateen also paid tribute to Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam and recalled his contributions to journalism and the Kashmir cause. Hurriyat activists M. Zia-ul-Haq Andrabi and Muhammad Ashraf, and senior journalists Habibullah Sheikh and M. Ashraf Wani also spoke on the occasion and highlighted Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam's commitment to journalism and the Kashmir cause. Later, a special Dua was offered for the departed soul of Shaikh Tajammul-ul-Islam, with participants praying for his forgiveness, eternal peace and elevation of his ranks in the hereafter.—APP

Strategic roadmap for Railways' modernization

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has approved a comprehensive strategic reform roadmap aimed at transforming the department into a modern, efficient, customer-oriented and financially sustainable organization. "The roadmap focuses on strengthening freight operations, improving passenger services through infrastructure development, enhancing private-sector participation and accelerating digital transformation across the railway system," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. Under the reform plan, Pakistan Railways aims to increase its freight market share from the existing 8 percent to around 20 percent fol-

lowing the upgradation of Main Line-1 (ML-1), he said. The initiative would focus on expanding the transportation of coal, containers, cement, fertilizers, rock phosphate and other bulk commodities to enhance the railway's role in the national freight sector. The official said the passenger share was also targeted to increase from the current 5 percent to 7.52 percent after completion of the ML-1 upgradation. He said the modernization programme envisaged the upgradation of ML-1, ML-2 and ML-3 corridors to enhance line capacity, improve safety, reduce travel time and strengthen operational efficiency.—APP

Dr. Tariq pays tribute to PAF Shaheens

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Monday paid rich tribute to the brave personnel of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on the occasion of Air Force Day, acknowledging their courage, determination and professional excellence in defending the country. In his message, the minister said the day provided an opportunity to pay homage to the brave "Shaheens" of the PAF who had written remarkable chapters in the history of national defence through their courage, resolve and professional skills. He said that during the 1965 war, the PAF's valiant pilots and personnel had foiled the enemy's designs and made the nation proud through their outstanding performance. "The bravery and professional expertise of the PAF Shaheens constitute a glorious chapter in our defence history," he said. Dr. Tariq said the PAF's outstanding performance during Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos had once again demonstrated its formidable defence capabilities. He said the operation had proved that the PAF Shaheens possessed the capability and determination to confront every challenge and effectively defend the country. The minister said the PAF remained fully prepared and vigilant round the clock to safeguard Pakistan's airspace. He paid tribute to the martyrs of the Pakistan Air Force for their supreme sacrifices and lauded the services of its Ghazis. "The present-day Shaheens of the Pakistan Air Force are a source of pride for the entire nation," he said, adding that the nation was proud of their courage, determination and professional competence.—APP

IGP reviews Islamabad's policing readiness

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Monday chaired a meeting of senior police officers to review the capital's law and order situation, counter-terrorism measures, security arrangements, traffic management and the performance of the Capital Patrols Unit. An official told APP that the meeting held a detailed review of various policing matters aimed at strengthening security and improving the overall effectiveness of police operations in the federal capital. The performance of the Capital Patrols Unit was also reviewed, along with measures related to traffic management and security arrangements across Islamabad.—APP

Reforms to boost WB's business framework

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved a set of regulatory reforms aimed at improving Pakistan's performance under the World Bank Group's Business Ready (B READY) assessment. Pakistan has already performed strongly in the Business Entry category of the B READY 2025 Report, ranking 17th among 101 economies with a score of 86.64, said a release issued here on Monday. The reforms approved by the Commission are designed to close the remaining gaps and bring the country's business framework closer to leading international practices. As part of the reforms, automated sharing of updated company information with the Federal Board of Revenue through APIs will be expanded, in coordination with the Board of Investment, to further streamline compliance and reduce duplication for businesses. The Commission also approved measures to make information on environmental approvals and operating permits accessible through SECP's website, once compiled by the relevant authorities, giving businesses a single point of reference for regulatory requirements. Similarly, information on publicly funded programmes supporting SMEs and women entrepreneurs is made available through SECP's digital platforms, improving awareness and access to existing government support.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Massive traffic jam on Islamabad highway during peak hours in the evening, in the Federal Capital.

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Has the EU lost its allure?

KHALED ABOU ZAHR

DOES the EU still make people and nations dream of joining? Following Iceland’s vote to reject a return to accession negotiations last week, many are stating this openly. The EU has become a bureaucratic dictatorship that is destroying national identities and sovereignty. Now, for insular countries such as Iceland and the UK, which exited the EU in 2020, that might be true. Part of it is undoubtedly true: to keep the bloc together, Brussels has become more top-down than bottom-up in terms of representation. Members of the European Parliament attest to this. Yet, when it comes to joining the EU, there is also what I call “Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?” And this probably applies to many of the countries that are part of the European Economic Area and Schengen but outside the EU. Countries such as Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, as members of the European Economic Area, obtain most of the practical advantages of the European market without being full EU members, meaning they do not need to accept common integration policies in key areas such as customs and monetary union and do not need to fully participate in the political institutions. As a consequence, they are not bound on important and influential domestic topics, such as agriculture and fishing rights. Fishing is and will continue to be a key issue for Iceland. Switzerland has a similar model through bilateral agreements with the EU, rather than joining the European Economic Area. And as all these countries are part of Schengen, they do not feel the need to apply for membership. Perhaps, with these small, wealthy countries, it is the EU that is keen on offering this very attractive middle ground and Iceland’s referendum result illustrates this logic clearly. What might change this mindset is not the dream that guided most of the countries to join the EU in the late 1990s and early 2000s – it is the nightmare of the major crises that could happen, with the bloc seen as a potential safeguard in such a situation. Hence, it was in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2009 and the collapse of its banking system that Iceland announced that it intended to join the EU. While most of the negotiation points were cleared, a more euroskeptic senti-

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ment has recently become dominant within the population. Switzerland is currently considering a new package of agreements with the EU known as the Bilaterals III. The package, if approved, will deepen cooperation in areas such as electricity, health, research, food safety, transport and the single market. But it will also introduce certain rules that will align the country with evolving EU legislation. Surveys indicate that this would be approved in a popular vote, even if the package is still currently being considered by parliament, with a vote expected in 2027. However, the arguments of the “no” camp are gaining traction. Their fear is a loss of Swiss sovereignty, arguing that Switzerland could end up adopting EU rules without having a vote in making them, which would destroy the direct democracy it is today. It is undeniable that we tend to take everything for granted and quickly forget that the EU and its predecessor brought peace to nations that had been fighting for centuries and it is today a stronger bloc despite all its flaws. But the effervescence and celebrations of nations every time they cross a milestone that brings them closer to membership have dissipated and we have moved to a transactional vision. This is very clear with Türkiye, which is one of the main candidates for EU membership. The dynamics in this relationship have shifted over the past 20 years. While President Recep Tayyip Erdogan set EU accession as a major objective in the 2000s, he recently stated that membership of the bloc is “not a priority.” Even in countries in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, where membership is a key pathway linked to prosperity, security and political stability, the excitement is not the same and countries are increasingly questioning whether the long and uncertain path to membership is still worth it. While surveys do show trust in the EU, we notice that Europeans mostly trust their local institutions – the ones in which they have a direct say. The EU, while having strong legislative power over its members and being all-powerful, lacks real leadership. This is especially the case regarding the relationship between France and Germany, the two key driving forces behind European integration, over Ukraine and the tensions in global supply routes. They are now facing off over their respective economic interests in the rearmament of Europe, while geopolitical files seem left unanswered. This bickering, along with a void in leadership and vision, may be what makes others question whether they still want to be a part of the EU.

When the West Sacrifices Secularism at the Altar of Religion

Qamar Bashir



Today, however, a contrary narrative is gaining political power. Leaders and movements in the United States increasingly describe America as a Christian nation. President Donald Trump has promised to defend the “Judeo-Christian principles of our founding” and has declared that America is “one nation under God.” In Europe, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has stated even more directly: “Europe is a Christian continent, and this is how we want to keep it.” He has connected the preservation of this identity with opposition to immigration and the fear...

FOR countless people living in developing countries, the United States and Europe have represented a dream. This attraction is not based only on wealth, employment or a higher standard of living. More importantly, these societies have been regarded as places where the state does not discriminate among citizens on the basis of religion, color, race or creed. For people persecuted because of their faith, ethnicity, culture or way of life, migration to the West has promised safety from hatred, violence and official discrimination. The foundation of this dream is secular government. Secularism does not mean hostility to religion or the exclusion of religious people from public life. It means that the state itself does not belong to one religion. A secular government protects Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, atheists and others under the same law. It asks citizens to obey the Constitution, not to adopt the religion or culture of the majority. Today, however, a contrary narrative is gaining political power. Leaders and movements in the United States increasingly describe America as a Christian nation. President Donald Trump has promised to defend the “Judeo-Christian principles of our founding” and has declared that America is “one nation under God.” In Europe, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has stated even more directly: “Europe is a Christian continent, and this is how we want to keep it.” He has connected the preservation of this identity with opposition to immigration and the fear that Muslims will transform Europe’s ethnic and cultural composition. Israel, meanwhile, expressly defines itself as a Jewish state. Its 2018 Nation-State Basic Law declares that Israel is “the nation state of the Jewish People” and that national self-determination in the state is “exclusive to the Jewish People.” It also describes Jewish settlement as a national value. The danger lies not in Judaism—or in Christianity or Islam—but in giving one religious or ethno-religious identity a constitutionally superior relationship with the state. These declarations must be tested against the constitutional principles that made the West attractive. The U.S. Constitution neither establishes Christianity nor grants it privileged status: the First Amendment prohibits laws “respecting an establishment of religion,” while Article VI bars religious tests for public office. Although the Declaration of Independence refers to a Creator, the Constitution is the governing legal document and protects equal citizenship regardless of belief. Yet the tension persists: a 2024 Pew survey

found that 13 percent of Americans supported declaring Christianity the official religion, while 44 percent favored promoting Christian values without formal establishment—a distinction that becomes dangerous when moral advocacy turns into state preference and the exclusion of other faiths. European Convention on Human Rights. Article 9 guarantees everyone “freedom of thought, conscience and religion,” including the freedom to change religion and to manifest belief privately or publicly. The European Court of Human Rights has held that the state must remain a “neutral and impartial” organizer of religious life because pluralism is essential to democracy. The Magna Carta is often invoked as a symbol of Western liberty and government under law, although it is not a modern constitution or a comprehensive guarantee of religious equality. Its lasting importance is the principle that political authority is subject to law. The modern constitutional descendants of that principle are equal citizenship, due process, religious liberty and protection against arbitrary power. Religious nationalism undermines this inheritance when it divides lawful citizens into authentic members and tolerated outsiders. The consequences are visible in contemporary politics. During Zohran Mamdani’s campaign for mayor of New York, opponents and online commentators connected his Muslim identity with terrorism, jihad and Sharia. Some called for his denaturalization or deportation, despite the absence of evidence that he intended to impose Islamic law. Mamdani nevertheless won the November 2025 election and became New York City’s first Muslim mayor. His victory affirmed constitutional inclusion, but the reaction exposed how readily a Muslim candidate’s faith could be presented as a security threat. Michigan politician Abdul El-Sayed has faced similar attempts to associate his Muslim identity with extremism. Dearborn, a city with a large Arab-American and Muslim population, has become a national target for agitators warning about the supposed “Islamification” of America. Yet electing Muslim mayors, council members or police officials is not evidence of religious conquest. It is democracy: citizens exercising the same political rights that the Constitution guarantees to Christians. Nor is Sharia the governing law of Michigan, New York or any European country. Muslims may voluntarily follow religious principles in their private lives, just as Christians and Jews may consult their own traditions. Civil law nevertheless

remains supreme. Raising the specter of Sharia without evidence transforms a religious minority into a permanently suspect population. The problem is measurable. The U.S. Department of Justice recorded 236 anti-Muslim hate incidents and 156 anti-Sikh incidents in 2023. In the European Union, a survey of almost 10,000 Muslims across 13 countries found that 47 percent had experienced racial discrimination within the preceding five years, particularly in employment and housing. The same constitutional test must be applied to Israel. Israel emerged from Zionism, British rule in Palestine, European antisemitism culminating in the Holocaust, and the United Nations’ 1947 proposal for separate Arab and Jewish states. It would be historically inaccurate to reduce its creation to a single Western plan for removing Jews from Europe. Nevertheless, defining national self-determination as exclusive to one people raises a profound question about equality for Palestinians and other non-Jewish citizens and residents. That concern is intensified by occupation and settlement. In a 2024 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice concluded that Israel’s continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful and that settlement activity must cease. United Nations satellite analysis later estimated that approximately 81 percent of structures in Gaza had been damaged by October 2025. The conclusion is not that religion must disappear. Religion can inspire compassion, justice and service. The danger begins when it becomes a certificate of citizenship or a weapon for deciding who truly belongs. A Muslim, Jew, Christian, Hindu, Sikh or non-believer should not have to become culturally “like” the majority to receive equal protection. The United States and Europe became dreams because they promised that law would stand above sectarian identity. If their leaders replace that promise with competing religious nationalisms, they will revive the divisions their constitutional systems were designed to restrain. Their future peace and prosperity therefore depend upon returning to the essential principle of secular democracy: the state has no favored faith, and every citizen stands equal before the law.

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Iran’s biggest enemy is its inflated sense of power

Abdulrahman Al-Rashed

The Iranian leadership’s perceptions that it is capable of defeating a superpower with such ease are peculiar; has the military leadership misled the political authorities in Iran? The developments following the war indicate that their understanding of the world does not differ much from the delusions of a megalomaniac, much like Saddam Hussein in the 1980s and 1990s. Their perceptions of the balance of war do not align with their actual capabilities when confronting two fierce adversaries: the US and Israel...

IN a recently surfaced video, Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, speaks about kidnapping 1,000 US soldiers and bargaining over them. While the video is authentic, the statement is old, dating back to 2015. Today, Rezaei serves as the right-hand man to the new supreme leader. Does Iran still view war through this same mindset? The confrontation has been continuing for a year, yet they have been unable to arrest anyone or destroy a single battleship, and US casualties are the lowest in the history of its wars. Iran’s enemy is its inflated sense of power, which makes notions such as continuing an asymmetrical war, closing straits, choking the global economy, and bombing neighbors appear to be great plans. The arrogance of power led Napoleon and Hitler to invade Russia, only to face defeat. While such a sense of superiority might be justified for major powers, it appears peculiar in mid-tier, economically frail countries. This very sentiment causes them to indulge in unrealistic illusions for consecutive decades, only to lose their entire first-tier leadership and most of their military capabilities in the very first confrontation. A distorted intellectual delusion was exposed. The Iranian leadership’s perceptions that it is capable of defeating a superpower with such ease are peculiar; has the military leadership misled the political authorities in Iran? The developments following the war indicate that their understanding of the world does not differ much from the delusions of a megalomaniac, much like Saddam Hussein in the 1980s and 1990s. Their perceptions of the balance of war do not align with their actual capabilities when confronting two fierce adversaries: the US and Israel. For years, their previous statements consistently converged on two conclusions: first, that “America will not dare to attack us,” and second, “if it does, it will be defeated.” An associate close to Saddam Hussein recounted that during a poolside barbecue at Saddam’s palace follow-

ing the invasion of Kuwait, he asked the Iraqi leader why he had not taken precautions. He said: “Saddam responded mockingly: ‘You know they can see us with their satellites and know that we are here together by the pool grilling meat? They are capable of reaching us, but they do not dare to target me.’” Because successive US administrations refrained from entering a war with Iran, despite the attacks carried out or orchestrated by the Revolutionary Guard against American citizens and interests around the world, an impression emerged among both clerical and military leaders that Iran was immune to any attack due to its growing military capabilities. Tehran’s condescending perceptions toward the US may differ from their view of the much smaller Israeli power. They have always been anxious about the prospect of a war with Israel, which largely explains their persistence in executing their military nuclear program – viewing it, in their imagination, as the ultimate weapon. Ideological regimes rarely learn from experience. During the stage before seeking to acquire a nuclear bomb, they established a vast belt in the region to protect them from Israel, spanning Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, and Iraq. Leaders of Hezbollah frequently echoed this erroneous conviction, asserting that these proxy camps were sufficient to defend Iran, and that should Israel dare to launch an attack, it would be destroyed. Superiority, hegemony, success, and national pride were all embodied in a single project: building a massive military force until it became an Iranian obsession. This power began directing the regime’s policies and incentivizing it toward further defiance, proving that “power deludes its possessor into believing they are capable of anything.” “Military superiority” led Tehran to harbor the illusion that it was capable of controlling, expanding, imposing political hegemony, and altering or main-

taining regimes. The reverberations of Iran’s growing power reached across the globe, as it became the primary supplier of lethal drones to a major superpower like Russia in its war in Ukraine. It constructed 30 underground missile cities, produced tens of thousands of drones each month, surpassing American factories, carved mountains for nuclear laboratories, and dug hundreds of kilometers of underground tunnels to conceal ballistic missiles. Tehran reached a stage of thinking described as “if you have a hammer, it is tempting to treat everything around you as nails.” A distorted intellectual delusion was exposed during the war, along with the weakness of Iran’s defensive capabilities and the failure of its strategies to close the straits and strangle global markets. Iran now recognizes that it is not a match for the US and Israel. Today, Iran’s airspace is breached and its defenses are eroded, leaving it incapable of inflicting harm except on its neighbors who are less inclined and equipped for war. Nonetheless, Iran has not yet altered its behavior or narrative; instead, it has begun to label mere endurance as a victory. While it is true that the survival of the regime constitutes a victory for it, the outcomes of two brief rounds of war have been devastating. These results include the elimination of its first-tier political and military leadership, the massive destruction of its offensive capabilities, and an unprecedented, stifling siege. Can Iranian leaders think more realistically after all this? Ideological regimes do not follow the survival instincts known to conventional states. They rarely learn from experience, and preserving their image becomes their primary concern, leading them to become more defiant. Abdulrahman Al-Rashed is a Saudi journalist and intellectual. He is the former general manager of Al Arabiya news channel and former editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, where this article was originally published. X: @aalrashed

Briefs

Saudi Arabia,
Afghanistan
sign...

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proposed receipt point near Guzara District in Herat Province with a proposed delivery point near Spin Boldak District in Kandahar Province. The proposed pipeline is expected to involve an investment of approximately US\$10 billion over a ten-year period, subject to technical and economic feasibility, regulatory approvals, financing and a final investment decision. The pipeline is intended to be evaluated as a potential strategic energy corridor connecting Afghanistan's emerging gas resources with domestic and regional markets. Any construction decision will depend on successful exploration, confirmation of sufficient reserves, technical and economic feasibility, approvals and project financing. Sheikh Badr Mohammed Al-Aiban, Chairman of Delta International Holding Group, said: "This is much more than an oil and gas investment. It is an opportunity to help develop an integrated energy ecosystem that could have a lasting impact on Afghanistan and the wider region. Chaher Altaki, President & Partner of Delta International Holding Group, said: "We are pleased to begin this partnership with the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and to participate in Afghanistan's next phase of energy development. "At the same time, we are assessing the broader energy value chain. The Herat gas utilization programme examines how natural gas can support industry and local energy demand, while the proposed CentGas Corridor represents the longer-term regional dimension. Afghanistan Ministry of Mines and Petroleum Mullah Hidayatullah Badri, Minister of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan, said: "This agreement represents an important step in the development of Afghanistan's hydrocarbon resources. Cooperation with Delta Energy provides an opportunity to advance exploration, evaluate our natural gas potential and develop infrastructure that can support economic activity and energy security. A Potential New Energy Corridor The programme is designed to connect upstream exploration and production with domestic gas utilization and regional infrastructure, supporting, subject to commercial viability, industrial development, energy availability, employment and regional connectivity.

President
Zardari
shortens...

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Bilawal arrived from Paris after spending several days in Austria, while Bakhtawar travelled to London with her husband, Mahmood Chaudhry, and their children. The family's stay in Austria generated reports that President Zardari had travelled there to discuss a possible marriage proposal for Bilawal with a prominent European family. Bilawal categorically rejected the reports, saying no engagement or marriage had taken place and that he did not know any "Princess Gloria". He said any decision regarding his personal life would be announced by his family.

Death
penalty for
acid attack
culprits...

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It proposes the punishment of "death or imprisonment for life or imprisonment for not less than 14 years and a fine of Rs2 million" to serve as a strong deterrent. The committee also unanimously passed the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill moved by Senator Sarmad Ali, proposing to criminalise the abuse of domestic workers. The Statement of Objects and Reasons notes that "domestic workers constitute one of the most vulnerable segments of society, often subjected to physical violence, sexual abuse, forced labour, and other forms of mistreatment by employers."

Chinese and Pakistani
Researchers discuss frontiers
of bilateral cooperation

The strategic value of the green transition goes beyond decarbonisation, Mr. Mao argued. It can shorten the transmission chain through which geopolitical shocks—from conflicts in the Middle East, for instance—reach domestic energy markets and inflation. In that sense, renewable energy becomes a form of risk management

DNA

BEIJING: An international academic symposium marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan was held at Peking University over the weekend, bringing together around 100 scholars, think-tank researchers, diplomats, and business representatives from the two countries, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Monday. Reviewing the momentum behind the accelerating B2B engagement, Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's ambassador to China, said that agreements worth more than \$22 billion were signed between Chinese and Pakistani businesses over the past two years. Nearly 30% of it, or about \$7 billion, was linked to efforts involving the relocation of enterprises. Technology is taking an increasingly prominent role. "Over the last two years, we have opened four new centres for Pakistan studies—in Shenzhen, Shandong, Hangzhou and Shenyang," Hashmi said. Their focus differs from that of traditional Pakistan-studies programmes, with greater attention being paid to technology-related fields, including chemical technology and artificial intelligence. Luo Zhaohui, former Chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency, shared his insights on new developments in Pakistan and new perspectives on China-Pakistan cooperation. He highlighted the necessity for the two countries to explore new approaches to development and continue to inject momentum into regional peace and growth. Beyond Decarbonisation: Renewables as insurance Energy transition is highlighted as being at the forefront in bilateral cooperation.



eration. "Green transition is no longer just a tool to cut emissions. It has become a safety asset," said Mao Keji, an associate research fellow at the International Cooperation Centre of China's National Development and Reform Commission. An empirical analysis of monthly data from 12 economies in South and Southeast Asia between 2025 and 2026 found that for every 10-percentage-point increase in a country's dependence on imported oil and natural gas, green-energy imports rose by about 3.6% following a crisis, while electric-vehicle imports increased by roughly 7.9%. By the end of May 2026, the country's cumulative imports of solar panels had exceeded 55,700 MW, or 55.7 GW, reflecting the enormous build-up from the solar-import boom of previous years, particularly in 2023 and 2024. The State Bank of Pakistan estimates that replacing fossil-fuel generation with solar power could eventually cut the country's annual energy-import bill by between \$5.2 billion and \$7.8 billion.

The strategic value of the green transition goes beyond decarbonisation, Mr. Mao argued. It can shorten the transmission chain through which geopolitical shocks—from conflicts in the Middle East, for instance—reach domestic energy markets and inflation. In that sense, renewable energy becomes a form of risk management. "A solar installation requires a large upfront capital investment but can replace years of recurring dollar-denominated fuel purchases. Financing can also be structured in different currencies, including the renminbi, potentially giving countries greater room for policy manoeuvre and reducing their exposure to external financing constraints. A more diversified energy-supply chain, meanwhile, can make economies less vulnerable to disruptions in any single source," he said. The energy story goes beyond solar: Liu Yonggang, Assistant CEO, Chief Compliance Officer, Chief Legal Advisor of China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Limited (CSAIL) said that the

Karot Hydropower Project is meeting the electricity demand of around five million local people. Having generated more than 12 billion kWh of electricity cumulatively, it saves about 1.4 million tonnes of standard coal a year and cutting carbon-dioxide emissions by roughly 3.5 million tonnes. At the end of its concession period, the project will be transferred to Pakistan free of charge, becoming a permanent state asset. "Our wind-power projects in Pakistan have reached a combined installed capacity of 150 MW with cumulative generation of 3.2 billion kWh, complementing hydropower and helping create a more diversified and stable clean-energy mix," he said. Local Connections and Community Empowerment: Greater B2B engagement is also tightening the links between provinces and cities in the two countries. Taking agriculture as an example, Zhang Shulan, Director of the Center for South Asian Studies at Shandong University, highlighted the increasingly specialised nature of subnational cooperation.

ACC announces schedule for
Asian Games cricket competitions

DNA

THE Asian Cricket Council (ACC) on Monday confirmed the schedule for the men's and women's cricket competitions at the forthcoming Asian Games, which will run from September 17 to October 3. All cricket matches will be played in the T20 format at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya. Pakistan's women's team will begin its campaign on September 17 against Thailand. The women's semi-finals are scheduled for September 20, followed by the bronze-medal match and final on September 22. In the men's competition, the group stage will be held from September 24 to 26. Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are among the seeded teams that will enter the competition at the

quarter-final stage. Pakistan will play its quarter-final on September 28 against the team finishing second in Group B, while India will face the Group A runners-up on the same day. Under the draw, India and Pakistan can meet only in the gold-medal match or the bronze-medal play-off, both scheduled for October 3. The men's semi-finals will be played on October 1. In the previous Asian Games men's cricket competition, held in China in 2023, India were awarded the gold medal after the final against Afghanistan ended without a result. In the bronze-medal match, Pakistan suffered a six-wicket defeat against Bangladesh, with the Tigers securing third place. Meanwhile, a similar outcome was witnessed in the women's competition, with India winning the gold medal, Sri Lanka taking silver and Bang-

ladesh securing bronze after defeating two-time gold medalists Pakistan. Men's cricket schedule

Groups
• Group A: Afghanistan, Japan, Nepal
• Group B: Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Oman
Group stage
September 24
• 9:00am – Afghanistan vs Japan
• 2:00pm – Hong Kong vs Malaysia
September 25
• 9:00am – Hong Kong vs Oman
• 2:00pm – Afghanistan vs Nepal
September 26
• 9:00am – Japan vs Nepal
• 2:00pm – Malaysia vs Oman
Quarter-finals – September 28
• 9:00am – Pakistan vs B2
• 2:00pm – India vs A2
• 9:00am – Bronze-medal match
• 2:00pm – Final.

University Lahore
expanding programs with
Chinese Universities

LAHORE: Lahore's Government College University (GCU) is actively broadening its academic and cultural ties with Chinese institutions, according to Dr. Ahmad Raza Khan, person in charge of the Center of Excellence of China Studies at GCU. In an interview with Gwadar Pro, Dr. Khan outlined ongoing exchange program with China University of Geosciences in Wuhan, which focuses on MS level, and revealed that new student-exchange agreements are being discussed with Peking University and Tsinghua University. Documentation has been submitted to the Pakistani government, and he hopes the programs will become operational within the year. Currently, 20 to 25 students from GCU participate in exchanges at the MS level. Dr. Khan's long-term goal is to shift from individual scholarship applications to direct university-to-university exchanges, making mobility smoother and more systematic. He cited a former student from a small town in southern Punjab who, after earning a BS, MS, and PhD, completed a postdoc at Peking University and recently secured a two-year research fellowship in Poland. "The youth are the future of both countries," Dr. Khan said. To that end, all BS International Relations students at GCU are now required to study Chinese language, aiming to foster direct communication. – APP

PCB launches
internal disciplinary
inquiry amid reports
about Imam, Rizwan

THE Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday confirmed that it had initiated an internal disciplinary inquiry following reports "concerning discipline and conduct" as the media alleged that investigations involving former Test players Imamul Haq and Mohammad Rizwan have been widened. In a statement, PCB media director Amir Mir said the board was reviewing matters relating to "discipline and conduct" internally and that the process was being conducted under its regulations. The PCB has initiated an internal disciplinary inquiry following media reports concerning discipline and conduct, which are currently being reviewed internally," he said. "The PCB handles such matters in accordance with its standard procedures. The process is being conducted under PCB regulations, ensuring that all concerned individuals are given due consideration," he added. The statement came after DNA News that the PCB had obtained data from the mobile phones of Imam and Rizwan as part of an investigation into their activities and contacts during the team's stay in London. – DNA

Pakistan engineers complete advanced
reliability training in China

DNA

BEIJING: A group of engineers and technical professionals from Pakistan's National Engineering and Scientific Commission (NESCOM) have completed an advanced training program on reliability engineering in China, highlighting continued interactions between Chinese and Pakistani institutions in engineering and technology. The nearly three-week program was organized by Beihang University and the Asian Simulation Federation (ASIASF), with activities held in Beijing and Hangzhou from Aug. 3 to Aug. 21, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The program combined classroom instruction, technical interactions and visits to research institutions and technology companies. The training covered areas including reliability assessment, nondestructive testing, systems engineering, maintenance, autonomous systems and equipment health management. Emerging technologies, including digital twins and large language



models, were also discussed in the context of reliability engineering and practical applications. During the program, the Pakistani participants visited Hikvision's headquarters in Hangzhou, Untree Robotics and Tianmushan Laboratory. The visits gave them an opportunity to learn about reliability design, testing and quality management in areas such as intelligent systems, robotics and unmanned aerial vehicles. At the closing ceremony, Weng Jingnong, secretary-general of ASIASF and a professor at Beihang University, said the training could serve as a new starting point for further interactions between Beihang and NESCOM. Umer Farooq, representing the NESCOM trainees, expressed appreciation for the training arrangements and support from the Chinese organizers. He said the participants had gained practical experience and benefited from both the courses and on-site interactions. The program provided a platform for technical and academic interactions between the two sides, allowing the Pakistani participants to learn from Chinese universities, research institutions and technology companies.

India agrees 'in principle' to take part
in Pakistan-hosted 2027 SAF Games

DNA

INDIA has formally agreed to participate in the 2027 South Asian Federation (SAF) Games, which Pakistan is set to host from April 4 to 11, marking a significant step towards the return of the regional multi-sport event to the country after 23 years, The News reported on Monday. Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) Secretary General Khalid Mehmood said that India was represented at a high-level meeting of the South Asian Olympic Association and agreed to participate following an invitation to the games. According to Khalid Mehmood, India has agreed in principle at the relevant regional sporting level, while details of its contingent will be communicated in January 2027. The development came as Pakistan intensified preparations for the staging of the games, with a high-level meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reviewing arrangements for the event.

The meeting discussed the support required from the federal government, provincial administrations and relevant institutions to ensure international-standard venues, security, transportation, accommodation, medical facilities and other essential arrangements. The proposed games will feature competition in 28 sports, with events distributed among Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar. Islamabad will host 15 sports, including squash, tennis and martial arts, making the federal capital the largest sporting hub of the games. Lahore will host competitions in 10 sports, including swimming, cricket and hockey. The city's existing sporting infrastructure and experience of hosting major domestic and international competitions will make it a key venue for the games. Peshawar will host competitions in three sports, giving Khyber Pakhtunkhwa a direct role in the regional sporting event. The government has placed particular emphasis on security as the games are expected to bring thousands of athletes, coaches,

officials, technical staff, spectators and international media personnel to Pakistan. DPM Dar has directed the relevant provincial administrations and sports departments to utilise all available resources and complete preparations well before the opening of the games. The provincial authorities have also been instructed to ensure foolproof security for foreign delegations, athletes, officials, spectators and visiting journalists from their arrival in Pakistan until their departure. The Pakistan Olympic Association has begun coordination with member countries and relevant regional sporting bodies regarding participation and is expected to remain at the centre of efforts to finalise the participating countries and their respective contingents. Pakistan last hosted the 9th SAF Games in Islamabad from March 29 to April 7, 2004. The 2027 edition will therefore mark the country's return to hosting the regional multi-sport event after more than two decades. The games are also expected to generate economic activity in the

host cities, with athletes, officials, spectators and journalists contributing to demand for hotels, restaurants, transport and other hospitality services. For Pakistan's athletes, the event will offer the advantage of competing before home crowds against strong regional opposition. Sports including squash, hockey, swimming, tennis and cricket are expected to attract substantial interest. The inclusion of Peshawar will extend the reach of the games beyond the traditional centres of major international sporting competitions and give spectators in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa an opportunity to experience a regional multi-sport event. The success of the SAF Games will depend on coordination among federal and provincial governments, sports organisations, security agencies, health departments, local administrations, transport authorities, venue managers and other stakeholders. With the games scheduled for April 4-11, 2027, preparations are expected to remain under close review in the coming months.

Iran to
unfurl new
restricted
Hormuz
zone

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the war, the conflict appears to be at a stalemate. A preliminary ceasefire accord reached in June has unravelled, and little progress has been made in diplomatic efforts to get the peace process back on track. After a pause in military action for much of August, tit-for-tat strikes have resumed. U.S. forces struck three Iranian oil tankers on Saturday, U.S. Central Command said, including one off Kharg Island, Iran's key oil export hub, following attacks by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on U.S. warships in the region. Tehran has shown it retains the capability to attack U.S. interests in neighboring countries and to shut down oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of global oil supplies flowed prior to the conflict. An average of 10 commodity ships transited the Strait per day in the past 10 days, the lowest since May, according to shipping data on Monday. That helped oil prices extend last week's big gains, with Brent crude up 0.8 percent above \$97 a barrel. Iran has said it will step up efforts to tackle problems created by U.S. sanctions that are crippling its economy. However, the U.S. campaign to throttle Iran's economy by blockading its oil exports and stopping sanctions evasion is growing increasingly difficult to withstand, three senior Iranian sources have said. Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on Sunday that the U.S. should understand that the rules of the game have changed "before it is too late". "From now on, any attack against Iran's interests and security will receive a faster, heavier and more painful response," he said in a speech published on his Telegram channel. Qalibaf said that alongside the military front, Iran's main battle was now over production and people's livelihoods. He cited sharp currency fluctuations, inflation, unemployment and market management as major challenges, adding Iranians could tolerate hardship but not mismanagement or inaction and expected the government to act quickly. Iran's Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh said Tehran planned to respond to U.S. economic pressure with reforms and rejected the notion that sanctions would cause it to change course, according to state media on Sunday. "They speak of economic pressure and isolation, of breaking off financial ties and they think that by pressuring the economy of a country they can change the decisions of its people," Madanizadeh said.

Saudi
Arabia
preparing
to grant...

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inspections at undeclared locations. Iran implemented the Additional Protocol from 2016 to 2021 under a nuclear deal with major powers that unravelled after the US pulled out in 2018. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said that while the Additional Protocol would be the "ideal setup", Riyadh was preparing to go beyond its core obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement governing relations with the IAEA. "What is important is that in the consultations, in the preparation process, it has been possible to introduce a number of provisions to the bilateral agreement that will give the agency additional verification and monitoring authorisations," he told a press conference.

PPP leader
takes aim at
federal...

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Meanwhile, the MQM-P has fully backed the idea of creating new provinces. "Those lecturing us on the 18th Amendment are the products of Form-47; those who have secured an artificial or handed-out mandate cannot make decisions for the nation," the senior provincial minister said during his speech in the Sindh Assembly.

Briefs

PSX loses over 1,692 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 1,692.74 points, a negative change of 0.97 percent, to close at 173,636.08 points against 175,328.82 points recorded in the previous trading session.

The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 679.188 million shares, compared to 874.322 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value surged to Rs23.692 billion from Rs32.417 billion. Market capitalisation decreased to Rs19.434 trillion from Rs19.629 trillion recorded a day earlier. Out of 495 companies that traded in the ready market, 154 posted gains, 311 suffered losses, while 30 remained unchanged, reflecting a downward trend in the market. Cnergyco PK led the volume chart with 82.458 million shares, followed by 1st Capital Sec. with 41.468 million shares and Pak Refinery with 39.964 million shares. Among the top gainers, PIA Holding Company Limited surged by Rs225.12 to close at Rs17,224.12, while Buxly Paints Limited advanced by Rs98.91 to settle at Rs1,088.05. —APP

Rupee gains 01 paisa against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs277.40, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs277.41. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278 and Rs 278.50, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.34 and closed at Rs 322.72 against the previous day's closing of Rs 322.38, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 02 paisa to close at Rs 1.79, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs0.14 and closed at Rs 375.67 compared to the previous day's Rs 375.53. The exchange rates of the Emirati Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged to close at Rs 75.52 and at Rs 73.87, respectively. —APP

Gold prices fall by Rs2,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a decline in the local market on Monday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola falling by Rs2,400 to settle at Rs463,136, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs2,058 to Rs397,064, whereas 10 grams of 22-karat gold declined by Rs1,887 to Rs363,988. In the international market, the price of gold fell by \$24 to \$4,406 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs39 to Rs7,059, while the price of 10 grams of silver fell by Rs34 to Rs6,051. The price of silver in the international market also declined by \$0.39 to \$65.80 per ounce, the association added. —APP

China, Pak celebrate 75-years of ties

BEIJING: Against the majestic backdrop of the illuminated Badaling Great Wall, notes of traditional Chinese melodies and the resonant rhythms of Pakistani Sufi Qawwali echoed across Wangjing Square on Sunday evening. The 2026 Beijing International Great Wall Concert, themed "An Ode to Ironclad Friendship," was held to commemorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Jointly organized by the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing and the China International Cultural Communication Center (CICCC), with support from the People's Government of Yangqing District, the landmark cultural gala drew senior diplomats. —APP

Aasan Tajir scheme opens door for traders: Yasmeen

Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to serving as a bridge between the government and the private sector and assured the RTO of the Chamber's full cooperation in creating awareness about the Simplified Income Tax Regime and facilitating traders in meeting their tax requirements



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Commissioner Regional Tax Office (RTO) Islamabad Yasmeen Fatima has urged retailers and small shopkeepers to register under the government's Simplified Income Tax Regime (Aasan Tajir Scheme) and file their returns by September 30, 2026, saying the initiative is designed to simplify taxation, encourage voluntary compliance and bring more businesses into the formal economy. Speaking at an interactive session at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here on Monday, she described the scheme as a friendly and positive gesture towards the business community and called for replacing the traditional fear and distance between

taxpayers and tax officials with co-operation, facilitation and mutual trust. Explaining the scheme, Yasmeen Fatima said traders with annual turnover of up to Rs200 million could opt for the simplified regime while retaining the option of filing normal tax returns. Under the simplified system, eligible traders would pay a minimum annual tax of Rs25,000, while those fulfilling the prescribed requirements would remain exempt from audit. She said the scheme offers small businesses greater certainty about their tax obligations and provides an opportunity for traders currently outside the tax net to enter the formal economy through a simpler and more manageable compliance mechanism. She said the registration process had also been made easier, with the relevant form available in

Urdu to facilitate small traders. Traders could register through the Tax Aasan App, while those requiring assistance could approach the tax authorities directly. The Chief Commissioner said the scheme also carried significant benefits for traders including no audit under the scheme and an amnesty provision, urging the business community to view the initiative positively and avail the opportunity. Yasmeen Fatima said a Green Plate carrying a QR code would be displayed outside registered shops, promoting transparency and providing a visible indication of compliance. She expressed the hope that the initiative would build confidence among small businesses while reducing unnecessary interaction between traders and tax officials. "The government is extending a hand of

cooperation to the business community," she said, emphasizing that the objective was not to create fear but to facilitate traders in becoming part of the documented economy and contributing to national development. Earlier, Chief Commissioner Yasmeen Fatima, along with ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, senior RTO officials, ICCI office-bearers and representatives of the business community, inaugurated the Income Tax Facilitation Desk at the ICCI premises. She said the desk would operate as a one-window support facility where traders could obtain guidance on registration, return filing and other tax-related matters. ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood appreciated the RTO Islamabad for establishing the facilitation desk at the Chamber, describing it as

a practical step towards addressing the concerns of small traders. He said the business community was a responsible partner in Pakistan's economic development and the backbone of economic activity, contributing to employment, investment, trade and revenue generation. He said the desk would help bridge the communication gap between tax authorities and small businesses by providing timely guidance, resolving procedural issues and enabling traders to fulfil their obligations without unnecessary hurdles. Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to serving as a bridge between the government and the private sector and assured the RTO of the Chamber's full cooperation in creating awareness about the Simplified Income Tax Regime and facilitating traders in meeting their tax requirements.

Wildfires, heat waves endanger air quality, health

GENEVA: Wildfires and heatwaves, which generate microscopic airborne pollutants, risk undermining international efforts to improve air quality, protect human health and safeguard nature, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Monday. The United Nations' weather and climate agency underlined the links between air pollution and climate change, which scientists say is leading to more frequent and more intense heatwaves and wildfires. "Extreme wildfires are increasing, leading to big health consequences because of the high toxicity of smoke," the WMO said in a statement accompanying its latest annual Air Quality and Climate Bulletin. "Whilst regulations in Europe and North America have reduced industrial and transport PM2.5 emissions, exposure to fire-related PM2.5 has increased." Particulate matter PM2.5 is composed of microscopic particles and droplets of less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter, which is a health hazard because it can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream. It is emitted by fossil fuel-driven industrial activities, farming, domestic heating and transport, as well as by wildfires and dust storms. The report said the world needs to better monitor air pollutants such as aerosol — including black carbon and microplastics —, fine particles and ground-level ozone.

These pollutants "are not sufficiently monitored even though they are widespread and are potentially harmful to ecosystems", the WMO said. "We need complementary and coordinated policies on air quality and climate because they cannot be dealt with in isolation." "Air quality and climate change can't be dealt with separately. If one worsens, the other does too," Lorenzo Labador, from the WMO's Global Atmosphere Watch network of scientists, told AFP.

"In places where there are relatively powerful forest fires, we find a lot of fine particle pollution," he said. Microparticles generated by burning vegetation are "much more toxic" than those emitted by other sources, even car exhaust, he stressed. They damage the health of people and wildlife living far from the fire itself because they are carried by the wind, but their poisonous effect is not sufficiently taken into account in air quality assessments, Labador said. "Conventional risks models based on total PM2.5 concentrations may underestimate wildfire-attributable mortality by up to 93 percent," the WMO said. One study cited in the WMO Bulletin says extreme fire-smoke events have tripled globally since the 1990s, contributing to nearly 100,000 additional deaths per year between 2010 and 2018, although this may be an underestimate. Another source of air pollution that carries major health risks is ground-level ozone, which accumulates when temperatures rise, atmospheric conditions stagnate and solar radiation is intense, as seen during recent heatwaves in China, Europe and the southeastern United States. "This increased exposure to ozone pollution has the potential to lead to tens of thousands of additional premature deaths," particularly due to respiratory diseases, the WMO warned. —Agencies

China's shifting priorities require Pak to build institutional capacity

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan needs to strengthen its institutional capacity and realign its economic strategy with China's changing priorities to secure greater benefits from bilateral cooperation, a policy paper said. The recommendation was made in a policy paper titled "Understanding China: China's Economy and Industrial Policy," launched by the China Desk of EMPAK Strategies at a ceremony attended by Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh as chief guest said a release issued here on Monday. The report said China's 15th Five-Year Plan for 2026-2030 focuses on industrial and technological development, productive capacity and innovation, while the first decade of Pakistan-China economic cooperation largely revolved around infrastructure and financing. It said China had now moved beyond that model, requiring Pakistan to revise its strategy and align its priorities with the new direction of the Chinese economy. According to the report, the central concept of China's industrial policy is "new quality productive forces", which prioritizes technology, innovation and productivity rather than low-cost labour. China accounted for 54 percent of industrial robots installed worldwide in 2024, with 295,000 robots installed during the year. It also spent 3.93 trillion yuan on research and development in 2025, the report added. The report noted that despite a record increase in Pakistan's exports to China, the bilateral trade imbalance continued to widen. During fiscal year 2025-26, Pakistan's exports to China increased by around 10 percent to \$2.67 billion, making China the second-largest market for Pakistani products after the United States. Meanwhile, imports from China rose by 14 percent to approximately \$22.2 billion, resulting in a bilateral trade deficit of around \$19.53 billion, an increase of approximately \$2.4 billion in one year. Addressing the launching ceremony, Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said China was a sincere friend of Pakistan and had supported the country in every difficult situation. The minister said it was up to Pakistan to determine how much benefit it could derive from Chinese cooperation. The minister acknowledged that CPEC projects had suffered setbacks in the past, but said the present government was providing better conditions and facilities to investors from China and other countries. Chairperson of China Global Professional Technical Certification and former Chairperson of NAVTTC Pakistan Gulmina Bilal said China was prioritizing eight strategic sectors, including next-generation information technology, new energy, robotics, biomedicine, high-end equipment, aviation and aerospace. She said six future industries, including quantum technology, biomanufacturing, hydrogen and fusion energy, brain-computer interfaces and 6G, were also being developed. Pakistan, she said, should focus on these emerging sectors and prepare a workforce equipped with internationally competitive technical skills. —

Secret Assad-era Syrian nuclear reactor almost complete

VIENNA: An undeclared Syrian nuclear reactor being constructed during the era of former leader Bashar Assad was "almost complete," representing an "important step" in any nuclear weapons program, the UN nuclear watchdog said on Monday. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) last month visited two sites, one in Deir Ezzor and a second undisclosed location identified to them by Syrian authorities. In a report seen by AFP last week, the IAEA said it found that Syria's previous government was building a nuclear reactor. Longtime ruler Assad was toppled in December 2024, bringing to power the current Islamist government. IAEA head Rafael Grossi said it was "obvious that the previous government was pursuing a number of clandestine" activities. "I cannot judge intentions, but it is very clear that these activities were not de-

clared; they didn't want the world to know what they were doing," he told reporters after opening the Vienna-based agency's quarterly Board of Governors meeting. "Given the configuration, the technical features of that type of reactor, this is a reactor that is very efficient in the production of fissile material that could be used directly for the fabrication of nuclear weapons," he said, adding that building the reactor was a "very important step." He added that the reactor — which is currently being excavated — "was almost completed." "It was in a very advanced stage of construction," he said, adding that it was "very possible and cannot be excluded that the then Syrian authorities also performed some explosions in order to... hinder any possibility of an investigation." Besides the nuclear reactor under construction at the Deir Ezzor site, the IAEA found a fuel fabrication plant, where the nuclear fuel for the reactor was manufactured, and a location where nuclear fuel as well as uranium scrap and waste were stored. In its report, the IAEA said it found around 73 tonnes of natural uranium metal. = Grossi has praised Damascus's "courageous decision" to report the undisclosed site. = The UN atomic watchdog had declared in 2011 that the location was "very likely" to host a nuclear reactor, adding that its information suggested it was being built with North Korean assistance. —APP

Lebanon thanks UAE for support amid challenges

DUBAI: Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun thanked UAE leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan for supporting his nation during recent discussions on security and bilateral relations, Lebanon's presidency said on Monday. During a phone call, Aoun praised the UAE for its efforts to ease the suffering of the Lebanese people amid difficult circumstances. He also highlighted recent mutual visits by the leaders, saying they reflected the depth of current ties and laid the groundwork for greater economic, trade and investment cooperation. The two leaders also discussed the rapidly developing security situation in southern Lebanon and broader regional developments. —APP

Oxford varsity museum to return human remains to Naga people

LONDON: Oxford University's Pitt Rivers Museum will return the remains of 39 people taken during Britain's colonial era to the Naga community in northeast India, the museum said on Monday. The museum, which holds the world's largest collection of Naga artefacts, confirmed it was preparing the repatriation after the university approved a restitution request by the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR). The remains "have been away from their homeland for far too long", museum director Laura Van Broekhoven said in a statement sent to AFP. The human remains were collected in the early 20th century by British colonial administrators and some remained on public display until 2020. "Repatriation, for the Nagas, is not simply about bones and ancestral remains finding their way back to the land but importantly about memory returning to where it belongs," the FNR and other Naga organisations said in a statement sent to AFP, welcoming the agreement. The request covered 40 sets of human remains, Pitt Rivers Museum said. Oxford University approved the return of 39 of them on July 13, concluding that one specimen "does not have a clear provenance as Naga". The museum said it was "working closely" with the Naga community to agree a date for a handover ceremony, which hasn't been set yet. The agreement forms part of a wider international movement to repatriate artefacts and human remains acquired by Western institutions during the colonial era. —APP

Germany seeks to quash Gaza genocide case

BERLIN: The Hague: Germany will Monday ask the top United Nations court to toss out a case brought against it by Nicaragua, which has accused Berlin of "facilitating genocide" with its support of Israel. Lawyers for Germany will kick off four days of hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the court based in The Hague that rules on disputes between countries. The case dates back to 2024, following the start of Israel's offensive in Gaza. Nicaragua urged ICJ judges to impose emergency measures to force Berlin to halt all aid to Israel, in particular military equipment. The court threw out Nicaragua's request in April of that year, saying "the circumstances, as they now present themselves" did not justify emergency orders. The case is nevertheless ongoing and Germany is now seeking to have it removed, either by persuading judges they do not have the power to rule in the case or that Nicaragua's argument does not stack up. Berlin has filed so-called "preliminary objections to the jurisdiction of the Court and to the admissibility of certain claims" presented by Nicaragua, according to an ICJ statement. The detail of Berlin's case has not yet been made public. Genocide claim After Germany presents its case on Monday, Nicaragua will respond before both countries get another chance to address the court on Wednesday and Thursday. It takes on average six months for the court to hand down a ruling in such cases. The court could either side with Germany and throw out the case completely or rule against Berlin. —APP

Indonesia seeks GCC trade deal for tech transfer

JAKARTA: Indonesia is seeking a free trade agreement with Gulf Cooperation Council countries to advance technology transfer, strengthen food security and build supply-chain resilience, its trade ministry says, as negotiations on the pact are expected to conclude by the end of 2026. Jakarta and the GCC launched talks for the FTA in July 2024. Following the latest meetings in July, Indonesia's Deputy Trade Minister Roro Esti Widya Putri said nearly 90 percent of the deal has been completed, reflecting "the strong commitment" of both negotiating teams. "We are doing our best to conclude it substantially, hopefully by the end of 2026," Johni Martha, director general of International Trade Negotiations at the Ministry of Trade, told Arab News. "We want the Indonesia-GCC FTA to support investment, technology transfer, supply-chain resilience, food security, energy transition and industrial development." Indonesia already has a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the UAE and facilitating greater trade flows with other mem-

bers of the bloc, especially Saudi Arabia, is projected by the Indonesian government to increase the Southeast Asian nation's total exports by more than 17 percent. "Closer trade cooperation with the Gulf is strategically important because the GCC is not only a major trading partner but also an increasingly important investment, logistics, and economic hub connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa ... At the same time, Indonesia can offer the GCC a large, dynamic market and a platform to expand economic activities into ASEAN," Martha said. "We see strong potential because Indonesia is a market of around 285 million people, while the GCC represents a highly integrated market with substantial purchasing power and significant investment capacity. The agreement can therefore create a much broader economic partnership beyond conventional trade in goods." Indonesia's total trade with GCC countries was valued at \$17 billion out of a total \$524 billion in 2025. The main export commodities to the Gulf region included motor vehicles and automotive

components, palm oil, and jewelry. Immediate gains from the deal are expected to be seen in the food and food security sectors, as Indonesia would play a bigger role in the GCC's food supply chains. Being the biggest Muslim-majority country with a strong agricultural and food-processing base, it is also a leading producer of halal-certified food products. In the longer term, partnerships are expected in investment and industrial cooperation — especially green energy and energy transition, where GCC has significant expertise. "GCC countries have strong capital and investment capabilities, while Indonesia offers a large domestic market, manufacturing capacity, abundant renewable energy potential, and growing downstream industries," Martha said. "We would like to connect these strengths by promoting investment in renewable energy, green hydrogen and ammonia, green industrial development, and other clean energy solutions, while strengthening industrial value chains and creating mutually beneficial opportunities for both sides. —Agencies

Briefs

NCCA gets
3-day
remand of
journalist

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A judicial magistrate in Islamabad on Monday granted the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCA) three-day physical remand of journalist Bilal Ghauri in a case registered under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca). According to the first information report, seen by Dawn, the case was registered on Sept 6 on the state's behalf through NC-CIA Technical Assistant Muhammad Umair Warsi under Section 20 (offences against the dignity of a natural person) and 26-A (dissemination of false and fake information) of Peca. The FIR stated that Ghauri allegedly uploaded and disseminated content concerning the appointment of the National Counter Terrorism Authority's (Nacta) head on Sept 5. "Prima facie, the material allegedly contained assertions and allegations concerning the process and circumstances relating to the appointment of the Nacta national coordinator," the FIR stated. It said an inquiry into the matter concluded that Ghauri had "intentionally created, uploaded, transmitted and disseminated the false narratives through social media platforms". The inquiry also found that the content was "false, misleading and presented without any lawful, factual or independently verifiable basis", the FIR added.

'West Bank
escalation
makes two-
state solution
'impossible'

DNA

NEW YORK: A top official within the US-backed Board of Peace said on Monday that a failure to move forward in Gaza paired with rising violence in the West Bank are making a two-state solution "impossible". Nikolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza under the US-backed Board of Peace tasked with implementing an October 2025 ceasefire plan, was speaking at the Hili Forum in Abu Dhabi. "I would say that if Gaza continues the way it is now, or does not move into implementing... the plan that we have under the comprehensive plan, the two-state solution will become practically impossible," he said. "Because, with everything that is happening in the West Bank, and with more than 50 per cent of Gaza now under the control of the Israeli army and less than 50 per cent under the control of Hamas, there is no credible pathway forward to a political resolution of the conflict," he added.

Acting President inaugurates
Founders' Wall at ISE Towers

Ms. Marium, Chairperson, ISE Towers Limited, expressed her gratitude to the Acting President for gracing the occasion and inaugurating the Founders' Wall



ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani unveiling the plaque at the Founders' Wall at Islamabad Stock Exchange (ISE) Towers Limited. – DNA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Acting President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Chairman, Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, today inaugurated the Founders' Wall at ISE (Islamabad Stock Exchange) Towers Limited, Islamabad. The Founders' Wall has been established to preserve and honour the legacy of the founders and key contributors to the Islamabad Stock Exchange's historic journey now existing

as ISE REIT Management Company and ISE Towers Limited. The Acting President was received by Mr. Haroon Ihsan Piracha, Chairman ISE REIT Management Company along with other Board Members. Following the inauguration, the Acting President interacted with the Board Members. Welcoming the Acting President, Mr. Haroon Ihsan Piracha thanked him for sparing his valuable time to grace the occasion and recalled his association with the institution. He noted that the licence for the establishment of the Islamabad

Stock Exchange was granted during the first government of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed. He also recalled that the building of ISE Towers was inaugurated by Honorable Guest during his tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan, thus making his presence at the inauguration of the Founders' Wall a particularly meaningful occasion for the institution. The Chairman highly appreciated the Acting President's continued support and interest in the development of Pakistan's capital market. Ms. Marium, Chairperson, ISE Towers

Limited, expressed her gratitude to the Acting President for gracing the occasion and inaugurating the Founders' Wall. Mr. Zahid Latif Khan, Director and former Chairman, briefed the gathering on the history and evolution of the Company, tracing its journey from its origins as the Islamabad Stock Exchange (ISE) to its present role in Pakistan's capital market. He highlighted the Company's significant contribution to the development and strengthening of the country's capital market over the years. He also expressed his appreciation for the continued support and patronage extended towards the Company and its initiatives for further growth and development. In his brief remarks, the Acting President recalled the history of the institution as the Islamabad Stock Exchange (ISE) and appreciated its contribution to the development of Pakistan's capital market. He acknowledged the efforts of those associated with the establishment of ISE and specifically mentioned Mr. Ihsan-ul-Haq Piracha, former Finance Minister, for his role in obtaining the licence for the Islamabad Stock Exchange. The Acting President appreciated the institution's journey and expressed hope that it would continue to carry its legacy and contribute to the development of Pakistan's capital market and the country's future economic growth. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Board of Directors expressed their gratitude to the Acting President for gracing the occasion, inaugurating the Founders' Wall, and sharing his valuable reflections on the institution's history. The Acting President also assured full support to the institution in future as well for its further growth and dynamic role in the economic development of the country.

23 die in US
immigration
custody

"Four more people have died in US immigration custody since (June), for a total of 23 deaths in 2026 alone. There needs to be accountability for these deaths"

GENEVA: The United Nations rights chief demanded Monday accountability for swelling numbers of deaths in US immigration custody, and urged Washington to halt deportations to places where people face "irreparable harm". "Four more people have died in US immigration custody since (June), for a total of 23 deaths in 2026 alone. There needs to be accountability for these deaths," Volker Turk said in an opening address to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. – APP

Iran warns
South Korea

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry on Monday warned South Korea against military deployment or involvement in US operations in the Strait of Hormuz, saying such a move would have "serious consequences". On Friday, Seoul said it was considering "contributions" to US security efforts in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran has largely controlled since the outbreak of war against the United States on February 28. South Korea said it would consider the move provided that its own military readiness was not compromised, but added that no decision had been made. On Monday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei warned South Korea against succumbing to what he called "US pressure and intimidation". "Any military deployment or participation in operations by other countries in the Persian Gulf or the Strait of Hormuz can only be regarded as direct support for the party responsible for that aggression and will have serious consequences," he said in a post on X. Iran and the United States have continued to trade fire in and around the Strait of Hormuz, even after an April ceasefire brought the initial intense bombardment campaign to an end. Negotiations between the two foes have stalled as they vied for control over Hormuz, which normally carries around a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports. Since the war erupted, traffic through the vital waterway has been virtually paralysed, disrupting global energy markets. Iran has required vessels to seek permission to transit – a move opposed by Washington and several regional countries – insisting that there will be no return to the pre-war system of unrestricted navigation.

'Sindh division without public
consent would weaken federation'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan has warned that dividing Sindh without the consent of its people would weaken the federation, calling for broad consultation before any decision on the creation of new provinces. Speaking to the media outside the Supreme Court on Monday, Gohar said the establishment of new provinces was a serious matter and should not be pursued through controversial legislation or in haste. The debate over restructuring the country's administrative map has intensified in recent weeks, with ruling allies the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) appearing divided over the matter. Last week, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said new administrative units will eventually be created, insisting that no one can stop the process, while reiterating his call for a "reset" of the country's system. Similarly, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal had proposed creating 12 to 15 provinces and called for a national political debate, arguing that the country's four

existing provinces have become increasingly centralised. The issue has particularly sharpened in Sindh, where opposition to any division of the province has grown alongside competing calls for administrative devolution. The Sindh Assembly has rejected proposals to alter the province's boundaries or create new administrative units, while the PPP leadership has reiterated its opposition to any division of Sindh. In today's media interaction, Gohar said serious consultation, similar to that undertaken for the 18th Amendment, should precede any decision on creating new provinces. "Without the consent of the people, if Sindh is divided, the federation will become weaker," he said. The PTI chairman said the division of Sindh, Punjab or Balochistan without the consent of their people and elected representatives could create further complications. "Such experiments should not be conducted in the country," he said, warning that taking decisions on the creation of provinces in haste would be against the unity of the federation. On political dialogue, Gohar criticised the federal government, saying that negotiations had previously remained limited to offers and stressed that progress should now be made.

ATC grants 20-day
physical remand
of PTI leader
Hammad Azhar

Former federal minister's mother moves LHC seeking record of cases registered against him

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore handed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Hammad Azhar over to police on a 20-day physical remand. Police presented the former federal minister before the court hours after confirming his arrest, while his mother approached the Lahore High Court (LHC) seeking his recovery a day after police reportedly detained him in Multan. A spokesperson for Lahore police said earlier that Azhar had been wanted by Lahore police in 18 cases, while he had remained absconding for three years. The spokesperson said that the investigation police arrested the PTI leader and would produce him before a court to seek his remand.

A charge sheet would be presented before the Anti-Terrorism Court after completing the investigation, the spokesperson added. The mother of PTI leader earlier approached the LHC seeking Azhar's recovery. The petition named Punjab Inspector General of Police, Lahore Capital City Police Officer and others as respondents, seeking orders to disclose Azhar's arrest and produce him before court. According to the petition, the former federal minister was taken into custody from Multan two days ago but was not presented before a court. The petitioner requested the court to order authorities to formally show Azhar's arrest, provide records of cases registered against him, and produce him before the court. Azhar was reportedly handed over to Lahore police following his arrest in Multan, with police sources saying that the PTI leader – declared a proclaimed offender – was involved in multiple cases registered in connection with the May 9, 2023 riots. Police sources confirmed earlier that Azhar had been taken into custody but his arrest could not yet be formally recorded. Azhar, who served as the federal minister during the PTI's tenure at the Centre, resigned from the post of the party's Punjab chapter president in August 2024. At the time, he cited the "lack of access" to jailed PTI founder and former prime minister Imran Khan and restrictions on his movements as the reasons behind his decision. – DNA

Oil nears \$97
as US-Iran
attacks intensify

Brent crude goes 7.8% higher last week, while West Texas Intermediate gains nearly 10% amid renewed attacks

LONDON: Oil prices extended gains on Monday as tit-for-tat strikes by the US and Iran on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and elsewhere heightened concerns over a prolonged disruption to Middle East supplies. Brent crude futures rose 52 cents, or 0.54%, to \$96.80 a barrel by 2354 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$92.14 a barrel, up 66 cents, or 0.72%. Brent gained 7.8% last week, while WTI rose nearly 10% after the US and Iran resumed attacks, reducing oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil supply passed before the conflict. US forces struck three Iranian oil tankers on Saturday, US Central Command said, including one off the coast of Kharg Island, near Iran's key oil export hub. The navy of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said on Saturday that it had targeted three oil tankers travelling through unauthorised routes in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as three additional US vessels in other areas. The Saturday attacks represented a "major escalation in the maritime conflict", maritime intelligence firm Marisks said. "Commercial tankers are now being deliberately used as instruments of reciprocal economic pressure, substantially weakening the previous distinction between military confrontation and commercial shipping," it added. An average of 10 commodity ships transited the Strait of Hormuz each day over the past 10 days, the lowest level since May, according to data from analytics firm Kpler. A restricted zone will be announced outside the Strait of Hormuz in the coming days, Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Sunday, according to state media. – DNA

UK ban on trade with illegal Israeli
settlements should be permanent

Albanese also called on the UK government to take measures against the planned E1 settlement which, if completed, would sever East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Britain's proposed ban on trade with illegal Israeli settlements is an overdue initial step that should be judged by its practical impact, UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has said. She told The Guardian that a "ban on settlement goods was a change in UK government stance and absolutely important," and that she would "not join those dismissing it as theatre before the details had been announced." It came as UK Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband vowed to act more decisively against Israeli settlements and the continued restriction of aid flow into Gaza. Palestinian groups in the UK are awaiting the finer details of Miliband's policy, set to be announced on Tuesday. However, they are expecting one of the most fundamental shifts in the British position toward the Israel-Palestine question since David Lammy, a previous foreign secretary, withdrew major arms export licenses to Israel in 2024. A settlement trade ban would have to be part of "a true paradigm shift to Israel-Palestine that

ultimately seeks to implement the International Court of Justice advisory opinion in 2024," Albanese said. That opinion found that Israel's occupation is "unlawful in its entirety." As a result, "all states carry an obligation ... not to recognize the situation as legal, and not render aid and assistance in maintaining it," Albanese said. She warned that the UK's policy shift must not confine itself to a limited ban on goods – mainly agricultural products and cosmetics – because this would represent just a "fraction of what sustains the occupation, and a fraction that Israel can absorb without difficulty." The government should target trade in services, intelligence cooperation, arms licensing, and unexamined flights over Gaza from the Royal Air Force's Akrotiri airbase in Cyprus. If these measures were left on the table, the proposed shift would "over time come to be seen as not amounting to a reckoning, but a press release," Albanese said. "Because the 2024 ICJ advisory opinion declares the entire Israeli presence in the occupied territories as unlawful, third states'

obligations 'not to render aid or assistance' extends to everything that sustains that unlawful presence as a whole." Albanese also called on the UK government to take measures against the planned E1 settlement which, if completed, would sever East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. She highlighted comments by Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich that E1 is designed to "bury the idea of a Palestinian state." Britain must also join South Africa before the ICJ and support Nicaragua when the court hears preliminary objections from Germany. Nicaragua had filed claims in the ICJ alleging that Berlin's continued arms sales to Israel amount to complicity in genocide. Albanese said: "Britain is not a party to that case. It can still choose which side of the argument it stands on: whether it treats participation in international accountability mechanisms as a threat to an alliance, or recognizes that an alliance built on anything other than principle and the rule of law is not an alliance at all. It is an arrangement of convenience, honored only until convenience changes."



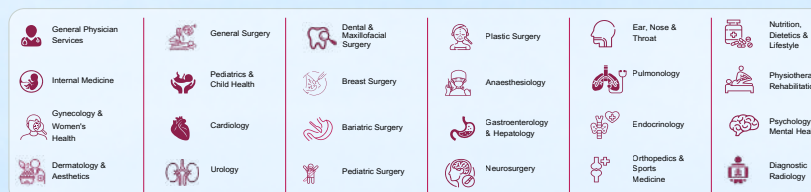
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