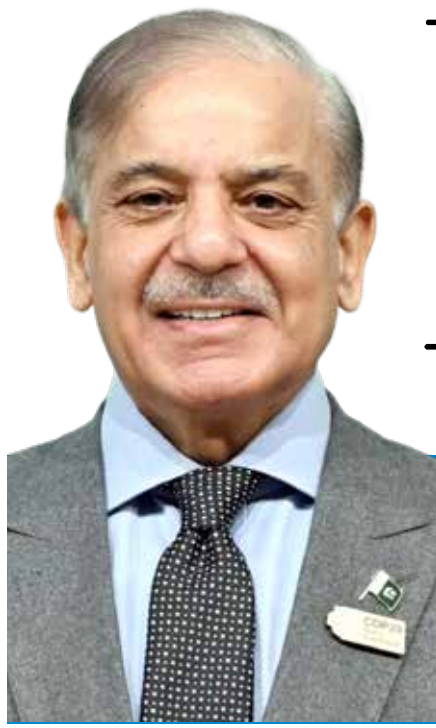




Thursday, September 10, 2026

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PM directs survey of properties for Apna Ghar Scheme

Detailed News On Page-08

Bilawal calls upon Naqvi to discuss Issues in the NA

Detailed News On Page-01



New Zealand keen to boost ties with Pak

Detailed News On Page-02



Pakistan warning

Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia could trigger Makkah pact

Islamabad will honour terms and conditions of tripartite agreement, says Defence Minister Khawaja Asif

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has warned that Houthi attacks on Saudi territory would invoke the Makkah Defence Alliance, a tripartite defence agreement signed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. At least 71 people were injured on Tuesday after Houthis launched an attack on several cities in Saudi Arabia, further undermining stability in the Middle East. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attacks, terming them a "cowardly" act that endangered innocent lives and threatened regional peace and security. The prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast support for the kingdom's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity. Speaking during the show, the defence minister said that unprovoked aggression or the spillover from Yemen into Saudi Arabia "will definitely" operationalise the Makkah Defence Alliance. "There should be no doubt about it. We are bound by the terms and conditions of this pact, and we will honour them in case there is a need," he added. However, Asif said that Islamabad hoped the situation would be brought under control and eventually subside. The trilateral agreement – signed between Islamabad, Riyadh and Ankara on August 7 – provides for collective security and defence cooperation among the three states. The pact was signed amid heightened tensions in the Middle East following the conflict that began on February 28, when the United States and Israel launched joint strikes against Iran and targeted its senior leadership. On Pakistan's mediation efforts between the US and Iran, the defence minister said that Islamabad's efforts to broker peace were still ongoing. The defence minister said that Pakistan wanted an environment that could help reduce tensions in the region. "There are contacts, even if they are indirect," Pakistan, which emerged as a key mediator between the US and Iran, achieved a

Continued on Page 06

Iran attacks American base in Jordan

DNA

IRAN'S Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) said it fired ballistic missiles at a base in Jordan used by the US military and attacked 10 ships on Wednesday, after the US said it had destroyed five Iranian oil tankers, in a sharp escalation of the six-month-old war. Increased attacks by both the US and Iran have shattered a month of relative calm, hitting military, shipping and energy assets, sending oil prices surging and drawing in regional allies in recent days. The US military's Central Command posted video of the strikes, which it called a response to IRGC targeting a US Navy warship twice with ballistic missiles over the previous two days. No Americans were harmed, the US said. "Iran continues to try to hit US naval ships, and for every time they do that or try to do that, they're going to lose tankers," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters during a visit to Colombia. Iran then carried out a ballistic missile attack on a base used by US forces near Al Azraq in Jordan, according to an IRGC statement on state media. Although Iran said its missiles inflicted heavy damage, Jordan said its air defences intercepted 18 of the 20 Iranian missiles, with two falling in unpopulated areas, and that there were no casualties.

Continued on Page 06

PM Shehbaz meets AJK prime minister

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with the newly elected Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Iftikhar Ali Gillani, at the Prime Minister's Office. During the meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif congratulated Mr. Gillani on assuming office and extended his best wishes for a successful tenure. He reaffirmed that the Government of Pakistan will continue to fully support the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in initiatives aimed at the welfare and prosperity of the Kashmiri people. The two leaders discussed matters related to peace, development, and ongoing welfare projects in the region. Prime Minister Sharif reiterated the federal government's commitment to ensuring progress and prosperity for the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, emphasizing that all necessary measures will be taken to strengthen socio-economic development. Prime Minister Gillani expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Sharif for his support and assured that he would dedicate his efforts and abilities

Continued on Page 06

UK air traffic control glitch

DNA

LONDON: Almost 1,100 flights to and from UK airports were cancelled Tuesday due to what the country's air traffic control service called a technical issue, in the latest glitch to spark travel chaos. A total of 1,055 flights to and from British airports had been axed by 8:00 pm (1900 GMT), according to the aircraft tracking website FlightRadar24. "Recovery from today's system issue has taken longer than we had hoped," Britain's air traffic control service, known as NATS, said on X early evening. "Our system issue is now resolved, we are operating normally and working as hard as possible to clear the backlog of flights," it noted, adding "this is hugely frustrating and apologise unreservedly". Tuesday's issues follow a technical glitch in July last year that saw scores of flights to and from the UK cancelled and which prompted anger from airline chiefs. Britain saw its worst air systems failure in years in 2023, with more than 700,000 passengers affected after hundreds of flights were delayed or cancelled. Heathrow Airport, Britain's largest and busiest airport, in west London,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: AJK Prime Minister calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

West Bank issue

Pakistan welcomes steps against illegal settlements

Pakistan also welcomed announcements by several other countries, including Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, to consider similar measures and support efforts against illegal Israeli settlements

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday welcomed the United Kingdom's decision to impose a ban on items originating from illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank, describing the settlements as a blatant violation of international law. In a statement, the Foreign Office said the continued expansion of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory also violated relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. It said such illegal actions were undermining international efforts aimed at achieving a two-state solution as well as peace and stability in the region. Pakistan also welcomed announcements by several other countries, including Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, to consider similar measures and support efforts against illegal Israeli settlements. The Foreign Office said Pakistan hoped the measures would send a clear and unequivocal message rejecting illegal actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

Debate system' issue in parliament, Bilawal tells Naqvi

"It cannot be the case that the fate of the country is decided by a handful of businessmen," says PPP chief

DNA

LONDON: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has challenged Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to take his criticism of Pakistan's political and governance "collapsed" system to parliament, saying the country's fate cannot be decided by "a handful of businessmen" at business forums. Speaking to the media in London, Bilawal said Naqvi had every right to express his views, but if he believed that the system had failed, then the issue must be debated in the National Assembly to establish why it had failed and what could be done to fix it.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Two Navy personnel martyred

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two Pakistan Navy personnel were martyred while patrolling at sea to ensure security, the Navy's Directorate-General of Public Relations (DGPR) said on Wednesday. "Shoaibur Rehman (PMA-IV) and Ghufuran Nasar (PMT-II) embraced martyrdom while performing patrolling duties at sea to ensure security," it said in a statement on X. As per the statement, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf expressed deep sorrow over the loss of precious lives. "Senior Pakistan Navy officials attended the funerals of martyred sailors and met their families," it added. In March this year, the Pakistan Navy had launched Operation Muhafizul Bahr to counter "multidimensional threats to national shipping and maritime trade".

Abid Sher Ali, Aimal Wali exchange sharp words

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights hearing descended into a heated exchange between Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Abid Sher Ali and Awami National Party (ANP) Senator Aimal Wali Khan on Wednesday during questioning of Suthra Punjab officials over the suicide of a sanitary worker in Gujranwala. The committee, chaired by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, was examining the case of a Gujranwala Waste Management Company employee who took his own life, reportedly after receiving half his salary and having his contract terminated.

Asim Iftikahr to become new foreign secretary

Incumbent Secretary Amna Baloch will retire on September 17; head to Türkiye as ambassador

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a major diplomatic development, Pakistan has appointed Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmed, currently serving as the country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, as the new Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. The announcement, first reported by Islamabad Post on September 6, comes at a critical juncture as Pakistan navigates complex regional and global challenges. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar is widely regarded as a seasoned diplomat with decades of experience in foreign service. During his tenure at the UN, he earned respect for his articulate advocacy on Pakistan's core issues, including Kashmir and counterterrorism. His appointment is seen as a strategic move to strengthen Pakistan's diplomatic outreach and policy execution at a time when the country faces pressing geopolitical realities. Beyond his international assignments, Asim Iftikhar has also left a strong mark



in Islamabad. As the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he developed excellent relations with the media fraternity, building trust and credibility through transparent communication. He is equally respected among his colleagues for his professionalism, integrity, and commitment to national service. Sources indicate that Ambassador Iftikhar is nearing retirement. However, given his stature and contributions, there is speculation that he may either be offered a new contract or have his service extended, ensuring continuity in Pakistan's foreign policy leadership. The appointment follows the retirement of the current Foreign Secretary, Amna Baloch, who will step down on September 17. Reports suggest she is set to be appointed as Pakistan's next Ambassador to Türkiye, another key diplomatic posting. The transition underscores Pakistan's emphasis on experienced leadership in its foreign service. With Ambassador Iftikhar at the helm, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is expected to pursue a more proactive and nuanced approach to diplomacy, balancing national interests with global engagement.

Continued on Page 06

Security forces neutralise 11 India-sponsored terrorists

Eight militants killed in Kharan while three eliminated during Washuk operation, says military's media wing

NEWS DESK

QUETTA: Security forces have eliminated at least 11 India-sponsored militants in separate intelligence-based operations in Kharan and Washuk districts of Balochistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Wednesday. The operations were conducted on September 6 and 7 following reports of the presence of terrorists belonging to the Indian proxy, Fitna al-Hindistan, the military's media wing added. On September 6, terrorists attempted to establish a roadblock in Kharan and disrupt local traffic, the statement said, adding that security forces promptly intercepted and engaged the terrorists, killing eight of them. In a separate operation in Washuk district on September 7, security forces targeted a reported terrorist hideout. "Own troops effectively busted the hideout and, following an intense exchange of fire, killed three more terrorists," the military said. The security forces also recovered 2.9 tonnes of explosives used to prepare improvised explosive devices (IEDs), it added. San-

itisation operations were under way to eliminate any other India-sponsored terrorists who may be present in the area, the ISPR said. The military said the ongoing counter-terrorism campaign under the "Azm-e-Istehkam" initiative, approved by the Federal Apex Committee on the National Action Plan, would continue at full pace. The campaign aims to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored-and-supported terrorism from the country. Pakistan witnessed a surge in terror activities, particularly in its KP and Balochistan provinces, since 2021, when the Afghan Taliban came into power. According to a report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the two provinces remained the country's main hotspots for violence during the second quarter of 2026, with KP emerging as the worst-affected region. The report stated that KP and Balochistan together accounted for nearly 96% of all violence-related fatalities recorded during the quarter. Of the total deaths, more than 61% (475) were reported in KP, while Balochistan accounted for 34% (265).

Continued on Page 06

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Kundi stresses quality housing, healthcare facilities

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday underscored the need for providing quality residential facilities to citizens and stressed that hospitals and sports grounds should be integral parts of housing projects. He expressed these views during a meeting with Chairman of Saif Group Jahangir Saifullah Khan, who called on him and briefed him on the on-going housing project in Dera Ismail Khan. PPP Parliamentary Leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Ahmad Kundi, Saif Group Senior Manager Danish Iftikhar and Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Abid Khan Marwat were also present during the meeting. The Governor said modern housing schemes should ensure the availability of healthcare and recreational facilities alongside residential units to improve the quality of life of the people. Jahangir Saifullah Khan informed the Governor that the project already included a hospital and sports grounds and assured him that work on these components would be further expedited. Governor Kundi appreciated the efforts of the Saif Group in developing the housing project and emphasized the importance of timely completion of facilities for the benefit of local residents.—APP

Bugti reviews its key admin, operational matters

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti presided over the fourth meeting of the Board of Directors of Balochistan Aviation Company on Wednesday reviewing key administrative, financial and operational matters of the institution. The chief minister directed officials to align the company with modern aviation requirements, enhancing its operational and administrative capacity to play a more effective role in expanding air connectivity and facilities across the province. He emphasized the need for transparency, professional management, and effective monitoring, instructing that a clear mechanism be devised to ensure timely implementation of approved decisions. During the session, the board discussed the company's performance, management issues, operational challenges, and future strategy. Several important decisions and proposals were approved, while resolutions from the previous board meeting were formally ratified. The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Finance Secretary Jahangir Khan, Director General Balochistan Aviation Company Captain Ali Azad, members of the board, and other relevant officials.—APP

New Zealand keen to explore coop with Pakistan in agri-tech

The Finance Minister highlighted Pakistan's progress in achieving macroeconomic stability and emphasized that the Government's focus is now on sustaining the reform momentum while moving towards investment, exports, employment generation and sustainable economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting with H.E David Pine, High Commissioner-designate of New Zealand to Pakistan, who called on the Minister along with Ms. Avanthi Kalansooriya, Policy and Public Affairs Adviser, New Zealand High Commission, and Mr. Moin M. Fudda, Honorary Consul General of New Zealand for Pakistan, to discuss bilateral relations, trade, investment and avenues for strengthening economic cooperation. Mr. Pine congratulated the Finance Minister on Pakistan's successful return to international capital markets through the recent Eurobond issuance and appreciated the progress made towards macroeconomic stability and economic reform. He also briefed the Finance Minister on New Zealand's approach to strengthening its engagement with Pakistan and the wider South Asian region. The Finance Minister highlighted Pakistan's progress in achieving macroeconomic stability and emphasized that the Government's focus is now on sustaining the reform momentum while moving towards investment, exports, employment generation and sustainable economic growth. He noted that policy continuity, fiscal discipline and structural reforms would remain important to maintaining this trajectory. The discussion focused on strengthening business-to-business (B2B) engagement between Pakistan and New Zealand. Mr. Pine highlighted the importance of encouraging businesses from both countries to establish direct linkages and identify areas of practical commercial interest. He also shared the New Zealand side's interest in promoting more regular bilateral trade discussions to identify and address trade-related issues as they emerge. The Finance Minister underscored that private-sector engagement should lead the way in expanding commercial relations, with the Government facilitating the necessary ecosystem and support. He noted that formal trade agreements can accelerate existing business activity, while sustained business linkages are essential for creating the foundation for stronger trade and investment flows. The discussion also covered the large number of Pakistani scholars and students in New Zealand, particularly in agriculture-related fields. The Finance Minister emphasized the importance of strengthening the link between such educational opportunities and practical outcomes in Pakistan, including through the return of trained professionals and greater application of their knowledge

and expertise. He also highlighted the potential to leverage technology and innovation to further support economic development and cooperation. The Finance Minister highlighted the potential for greater cooperation in the new economy, particularly in digital services, technology and young talent. He noted Pakistan's growing IT

building stronger connections between the business communities of the two countries. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb welcomed the renewed engagement with New Zealand and emphasized the importance of continued interaction at both government and private-sector levels to translate the shared interest into concrete



and freelance ecosystem and emphasized the opportunity for the country to leapfrog in emerging sectors while continuing efforts to improve the competitiveness of traditional export industries. Mr. Pine shared New Zealand's interest in identifying opportunities across a range of sectors, including agri-tech and other areas of private-sector cooperation, and emphasized the importance of

trade, investment, knowledge and skills partnerships. Mr. David Pine appreciated the Finance Minister's engagement and reaffirmed New Zealand's interest in strengthening bilateral economic relations with Pakistan. He expressed support for greater business-to-business engagement and continued dialogue to identify practical opportunities for cooperation.

Efforts afoot to expand shelter homes: Shafi

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Minister Shafi Jan on Wednesday said the provincial government was taking practical steps to make shelters and shelter homes more effective and far-reaching, so that no needy person, traveler or helpless individual feels alone in times of hardship. In a statement, he said the responsibility of the state was not limited to development projects alone, but also included standing by those who need help at difficult turns in life. Highlighting

the notable progress of the shelters and shelter homes sector, the minister said that out of four schemes, three were under implementation while one was at the planning stage. He said 11 shelter homes were currently functional across 10 districts of the province, with a combined approved capacity of 674 persons. He said that 508,620 individuals had benefited from the shelter homes since their inception, of whom 421,420 had availed the facility during the

past 10 months alone. The minister said shelter homes at Torkham and Angor Adda were both operational, with a combined approved capacity of 100 persons, and 24,041 individuals had benefited from them since their launch. He added that free overnight accommodation and meals were being provided to the needy at these facilities. Shafi Jan said schemes for shelter homes at DHQ Hospital Bajaur and DHQ Hospital North Waziristan were under way, while a new scheme to establish shelter homes on a permanent basis in major cities was at the planning stage. He said these facilities were a source of hope, protection and humanity for helpless people seeking a safe place to spend the night during travel, medical treatment or other compulsions.

He added that the true hallmark of a welfare state was that it holds the hand of the weak and needy and makes them feel that they are not alone in society.—APP

EOC launches youth-led social, behaviour change initiative

PESHAWAR: The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has launched a youth-led strategy to promote the importance of polio and other immunizations by engaging students from schools, colleges and universities as ambassadors to spread awareness and encourage vaccine acceptance in their communities. Under the strategy, the first awareness session was held for students of City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, here on Wednesday. Polio National Team Lead for UNICEF in Pakistan Melissa Corkum, Additional Secretary Health and EOC Coordinator, Shafullah Khan, Senior Programme

Officer Gates Foundation, Emaad Hassan, Dean City University, Prof Dr. Arif Shah and UNICEF Communication Officer, Shahdab Younas attended the orientation session. "The initiative, titled 'Students & Adolescents for Health and Immunization (SAHI),' is a youth-led social and behaviour change initiative that positions young people as trusted and informed immunization ambassadors within schools, colleges and universities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," said Shahdab Younas in her inaugural remarks. She said students would participate on a voluntary basis and not only promote immunization messages but also raise awareness about nutrition, hygiene

and other healthy practices in their communities. Welcoming the guests, Dean City University, Prof. Dr. Arif Shah said it was a matter of pride that students of the university would contribute to a national cause aimed at protecting children from polio and promoting healthy practices in society. He expressed the hope that the initiative would prove impactful by engaging young people in community awareness and encouraging the adoption of healthier practices. Dr. Imran of EOC, in his presentation, stressed the need for participation by every segment of society to improve immunization coverage.—APP

Awn hails WWF's record revenue

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Muhammad Awn Chaudhry on Wednesday visited the Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) Secretariat in Islamabad, where he reviewed the fund's administrative affairs, welfare projects and facilities for industrial workers and their families, hailed its record revenue collection and called for stronger reforms to improve transparency and service delivery. WWF Secretary Zulfiqar Ahmed and senior officials received the minister and briefed him on the institution's ongoing welfare initiatives, including education, housing and other facilities being provided to workers and their families. Mr Chaudhry congratulated the secretary and his team on achieving record revenue collection, describing it as a significant achievement and appreciating the overall performance of the institution. The minister said the government was taking practical measures to improve the quality of life of the working class through worker-friendly policies, quality education for workers' children, residential facilities and other welfare initiatives. He attributed the increased focus on workers' welfare to the present government's policies and the efforts of Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain. Mr Chaudhry also appreciated the WWF's efforts to digitalise its systems, saying the transition to modern technology would enhance transparency, expedite service delivery and strengthen monitoring of welfare programmes. He particularly praised the fund's cashless policy, saying it had promoted transparency and merit while making the delivery of welfare facilities easier, safer and more effective for workers and their families. The minister described the digitalisation and cashless system as an example of modern governance in the public sector and stressed the importance of sustaining such reforms. He said the WWF was committed to implementing the policies and vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and that all available resources were being utilised for the welfare and well-being of workers. Mr Chaudhry said the government would continue efforts to protect workers' rights and provide them with maximum welfare facilities, while taking all necessary measures to make the WWF a more effective, transparent and modern institution. Mr Zulfiqar Ahmed thanked the minister for his visit and reaffirmed the WWF's commitment to performing its responsibilities for workers and their families in a more effective manner. At the conclusion of the visit, the WWF secretary presented a commemorative shield to the minister.—APP

Bahawalpur Hockey team celebrates one-year milestone

DNA

BAHAWALNAGAR: A ceremony was organized in Bahawalnagar to mark the completion of one year of the Bahawalnagar Hockey Team's efforts to promote hockey, Pakistan's national sport, in the district. The team has remained actively engaged in promoting hockey and encouraging young players in Bahawalnagar for the past year. The anniversary ceremony was attended by prominent personalities, team officials, players and sports enthusiasts. The celebrations included a cake-cutting ceremony, followed by the

distribution of beautiful commemorative shields among the players and

distinguished guests in recognition of their participation and support

for the promotion of hockey. District Additional and Sessions Judge Lahore Sa-

bir Sultan Pasha attended the ceremony as the chief guest. Other distinguished guests included Abdul Samad Joiya, Chairman WAPDA Bahawalnagar, and Rizwan Munir, CEO Haji Munir & Sons. The organizers appreciated the dedication of the players and supporters who have contributed to keeping hockey active in Bahawalnagar and expressed their resolve to continue efforts for the development of young talent and revival of the national sport. The event was organized by Abu Marsad Shaheen, Ustad Aqeel, Yousaf Ghori, Arslan Shahbaz and Adnan Mushtaq, who have been working to promote hockey and provide opportunities for local players.



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- 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
- Sept21/Malta Independence Day
- Sept23/Saudi Arabia National Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949

- Rescue (Police).....15
- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
- Motorway Police...9266044
- Motorway Police.9270601-20
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
- Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi...5555489
- CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....561116
- Chantt Hospital...9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
- CDA.....9208301-04
- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

LAHM brings Brazilian meat steaks to Islamabad

For steak lovers, this is more than just a restaurant opening – it’s a celebration of flavor. The juicy cuts, sizzling aromas, and artful presentation promise to transport diners straight to Brazil, while staying rooted in the capital’s vibrant culinary culture



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Morocco Mohamed Karmoune, former Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem, Additional Foreign Secretary Hamid Asghar Khan, Editor Daily Islamabad POST Ansar Mahmood Bhatti and Navid Miraj at the LAHM. DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad’s food scene just got juicier! The Monal Group has unveiled its latest culinary venture, LAHM, at the prestigious Beverly Center. This new eatery is already making waves among steak enthusiasts, promising an authentic experience with premium cuts of Brazilian beef. At LAHM, diners can expect mouth-watering steaks grilled to perfection, bursting with flavor and tenderness. Each plate is thoughtfully paired with traditional side orders that elevate the dining experience – from buttery mashed and baby potatoes to crisp seasonal vegetables and signature sauces that comple-

ment the rich, smoky taste of the beef. The restaurant’s ambiance reflects sophistication and warmth, making it a perfect spot for both casual gatherings and special occasions. With Monal’s reputation for excellence, LAHM is set to become another landmark eatery in the capital, adding to Islamabad’s growing list of fine dining destinations. For steak lovers, this is more than just a restaurant opening – it’s a celebration of flavor. The juicy cuts, sizzling aromas, and artful presentation promise to transport diners straight to Brazil, while staying rooted in the capital’s vibrant culinary

culture. Whether you’re a seasoned steak aficionado or simply curious to try something extraordinary, LAHM is poised to deliver an unforgettable experience. Islamabad’s foodies now have a new hotspot to indulge in the finest steaks the city has ever seen. Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan, Mohamed Karmoune, recently visited LAHM and thoroughly enjoyed the restaurant’s signature grills. He remarked that LAHM is certain to become a remarkable addition to Islamabad’s culinary landscape, offering food lovers an authentic and memorable dining experience.—DNA

COMSATS University hosts photography exhibition

ISLAMABAD: A photography exhibition titled “Frames of Freedom”, featuring more than 50 exhibits celebrating Pakistan’s cultural heritage, historic architecture, natural landscapes, people, traditions and everyday life, was organized at the Art Gallery of COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) on Wednesday. Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Farah Naz Akbar inaugurated the exhibition, which presented diverse visual perspectives on Pakistan and seeks to celebrate the country’s national spirit while encouraging reflection on the relationship between people, places, memory and identity. Speaking on the occasion, Farah Naz Akbar appreciated the university’s efforts for provid-

ing a platform to celebrate Pakistan’s cultural and natural heritage through photography and commended the participating photographers for their creativity and distinctive perspectives. She said there is a need to promote a soft image of Pakistan and channel the talent of youth towards capturing the country’s heritage and rich culture for future generations. Speaking on the occasion, Rector CUI Prof. Dr. Raheel Qamar appreciated the photographers’ efforts for presenting compelling visual interpretations of Pakistan. He observed that photography could transcend documentation to become a powerful medium for creative expression, reflection and cultural dialogue. He emphasized the important role of universities in fostering artis-

tic creativity, intellectual inquiry and meaningful engagement with cultural heritage, and congratulated the photographers for presenting a thoughtful visual celebration of Pakistan. The exhibition featured works by Fida Muhammad, Khurram Bhatti, Meezan Ali Mir, Muhammad Asad Ali, Muhammad Junaid, Raheela Mushtaq, Saima Salahuddin (Aimon), Sohaina Elia, Suriyaya Choudhary and Tahmeena Javaid Adeel. Coming from diverse academic backgrounds, the photographers brought individual approaches shaped by observation, experience, inquiry and creative expression. Curated by Farrah Mahmood Rana, “Frames of Freedom” placed particular emphasis on spaces, architecture.—APP

Faster verification process for overseas passports, documents

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday directed the relevant authorities to make the verification process for passports and other essential documents of overseas Pakistanis faster, easier and more efficient. He was chairing a meeting of the Committee on Passport Rules attended by officials from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Passport Department and other relevant institutions. The Federal Minister said overseas Pakistanis were a valuable asset of the country and stressed the need to further improve existing procedures to facilitate them. He directed development of an integrated system for timely verification of travel documents and other essential documents of overseas Pakistanis, while making the record verification process quicker and simpler. Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar directed that a clear timeline be prescribed for record verification and an electronic mechanism be developed at the Ministry of Interior to enable queries and necessary actions to be processed electronically at the earliest. He emphasized minimizing human interaction in the verification process and proposed introduction of a one-window verification portal. The Federal Minister also directed preparation of proposals for necessary amendments to rules and regulations aimed at facilitating overseas Pakistanis. He further directed the relevant institutions to present a clear course of action and procedure at the next meeting.—APP

Property dispute case SC rules in favour of widow migrant

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday has ruled in favour of a widow who migrated to Pakistan from India, holding that the property claimed by the opposing parties had never been owned by her deceased husband. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail authored the judgment, in which the apex court observed that it was an admitted fact that Abdul Karim had died before the creation of Pakistan. The judgment said Abdul Karim’s widow had personally applied for allotment of land for her permanent settlement in Pakistan as a displaced widow. The court observed that the land over which the parties had claimed shares had never been owned by Abdul Karim. Rather, the property had been allotted to a homeless migrant widow for her rehabilitation in Pakistan. According to the judgment, the opposing parties had neither claimed that they had migrated from India nor presented themselves as displaced persons. The court held that a relative of the deceased Abdul Karim could claim property only to the extent of land left behind in India. The Supreme Court consequently set aside the trial court’s order passed in 2000 as well as the High Court judgment delivered in 2014.—APP

Pakistan needs AI-enabled workers, not just experts: Gulmina

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must prepare not only artificial intelligence (AI) experts but also workers across different sectors to use the technology, Chairperson of China Global Professional Certification (CGPTC) Gulmina Bilal Ahmed said on Wednesday. Speaking at a panel discussion during the Pakistan Women Leadership and Policy Summit 2026 at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Gulmina Bilal said the AI debate should not remain confined to software engineers and technology companies. “Why should AI training be limited only to programmers. Pakistan needs AI-enabled plumbers, electricians, technicians, farmers, teachers, nurses and entrepreneurs,” she said. Gulmina who also served as Chairperson of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) Pakistan, said the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025 had warned that by 2030, 39 per cent of the skills required for existing jobs globally were expected to be transformed or become outdated, underscoring the need for re-skilling and new skills. The biggest employment risk for Pakistan, she said, was not simply that AI would replace workers. “The real competition could be between workers who know how to use AI and those who do not,” she added. Gulmina Bilal said Pakistan’s young population represented a major potential advantage in the global economy, but demographics alone could not guarantee economic gains.—APP

Abbasi hails security forces for successful operation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Wednesday paid tribute to the security forces for their successful operation against terrorists in Balochistan, in which 11 terrorists were eliminated. The minister said that eliminating 11 terrorists was a manifestation of the professionalism, courage and timely action of the security forces. He said the unparalleled sacrifices rendered by the security forces for maintaining peace in the country were a matter of pride for the entire nation. “The nation stands shoulder to shoulder with its brave security forces to cleanse the soil of Balochistan of terrorists,” he said. Hanif Abbasi said the terrorist elements would never succeed in achieving their nefarious designs, as the entire nation and state institutions were united against the enemies of peace. He said the services and sacrifices of the security forces for maintaining peace and stability in Balochistan were unforgettable. The minister reaffirmed that the resolve of the state institutions and the nation would remain firm until the menace of terrorism was completely eliminated from the country.—APP

HEC chief inaugurates Theatre Hall at AIOU

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar on Wednesday inaugurated a state-of-the-art theatre hall at Academic Complex of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), marking a significant step towards creating a vibrant academic, literary, cultural and creative environment for students. The new facility is designed to provide students with a dedicated platform to express their ideas, showcase their creative talents, engage in performing arts and participate in intellectual and cultural activities alongside their academic pursuits. The ceremony was attended by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood, faculty members and principal officers. As the first event at the newly inaugurated theatre hall, a ceremony was held to launch “Teacher Education in Pakistan” authored by Punjab University Professor Emeritus and renowned educationist Prof. Dr Munawar Sultana Mirza with HEC Chairman Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar presiding. Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar said that competent, well-trained and committed teachers are indispensable for ensuring quality education in Pakistan. He emphasized that a teacher is not merely a source of academic knowledge but should also serve as a role model for students, parents and society. He stressed that teachers must continuously enhance their academic, pedagogical and professional competencies to respond effectively to changing educational needs. He said “Teacher Education in Pakistan” is particularly important in this context, as it offers valuable insights into teacher education and training, the role of teachers and their professional development. He encouraged teachers and education professionals to read and benefit

from the book. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood paid tribute to the academic and teaching services of Prof. Dr Munawar Sultana Mirza describing her as a respected academic authority and an insightful personality in the field of education and teaching. He said that “Teacher Education in Pakistan” reflects her academic insight, extensive experience and intellectual contribution, making it a valuable scholarly resource for those associated with

education. Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education Hassan Saqlain, Parliamentary Secretary Rabia Naseem, Professor Emeritus and former Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Mahmood-ul-Hassan Butt and Dr Afshan Huma also addressed the ceremony. The speakers described “Teacher Education in Pakistan” as a significant scholarly contribution to teacher education and training in Pakistan and paid tribute to Prof. Dr Munawar Sultana Mirza for her academic and research contributions.—DNA



Briefs

Haroon,
Syrian envoy
discuss
matters
of mutual
interest

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to Pakistan, Dr. Ramez Alraee, called on Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media Fahd Haroon at his office in Islamabad today. The two sides discussed Pakistan-Syria relations and exchanged views on developments, opportunities and challenges in digital and broadcast media, as well as matters of mutual interest. Fahd Haroon shared perspectives on Pakistan's evolving digital media landscape, including the country's efforts to further strengthen its digital ecosystem and advance digital transformation, while the Ambassador shared perspectives on developments in Syria's media and digital landscape. The meeting reaffirmed the importance of continued dialogue and engagement between Pakistan and Syria, particularly in the evolving fields of digital and broadcast media.—APP

Helmet use
hits 90pc in
Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Helmet use among motorcyclists in Islamabad has reached 90 percent, a result Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) attributed to its special campaign combining road-safety awareness with enforcement to protect riders from serious injuries. An ITP official told APP on Wednesday that the special campaign to promote helmet use among motorcycle riders was continuing across the federal capital. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Kainat Azhar Khan termed the sharp increase in helmet use an encouraging development for the safety of citizens. A helmet is not merely a traffic requirement; it protects the life of a motorcyclist, she said. The CTO Kainat urged motorcycle riders to use standard-quality helmets during every journey for their own safety and the protection of their loved ones. She said ITP was not only enforcing traffic laws but was also taking extensive measures to create traffic awareness among citizens. Kainat said compliance with traffic laws and helmet use were essential for safe travel. She said Islamabad's roads could be made safer with the cooperation of citizens and urged motorcyclists to make helmet use a regular part of every journey.—APP

Railways,
provincial
govts to
develop green
corridors

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways, in collaboration with provincial governments, has undertaken large-scale plantation drives along railway tracks across the country to promote environmental sustainability, improve the landscape and combat environmental degradation. "Under the plantation initiatives, a total of 611,930 plants have been planted alongside railway tracks in different regions of the country," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said the plantation drives have not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of railway routes but also contributed to mitigating environmental challenges, including air pollution and soil erosion. In another major step towards promoting greener railway infrastructure, Pakistan Railways had already signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Lahore for the development of a green corridor along the railway track from Shahdara to Raiwind, he added. The official said the project aims to develop green belts, increase green cover, provide safe and accessible recreational facilities and utilize railway land in a manner that supports public welfare. In the first phase, the official the PHA Lahore will spend Rs300 million on the development of the green corridor along the railway track.—APP

Effective business community
representation need of hour

Former ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that as discussions about the creation of new provinces are taking place in the country, the business community should consider laying the foundation of an Islamabad Businessmen and Citizens Party today

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Founder Group ICCI Tariq Sadiq has said that the economy can be placed on a stronger footing when the business community and government institutions work together. Effective representation of the business community in key decision-making institutions is the need of the hour, while the strength of the Founder Group lies in its unity, organization and the confidence of the business community. He expressed these views while addressing a dinner hosted by Wajid Ayub, Javeed Ullah Wazir and the business community of Tarnol in honour of the Founder Group leadership and candidates in connection with the upcoming elections of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). Council Members Abdul Rauf Alam, Khalid Javed, Zafar Bakhtawari, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Aamir Waheed, Chaudhry Masood and Chaudhry Waheed-ud-Din, along with a large number of traders, were also present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Tariq Sadiq said that the Founder Group has always raised its voice for the rights and business interests of the trading community. He stressed the need for traders to set aside differences and elect their representatives through unity so that business-related issues could be effectively raised before the relevant forums through the platform of the Chamber. Wajid Ayub, addressing the gathering, said, "Our life and commitment are with the Founder Group, and we are working day and night for its success. We have stood with the Founder Group for the last 10 years and will continue to remain loyal to it. Those whom we support should know it, and those whom we oppose should also know that we stand firmly by our principles." He said that the leaders of the Founder



Group have been serving the business community and the city of Islamabad for the last 40 years. The way the group remains united and organized, he said, is an example that is difficult to find even in a single political party. He added that the presence of 280 voters at the event was a clear indication of the group's strength, with nearly 50 percent of the voters attending the gathering. Former ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that as discussions about the creation of new provinces are taking place in the country, the business community should consider laying the foundation of an Islamabad Businessmen and Citizens Party today. He called upon businessmen to contest elections for the proposed assembly from their respective constituencies so that the city could have genuine representation. He said that local businessmen un-

derstand the problems of their areas better than anyone else and, with their representation in the assembly, they would be able to resolve these issues more effectively.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Zakariya Zia and Umar Hussain would serve the Chamber even better than previous presidents, while Senior Vice President Iftikhar Chattha was also an excellent choice. Referring to the problems faced by traders in Tarnol, he called for resolving parking issues in coordination with the National Highway Authority (NHA) and urged that an effective voice be raised for the construction of a flyover at the GT Road railway crossing. He said that an Islamabad Assembly would enable the business community to work more effectively for resolving the city's problems. He added that the Founder Group would present

a comprehensive election manifesto for the Chamber elections. He invited the business community to join hands in taking charge of the city and transforming Islamabad into the world's most beautiful and business-friendly city. Aamir Waheed said that the Founder Group has always raised its voice for the rights of traders and that the strong participation of the business community in the ongoing election campaign reflects its confidence in the group. Ejaz Abbasi said that unity and strong representation are essential for resolving the issues of the business community. Presidential candidate Zakariya Zia thanked the hosts and participants for their warm welcome, confidence and support, saying that the love, trust and sincerity shown by the business community would always be remembered. He said that after the elections, they would continue to take everyone along and work jointly for resolving the issues of Islamabad's business community. Presidential candidate Umar Hussain said that the purpose of their success was not merely to secure office, but to strengthen the Chamber, effectively raise the voice of traders before the government and ensure that the problems of the business community were resolved on a priority basis. He said that all groups and trade organizations would be taken along for the development of Islamabad and promotion of business activities. President Central Traders Organization Pakistan Kashif Chaudhry said that all colleagues would be taken along to ensure the success of the Founder Group and make the Chamber an effective platform for resolving the genuine issues of the business community. Babar Chaudhry performed the duties of host and moderator and welcomed the participants to the event.

Naqvi calls for better
public service

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday inaugurated the upgraded Aabpara Police Station after the completion of its renovation and reconstruction, marking another step in the ongoing improvement of police stations in the federal capital. During his visit, the minister toured different sections of the police station and reviewed the facilities available for citizens. He inspected the Station House Officer (SHO) office, Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC), inquiry office, waiting area, and other sections. He also examined the services being provided to visitors at the station's public counters. Mohsin Naqvi expressed satisfaction with the facilities arranged for complainants and members of the public. He also met members of the Dispute Resolution Committee and appreciated their role in resolving public issues through dialogue and mediation. Speaking on the occasion, the interior minister said the purpose of the project was to provide people with a modern, respectful, and public-focused policing environment. He emphasized that every possible effort should be made to address the concerns of citizens who visit police stations for assistance. The minister directed police officials to ensure action on every complaint submitted by citizens. He stressed that no citizen should face unnecessary delays or difficulties in the registration of a First Information Report (FIR). Mohsin Naqvi also instructed police personnel to adopt a courteous and responsible attitude toward members of the public visiting police stations. He said public service and timely response to complaints should remain a priority. During the visit, the minister was briefed on the upgradation work carried out at the police station and the facilities introduced as part of the renovation project. Senior police officers were also present on the occasion, including the Inspector General (IG) of Islamabad Police, the Deputy Inspector General (DIG), the Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations), and other officials.—APP

CDA speeds
up Islamabad
development works

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has intensified action against encroachments and civic violations, while expediting major development, sanitation, beautification and tourism projects across the federal capital. Under its zero-tolerance policy, the authority is reclaiming government land worth billions of rupees and taking action to protect roads, footpaths, green belts and other public spaces from encroachment. The CDA has also stepped up enforcement of Fire and Life Safety regulations to improve public safety and ensure compliance with civic requirements. Meanwhile, major infrastructure projects, including roads, interchanges, underpasses, pedestrian facilities and other urban works, are being expedited to improve con-

nectivity, mobility and traffic flow. Development and improvement works in key areas, including the Diplomatic Enclave, are also continuing. The authority is carrying out plantation, landscaping and beautification works on green belts, medians, interchanges, roadsides, parks and other public spaces as part of efforts to enhance Islamabad's green character. CDA sanitation teams are working in their respective areas, while cleanliness, drainage, nullah and watercourse clearance operations are being carried out regularly. Efforts to strengthen and modernise solid waste management are also being accelerated. The authority is also improving recreational and tourism facilities at F-9 Park, Lake View Park, Damani-Koh and walking trails to provide better facilities for residents, domestic tourists and international visitors. The ongoing activities are part of the CDA's broader efforts to improve civic services, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, public spaces and tourism facilities in Islamabad. The authority says the initiatives are aimed at making the capital cleaner, greener, safer and better managed, while improving public facilitation and the overall urban environment. The development and civic improvement programme is being pursued alongside efforts to modernise municipal administration and strengthen service delivery.—APP

PNCA hosts opera, sufi live concert

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) hosted an enchanting "Opera and Sufi – Live Concert" at its auditorium on Tuesday, bringing together the grandeur of Western opera and the spiritual depth of Sufi music as part of the Sitara-i-Imtiaz 2026 celebrations. Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi graced the musical evening as the chief guest. Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Division, Farah Naz Akbar, Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayoub Jamali and former Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Syed Jamal Shah were also present. The concert featured Pakistan's renowned first opera singer, Sa Ra Peter, who presented a captivating performance that seamlessly blended Western

opera with Sufi musical traditions. Through her powerful vocals and distinctive musical style, Sa Ra Peter captivated the audience, creating an engaging and spiritually uplifting atmosphere at the PNCA Auditorium. The performance showcased the richness and diversity of Pakistan's cultural heritage while highlighting the possibilities of artistic fusion and innovative musical expression. Welcoming the distinguished guests and participants, Federal Minister Aurangzeb Khan Khichi appreciated PNCA for its continued efforts to promote Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage and provide platforms for talented artists and innovative forms of artistic expression. He also commended Sa Ra Peter for her remarkable contribution to promoting Pakistani music and culture at both national and international levels.—APP

Ahsan calls for taking
devolution to grassroots

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said the benefits of devolution had not reached the grassroots over the past 15 years, stressing the transfer of powers and resources to local governments for effective service delivery and development. Addressing the national inception workshop and launch of the Technical Working Group on "Integrated Land & Water Use Planning," he said devolution itself was not the problem, but its implementation had stopped at the provincial level. "It is not that devolution was wrong; it should have been devolution. The whole world is being devolved," the minister said, stressing that powers should also flow from provinces to district and municipal governments. He said the 18th Amendment had devolved substantial responsibilities to the provinces in 2010, but local governments were not given corresponding powers and resources. "If you give a local government a responsibility, but there is no power or resources behind that responsibility, then that responsibility becomes a burden," he remarked. Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan needed a development ecosystem based on effective coordination between the federation and provinces, coupled with empowered local institutions capable of translating national priorities into improved services and outcomes. He said this was particularly important for agriculture, which remained a key driver of the national economy and a major source of livelihoods, food security and export potential. Despite its agricultural resources, Pakistan had become a net agricultural importing country, importing around \$45 billion worth of agricultural products annually, he noted. The minister said the country needed to

move from dependence on agricultural imports towards becoming a food-exporting economy by improving productivity and fully exploiting its land and water resources. He cautioned that this objective could not be achieved without protecting productive farmland from unchecked urban expansion. "Agriculture and food do not grow in the air. Agriculture and food grow on land," he said, emphasizing the need to strike a balance between food production and the growing requirements of cities. He said productive agricultural areas, including citrus orchards in Sargodha, mango orchards in Multan and areas producing high-quality basmati rice around Gujranwala, needed protection from unplanned urbanization. "Productive farmland and urban growth needs to be harmonized," Ahsan said, calling for evidence-based land-use planning and vertical rather than unchecked horizontal expansion of cities. He said Pakistan's rapidly growing population was adding pressure on food resources, while declining per-capita water availability had made water security an equally serious challenge. The minister called for a coordinated national framework involving the federation and provinces to address food, land and water issues, saying fragmented efforts could not deliver sustainable results. He also highlighted the need to regulate groundwater extraction, assess aquifers' sustainable capacity, and promote groundwater recharge. He viewed that solar-powered pumping had made groundwater extraction easier, making effective regulation increasingly important. Ahsan Iqbal said the Integrated Land & Water Use Planning initiative would help develop an evidence-based framework to protect productive agricultural land, manage urban growth.—DNA

Police stage
grand flag march
with 50-EV fleet

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police staged a grand flag march of its newly inducted 50 electric vehicles (EVs), starting from D-Chowk and passing through major roads of the federal capital before returning to the same point, marking the fleet's rollout for enhanced patrolling and field operations. An official told APP on Wednesday that the flag march showcased the modern electric fleet inducted into Islamabad Police to strengthen police presence on roads, expand patrolling and promote environment-friendly policing. The EV flag march started from D-Chowk, moved through key roads of Islamabad and concluded at D-Chowk, presenting the newly inducted fleet that will be used to improve policing and security across the capital. The 50 electric vehicles were handed over to Islamabad Police by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, with the keys presented to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and IGP Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi as part of efforts to promote modern, safe and green policing. The new vehicles are part of the Capital Patrol initiative, aimed at strengthening security, rapid response and effective patrolling in different areas of Islamabad. SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza said the addition of modern electric vehicles would make police patrolling more active and strengthen the presence of personnel in the field. He said the expanded patrolling network and closer surveillance of sensitive locations and major roads would help police prevent crime. Qazi said the electric vehicles would also help improve police response time and make field operations faster and more effective. He termed the induction of EVs an important step towards modern and environment-friendly policing, saying effective use of technology and available resources was helping provide citizens with a peaceful and secure environment. The SSP Qazi said protection of citizens' lives and property remained the top priority, adding that modern resources would further strengthen the field force, patrolling and security system across Islamabad.—DNA

IRSA
releases
223,600
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 223,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 194,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA on Sunday, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1549.38 feet, which was 147.38 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 116,700 cusecs and 134,700 cusecs each. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1222.05 feet, which was 172.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 18,900 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 181,300, 158,200, 211,700 and 167,900 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 201,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 11,700 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala. —APP

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Trump's 'economic D-Day' about more than sanctions

NADIM SHEHADI

THERE are many ways of looking at US President Donald Trump's "economic D-Day" against Iran. Conventional wisdom says that economic sanctions on the economy simply do not work, but maybe they were never meant to. This is part of a many-sided mind game involving both domestic and international audiences. It is like a gunman in a cowboy movie aiming at several targets at the same time. There is the opponent, the opponent's public, the international audience of allies and rivals, and, most importantly, your own domestic public. Sanctions are sometimes the default option to show that something is being done. This can be for internal political reasons, to avoid other choices or as a digression to gain time. These curbs have little effect on the regimes being sanctioned and instead it is the civilian population that bears the brunt via the economic collapse of their day-to-day lives. The targeted regime can use the restrictions to grow stronger by directing the anger at the US rather than at itself. We have seen this in many cases, from Saddam Hussein's Iraq to Bashar Assad's Syria to Tehran itself. In 1991, former US President George H.W. Bush called on Iraqis to rise up against Saddam, which they did, thinking they had US support. But Bush got cold feet and, instead of liberating the Iraqi people, punished them with sanctions and allowed Saddam to crush the revolt.

So, when Trump announces an "economic D-Day" — unleashing maximum pressure and threatening secondary sanctions on anyone doing business with Iran — the anti-Trump mainstream media's reaction is entirely predictable. It is framed as a desperate measure from an administration whose policy has failed, with the Iranian regime still standing, the Strait of Hormuz a flashpoint and the US losing the battle. Here, domestic politics becomes the main battleground. At the same time, Trump must show his base and the public that he is acting tough and winning; he cannot afford to project any degree of weakness.

If Washington shows any sign of fragility, the Iran regime will seize on it to declare victory to its own people Tehran is playing a similar game. The Iranian regime has its own internal constituency and hard-liners to satisfy. If Washington shows any sign of fragility, the regime will seize on it to declare victory to its own people. Any concessions can backfire. When former President Joe Biden suspended the enforcement of certain sanctions as an incentive for diplomatic progress, the approach failed — the Iranians viewed it as a weakness to be exploited. This time, the regime may have met its match, with both sides playing tough and Trump not falling for any of the previous traps set by Tehran. One was using the nuclear issue as a diversion

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while building up its proxies in the region. Another was using these proxies to keep the battle away from its own territory.

For more than 30 years, many of the region's dictators have used nuclear negotiations and weapons of mass destruction as a diversion. Saddam welcomed international inspectors and kept the world busy while he was massacring his own people. Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi used them as a rehabilitation tool. Assad, with Russian help, brought in inspectors as a distraction and avoided the retaliation that former US President Barack Obama promised — his famous "red line" — if Syria used chemical weapons against its own people. As a result, Assad was given a green light to destroy his country.

The 2015 nuclear deal allowed Iran to develop its regional power, which we saw in action after Oct. 7, 2023. The main condition during these negotiations was that the US should concentrate only on the technicalities of the nuclear issue and was forbidden to bring to the table any "geopolitical" matters involving Iran's role in the region. Hence, Iran intervened in Syria to prop up the Assad regime and continued to build up its proxies in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Trump, however, refuses to isolate the nuclear file and insists on addressing the entire package, including ballistic missiles and regional proxies. In response, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is trying to exert counter-pressure by targeting Gulf states and holding global trade hostage in the Strait of Hormuz. But this kind of economic blackmail is a double-edged sword. Tehran is not gaining any friends in the region by acting like a global nuisance, nor is it winning favor with its own key allies. Closing international waterways hurts major energy importers such as China far more than it hurts the energy independent US. Maximum pressure is a card in Trump's hand for his broader strategic posture, particularly regarding China. At the same time, the war is now happening on Iranian soil. For 47 years, the IRGC has managed to avoid this by keeping the confrontation with the US away from its own territory. As such, it is far more costly than when the battles were in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon or Gaza. This is far less sustainable and is affecting the economy, infrastructure and destroying most of the regime's arsenal and military equipment. This brings us to the broader geopolitical chessboard. Maximum pressure on Iran is not just about Tehran — it is also a card in Trump's hand for his broader strategic posture, particularly regarding his upcoming meeting with China's Xi Jinping. By squeezing Iran's oil trade, Trump creates leverage that can be traded or leveraged in high-level talks with Beijing.

None of this changes the tragic human reality. Under extreme sanctions, it is never the regime elites who starve or go without medicine; it is ordinary civilians who bear the brunt of a collapsing economy and skyrocketing inflation. We saw this devastating pattern in Iraq and we are seeing it again in Iran.

Nobody can predict the final outcome of this confrontation or how internal shifts on either side will influence events. Trump may have to back down due to purely internal pressures if the outcome of the upcoming midterm elections is unfavorable. In Iran, we may also see popular revolts intensifying. Both sides may be let down by their allies because of economic pressures resulting from the war. But viewing Trump's "economic D-Day" purely as a sanctions failure ignores the brutal realities of political survival. This is not just economic policy; it is a battle of wits and political posturing played out on a global stage, with both sides fighting as much for their domestic survival as they are for regional dominance.

UK Labels Israel "Genocidal" and Bans Its Products

Qamar Bashir



The United States, Israel's most steadfast ally, is increasingly isolated in its unconditional support. The proposed congressional resolution declaring that the United States will not aid Israel or enter into wars on its behalf represents a significant shift in American public sentiment. Even within the US, there is growing recognition that uncritical support for Israel has damaged American interests, destabilized the Middle East, and put the United States on the wrong side of history. The call for boycott has extended beyond governments to include religious authorities...

THE world stands at a critical juncture in its relationship with Israel. For decades, the international community has watched as Palestinians have been systematically displaced, their homes destroyed, and their rights violated under the guise of security concerns. The recent announcement by the United Kingdom government to impose comprehensive sanctions on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank represents a watershed moment—one that challenges the long-standing impunity with which Israel has operated. These measures are not merely diplomatic gestures but essential tools for justice, peace, and the preservation of human dignity. Ironically it was the UK which spearheaded the foundation of Israel in 1948, and was instrumental in ethnically cleansing 750,000 Palestinians from their homes in Majdal Ashkelan to establish the state of Israel. These Palestinians were forcibly removed, placed in prison camps, and eventually dumped into the Gaza Strip, where they have been permanently warehoused under siege conditions. However, as repentance of its past crimes, the encouraging British government's decision to ban imports from illegal Israeli settlements, impose strict arms export controls, and sanction individuals involved in settler violence represents a courageous stand for international law, is a step in the right direction. These settlements are unequivocally illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into territory it occupies. For too long, the international community has paid lip service to this principle while allowing Israel to continue its expansion unabated. Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband's characterization of settler activities as "ethnic cleansing" is not hyperbole but an accurate description of reality. When Israeli settlers, often with state protection, systematically drive Palestinian communities from their land through violence, intimidation, and the destruction of homes and olive groves, this is ethnic cleansing by any reasonable definition. The UK's sanctions send a clear message: such practices have consequences, and the era of impunity is ending. Israel's reaction to the UK sanctions has been telling. President Herzog and Prime Minister Netanyahu have condemned the measures, claiming that sanctions are not the solution and that dialogue is the only path forward. Yet this appeal to dialogue is fundamentally disingenuous when Israel itself has consistently rejected dialogue in favor of military action. The same government that has flattened Gaza, destroyed southern Lebanon, occupied the Golan Heights, and continues to expand settlements in the West Bank cannot credibly lecture others about the virtues of peaceful negotiation. The Israeli government's countermeasures—closing the British consulate in Jerusalem, expelling UK representatives from coordination centers, and denying entry to British officials—reveal a government more interested in retaliation than reconciliation. This is the behavior of a state that believes it can act with complete impunity, that international law applies to others but not to itself. The irony of Israel's position becomes even more apparent when considering its enthusiastic support for US sanctions against Iran. If sanctions are illegitimate when applied to Israel, why are they legitimate when applied to others? What makes the current moment particularly significant is the growing global consensus around the need to hold Israel accountable. Canada and France have already implemented matching bans on settlement trade, and other nations are expected to follow. This is not a fringe movement but a mainstream diplomatic position grounded in international law and basic human rights principles. The United States, Israel's most steadfast ally, is increasingly isolated in its unconditional support. The proposed congressional resolution declaring that the United States will not aid Israel or enter into wars on its behalf represents a significant shift in American public sentiment. Even within the US, there is growing recognition that uncritical support for Israel has damaged American interests, destabilized the Middle East, and put the United States on the wrong side of history. The call for boycott has extended beyond governments to include religious authorities and civil society organizations. Christian leaders, including Archbishop J. Black, have called for boycott of Israeli products, drawing parallels to the successful international campaign against apartheid South Africa. Their position is rooted not in anti-Semitism but in a profound commitment to justice—the recognition that any system built on racial or religious supremacy must be dismantled. The boycott movement has practical implications. Consumers are being urged to check labels and avoid products from Israeli settlements, which are often sold under supermarket own brands or other disguises. Items ranging from fruits and vegetables to beauty products, diamonds, and plastic goods should be scrutinized for Israeli origins. The economic impact of such boycotts, if sustained, could be substantial—UK trade with Israel amounts to approximately \$1.6 billion annually. The UK's leadership in this matter provides an opportunity for Muslim countries to take decisive action. While individual boycotts have existed in some Muslim nations, coordinated government-level sanctions would send an even stronger message. Islamic countries should follow the British example by imposing comprehensive bans on Israeli products, regardless of how they are branded or marketed. They should also consider severing diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties with Israel until it complies with international law. This is not about targeting Jewish people—a charge that Israeli leaders cynically weaponize to deflect legitimate criticism. It is about opposing a state that has institutionalized discrimination, collective punishment, and territorial

expansion. The vast majority of pro-Palestinian advocates, whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or secular, are motivated by a commitment to human rights, not by prejudice. No discussion of Israel's accountability would be complete without addressing the United States' role as its primary enabler. For decades, the US has provided Israel with billions of dollars in annual aid, diplomatic cover at the United Nations, and military support that has been used to commit atrocities against Palestinians. This relationship has not only facilitated Israeli aggression but has also undermined US credibility in the Middle East and the global South.

The American people, who are hardworking, peace-loving, and committed to justice, must pressure their representatives to end this unconditional support. Individual Americans can participate in boycotts, campaign for congressional action, and raise their voices in solidarity with Palestinians. The Israeli government's increasingly extreme rhetoric, including calls for a "greater Israel" from the Nile to the Euphrates, should alarm all Americans who value stability and international law. The South African anti-apartheid movement demonstrated that sustained international pressure can bring about change. Sanctions, boycotts, and diplomatic isolation were instrumental in forcing the apartheid regime to negotiate an end to its discriminatory system. The same strategy can and must be applied to Israel. Making Israel a pariah state serves multiple purposes. First, it strips away the illusion that Israel's actions are legitimate, forcing the Israeli public to confront the reality of their government's policies. Second, it creates tangible consequences for continued occupation and settlement expansion. Third, it signals to the world that the era of unconditional tolerance for Israeli atrocities is over.

The UK's sanctions against Israeli settlements are not an act of hostility but an expression of hope—hope that international law can be restored, hope that justice can prevail over might, hope that the Palestinian people will finally receive the recognition and rights they have been denied for three generations. Justice for Palestinians is not about choosing sides in a conflict; it is about upholding fundamental principles of human dignity, equality, and the rule of law. Israel must now confront the fact that its political establishment has become a pariah in the community of nations. The question is not whether Israel will change—it is whether the world will have the courage to demand that change. History will judge us all by our response to this defining moment. The time for action is now, and the world must recognize Palestine as a state and ensure its borders are protected. Only through collective action can we ensure that justice, truth, and humanity prevail.

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

The Makkah Pact and the New Security Map

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The possibility of further expansion is therefore more important than the present composition of the pact. If Bangladesh or another important Muslim-majority country eventually joins, the agreement would acquire a wider South Asian dimension. Other states could also find participation attractive if membership provided access to military training, defence...

THE emergence of a new defence understanding among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey deserves greater attention than it has so far received. The agreement, often described as the Mecca Agreement, has the potential to influence security calculations well beyond the Middle East. Its significance lies not merely in the military capabilities of its three members but in the possibility that it may gradually become the nucleus of a wider political and security arrangement involving other Muslim countries. For India, Israel and the major Western powers, the development presents a complicated question. Is this simply another diplomatic understanding among states with different interests, or could it develop into a more coherent security partnership? The answer will depend largely on what the three countries do with the agreement in the years ahead. Pakistan brings a sizeable and experienced military establishment to the arrangement. Saudi Arabia possesses financial resources, energy importance and considerable influence in the Muslim world. Turkey has a growing defence industry, an increasingly independent foreign policy and strategic interests stretching from the Middle East to the Mediterranean, Caucasus and Central Asia. Individually, these countries have limitations. Together, however, they could provide one another with political, financial and military advantages.

The most important issue is the question of collective defence. If the agreement develops mechanisms through which an attack on one member is treated as a concern for all, its political importance would increase considerably. Yet collective defence arrangements are not automatically effective. They require common threat perceptions, military coordination, intelligence sharing, financial commitments and, above all, political willingness to act in a crisis. The three members do not see every regional issue through the same lens. Saudi Arabia has its own interests in the Gulf and its relationship with the United States. Turkey has pursued an independent regional policy and maintains difficult relationships with several neighbouring states. Pakistan remains deeply concerned with India, Afghanistan, economic pressures and its relationship with China and the Gulf states. These differences could limit the agreement.

They could also, however, encourage the members to concentrate on areas where their interests overlap. The possibility of further expansion is therefore more important than the present composition of the pact. If Bangladesh or another important Muslim-majority country eventually joins, the agreement would acquire a wider South Asian dimension. Other states could also find participation attractive if membership provided access to military training, defence technology, intelligence cooperation, investment and diplomatic support. Such a development would inevitably affect India. New Delhi is already surrounded by a complicated strategic environment. Its competition with Pakistan is longstanding, while its relationship with China remains marked by border disputes and wider competition. A closer Pakistan-Turkey-Saudi relationship could provide Islamabad with additional diplomatic space at a time when Pakistan is attempting to diversify its external partnerships. India and Israel are consequently likely to examine ways of strengthening their own relationships with countries that have concerns about Turkish or Pakistani influence. But there is an important difference between preparing for a changing security environment and attempting to create another bloc confrontation.

Balochistan's political and economic grievances are real issues requiring serious attention from Islamabad. Questions relating to provincial autonomy, resource distribution, political representation, missing persons, development and the rights of local communities cannot simply be treated as security problems. At the same time, violence against civilians or the state cannot provide a durable political settlement. For India, therefore, the wider approach would be to watch Pakistan's internal developments carefully without becoming trapped in a policy of covert escalation. Pakistan's instability would not necessarily serve Indian interests. A weaker and more insecure Pakistan could generate problems along India's western frontier, encourage militant networks and complicate regional trade. Gwadar and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor add another dimension. The port has strategic significance for Beijing because China seeks alternatives to vulnerable maritime routes, particularly the Malacca Strait. Yet the fu-

ture of Gwadar will depend not only on geography but also on security, local acceptance, economic viability and political stability in Balochistan. Attempts to disrupt the port through violence would carry consequences far beyond Pakistan-China relations. They could affect shipping, investment and the wider Indian Ocean security environment. Washington, New Delhi and other regional capitals therefore have an interest in ensuring that competition over CPEC does not become another source of armed conflict. The emerging order will not be determined by one agreement alone. Its future will depend on whether these competing partnerships become mechanisms for cooperation or instruments of confrontation.

For Pakistan, the agreement offers diplomatic and strategic opportunities, but it also carries responsibilities. Islamabad must ensure that closer defence relations do not deepen sectarian tensions or draw the country into conflicts that serve other states' interests. For India and Israel, the answer should not be an arms race or a policy of encouraging internal disorder in neighbouring countries. Their stronger option is sustained diplomacy, economic partnerships, maritime cooperation and carefully defined security arrangements. The real test of the Mecca Agreement will come not when its members issue declarations, but when a regional crisis forces them to decide how far their commitments actually extend.

The Middle East and South Asia have already paid a heavy price for assuming that military balances alone can produce security. The next phase of regional politics should not repeat that mistake. If the Mecca Agreement develops into a durable security partnership, its members will have to demonstrate that it is intended to protect their interests rather than redraw the region through confrontation. And those outside the agreement will have to recognise that the Muslim world is no longer prepared to leave its security calculations entirely distant powers. The coming contest will be not simply over weapons, alliances or territory, but over who gets to shape the political order of the region.

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Briefs

Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia...

FROM PAGE 01
historic diplomatic victory on June 15 when Tehran and Washington signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for peace in the region. Islamabad has since continued to facilitate communication between the two sides and promote dialogue, de-escalation and a peaceful resolution. While Asif warned that Israel would want the Iran-US conflict to continue, he expressed optimism about international pressure contributing to peace in the region. "Peace will be established in the region and Israel will have to pay a price," Asif said.

Iran attacks American base in...

FROM PAGE 01
A US official said Iran's strikes in Jordan were ineffective and all American troops were accounted for. The IRGC said on Wednesday it also attacked 10 ships, including two US Vessels and eight oil tankers, attempting to cross a "prohibited and unsafe" area of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy conduit largely choked off by Iranian attacks. Iran has targeted US assets and allies in the region throughout the war, including in Jordan several times, killing at least two US military personnel during one strike in July. Iran has also threatened oil tankers in Kuwaiti and Bahraini ports, according to a statement carried by state media. A maritime security source reported a liquefied natural gas tanker was damaged in the Emirati port of Khor Fakkan, though it was unclear who was responsible. Oil prices extended gains in early trade on Wednesday with Brent crude nearing \$100 a barrel on market concerns over the disruption of oil tanker traffic in the Strait of Hormuz. Recent attacks by Yemen's Houthis on top energy producer Saudi Arabia have added to supply concerns.

Debate system' issue in...

FROM PAGE 01
Bilawal said problems, faults and weaknesses within Pakistan's political system were neither new nor something that could be addressed through slogans. There should be an open debate on the causes behind the system's failures and the solutions required to address them, he added. Responding to a question whether Naqvi was speaking for someone else through his recent statements, Bilawal said: "Mr Mohsin Naqvi is speaking for himself, and I speak for myself." On the intensifying debate over the creation of new provinces, Bilawal said the PPP's position had not emerged overnight and had remained consistent for a considerable period. He cited Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab and Sindh to argue that the views of the people should be reflected through their elected representatives and provincial assemblies. Bilawal warned against presenting the creation of new provinces as a cure-all for Pakistan's deep-rooted economic and political crises. "You cannot simply say that by creating new provinces, you will solve the problems of political instability, poverty, unemployment, and the tsunami of inflation," he said. Bilawal rejected suggestions that the PPP was preparing to walk away from cooperation with the federal government, saying talks between the PPP and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) representatives were continuing. "At present, we are fully engaged with the federal government," he said. He sharply criticised PTI's strategy of boycotting parliamentary bodies, committees and elections, arguing that such a course was damaging not only to PTI and the opposition but also to parliament itself. "I believe PTI's decision to boycott all bodies, all committees, and elections is not only wrong for PTI and wrong for the opposition, but it is also not good for parliament as an institution," he said.

Pakistan Ambassador Khalil Hashmi bids farewell



DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi marked the end of his posting with a farewell reception at Pakistan House in Beijing, expressing gratitude to Chinese friends and colleagues while highlighting the enduring friendship and expanding cooperation between Pakistan and China. The reception brought together Chinese officials and diplomats, members of the Pakistani community, media representatives, business representatives and members of the diplomatic corps, reflecting the broad network of people-to-people and institutional ties connecting the two countries. Reflecting on his nearly 34-month tenure in China, Hashmi said extensive travel across the country had given him a deeper understanding of China's development experience and its approach to international cooperation, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. "That gave me some insight, and I think I learned a few things, which helped me better understand initiatives centered on shared development, security and civilization," he said. Hashmi said these

experiences had also helped him better understand concepts such as "shared prosperity," "shared development," "win-win" cooperation and a "shared future." Hashmi said he was deeply impressed by what he described as the wisdom and long-term thinking behind China's development. During his tenure, Hashmi said efforts were made to broaden Pakistan-China engagement beyond government-to-government relations, with greater emphasis on business-to-business and people-to-people exchanges. Among the initiatives, he cited a Pakistan-China fashion show held at the Great Wall, cultural concerts, mango festivals and a Pakistan food festival in Chengdu, describing such activities as platforms for bringing the people and cultures of the two countries closer. "We were able to achieve many things on the business-to-business level and also people-to-people," Hashmi said. He also highlighted the establishment of four new Pakistan Studies Centers in China, in Shenzhen, Shandong, Liaoning and Hangzhou. According to Hashmi, such platforms can promote mutual understanding and strengthen cooperation in areas including education, research, trade, investment and

business. "These are great platforms to promote Pakistan-China friendship, understanding, and more and more business, investment, trade," he said. Hashmi also pointed to efforts to deepen subnational cooperation, including the establishment of the sister-province relationship between Pakistan's Punjab Province and China's Zhejiang Province, as well as moves to develop new ties involving Liaoning and Hunan. Speaking about Pakistan-China relations, Hashmi described the bilateral friendship as "unique" and "very special," particularly as the two countries mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year. "Despite our very different cultures, differences in language, governance systems, and political and economic systems, we have been able to forge one of the most enduring interstate relationships," he said. He said the strength of the relationship had been built through the efforts of generations of leaders, diplomats and people from both countries, resulting in what Pakistan and China commonly describe as an "ironclad friendship." Hashmi noted Pakistan's support for China's Belt and Road Initiative, as well as the Global Development Initiative,

Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and Global Governance Initiative. "Pakistan, of course, was always among the first countries to lend support to these initiatives by President Xi Jinping," he said. Hashmi expressed appreciation to Chinese officials and colleagues for their friendship, cooperation and support throughout his posting. "Without your support and without your assistance and without your friendship, what we were able to achieve for Pakistan and China would not have been possible," he said. He also thanked his colleagues at the Pakistan Embassy and the country's consulates in China, describing the achievements during his tenure as an "excellent team effort." The ambassador also acknowledged the contribution of his wife, Mariam Mahmood, for her support throughout his tenure and her involvement in activities connecting the spouses of heads of diplomatic missions in Beijing. Hashmi's departure comes as Pakistan and China mark 75 years of diplomatic relations, with both countries continuing to emphasize people-to-people exchanges, trade, investment, cultural cooperation and connectivity as important areas of bilateral cooperation.

Asim Iftikhar to become new foreign secretary

FROM PAGE 01
This development is being welcomed across diplomatic circles in Islamabad, where observers believe that Asim Iftikhar's appointment will further enhance Pakistan's credibility and effectiveness on the international stage.

Security forces neutralise 11 India...

FROM PAGE 01
KP also recorded the highest number of violent incidents, with 151 cases, representing 57% of the nationwide total. Balochistan followed with 94 incidents, or 35%, underscoring the concentration of militant activity in the two provinces.

Pakistan welcomes steps...

FROM PAGE 01
It reiterated that Pakistan had stood and would continue to stand by the people of Palestine in their just struggle for self-determination. Pakistan would also continue to support all efforts aimed at establishing a sovereign, independent and contiguous Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, the statement added.

PM Shehbaz meets AJK PM

FROM PAGE 01
to the advancement of the region and the well-being of its citizens. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, along with senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office. This high-level engagement marks a significant step in reinforcing the partnership between Islamabad and Muzaffarabad, highlighting a shared vision for a peaceful and prosperous future for Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

UK air traffic control...

FROM PAGE 01
confirmed it was among those affected on Tuesday, along with Gatwick to the south of the UK capital. "It's just an absolute nightmare down there," healthcare worker Josie Donoghue said of Gatwick after leaving the airport, having had to disembark her flight to Ireland after three hours stuck on the runway. "Getting through that airport was like trying to get out of Alcatraz," she told Britain's domestic Press Association news agency. Liverpool, Birmingham and Edinburgh airports were also affected, while Dublin Airport in Ireland said it had cancelled dozens of flights.

Indian hockey back to blue after anger over orange kit

DNA
THE colour change at the tournament in Belgium and the Netherlands drew the ire of Hockey India officials and former players. The bright orange saffron colour is associated with Hindu nationalism, espoused by India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The men's and women's national teams will now have blue as their primary colour at the Asian Games starting September 19 in Nagoya-Aichi. "Before the World Cup as well, I was asked about it... and at that time I said this was not a permanent decision," Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey told reporters at an Asian Games send-off event in New Delhi on Tuesday. "We are back to wearing blue again. Both our teams.

Atletico have work to do to reach home Champions League final: Simeone

DNA

LIVERPOOL: Diego Simeone believes Atletico Madrid are a work in progress as they aim to reach the Champions League final at their own Metropolitan Stadium, but is confident his side will improve after a slow start to the season. Atletico were blown away in a second half blitz by Athletic Bilbao to lose 3-0 at the weekend and already fall five points behind La Liga leaders Barcelona after just four games. The uncertainty over star forward Julian Alvarez's future has blighted Simeone's preparations for the new

season, but the Argentine is still an Atletico player and Los Rojiblancos further bolstered their attack with the loan arrival of Canadian international Jonathan David. Atletico were also affected by having nine players involved in Spain's 1-0 win over Argentina in the World Cup final less than a month before their league season began. "It is very important for the club that the final is being held at the Metropolitan. As for us, we have a lot of work to do if we want to reach that privileged position," said Simeone ahead of Atletico's Champions League opener away to

Liverpool on Wednesday. "We are improving, finding our feet. There are many new players, Julian's situation, David arriving at the end of the transfer window, the national team players who joined late. Little by little, we'll find our rhythm." Alvarez was the subject of interest from Barcelona, while Atletico rejected a 150 million euro (\$174 million) bid from rivals Real Madrid. But the former Manchester City man is yet to start this season and has been met with a backlash from the club's supporters over his desire to leave. "Julian is getting better. I don't see that he could start

tomorrow, but I am sure he could help at some point in the game," added Simeone. Atletico's Champions League campaign last season also began at Anfield, where they lost 3-2 to a stoppage-time winner from Virgil van Dijk, and Simeone called for better concentration from his side to avoid a repeat of their recent defeat in Bilbao. "I don't think it was (a lack of) motivation what happened to us in Bilbao, it was a lack of awareness, switching off," said the Argentine, whose side reached the semifinals last season. We are coming into a marvellous stadium, a great atmosphere.

Alcaraz falls to Shelton in epic latest-ever US Open finish

DNA

NEW YORK: Carlos Alcaraz tumbled out of the US Open quarter-finals at 3:34 am Wednesday, falling to Ben Shelton in an epic five-set thriller that broke the record for latest finish ever at Flushing Meadows. The big-hitting Shelton claimed his first career win over Alcaraz, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1, 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (10/7), ending the Spaniard's hopes of retaining his title in his first tournament.

Tiafoe escapes Michelsen to reach US Open semi-finals

DNA

NEW YORK: Frances Tiafoe rallied from two sets down - and 3-0 down in the fifth set - to edge 22-year-old Alex Michelsen 5-7, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3, 7-6 (10/6) and reach the US Open semi-finals on Tuesday. American 11th seed Tiafoe had all he could handle from his 22-year-old compatriot, who hadn't dropped a set in reaching the first Grand Slam quarter-final of his career.

But in a match of swinging momentum shifts, Tiafoe battled back from 5-3 down in the third set and recovered an early break in the fifth to reach his third US Open semi-final in five years. Tiafoe clinched it in the 10-point match tiebreaker after four hours and 38 minutes, Michelsen weeping in the victor's arms as they met at the net. Tiafoe will face either defending champion Carlos Alcaraz or eighth-seeded American Ben Shelton for

a place in Sunday's championship match. Michelsen came out swinging on Arthur Ashe Stadium against an uncharacteristically passive Tiafoe, who usually feeds on the energy of the crowd. But when Michelsen found himself serving for the match at 5-4 in the third, his nerves betrayed him. Two double faults helped Tiafoe break back, and Tiafoe strung together seven straight games to close out the third set and seize control of the fourth.

IPC, PSB, FBBA Join Hands to Boost School Basketball

The initiative aims to strengthen the professional capacity of school sports teachers, promote basketball among students and identify, groom and nurture young talent from an early age

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a major initiative to promote basketball at the grassroots and school levels, a specialized training course for female sports teachers of schools under the Federal Directorate of Education was organized at the Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad in collaboration with the Federal Basketball Association (FBBA). The initiative aims to strengthen the professional capacity of school sports teachers, promote basketball among students and identify, groom and nurture young tal-

ent from an early age. More than 62 female sports teachers participated in the training programme and received comprehensive instruction on basketball fundamentals, rules of the game, modern coaching techniques, training drills and practical methods for introducing and developing basketball in their respective schools. Practical demonstrations were also conducted to enhance the participants' coaching and training skills. The training was conducted by Umer Mahmood, former international basketball player and member of the Coaches Board of the Pakistan Basketball Federation. The

programme was held under the supervision of Mumtaz ul Haq, Deputy Director General, Pakistan Sports Board, in line with the vision and directions of Mohyuddin Wani, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC), and under the leadership of Yawar Hussain, Director General, Pakistan Sports Board (PSB). Federal Basketball Association President Ejaz Butt and Secretary General Ouj E Zahoor extended full cooperation and support for the successful organization of the training programme in accordance with the directions of the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination and Pakistan Sports Board.

The initiative is expected to provide a stronger foundation for school-level basketball by equipping female sports teachers with modern coaching skills and enabling them to create greater opportunities for students to participate in the sport. It will also contribute to the early identification and development of promising young basketball players. The Federal Basketball Association has been actively contributing to the promotion and development of basketball in the Federal Capital Region through training camps, coaching and development programmes, as well as local and national-level competitions.



Briefs

Rupee gains 01 paisa against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in inter-bank trading and closed at Rs277.36, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs277.37. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.05 and Rs 278.55, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.36 and closed at Rs 322.51 against the previous day's closing of Rs 322.15, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged at Rs 1.80, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs0.28 and closed at Rs 375.55 compared to the previous day's Rs 375.27. The exchange rates of the Emirate Dirham remained stagnant at Rs 75.51, while the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paisa to close at Rs 73.86.—APP

PSX stays bearish, loses over 698 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with its bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 698.56 points, a negative change of 0.40 percent, to close at 171,943.60 points against 172,642.16 points recorded in the previous trading session. The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 477.674 million shares, compared to 722.624 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value stood at Rs 22.637 billion, down from Rs 27.942 billion. Market capitalisation decreased to Rs 19.233 trillion from Rs 19.295 trillion recorded a day earlier. Out of 492 companies that traded in the ready market, 162 posted gains, 293 suffered losses, while 37 remained unchanged, reflecting a downward trend in the market. Energyco PK led the volume chart with 65.824 million shares, followed by Aisha Steel Mill with 28.558 million shares, and Thata Cement with 25.595 million shares. Among the top gainers, PIA Holding Company LimitedB surged by Rs 568.02 to close at Rs 17,450.00, while Pakistan Services Limited advanced by Rs 98.02 to settle at Rs 1,078.25. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 349.50 to close at Rs 24,500.00, while Buxly Paints Limited fell by Rs 114.48 to Rs 1,030.36. In the futures (DFC) market, turnover stood at 131.978 million shares with a traded value of Rs 7.107 billion, compared with 176.266 million shares worth Rs 8.304 billion in the previous session. Of the 299 companies traded in the DFC market, 81 advanced, 214 declined, and 4 remained unchanged.—APP

Gold prices rise by Rs 800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed an increase in the local market on Wednesday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola rising by Rs800 to settle at Rs462,936, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs686 to Rs396,893, whereas 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs629 to Rs363,831. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$8 to \$4,404 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs72 to Rs7,141, while the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs62 to Rs6,122. The price of silver in the international market also increased by \$0.72 to \$66.62 per ounce, the association added.—APP

Gilani for equal women's role to unlock eco potential

The Acting President said that the real measure of Pakistan's progress would be whether a woman, regardless of her background or region, had equal access to education, finance, technology, markets and decision-making

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani on Wednesday said that Pakistan's democratic strength, economic progress and social cohesion could not be fully realized unless women participated equally in shaping the country's institutions, economy and future. "If the country is to unlock its full economic potential, we must ensure that women are not only beneficiaries of development, but active drivers of it as entrepreneurs, professionals, policymakers, innovators and leaders," the Acting President said while addressing the Pakistan Women Leadership and Policy Summit 2026, organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) at the ICCI building. "It is a pleasure to join you at the Pakistan Women Leadership and Policy Summit 2026," he said while commending the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and all partners for convening the important forum. Gillani said the summit brought together two indispensable national priorities: women's leadership and sound public policy. He said women had remained pivotal to Pakistan's national progress, from Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan and Begum Shaista Ikramullah to former Prime Minister Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and the women CEOs and leaders participating in the summit. "Shaheed Mohtarma occupies a particularly historic place in this journey.



Being the first woman to lead a Muslim-majority country, she broke barriers that had long appeared impossible to overcome. Her legacy continues to inspire women to enter public life, lead institutions and contribute to national decision-making," he said. The Acting President said that the real measure of Pakistan's progress would be whether a woman, regardless of her background

or region, had equal access to education, finance, technology, markets and decision-making. "The challenge before us is therefore not whether women can lead, but whether we are prepared to create the systems that allow them to lead, succeed and shape Pakistan's future," he said. Gillani said that through concrete policy and legislative measures and institutional reforms,

his government had laid down a firm legal and policy foundation to ensure the protection, betterment and socio-economic and political empowerment of women. He said the sound legal edifice created during that period addressed key areas including protection of women against harassment at the workplace, acid violence, forced marriages and vani. The government also declared December 22 as Working Women's Day, acknowledging that Pakistan's economic, social and democratic vitality rested substantially on the contribution of its women. He said that the establishment of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus during that period further reflected the commitment to ensuring that women's rights and concerns remained central to parliamentary discourse. "A source of particular pride for me is the Benazir Income Support Programme. By placing financial assistance directly in the hands of women, it strengthened their role as economic decision-makers within their households. It represented a transformational shift from charity to dignity and from dependence to empowerment," Gillani said. He said that the direction was clear then and remained clear today: Pakistan could not stand still in the face of injustice, nor could it achieve its full potential without women's equal participation, protection and leadership.—DNA

Israel will not 'expel or deport' anyone from Gaza

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia: Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar on Wednesday said his country was "not planning to expel or deport anyone from Gaza Strip" during a visit to Slovenia for the opening of an Israeli embassy. If someone wants to leave Gaza "from his own will, and there is a country which is ready to accept him, as it happens from any conflict area in the world, we will not oppose that," he added. Several Israeli cabinet members have spoken of plans to remove all two million people from war-ravaged Gaza, although they largely cast the initiative as voluntary, saying that Palestinians want to leave and are prevented by the militant group Hamas. Saar was speaking at a press conference in Ljubljana ahead of the opening of an Israeli embassy there as Slovenia looks to reset diplomatic ties with Israel under nationalist Prime Minister Janez Jansa. He thanked Slovenia for its "friendship" and for "standing with Israel when it matters". "An embassy is more than a flag in the building. It is an investment in a relationship and a commitment to its future. And that is exactly what we are planning to do together," Saar said.— "Israel remembers its friends. As you have stood with us, we will stand with you," he said. The opening of an Israeli embassy in Ljubljana marks a dramatic departure from the policies of the previous centre-left government, which had been one of the EU's most critical voices on Israel's military offensive in Gaza.—APP

EU gives Spain 115m euros aid over Ceuta crisis

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: The EU on Wednesday said it was granting Spain 115 million euros (\$130 million) in emergency aid to help bolster border security and assist returns after the massive migrant rush into the north African exclave. More than 70,000 migrants crossed into Spanish territory from Morocco on July 30 and 31 in an unprecedented rush that left scores dead, most by drowning as

they tried to swim around a breakwater. "The situation in Ceuta has put pressure on our external borders," said European Commission vice president Henna Virkkunen. "Our message remains clear: we are committed to combat illegal migration and ensure the swift return of those who remain illegally in Ceuta." Spain requested assistance from Brussels in late August. The EU said that the funds would go towards "measures to enhance border surveillance, border protection and security-related infrastructure", such as thermal cameras and floating buoy systems and underwater drones. "It will also serve to set up facilities for the screening of migrants, as well as to support returns of those who remain illegally in Ceuta," Brussels said. Most of the migrants who entered Ceuta have returned to Morocco, but thousands have remained in often dire living conditions, increasing tensions in the small city and causing a political storm for the government. The Ceuta crisis sparked rifts between EU nations, with Spain's left-wing government clashing with Italy's hard-right authorities after Rome ramped up border controls. Spain's top criminal court on Monday opened an investigation into the deadly rush, alleging it was facilitated by Morocco and pointing to failings by the African country's police. But Spain's leftist government says there is no "solid proof" the surge was planned by Morocco, with which it has spent years trying to improve historically complicated relations.—Agencies

Pakistan, ADB vow to timely finalization of ML-1 project design

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Senator Ahad Cheema held a meeting with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) delegation to review progress on the Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway project, with particular focus on timely finalization of the project design and subsequent preparatory requirements. The ADB informed the meeting that its technical team and Project Consultants are actively working on the project and that every effort is being made to finalize the ML-1 project design within October. The ADB side further stated that, once the project design is finalized, it would make every effort, in close coordination with the Government, to move forward with procurement and other subsequent stages in a timely manner, said a release issued here on Wednesday. Senator Ahad Cheema appreciated the progress being made by ADB and its technical teams and emphasized the importance of maintaining close coordination among all stakeholders to facilitate timely completion of the ongoing work. The Minister said Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif attaches high priority to the ML-1 project and is keen to see it move towards implementation at the earliest possible stage. He assured the ADB delegation that the Government of Pakistan remains fully prepared to complete all

requirements on its part in a timely manner and extend necessary facilitation throughout the process. The Minister also called for continued review of the implementation schedule to identify opportunities, where feasible, to optimize timelines while ensuring full compliance with all technical, legal and procedural requirements. The ADB representatives appreciated the Government of Pakistan's commitment to advancing the project and assured that ADB would continue to work closely with the Government to facilitate timely progress. They also said that requirements related to subsequent processing and approvals, including those concerning consideration by the ADB Board, would be shared with the Government in a timely manner. The meeting was attended by ADB Country Director for Pakistan Ms. Emma Fan, ADB Deputy Country Director, Secretary Railways Mazhar Ali Shah, Secretary Economic Affairs Muhammad Humair Karim, Director General Planning, Ministry of Railways, and other senior officials from the relevant ministries and departments. The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment of the Government of Pakistan and ADB to maintaining close coordination for timely finalization of the project design and steady progress towards implementation of the ML-1 project.—APP

Govt pushes business facilitation reforms to boost exports: Qaiser

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Wednesday said the government was taking required steps to simplify business regulations, attract local and foreign investment, strengthen industry and promote value-added exports. Addressing an event, he said a Business Facilitation Centre had been established and the government was working with foreign experts, including US experts to streamline regulatory procedures. Relevant institutions were also being consulted to build consensus and ensure effective implementation of reforms. The minister acknowledged that Pakistan had lagged behind other countries in simplifying regulations, adding that the government was now making concerted efforts to improve the business environment. Incentives such as duty-free or zero-rated machinery, where applicable, were aimed at making domestic industries more competitive and encouraging export-oriented production. He highlighted the experience of Southeast Asian economies, where domestic and foreign investment helped drive value-added exports. Pakistan's economic zones, he said, offered opportunities for new industries, particularly for overseas Pakistanis and foreign investors. Investment initiatives were also being pursued in coordination with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while some projects offered tax incentives. Qaiser said improvements in Pakistan's sovereign credit ratings reflected progress in economic management and business facilitation, adding State Bank foreign exchange reserves had reached around \$18 billion, covering approximately three months of imports. On regional developments, the minister said the ongoing Iran-US conflict was creating economic challenges, particularly through higher oil prices and energy costs. He said Pakistan, given its relations with both countries, could help facilitate dialogue and supported diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute. Recalling Pakistan's role in facilitating US-China contacts in the past, Qaiser stressed the importance of continued diplomacy for regional peace and global economic stability. He also appreciated the military leadership's support for diplomatic initiatives.—DNA

Pakistani firm targets higher-value sesame exports

BEIJING: Pakistan's International Multi Group of Companies plans to make higher-value sesame products at home for export, as rapidly growing shipments to China create opportunities to capture more value from the crop before it leaves Pakistan. The conglomerate, known as IMGC, has built a processing plant of about 2,000 square metres and is in talks with Chinese equipment suppliers, Wang Li, the group's China representative told China Economic Net in an interview on the opening day of the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in Beijing. It is working to install machinery to turn sesame into products including oil and paste, rather than selling mainly cleaned seed, Wang said. The plant will use equipment from China. China has become a key market for Pakistani sesame. Pakistan shipped 103,340 tonnes of sesame seed worth \$105.29 million to China in the first seven months of 2026, up 110.8% in volume and 72.2% in value from a year earlier, according to data from China's General Administration of Customs. One measure of Pakistan's limited downstream sesame exports is oil. Shipments of sesame oil and its fractions totalled just \$228,470 in 2024, or 25.7 tonnes, according to World Bank WITS data based on UN Comtrade. Almost all went to China.—DNA

Lebanon media says one dead in Israeli drone strike

BEIRUT, LEBANON: An Israeli strike killed one person in Lebanon's south, the Lebanese state news agency said on Wednesday, in a region where Israel has intensified attacks despite a ceasefire. An Israeli drone targeted a motorcycle in Zebdine in the Nabatieh region, killing a man, Lebanon's National News Agency said. Since announcing last week the capture of the Ali al-Taher ridge, a strategic Hezbollah position in Nabatieh, the Israeli army has stepped up its strikes in the area. The attacks have killed at least 29 people since Friday, including 12 members of the same family, according to Lebanese authorities and official media. Fighting in Lebanon had calmed since a US-Iran memorandum of understanding and a framework agreement between Israel and Lebanon were reached in June. But Beirut still reports recurring Israeli strikes, which it says have killed more than 4,300 people in total since March, and Israeli forces continue to occupy a so-called "security zone" in the south.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday expressed concern about the Israeli "escalation" in southern Lebanon, according to his spokesperson. In an online petition posted this week, nearly 400 Lebanese public figures, including legal experts and human rights advocates, called for Lebanon's army to be deployed in Nabatieh. They also voiced concern over a possible "expansion of the Israeli occupation" toward the city, which is about 11 kilometres (seven miles) from the Israeli border.—APP

Jordanian army foils attempt to smuggle 500,000 narcotic pills

LONDON: Jordanian authorities foiled four separate attempts to smuggle about 500,000 narcotic pills on Wednesday across the country's eastern border with Syria and Iraq. Border Guard units intercepted guided balloons that smugglers used to transport the drugs into Jordanian territory. The Eastern Military Zone conducted the operation in coordination with the Anti-Narcotics Department, according to the Jordan News Agency. Guided balloons are an unconventional method increasingly used by smugglers to transport narcotics across the border. The Jordan Armed Forces said that the tactic would not deter its units from fighting cross-border drug trafficking. Jordan typically announces several monthly interceptions of drug smuggling or infiltration attempts through its borders, mainly with Syria and Iraq. Criminal networks have long attempted to exploit Jordan's geographic location in the heart of the Middle East as a transit point for smuggling drugs that are mainly bound for Gulf countries.—APP

One dies in wildfire

ISTANBUL: One person died after suffering a heart attack during a wildfire in Turkey's southern Antalya province, a local official and broadcasters said on Wednesday, as authorities sought to contain several fires that broke out in the region this week. The resident died after being affected by smoke from the fire, Aksu district mayor Isa Yildirim said in a post on X. Turkey's forest authority said wildfires in Antalya's Kumpula district and Mersin's Bozyazi district had been largely brought under control, though efforts to fully extinguish them continued. Firefighters were also battling separate wildfires in Antalya's Aksu district and Adana's Kozan district, spraying water from the air and on the ground, the authority said. Video footage showed flames sweeping through forested areas and thick smoke rising into the sky as helicopters, aircraft and fire trucks worked to contain the blazes. Residents joined firefighting efforts, with farmers using tractors and water tankers to help transport water to affected areas, broadcaster NTV reported.—APP

Syria no longer under UN nuclear watchdog probe

Robert Kelley, a former director of IAEA inspections and now an associate fellow of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, told AFP following the IAEA report that there was "no evidence of any weapons programme" in Syria. Instead the aim before the site was destroyed may have been to produce plutonium for North Korea, possibly to sell to a third party, he added

Vienna: The UN nuclear watchdog's board of governors on Wednesday decided to close a long-time probe against Syria launched under ousted leader Bashar al-Assad after the country's new authorities led agency exports to key nuclear sites. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) last month visited two sites, one in Deir Ezzor and a second in an undisclosed location identified to them by Syrian authorities. IAEA head Rafael Grossi said on Monday that a near-complete nuclear reactor found in Deir Ezzor and built secretly during the rule of al-Assad would have been able to produce material to make nuclear weapons. The IAEA board "adopted by consensus" a text stating that a 2011 resolution finding Syria in non-compliance with its obligations was "terminated", noting the current government's cooperation, two diplomats told AFP. The resolution, seen by AFP, was submitted by Egypt,

Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia and "encourages Syria to continue its cooperation with the agency, including the excavation work at the Deir Ezzor site". It also "requests the director general to update the board, as appropriate, on the outcomes of ongoing activities of the agency" in Syria. Assad was toppled in December 2024 and the current Islamist government came to power. Grossi said on Monday that it was "obvious that the previous government was pursuing a number of clandestine" activities. Besides the reactor under construction at the Deir Ezzor site, the IAEA found a fuel fabrication plant where nuclear fuel for the reactor was manufactured, and a location where nuclear fuel as well as uranium scrap and waste were stored. In a confidential report seen by AFP last week, 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. Last month, Grossi visited the site in Deir Ezzor in the east, which has been shut for 18 years. In 2018, Israel admitted carrying out a top-secret air raid on the site 11 years earlier. In 2008, less than a year after the strike, US officials accused Syria of having sought to build a secret nuclear reactor and acknowledged that Israel had destroyed it in the raid. Robert Kelley, a former director of IAEA inspections and now an associate fellow of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, told AFP following the IAEA report that there was "no evidence of any weapons programme" in Syria. Instead the aim before the site was destroyed may have been to produce plutonium for North Korea, possibly to sell to a third party, he added.—APP

Briefs

Australia prepares fresh Israel sanctions

LONDON: Australia is preparing another suite of sanctions against Israel but will not join the UK, France and Canada in banning trade with Israeli settlements, The Guardian reported on Wednesday. Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong said her country, which had joined its partners on previous rounds of action against Israel, is not committed to a broad ban on goods produced in settlements, which are illegal under international law. She added: "Australia is pursuing further targeted measures in coordination with international partners to deter illegal settlements and settler violence." "We have concerns about the implementation of a blanket ban and unintended consequences for Australian businesses, for Palestinians and for Israelis, and we will continue to work with partners to protect the prospects of a two-state solution." However, Wong said Israel's actions are "extinguishing the possibility of a two-state solution." Israel must stop settler violence against Palestinians, including destruction of property, displacement of families, torture, sexual assault and killings, she added. "We have taken action that Prime Minister (Benjamin) Netanyahu's government has made very clear that they are more than displeased with, but we have done so because this is the right thing to do," Wong said. - APP

Manila defence boss slams 'bullying' China

SEOUL: The Philippine defence chief has accused Beijing of "bullying", alleging he was handed a Chinese note at an international forum that asserted China's expansive claims over contested waters. Secretary Gilberto Teodoro was on stage for a panel discussion at the Seoul Defense Dialogue on Tuesday when he received a paper from what appeared to be an event staffer, video shows. "I have a note here. I think this is from China," he said, before reading out its contents in the South Korean capital. "China's position on the South China Sea arbitration is clear, consistent, and firm... The arbitration violates fundamental principles of international law," he read. The mention of arbitration refers to a landmark 2016 ruling by an international tribunal in The Hague that overwhelmingly sided with the Philippines in its case against China's claims to the South China Sea. Multiple nations in the region, including the Philippines, have territorial claims that overlap with China's, and altercations occur regularly in the heavily patrolled waterway. - APP

Bangladesh measles crisis kills more than 1,000 children

DHAKA: The death toll from measles in Bangladesh has topped 1,000 children since March, health officials said Wednesday, admitting that failures in a vaccination drive may have fuelled the outbreak. The South Asian nation of 170 million has recorded 1,002 deaths and 187,484 infections among children, making this year's outbreak the country's deadliest in decades, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). Measles is highly contagious, spreading through coughs and sneezes, and has no specific treatment once caught. Complications can include brain swelling and severe breathing problems. Although anyone can catch the disease, young children are particularly vulnerable. The disease has kept spreading in Bangladesh even as health authorities rolled out a mass vaccination drive to combat the outbreak. DGHS spokesman Zahid Raihan said more than 18 million children had been vaccinated so far. - APP

Tajikistan Independence Day reception in Islamabad

The event was led by Mr. Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir, Ambassador of Tajikistan, who along with the embassy staff, formally hoisted the national flag and cut a celebratory cake

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Tajikistan in Pakistan hosted a reception to mark the Independence Day anniversary of Tajikistan. The event was led by Mr. Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir, Ambassador of Tajikistan, who along with the embassy staff, formally hoisted the national flag and cut a celebratory cake. The ceremony was attended by diplomats, officials, and members of the community, reflecting the warmth and friendship between the two nations. Ambassador Sharifzoda highlighted the significance of Tajikistan's independence and expressed gratitude for the strong support and goodwill extended by Pakistan. He noted that the bilateral relationship has grown steadily over the years, with cooperation in trade, energy, and cultural exchanges. Pakistan's leadership also conveyed greetings to Tajikistan's government and people on the occasion. Messages of goodwill were shared, reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to strengthening ties with Dushanbe. Officials emphasized that Pakistan and Tajikistan enjoy excellent relations rooted in shared history, culture, and regional connectivity. The reception underscored the importance of continued collaboration between the two countries, particularly in the context of regional peace and economic development. Guests praised the embassy's efforts in promoting people-to-people contacts and fostering greater understanding between the two nations. The celebration not only marked Tajikistan's independence but also reaffirmed the enduring friendship between the two brotherly countries. A formal reception will be organized next month in Islamabad.



Pakistan set to receive much-needed LNG supplies as Qatari cargo passes through Hormuz

LNG carrier transits Hormuz on September 7 under Pakistan's govt-to-govt arrangement with Qatar

PAKISTAN is set to receive a much-needed boost to its LNG supplies after a Qatari cargo successfully crossed the strategically important Strait of Hormuz amid heightened regional tensions. The LNG carrier, Al Marrouna, carrying around 81,936 metric tons of LNG from Qatar's Ras Laffan terminal, transited the Strait of Hormuz on September 7 under Pakistan's government-to-government arrangement with Qatar. The Middle East war intensified on Tuesday with Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen launching strikes on several Saudi cities, further embroiling a US ally in the conflict, while US forces hit multiple Iranian oil tankers and Iran targeted a US base in Jordan. After a month of calm in August, Iran and the US resumed exchanging fire in recent days, with Hormuz shipping traffic falling below the 10-day average. Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Tuesday said they attacked two US vessels and eight oil tankers in the Gulf in response to the US attack on five Iranian tankers, Iranian state media reports. The Guards say their forces attacked 10 ships that were attempting to cross what they described as a "prohibited and unsafe" area of the Strait of Hormuz. The arrival of cargo is expected to provide temporary relief to Pakistan's power sector, which is currently facing loadshedding of between six and 12 hours in parts of the country. The cargo has been arranged at a price equivalent to 13.37% of Brent. The successful passage of Al Marrouna is also being closely watched by international LNG markets. Its transit has eased some concerns over a prolonged disruption of Qatari LNG supplies through the Strait, putting bearish pressure on Asian benchmark Platts JKM and Northwest European LNG prices. Meanwhile, Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) has cancelled a spot LNG tender floated on September 5, which was scheduled to be opened on September 8. The latest Qatari shipment is particularly significant as it is reportedly the first Qatari LNG cargo to exit the Persian Gulf since tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz escalated in July. The worsening security situation had raised concerns over shipping disruptions and pushed up insurance costs for vessels navigating the strategic waterway. - APP

Pakistan receives \$3.66 billing in workers remittances in August

Saudi Arabia leads with \$873m, followed by UAE, UK, and US remittance

KARACHI: Pakistan received \$3.66 billion in workers' remittances in August 2026, registering a 16.5% increase year-on-year, data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed on Wednesday. In a post on X, Adviser to the Finance Minister Khuram Schehzad said remittances during the first two months of FY27 stood at \$7.29 billion, up 14.7% compared with the same period last year. August remittances also increased 0.7% month-on-month, according to the figures shared by the adviser. SBP data showed that Saudi Arabia remained the largest source of remittances in August, contributing \$873 million, followed by the United Arab Emirates with \$750 million, the United Kingdom with \$564 million, and the United States with \$309 million. Schehzad said the latest inflows build on the record \$41.6 billion in remittances received by Pakistan during FY26. He said sustained remittance flows remain an important pillar of the country's external account, supporting household incomes, foreign exchange liquidity, reserves and overall external-sector resilience. According to data compiled by Topline Securities, inflows from Saudi Arabia reached \$873 million in August 2026, up 19% year-on-year from \$737 million in August 2025, though down 4% month-on-month from \$914 mln in July 2026. - DNA

Brent crude rises above \$100 a barrel

DNA

LONDON: Benchmark Brent crude oil futures rose past \$100 a barrel on Wednesday, hitting a more than six-week high and breaching the symbolic threshold for the first time since July 24 as intensifying conflict in the Middle East heightened concerns about oil flows from the region. Brent crude futures were up \$2.01, or 2.05 per cent, at \$99.93 a barrel by 01:02pm PKT, after earlier touching \$100.19, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was up \$1.49, or 1.60pc, at \$94.52 a barrel. Brent crude prices have risen by a quarter since early last month as hopes fade for a permanent resolution to the six-month-old US-Iran conflict. Since the Iran war began on February 28, Brent has surged as high as \$126.41 a barrel, a peak reached on April 30. This week, attacks by Houthis on Saudi energy facilities set oil installations ablaze, threatening a significant expansion of the conflict. The attacks also threatened crude shipments via the Red Sea, which has been a key alternative route to the crucial Strait of Hormuz, where oil flows have been severely curtailed since the February 28 start of the Iran war. "Market participants appear to be pricing in a more prolonged conflict in the Middle East as well as the risk that the latest escalation in military strikes disrupts oil flows from the Middle East," said Hamad Hussain, senior climate and commodities economist at Capital Economics. "The key risk is whether the recent attacks on oil tankers lead to fewer ship-to-ship transfers taking place in the Gulf of Oman, which have so far played a key role in providing oil to global markets and keeping a lid on prices." A growing number of banks, including Goldman Sachs, Bank of America and HSBC, have raised their crude price forecasts in recent days.

Lawyer's body found in court

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The body of a lawyer was found inside a car at the Judicial Complex's parking lot on Wednesday, police said. According to the initial police report, a moharir at the judicial complex informed Civil Lines police about the body at around 9:30am. The deceased was identified as Advocate Sanaullah Satti, the report said. A Punjab Forensic Science Agency (PFSA) team was also called to the scene, it added. Rawalpindi Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Tariq Mehboob told the media that the cause of death would be ascertained after the release of the forensic report. In January, the body of a lawyer was found in a deserted area in Islamabad's H-9. Passersby had informed police after they found the body, which had a bullet wound on the back, cops had said, adding that they suspected murder.

Nepal seeks survivors two weeks after deadly floods

KATMANDU: Nepali rescuers clung to hopes of finding survivors trapped in hydropower tunnels on Wednesday, two weeks after deadly flooding triggered by a glacial mountain collapse. The August 26 tsunami-like surge of water, mud and debris, which began on the China-Nepal border, has killed more than 1,410 people and left 5,651 missing. "The rescue and search work in the tunnels at Trishuli 3A, 3B and Chilime hydropower projects is ongoing," Nepal Army spokesman Raja Ram Basnet told AFP. In Nepal, 1,367 bodies have been recovered and 5,132 people are missing, according to Kathmandu's disaster authority on Wednesday. In China, 43 people are dead and 519 missing, according to state media. Hundreds of foreigners are among the missing, as well as hundreds of hydropower workers. Three people were rescued from deep inside tunnels - two Nepalis on Friday and a Chinese man on Saturday. But there has been no official confirmation of further survivors since then. Thousands of people displaced by the disaster are living in camps, and the charity Save the Children said as many as 540 children had been separated from their parents. While the exact cause of the glacial collapse is unclear, climate change is accelerating glacial melt worldwide and increasing the risk of such disasters. Nepal, a largely rural nation of 30 million people that has contributed little to the greenhouse gas emissions driving global warming, has said reconstruction could cost billions of dollars. - APP

PM directs survey of properties for Apna Ghar Scheme

The meeting was informed that the volume of bank lending to the agriculture sector stood at Rs1.268tr in August 2026, while a target of Rs2tr by June 2028 has been set under Access to Finance Plan 2026-2028

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the provincial chief secretaries to conduct a comprehensive survey of properties that could be made available for providing loans to people seeking to build homes under the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar Scheme. Chairing a review meeting on the access to finance plan 2026-28, the prime minister said that providing affordable housing to low-income and middle-class segments was the government's top priority. During the meeting, the prime minister was informed that 147,504 applications had so far been received under the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar Scheme, of which 53,127 applications have been approved. The total value of approved applications under the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar Scheme stands at Rs313.42bn, while loans amounting to Rs45.43bn have been disbursed to 8,739 applicants. A system is being developed to identify plots across the country that meet mortgage requirements, with Islamabad serving as the pilot city, the meeting was informed. It was informed in the meeting that an effective mechanism will be devised to involve renowned housing developers in the process to further streamline the

Apna Ghar Scheme. The prime minister stressed that banks and financial institutions should play their role in extending loans to farmers, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the housing sector. "The government would encourage banks that play an active role in providing loans," he said, adding that the agriculture sector was the backbone of the country's economy, and working for its promotion is a national responsibility. The prime minister directed that easy and uninterrupted access to financial resources be ensured for farmers. The meeting was informed that the volume of bank lending to the agriculture sector stood at Rs1.268tr in August 2026, while a target of Rs2tr by June 2028 has been set under the Access to Finance Plan 2026-2028. Under the Zarkhez-e app, 35,838 applications have been received for easy access to loans. Of these, Rs7.35 billion has been approved, while loans amounting to Rs1.96bn have been disbursed. The volume of bank lending to the SME sector stood at Rs1.067 trillion as of August 2026, while a target of Rs2 trillion by June 2028 has been set under the Access to Finance Plan 2026-2028, the meeting was informed. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) provided financial literacy training to 1,096 SMEs during the last three months, the meeting was informed.

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