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President says ties with Maldives from cordial to excellent

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Japan opens school for girls in Tarnol

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FPCCI, Romania envoy discuss cooperation

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\$200m target set

Pak, Maldives pledge to boost bilateral trade

PM Shehbaz says efforts to boost trade will be accelerated, Pakistan to provide technical assistance to Maldives in IT sector

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Maldives have agreed to boost their bilateral trade volume from \$13 million to \$200 million over the next two years, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday, as the two countries signed a series of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to strengthen cooperation across multiple sectors. The agreements were signed during the three-day state visit of Maldivian President Dr Mohamed Muizzu, the first by a president of the island nation to Pakistan in 11 years. The visit coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

PICTURE ON PAGE 08

PM Shehbaz and President Muizzu witnessed the signing ceremony as representatives of the two sides exchanged the documents. PM Shehbaz, while addressing a joint presser with the visiting dignitary on the occasion, said efforts to increase bilateral trade would be accelerated, adding that Pakistan would provide technical assistance to the Maldives in the information technology sector. The agreements cover defence, information technology, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, health, education, social protection, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, maritime security and several other areas of bilateral cooperation. An MoU was signed to strengthen cooperation in

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President Zardari meets Maldives President

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasised the need to translate the strong political goodwill between Pakistan and Maldives into greater trade, investment, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting Maldives in education, health-care, human resource development, social protection and sustainable development.

He was talking to the President of the Republic of Maldives, Dr Mohamed Muizzu, during a meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad, today. The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in areas of mutual interest. Welcoming President Muizzu, President Zardari reaffirmed the importance Pakistan attaches to its longstanding fraternal relations with Maldives, rooted in shared faith, mutual trust, respect for sovereignty and enduring goodwill. He noted that the State Visit, coinciding with sixty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, has provided

Continued on Page 06

State counsel for Imaan, Hadi case

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court on Wednesday appointed a state counsel to cross-examine prosecution witnesses from the defence side in a security breach case against lawyers Imaan Zainab, Hazir-Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha.

Advocate Taimur Janjua has been directed to be present at the next hearing as Imaan and Hadi's lawyers failed to cross-examine the witnesses during Wednesday's proceedings in the case pertaining to the alleged disruption of a security route of an international cricket team and incitement to public unrest in 2024.

Imaan and her husband, Hadi, have been accused of removing barriers from the route in the case, and the couple was indicted on Oct 7. They are facing a jail trial in the case, with ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra presiding over the proceedings at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail. Advocate Aimal Khan Mandokhail appeared before the judge on behalf of Imaan and Hadi on Wednesday and requested an adjournment. However, the court declined the request, observing that the prosecution witnesses were present at the

Continued on Page 06

Houthi deny launching drones towards Madina

NEWS DESK

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi is said that they have not launched any drones towards the Saudi holy city of Madina on Wednesday and have not conducted any military operations towards Saudi Arabia either, denying earlier comments from the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The comments by the group's military spokesperson Yahya Saree follow the coalition's claim that it had intercepted drones over Madina and the Eastern region. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says the United States has agreed to the conditions outlined in Iran's seven-day initiative but has requested the addition of several clauses, IRNA reported.

Araghchi made the remarks in an interview with Iraq's Al Ekhbariya television network, confirming that diplomatic contacts between the two sides remain ongoing. "We have previously presented an initiative to the American side under the title of the seven-day plan, in which we explicitly stated our conditions.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan, Turkiye, Qatar, and Indonesia sign defence accord

"Badr" accord seeks to bolster military production, capabilities and technical cooperation

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Pakistan, Turkiye, Qatar, and Indonesia signed an agreement on Wednesday to boost defence cooperation and strengthen defensive capabilities, the Turkish Defence Ministry said. In a statement, the ministry said the countries signed the "Badr Memorandum of Understanding" in Doha as a sign of their desire to further deepen cooperation and develop partnerships.

"The agreement holds substantial economic importance," it said, adding the accord sought to foster cooperation in military production, boost military capabilities, and help collaboration in technical military training, research and development. "By leveraging the unique military production capabilities of each country, the initiative will facilitate cooperation and integration, enhance defence industrial capacities, and enable the fulfilment of the needs of allied and friendly nations," it added. Turkiye, which has NATO's second-largest army and a robust defence industry, has been helping Gulf nations,

Continued on Page 06

Türkiye plans to send military personnel to Saudi Arabia

DNA

ANKARA: Turkiye will submit to parliament a mandate allowing for military personnel to be deployed to Saudi Arabia under its joint defence pact with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, a lawmaker from the ruling AK Party told Reuters on Wednesday. The lawmaker, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the mandate would be sent to parliament once a bill ratifying the accord has been approved. Turkiye submitted the Makah Joint Defence Agreement — signed by the three countries in August — to parliament for ratification on Tuesday,

Continued on Page 06

In India, Rubio talks about US ties with Pakistan

US secretary of state claims oil and energy shipments through straits have reached 80% to 100% of pre-conflict levels

DNA

NEW DELHI: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has defended Washington's decades-long ties with Pakistan, citing the importance of the country's geographic position. Rubio made the remarks in an interview with an Indian media outlet during his three-day visit to India, his second official trip to the country this year. Responding to a question about his views on Pakistan as a senator and now as US secretary of state, Rubio said he was responsible for managing US foreign policy. "And that does require us to have relationships with countries, including those that we may have some disagreements with," he added. Rubio reiterated that Washington was against terrorism anywhere in the world and anybody who sponsors terrorism. He defended Washington's ties with Pakistan, saying the US needs to maintain a relationship with the nuclear-armed country. "It's a country that, from a geographic standpoint, we need to be able to interact with them, in much the same way as the government of India has to have and has a relationship and meets with leaders from Iran," he added.

Continued on Page 06

Baghdad closes border crossing with Iran under US pressure

NEWS DESK

BAGHDAD: Iraqi authorities on Wednesday closed a border crossing with Iran "until an unspecified date", an Iraqi source told AFP, with two other sources saying the US is pressuring Baghdad to close more crossings in order to tighten the screws on Tehran. A source at Iraq's border crossings authority told AFP Wednesday that the al-Sheeb crossing "has been closed since this morning until an unspecified date", without specifying the reason. The Iranian judiciary's Mizan Online website confirmed the closure, adding that it came "following a decision by the Iraqi prime minister's office". One of the sources said "the US Treasury Department raised this with (Prime Minister Ali) al-Zaidi when he was in

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NATIONAL DAY OF KOREA



ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Han Sungho Ambassador of Republic of Korea posing for a picture on occasion of the National Day and the Armed Forces Day of Korea. — DNA

Minister says

Pak reaffirms resolve to solidify ties with Korea

Ambassador Han Sungho welcomed guests and highlighted the friendly and growing ties between Pakistan and the Republic of Korea

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its longstanding partnership with the Republic of Korea, highlighting the growing scope of cooperation in trade, investment, technology, education, and human resource development. Addressing a reception hosted by Han Sungho, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Pakistan, on the occasion of Korea's Nation-

al Foundation Day, the minister extended warm felicitations to the Government and people of Korea and praised the country's remarkable transformation into a global economic and technological powerhouse. The minister noted that Pakistan attaches great significance to its relations with the Republic of Korea and greatly values Korea's experience in industrial development, innovation, infrastructure, skills development, and human resource development. He said Pakistan sees considerable potential for

Continued on Page 06

PM Sharif congratulates Romanian Prime Minister

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif noted that Pakistan and Romania enjoy excellent bilateral relations founded on mutual respect, friendship, and cooperation

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, has extended his heartfelt congratulations to H.E. Mr. Luca Niculescu on assuming office as the Prime Minister of Romania. "I extend my most sincere felicitations to H.E. Mr. Luca Niculescu on his assumption of the office

of the Prime Minister of Romania. I also express my best wishes for his success in the new office," the Prime Minister said. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif noted that Pakistan and Romania enjoy excellent bilateral relations founded on mutual respect, friendship, and cooperation. He expressed confidence that the longstanding partnership between

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Moscow arrests German 'mercenary'

MOSCOW: Russia's FSB security services have arrested a German national accused of being a "mercenary" for Ukraine, Russian media reported Wednesday. "The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation has detained a German citizen who is a serving member of the Armed Forces of Ukraine," said a statement cited by state news agencies. According to the FSB, the man, who had previously fought in Afghanistan and Syria, arrived in Ukraine last November and signed a three-year contract with the Ukrainian army, but had deserted after not receiving promised wages. Born in 1976 and described as a "sniper," the German national had reportedly also served in Ukraine between 2016 and 2018. — APP

Israel election may change its leader

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Israel's election next week may change its leader, but not its strategy: Iran will remain its chief adversary, military force will continue to be its preferred tool and Palestinian statehood a distant prospect, regional policymakers and analysts say. That is because the strategic assumptions underpinning Israeli policy were hardened by the October 7, 2023, attacks on southern Israeli communities by Palestinian militant group Hamas and by the wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran. If anything, Israel could toughen its security policy, the analysts said, as victory for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the backing of far-right coalition partners could embolden him to step up the war with Iran, tighten Israel's grip on the occupied West Bank and push diplomacy further to the margins.

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UK, Pak vow to boost coop on eco reforms

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Kingdom here on Wednesday reaffirmed their commitment to deepen bilateral ties, focusing on economic reforms and key development priorities to drive sustainable growth.

According to press release issued by Economic Affairs Ministry, British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott called on Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema to discuss areas of mutual interest and cooperation between the two countries.

The High Commissioner congratulated the Minister on his appointment as Chair of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for 2027.

On the occasion, the minister highlighted the Prime Minister's priorities for strengthening agriculture, information technology and other key sectors. He said the government was pursuing sector-oriented reforms and policies to support economic growth.

Ahad Cheema said the government was providing full support to development partners and multilateral investments, while working to further facilitate cooperation and investment.—APP

Pakistan building digital infrastructure: Shaza

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said Pakistan is building digital public infrastructure to ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) services are scalable, inclusive and trusted.

Addressing a panel discussion titled "Enabling Digital Government Service Delivery through DPI and AI" at the Global AI & Digital Summit 2026 in Seoul, South Korea, organised under the auspices of the World Bank, she thanked the World Bank and shared a key lesson from Pakistan's experience, saying that AI was the final layer, not the first, and that an AI model was only as good, fair and trustworthy as the infrastructure supporting it.

"When governments skip the foundations, they do not get AI in public services; they get pilots that never scale and systems that citizens do not trust," she said.

The minister said the real question was not which AI system to deploy, but what needed to be in place before AI could safely serve every citizen. Highlighting Pakistan's experience, she outlined four key foundations for effective AI-based public service delivery. The first is digital identity, which enables an AI service to identify the person it is serving while ensuring that citizens retain control over who can access their data. She said the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) already provided verified identities to more than 100 million Pakistanis. The system was now being extended into a digital identity framework capable of authenticating citizens online and recording and enforcing their consent.—APP

Japan-funded girls' primary school inaugurated in Tarnol

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, inaugurated the school under the project for the construction of the Tine Girls Model Primary School in Tarnol, District Islamabad. The project was implemented by Community Services Programme (CSP), a non-governmental organization dedicated to uplifting vulnerable and marginalized communities across Pakistan



through education, healthcare, clean water, and women's empowerment. The Government of Japan, through its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program, provided financial assistance of 44,025 USD to this project. The inauguration ceremony was attended by officials of the Embassy of Japan, representatives of CSP, teachers, students, parents, and community members. CSP has successfully completed the construction of

the school, which includes eight classrooms and other essential school facilities such as a principal's office, washrooms, a leveled playground and 250 student chairs. CSP contributed additional resources to install a solar power system, an underground water storage tank with an electric water cooler, and an interactive Smart Board for digital learning. This project responds to the urgent need for access to quality education for girls in Tarnol, where young girls face barriers to education. The newly constructed school provides new opportunities for learning, and a safe, comfortable and modern learning environment for 240 enrolled students, with the capacity to accommodate up to 250 young learners. In his address at the ceremony, Ambassador Akamatsu congratulated CSP on the successful completion of the project despite challenging weather conditions. He stressed that education is not only a fundamental human right and a core pillar of human security, but also a foundation for a better and more prosperous society, and that girls' education in particular is vital for Pakistan's future. This is the reason why education remains a key priority of Japan's development cooperation in Pakistan.

NHMP organizes White Cane safety awareness session

The session brought together road safety professionals, mobility trainers, and members of the visually impaired community to highlight the importance of creating a safer and more accessible road environment for all citizens

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Road Safety Awareness Unit (RSAU) of the National Highways & Motorway Police (NHMP) coordinated a special White Cane Safety Awareness Session in collaboration with the National Mobility & Independence Training Centre (NMITC) at the DLA Hamid Shakeel Auditorium in Islamabad.

Organized in connection with White Cane Safety Day, the event aimed to promote inclusive road safety practices, safe pedestrian mobility, and greater awareness among motorists regarding the rights and needs of visually impaired individuals.

The session brought together road safety professionals, mobility trainers, and members of the visually impaired community to highlight the importance of creating a safer and more accessible road environment for all citizens. Participants were sensitized to the challenges faced by visually impaired pedestrians and the critical role that drivers and road users play in ensuring their safety.

Speakers emphasized that the white cane is a symbol of independence and mobility for visually impaired persons and called for increased public awareness and responsible road behavior to facilitate their safe movement. The event also underscored the need for greater cooperation among public institutions, civil society organizations, and the community to advance accessibility and inclusion.

The NHMP reaffirmed its commitment to promoting road safety education and supporting initiatives that foster an inclusive and



Governor orders immediate halt to supply of harmful wheat to flour mills

PESHAWAR :Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday directed the authorities to immediately stop supply of harmful and substandard wheat to flour mills, stressing the need to ensure protection of wheat stocks and quality of food items.

He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting regarding the supply of substandard wheat from Azakhel wheat godown to flour mills, where the Governor Inspection Team presented its inquiry report to him. Chairman Governor Inspection Team Mukhtar Ahmad briefed the Governor that the team inspected the 150-kanal Azakhel wheat godown, where six warehouses in two blocks

were affected by floodwater. He said samples of flood-affected wheat were sent to PCSIR laboratory, which declared the damaged wheat harmful to human health and unfit for human consumption. According to the inquiry report, necessary safety measures were not taken to protect the wheat godown from floodwater. Despite flood alerts issued by PDMA, precautionary measures were not adopted, while the Food Department also failed to constitute an assessment committee for technical evaluation of the affected wheat after the floods. The report recommended action against officials responsible for negligence. During the meeting, Governor Kundi

questioned why a protective wall had not been constructed around the wheat godown despite repeated floods. He was informed that rain and floodwater entered the godown through holes in the protective wall, damaging the wheat.

The Governor was further informed that there was no entry of flood-affected wheat in the Food Department's stock record and no scientific assessment of the damaged wheat had been conducted.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi directed that responsibility should be fixed in the matter and emphasized effective measures for protection of wheat reserves and ensuring food quality.—DNA

Rear Admiral Khyber Zaman takes over as Commander Pakistan fleet

KARACHI: Rear Admiral Khyber Zaman assumed the command as Commander Pakistan Fleet during Change of Command ceremony held at Fleet Headquarters, Karachi.

Rear Admiral Khyber Zaman is a graduate of Air War College (Karachi), National Defence University (Islamabad) and Naval Postgraduate College (USA). The Admiral has an illustrious naval career comprising vast experience of various Command and Staff appointments. His key appointments include Commander Field and Operational Sea Training (COMFOST), Naval Secretary and Additional Secretary-III at Ministry of Defence. In recognition of his meritorious services, the Admiral was awarded Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military).—DNA



FGEHA, FDHL partner for housing project on 2,000 kanals

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), through its Joint Venture Projects (JVP) Wing, held a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony on Wednesday at its headquarters in Islamabad, for the development of a housing scheme in a prime location of Rawalpindi District.

The MoU marks an important step towards expanding quality residential facilities for federal government employees and the general public through collaboration with the private sector. Under the agreement, FGEHA and Future Development Holdings (Private) Limited (FDHL) will collaborate to develop a modern housing scheme on approximately 2,000 kanals of land situated within the limits of Capital Smart City, Tehsil and District Rawalpindi.

The project will be developed under the Land Sharing Model, aimed at utilizing available resources effectively and facilitating the development of modern residential facilities. The ceremony was attended by Executive Director FDHL, Brigadier (Retd.) Muhammad Nadeem Aslam, and senior officials of FGEHA. The MoU was signed on behalf of FGEHA by Chief Engineer Syed Muhammad Hassan and on behalf of FDHL by Executive Director Brigadier (Retd.) Muhammad Nadeem Aslam.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General FGEHA, Capt. (Retd.) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, stated that Capital Smart City is a modern and well-planned residential development designed to provide residents with a high standard of living and a comprehensive range of essential and contemporary facilities. He highlighted that the project offers a range of amenities, including quality educational institutions, community centers, mosques, parks, sports facilities, commercial areas, healthcare services and other essential civic amenities. Its wide roads, landscaped green belts, organized infrastructure and modern urban facilities contribute to a well-planned residential environment. He observed that Capital Smart City represents more than a housing scheme, offering an integrated urban setting designed to provide families with comfort, convenience, recreation and improved living standards.

The Director General further stated that the proposed housing project represents a significant step towards realizing the vision of providing affordable and quality housing to government employees. He emphasized that the agreement reflects the Federal Government's commitment to advancing housing initiatives through public-private partnerships and effective utilization of available resources. According to the FGEHA spokesperson, the project is expected to facilitate the provision of secure, reliable and modern residential facilities for federal government employees in Rawalpindi District and its adjoining areas.—APP

Kamal for addressing trade challenges

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday chaired a consultative meeting with leading exporters, industrialists and representatives of the business community to address exporters' concerns, improving industrial competitiveness and accelerating Pakistan's export growth. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry joined virtually, while Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industries Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, secretaries of concerned ministries and senior officials from relevant departments attended the meeting.

Business representatives participated both virtually and in person, said a news release. Jam Kamal emphasised the need to diversify Pakistan's export basket, promote value-added products, explore new international markets and remove structural barriers affecting exporters. He acknowledged challenges arising from rising energy prices,

transportation and freight costs, taxation and changing global trade conditions. The minister said the government was engaging directly with industry stakeholders to identify practical solutions through coordinated efforts involving relevant ministries and regulatory authorities. Bilal Azhar actively facilitated the discussions, inviting representatives from different export sectors to present their concerns and encouraging officials to respond to specific issues. He stressed the importance of documenting exporters' problems, obtaining departmental responses and developing actionable recommendations rather than limiting the exercise to general discussions.

During the meeting, business representatives appreciated the EXIM Bank scheme for exporters, describing it as a positive initiative to improve access to export financing and support businesses seeking to expand internationally. Industry representatives highlighted concerns regarding energy costs, the captive power gas levy,

provincial infrastructure levies and rising production expenses. Petroleum Division officials provided clarifications on the gas levy mechanism.

Exporters also discussed international shipping delays, port facilitation, tax refunds and banking regulations, proposing greater flexibility in payment settlement periods due to disruptions in global logistics. Participants recommended studying markets where Bangladesh and India enjoy preferential trade advantages and exploring improved bilateral trade arrangements to strengthen Pakistan's export competitiveness.

Representatives of the meat and livestock sector highlighted challenges relating to foot-and-mouth disease, international sanitary requirements, border restrictions and access to Gulf markets. Responding, Jam Kamal informed participants that Prime Minister was personally taking a keen interest in livestock development, including disease control, investment, improved breeding and value-added exports.—DNA

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Oct 01/Nigeria Armed Forces Day

Oct 02/Guinea National Day

Oct 03/Germany Unification Day

Oct 03/Republic of Korea National Foundation Day

Oct 05/Indonesia Armed Forces Day

Oct 06/Egypt Armed Forces Day

Oct 09/Uganda Independence Day

Oct 12/Spain National Day

Oct 23/Hungary National Day

October 24/United Nations United Nations Day

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Sigvald, CDA chief discuss matters of mutual interest

Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf highlighted Islamabad’s significance as Pakistan’s capital and emphasized CDA’s vision of transforming the city into a modern, beautiful, sports, tourist-friendly, and environmentally sustainable capital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sigvald Hauge, Ambassador of Norway to Pakistan, called on Mr. Sohail Ashraf, Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, at CDA Headquarters, Islamabad. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, avenues for cooperation, and opportunities to further strengthen bilateral engagement were discussed. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf highlighted Islamabad’s significance as Pakistan’s capital and emphasized CDA’s vision of transforming the city into a modern, beautiful, sports, tourist-friendly, and environmentally sustainable capital. He apprised the Ambassador on CDA’s ongoing initiatives aimed at urban development, infrastructure improvement, environmental protection, sector development, enhancement of sports and tourism facilities, and upgradation of the Diplomatic Enclave. He also underscored CDA’s commitment to developing Islamabad as a model capital, equipped with modern infrastructure, improved civic amenities, and a sustainable urban environment. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views on areas of mutual cooperation, particularly sustainable urban development, beautification, environmental conservation, green initiatives, and the promotion of sports and tourism. Ambassador Sigvald Hauge appreciated CDA’s excellent efforts towards the development, beautification, and modernization of Islamabad. He expressed interest in further strengthening engagement and exploring opportunities for cooperation in areas of shared interest. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to promoting mutual understanding, strengthening bilateral engagement, and exploring avenues for future collaboration.



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IGP reviews security, modern policing

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Captain (Retd) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry chaired a series of meetings to review security arrangements, traffic management, modern policing and public service delivery, while directing officers to improve coordination and ensure better facilities for citizens. An Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that the IGP chaired a meeting at the Central Police Office (CPO), where security arrangements, traffic management, administrative matters and coordination among different departments were discussed in detail. IGP Sohail directed the concerned officers to strengthen security measures, improve traffic monitoring and maintain close coordination among relevant departments to ensure public safety and smooth traffic flow. The IGP Sohail stressed that all concerned departments should work under a coordinated strategy to protect the lives and property of citizens and maintain law and order in the federal capital.

US Secretary of State’s statement on Pak welcomed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Vice President Senator Sherry Rehman has welcomed US Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s statement regarding Pakistan, saying that Pakistan-US relations are important for promoting mutual respect, shared interests, peace and stability in the region. In a statement, Sherry Rehman said the US Secretary of State’s remarks acknowledged Pakistan’s geographical significance and the importance of maintaining constructive relations between the two countries. She said Pakistan had demonstrated its diplomatic capabilities at the international level through its efforts to mediate in the Iran-US conflict. She said that the recognition of Pakistan as a mediator by all parties to the Iran-US conflict was clear evidence of the international community’s confidence in Pakistan’s diplomatic role. Sherry Rehman said Pakistan was a peace-loving country that had consistently preferred dialogue and diplomacy for resolving disputes. She reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue to play a positive diplomatic role in promoting lasting peace and stability in the region. Sherry Rehman emphasized that Pakistan remained committed to peace, while safeguarding the country’s security, sovereignty and the protection of its people remained the highest priority.

YES expo opens at Bahria University

ISLAMABAD. The three-day event (20-22 Oct) brings together aspiring entrepreneurs, industry leaders and academic experts to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration between academia and industry. The opening ceremony of the Expo was inaugurated by Member of Parliament at National Assembly of Pakistan and Focal Person to the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme, Ms. Syeda Amna Batool, who was welcomed by the Rector Bahria University, Vice Admiral Engr. Abid Hameed HI(M) (Retd). The event was also attended by the HEC members including the Convener of HEC Taskforce for Business Incubation Centers, Dr. Javaid Laghari along with vice chancellors and rectors of distinguished educational institutions across Pakistan. Held under the themes of leadership, innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainability, YES 2026 provides a platform for emerging entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas, engage with industry professionals and explore opportunities for business development. The Summit and Expo will continue at Bahria University’s E-8 Campus, Islamabad, with further keynote addresses and interactive sessions scheduled for 22 October. The programme will conclude with a closing ceremony, bringing the three-day engagement to a close. Through initiatives such as YES 2026, Bahria University continues to provide opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop their ideas, engage with industry and contribute to a culture of innovation and enterprise.

tracting more than 290 startup ideas. The competition provided a platform for younginnovators to pitch their solutions and compete for a prize pool of PKR 1 million. The event also features workshops on key areas of entrepreneurship and business development. The Summit and Expo will continue at Bahria University’s E-8 Campus, Islamabad, with further keynote addresses and interactive sessions scheduled for 22 October. The programme will conclude with a closing ceremony, bringing the three-day engagement to a close. Through initiatives such as YES 2026, Bahria University continues to provide opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop their ideas, engage with industry and contribute to a culture of innovation and enterprise.

tracting more than 290 startup ideas. The competition provided a platform for younginnovators to pitch their solutions and compete for a prize pool of PKR 1 million. The event also features workshops on key areas of entrepreneurship and business development. The Summit and Expo will continue at Bahria University’s E-8 Campus, Islamabad, with further keynote addresses and interactive sessions scheduled for 22 October. The programme will conclude with a closing ceremony, bringing the three-day engagement to a close. Through initiatives such as YES 2026, Bahria University continues to provide opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop their ideas, engage with industry and contribute to a culture of innovation and enterprise.

Ban on all shisha cafes until rules framed

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday imposed an interim ban on all shisha cafes operating within the federal capital until relevant rules and regulations are finalized and enforced. In its detailed written judgment, Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar directed law officers to ensure that the process of framing rules for shisha cafes was completed without unnecessary delay. The court ruled that the issuance of no-objection certificates (NOCs) to shisha cafes could not legalize an activity prohibited under the law in the absence of the requisite regulatory framework. It clarified that the ban would also apply to cafes holding previously issued NOCs, which would be deemed withdrawn. The court directed the chief commissioner, deputy commissioner and inspector general of police to ensure implementation of its order and ordered that copies of the judgment be provided to all relevant authorities. The judgment observed that no activity harmful to public health should be permitted without an appropriate regulatory framework. It noted that despite an Islamabad High Court order issued in 2022, the relevant authorities had failed to establish a comprehensive regulatory mechanism for shisha cafes. The court further observed that the federal government had not finalized the proposed Shisha Rules 2023 despite the passage of considerable time. The draft rules had repeatedly been returned to the concerned ministry for revision by the Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases. The court said the proceedings had been initiated after repeated judicial extensions and assurances failed to produce a final regulatory framework. Highlighting the health risks associated with shisha smoking, the judgment noted that both flavoured and plain shisha exposed users to nicotine, carbon monoxide and cancer-causing toxic substances. It added that tobacco smoke also posed serious health risks to children and other vulnerable people in the vicinity. Referring to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, the court observed that restrictions on waterpipe smoking were necessary in indoor public places and shopping malls. It noted that water filtration did not eliminate the toxic substances in shisha smoke and that its health risks were scientifically established. The judgment further stated that the absence of appropriate regulations could not be treated as a license to continue shisha smoking. It directed that the provision of shisha at all commercial establishments remain prohibited until the relevant rules came into force, warning that violations would invite immediate and strict legal action. During the proceedings, the petitioner argued that shisha cafes were violating the law under the cover of NOCs issued by the district administration and that no effective inquiry or action had been taken despite complaints. Counsel for cafes.—DNA

Pak, UNHCR discuss protection of Afghan refugees

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Wednesday met UNHCR Representative in Pakistan Noriko Takagi to discuss Afghan refugee issues and humanitarian concerns. The minister welcomed Takagi and congratulated her on taking up her new responsibilities as the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Pakistan. The meeting was attended by the secretary and additional secretary of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, the Chief Commissioner Afghan Refugees (CCAR), and UNHCR representatives. During the meeting, Amir Muqam reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to implementing its national laws and policies while taking genuine humanitarian concerns into account, said a press released issued here. He also appreciated UNHCR’s cooperation and support for Pakistan over the past four decades. Takagi appreciated Pakistan’s longstanding hospitality towards Afghan refugees and acknowledged the government’s policy framework. She also highlighted concerns about vulnerable individuals who could face serious risks if returned to their country of origin and called for their cases to be considered carefully. Responding to these concerns, the minister said cases involving credible threats to life and safety required careful attention. He stressed that such cases should be assessed by the relevant authorities in line with Pakistan’s laws, policies, established procedures and applicable international obligations.

Second meeting of PIMS reforms committee held

ISLAMABAD: A second meeting of the committee constituted by the Prime Minister to introduce reforms at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) was held to review measures aimed at improving the hospital’s administration, healthcare delivery and governance system. Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Secretary Health Momin Ali Agha and other senior officials attended the meeting. The committee reviewed ongoing initiatives and examined the legal.

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on AI in
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ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of the Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan Justice Aminuddin Khan has addressed an international roundtable conference on the role of artificial intelligence in the functioning of constitutional courts during his official visit to Azerbaijan. The visit is being undertaken at the special invitation of the Association of Constitutional Courts of the Turkic World (TÜRKAY), which granted observer status to Pakistan's Federal Constitutional Court in July 2026. The conference, held in Baku, brought together heads of constitutional courts, senior officials and judges from Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Cyprus. Registrar of the Federal Constitutional Court Muhammad Hafeez Ullah Khan also attended the event. Justice Aminuddin Khan delivered a detailed address on the conference theme, highlighting the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing the functioning of constitutional courts.

At the conclusion of the event, the chief justice presented commemorative shields and gifts representing Pakistani culture to the participants. He also invited Chairman of the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan Dr Farhad Abdullayev to visit Pakistan, an invitation he graciously accepted. Prior to the conference, Justice Aminuddin Khan visited the Victory Monument in Baku and the memorial of Azerbaijan's national leader, Heydar Aliyev, where he laid floral tributes. The visit, which will continue until October 24, is expected to strengthen judicial cooperation and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. —APP

D-8, COMSATS
sign MoU to
strengthen
coop in
technology

ISLAMABAD: The Developing Eight (D-8) Organization for Economic Cooperation and the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in science, technology, innovation and sustainable development.

The MoU was signed by D-8 Secretary-General Ambassador Sohail Mahmood and COMSATS Executive Director Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria during a virtual ceremony. The MoU establishes a framework for cooperation in six priority areas: agriculture and food security; digital transformation, cybersecurity and information technologies (ICTs); climate change and environmental sustainability; energy security; industry; and public health. Under the MoU, both organizations will explore opportunities for joint research and development, capacity-building programmes, exchanges of experts and scientists, technology transfer, knowledge-sharing, collaborative business development activities, and joint workshops and training initiatives. In his remarks on the occasion, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the growing importance of science, technology and innovation in promoting economic competitiveness, sustainable development and resilience among developing countries. He emphasized that the partnership being forged between the two Organizations would provide an important platform for translating scientific knowledge and technological expertise into practical solutions that address the development priorities of their respective Member States. The Secretary-General further highlighted the importance of adopting a result-oriented approach, focusing on institutional capacity-building, innovation and technology transfer. —APP

RCCI opens women's
business & lifestyle expo

Women are an integral part of society and the national economy; women entrepreneurs should enter assemblies through general elections, says Barrister Daniyal

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) inaugurated the two-day Women's Business & Lifestyle Expo 2026 at the Chamber House on October 21. Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry, formally inaugurated the exhibition on its opening day. The Expo features more than 40 stalls showcasing a diverse range of products and services offered by women entrepreneurs, including clothing, fashion, home décor, beauty products, jewellery, precious stones, boutique collections, herbal products, and handicrafts.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry said that women are an integral part of society and the national economy and play a vital role in the country's development. He highlighted the growing participation of women in leadership positions, noting that Punjab's Chief Minister and women holding key ministerial portfolios reflect their expanding role in governance. He expressed his desire to see more women entrepreneurs represented in the assemblies. He stated that he does not support reserved seats for women as the preferred approach, advocating instead for women to contest general elections and enter assemblies through direct public representation. He emphasized that Pakistani women are no less capable than anyone else and deserve opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. Barrister Dani-



yal Chaudhry said that the Women's Business & Lifestyle Expo provides women entrepreneurs with valuable opportunities to promote their products, develop business connections, and explore new markets. He congratulated RCCI and the organizing team on successfully arranging the event and assured the Chamber of his continued support and engagement in addressing the concerns of the business community. Speaking on the occasion, RCCI President Noshawan Khalil Khan said that creating new business opportunities for women entrepreneurs remains an important priority. He stated that the Expo provides women with a platform to introduce their products, connect directly with potential customers,

strengthen business networks, and expand their enterprises. He added that RCCI remains committed to promoting women's entrepreneurship, strengthening their role in economic activities, and facilitating greater access to business and market opportunities. Chairperson of the Women's Expo, Naila Tassadaq, said that the initiative aims to enhance the entrepreneurial capabilities of women, encourage innovation, and provide them with opportunities to showcase their products to a wider audience. She emphasized that such platforms help women entrepreneurs build networks, attract customers, and explore avenues for business growth.

Former RCCI President Sohail Altaf stated that economic improvement is possible through effective coordination and cooperation between the government and the business community. He stressed the importance of maintaining constructive engagement to address business challenges and promote economic activity. Member of the Provincial Assembly Imran Ilyas assured the businesswomen that he would play his role in the provincial assembly to highlight their concerns and advocate measures to address the challenges they face. He emphasized the need to create a supportive business environment that encourages women's economic participation and entrepreneurship.

Suspect in
Rs 35b fake
postal stamp
scam nabbed

ISLAMABAD: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) has arrested suspect Faheem Akram in Lahore for his alleged involvement in a Rs35 billion online fraud involving counterfeit American postage stamps, while Director General Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi re-

viewed the operation during a Zoom meeting with senior officers.

According to an NCCIA official, the suspect allegedly operated a website to sell counterfeit US postage stamps, causing estimated losses of more than \$126 million to the United States Postal Service. He said the suspect had been wanted by US authorities in connection with the alleged fraud. The case involved the online sale of more than five million counterfeit postage labels. DG NCCIA Rizvi chaired a Zoom meeting attended by Deputy Director Hassan Sajjad Naqvi, Deputy Director Lahore Waqas Saeed and Additional Director Lahore Atif Ameer to review the successful operation. During the meeting, Rizvi congratulated the officers involved in the arrest and appreciated their professional skills, hard work and effective strategy. He directed the officers to continue operations against cybercriminals with the same dedication, professionalism and commitment. The DG Rizvi said protecting citizens from financial fraud, online scams and other cybercrimes remained a key responsibility of NCCIA. —APP

Pakistan, Maldives for coop
on human trafficking

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry met with Maldives Interior Minister Ali Ihsan on Wednesday and both have discussed strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation in internal security, law enforcement and efforts to prevent illegal immigration, human trafficking and organised crime. During the meeting, the two sides held a detailed exchange of views on bilateral relations and ways to expand cooperation between Pakistan and the Maldives. They discussed promoting mutual assistance to prevent illegal immigration, human trafficking and organised crime, with a focus on closer coordination to address these shared challenges. Talal Chaudhry said Pakistan attached importance to security cooperation and the exchange of experiences with friendly countries to promote peace and stability in the region. He said Pakistan wanted to further strengthen bilateral cooperation with the Maldives in internal security and law enforcement. The minister of state said closer contacts and cooperation between the two countries were necessary to address common challenges, including illegal immigration and human trafficking. Talal Chaudhry also conveyed Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's assurance that Pakistan would extend all possible support to promote bilateral cooperation between the two countries. He said Pakistan was ready to facilitate efforts aimed at strengthening cooperation in the relevant areas. During the meeting, Maldives Interior Minister Ali Ihsan said both countries could effectively address the challenges they faced through mutual cooperation and joint efforts. The meeting focused on opportunities to strengthen coordination between the two countries in areas of shared interest, particularly internal security, law enforcement and the prevention of cross-border crimes. —Special Secretary Interior Muhammad Shoaib Akbar and other relevant officials were also present at the meeting. —DNA

Field Marshal meets
President of Maldives

The COAS & CDF highlighted the longstanding and cordial relations between Pakistan and the Maldives and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation and promoting regional peace, stability and security through constructive engagement

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces (COAS & CDF), called on H.E. Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, President of the Republic of Maldives, in Islamabad. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, the prevailing regional security environment and avenues for enhancing bilateral cooperation were discussed. Both sides

underscored the importance of strengthening defence cooperation, institutional linkages and professional exchanges. The COAS & CDF highlighted the longstanding and cordial relations between Pakistan and the Maldives and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation and promoting regional peace, stability and security through constructive engagement. H.E. Dr. Mohamed Muizzu commended the professionalism of Pakistan's Armed Forces and appreciated Pakistan's continued efforts to promote peace and stability in the region.

APHC voices
concern over
demographic
changes in
IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has expressed concern over India's policies in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), alleging that they are aimed at changing the region's demographic composition and undermining the identity of the Kashmiri people. In a statement issued here on Wednesday, the APHC said the landing of Indian troops in Srinagar in 1947 marked the beginning of India's military intervention in Jammu and Kashmir. It said the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, had intensified concerns over the region's political status, identity and demographic future. The statement alleged that the ideology and policies of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were raising serious concerns about demographic changes and the settlement of non-Kashmiris in the territory. The APHC maintained that unilateral measures could not override the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination under relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. —APP

Court
sentences
man to death
for molesting
stepdaughter

ISLAMABAD: The District and Sessions Court of Islamabad on Wednesday sentenced a man to death for raping his stepdaughter over a period of one year, while her mother was absent. The court also ordered him to pay a total of Rs 3.5 million in fines and compensation to the victim and the child born as a result of the crime. Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Sohail announced the verdict after finding the accused, Iftikhar, guilty of the offence.

According to the written judgment, the court awarded Iftikhar the death penalty for the crime. It also imposed a fine of Rs 500,000 on him.

The court ordered the convict to pay Rs 1 million to the victim as compensation. In addition, he was directed to pay Rs 2 million for the care and maintenance of the child. The court relied on forensic evidence presented during the trial. DNA testing conducted by the Punjab Forensic Science Agency provided evidence linking the accused to the crime. —APP

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Houthis cannot break Saudi Arabia

ALI SHIHABI

MISSILES can damage airports, disrupt oil facilities and frighten civilians. They cannot, by themselves, bring a resilient nation to its knees. Yet much of the commentary surrounding the latest Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia seems to confuse the Kingdom's vulnerability to asymmetric warfare with a fundamental weakness of the Saudi state. These are two very different things.

Saudi Arabia is facing a serious security challenge. The Houthi movement has demonstrated an alarming capacity to launch missiles and drones against civilian and economic infrastructure. Its attacks have caused tragic loss of life, exposed weaknesses in Saudi air defenses and disrupted commercial activity. None of this should be minimized. But neither should it obscure a larger reality: Saudi Arabia has weathered formidable challenges over the past century and emerged stronger from them all. In the 1960s, Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt, at the height of its regional power and popularity, sought to destroy the Saudi monarchy, deploying tens of thousands of troops to neighboring Yemen and promoting revolutionary movements across the Arabian Peninsula. The Kingdom survived. In 1979, it confronted both the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the revolutionary ambitions of the new Iranian regime. It survived those challenges too. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait brought an enormous Iraqi army to its doorstep in 1990. A decade later, Al-Qaeda launched a damaging terrorist campaign inside the Kingdom, targeting civilians, foreigners and the Saudi state itself. Saudi Arabia crushed that campaign.

These were not minor disturbances. Each represented a serious challenge to Saudi security or stability. Yet the Kingdom endured because it possessed something that is frequently underestimated by outside observers: institutional continuity, substantial resources, political cohesion and a remarkable capacity to adapt when circumstances demand it. The current confrontation with the Houthis must be understood in that historical context. Saudi Arabia has weathered formidable challenges over the past century and emerged stronger from them all. The Houthis are formidable practitioners of asymmetric warfare. They have developed sophisticated capabilities, supported by Iranian technology and expertise, that allow them to inflict disproportionate damage at relatively low cost. Defending an enormous country with widely dispersed infrastructure against mobile missile launchers and inexpensive drones is exceptionally difficult. The US itself struggled for years against insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan despite overwhelming military superiority. Israel, with the most comprehensive missile defense infrastructure on Earth and a tiny geographic size compared to the Kingdom, still needed extensive help from the US to defend against Iranian missile attacks and yet some still got through, causing considerable damage. Saudi Arabia's armed forces are adapting conventional military capabilities to these unconventional threats. The Kingdom has demonstrated an ability to

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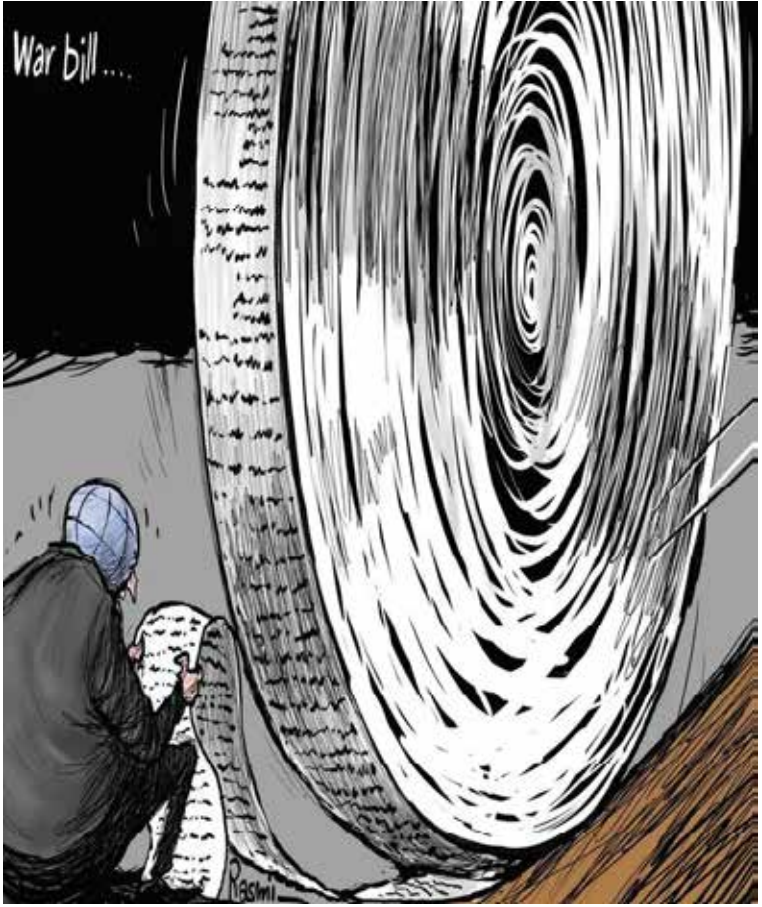
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achieve world-class performance in managing Saudi Aramco, despite the many disruptions to its production and distribution, and organizing the enormous logistical undertaking of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Bringing similar standards of operational excellence and innovation to its armed forces are an urgent priority. But operational limitations are not evidence of national fragility. Nor does the ability to penetrate an air defense system demonstrate the capacity to defeat the country it protects. The ability to penetrate an air defense system does not demonstrate the capacity to defeat the country it protects

Saudi Arabia also possesses enormous economic advantages that are too easily overlooked. It remains one of the world's largest energy producers, with immense financial resources and strong and well-established global commercial relationships. Its oil infrastructure includes pipelines and export facilities designed to provide alternatives when traditional routes are threatened. The International Monetary Fund acknowledged the resilience of the Saudi economy earlier this year, even while recognizing the damaging effects of the regional war. Vision 2030 will inevitably face delays and adjustments as security conditions change. Tourism and foreign investment are particularly sensitive to instability. But Saudi Arabia's economic transformation is not a fragile experiment that collapses when a project is postponed or an investor becomes cautious. Its foundations include a growing non-oil economy, an expanding private sector, a better-educated population and the rapid incorporation of women into the workforce. These fundamental structural changes will not simply disappear because of a military crisis. Nor should the Kingdom's search for international military cooperation be misread. Saudi Arabia has spent decades cultivating an extensive network of partnerships, beginning with the US but extending across Europe, Asia and the wider Muslim world. Seeking assistance from allies, particularly in air defense across this vast country with its thousands of targets, is precisely what alliances are for. The world's most powerful countries routinely rely on coalitions when confronting difficult security threats.

The Houthis, by contrast, possess a much narrower economic base and far fewer international relationships. They can inflict enormous pain but sustaining a modern economy, providing opportunities for millions of people and achieving long-term prosperity present challenges that missiles cannot solve. Observers note their capacity to absorb pain and willingness to allow their population to suffer, but even that cannot be limitless. Ultimately, they need energy and resources to feed and care for tens of millions of people, plus their military machine, and that capacity is now under considerable strain.

There is also a tendency to frame the conflict as a choice between the complete military destruction of the Houthis and an unacceptable Saudi defeat. This is a false choice. Saudi Arabia does not need to conquer every mountain in northern Yemen or occupy Sanaa to protect its essential interests. Its overriding objective will be to ensure that Yemen cannot remain a permanent platform for attacks on Saudi territory and regional commerce. That requires military pressure, improved defenses and a willingness to explore political arrangements when the conditions make them credible. The Kingdom has the resources, alliances and institutional endurance to pursue this objective over time. Its opponents should not mistake a preference for peace and economic development for an inability to sustain a prolonged confrontation.

America's Households Work; Corporate America Collects (Part-II)

Qamar Bashir



My experience in Pakistan was different. Many routine medical consultations, medicines and vehicle repairs could be paid from ordinary savings. Lower wages and operating costs help explain that difference; it cannot all be attributed to corporate conduct. Still, the practical consequence matters: an affordable repair lets a household solve a problem directly. An unaffordable repair can turn the same problem into a financing...

FOR households, however, both principal and interest still have to be found each month. Principal repayment may build ownership, but it cannot simultaneously buy groceries or meet an emergency. The family lives through cash flow, not accounting classifications. Then comes the subscription economy. EMARKETER forecast \$46.4 billion in U.S. paid retail membership fees for 2025. Shopping clubs sell access to savings; software sells continued access to tools; streaming platforms sell entertainment; newspapers and magazines sell information; security businesses sell monitoring and reassurance. Our research identified approximately \$56.66 billion in separately reported worldwide subscription revenue across just seven companies for their annual periods labelled 2025: Adobe, Disney's entertainment streaming business, SiriusXM, Dropbox, Peloton, The New York Times' digital products and Duolingo. Spotify separately reported 15.35 billion in Premium revenue. Netflix reported \$45.18 billion in worldwide revenue, predominantly from memberships but also including advertising and other sources. Amazon's \$49.62 billion subscription-services category combined Prime and other digital subscriptions. Newspapers beyond the Times, magazines, tabloids, other apps and private platforms add further charges. OnlyFans illustrates another variation: approximately \$7.2 billion in worldwide customer payments in fiscal 2024 generated about \$1.41 billion in platform revenue, with payments encompassing more than subscription fees. These figures cannot honestly be added into a single measure of American household extraction. They cover different countries, reporting periods and revenue definitions, and some overlap. Their significance lies in the breadth of the business model: an increasing range of activities carries a continuing payment obligation. The consequences of this structure became personal when my family moved from Pakistan to Michigan. In Pakistan, I could educate my children, meet household expenses, pay my dues and still save for the future. In the United States, several members of my family work, savings accumulated over a lifetime continue to supplement our earnings, and the month still ends with little room to breathe. The American dollar is stronger. Our household's financial security feels weaker. Since moving to the United States in 2025, I have experienced how a higher-earning economy can leave a work-

ing household with less financial breathing room. After a career in public service, my income in Pakistan provided purchasing power that its dollar equivalent—roughly \$1,500 to \$1,800 a month by my recollection—fails to convey. I could meet an education bill of approximately Rs100,000 for my two children, buy groceries, obtain medical care and maintain a reserve for unforeseen expenses. Over the years, I also built assets intended to protect my wife, my children and myself. Today, my wife works two jobs. I work, and our 18-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son also work. Yet the combined effort of our household, supplemented by savings brought from Pakistan, has not produced the financial comfort we expected. Groceries, by my estimate, account for only about 10 to 15 percent of our spending. Our son attends public school, while our daughter's education is being financed through a loan. That loan postpones a burden; it does not make education free. The remaining income is absorbed by housing, utilities, transportation, insurance, debt payments, memberships and other recurring charges. We are working to keep the account current, while the future waits. My experience cannot represent every Pakistani or American household. My professional standing and accumulated assets mattered in Pakistan; migration created new costs in America. Pakistan's lower-paid workers face severe hardship, and affordable care is neither universally available nor consistently adequate. But those differences do not invalidate the question our experience raises: why does a family require so many earners merely to maintain an ordinary life in a wealthy country? My experience in Pakistan was different. Many routine medical consultations, medicines and vehicle repairs could be paid from ordinary savings. Lower wages and operating costs help explain that difference; it cannot all be attributed to corporate conduct. Still, the practical consequence matters: an affordable repair lets a household solve a problem directly. An unaffordable repair can turn the same problem into a financing agreement, a protection contract or another claim on future income. An optional streaming service is not equivalent to necessary medical treatment. Cancelling subscriptions can help a budget. But cancelling entertainment cannot repair an unaffordable housing market, make a car-dependent commute disappear or bring hospital prices within reach. Advice to economize becomes inadequate when it

treats small discretionary charges as the main explanation for structural costs. Donald Trump has recognized the political force of that pressure. In January 2026, his administration proposed a healthcare framework addressing drug prices, insurance accountability, middlemen and price transparency. Those proposals acknowledge that Americans face serious affordability problems. Announcing them, however, is different from delivering household relief. The test of Trump's economic leadership must be the money and security left with families after essential bills are paid. Corporate growth and rising asset values cannot substitute for that test. If several members of a household must work while long-accumulated savings are consumed simply to remain current, declarations of prosperity do not describe that household's reality. Discipline must begin where costs are largest: healthcare pricing, housing supply and financing, transportation, insurance and expensive consumer debt. Competition rules should confront abusive market power. Medical prices should be understandable before treatment where feasible. Insurance should provide clear coverage and fair claims handling. Repair markets should offer affordable alternatives. Subscription cancellation should be as straightforward as enrolment. Public transport should make employment possible without multiplying vehicle costs. These reforms would preserve useful services while challenging prices and practices that leave families dependent and financially exposed. The objective should be a household capable of saving, choosing and planning. I did not bring a lifetime of savings to America merely to watch it disappear between payment deadlines. I came with the hope that work would improve our security and give our children a stronger future. A prosperous country should allow that hope to survive the monthly bills. When parents work, teenagers work and savings still shrink, the measure of success must extend beyond the balance sheets of the companies collecting the payments. The American promise must be judged by what remains in the household—and what that household can still hope to become.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
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What will determine the outcome of Israel's election?

Yossi Mekelberg

Secular, liberal and progressive Israelis feel under attack and increasingly defensive of the institutions and values they hold dear. In Israel's current political discourse, foreign affairs is understood primarily through the narrow lens of security. Security is, of course, a fundamental public good in any society, whether it means maintaining law and order at home or defending the country against external threats. In Israel, however, particularly among Jewish Israelis, the strong association between security concerns and support for the political right is largely framed in terms of military power: the ability to defend the country against, or inflict damage on, states...

AT HEAD of one of the most anticipated general elections in Israel's history, it has become almost impossible to decipher which issues could sway voters to switch their allegiance from one party to another. Even more difficult to predict is whether voters will move from supporting the governing coalition to backing the opposition bloc or vice versa when they head to the polls on Oct. 27. On the face of it, it is incomprehensible that the parties currently comprising the government, which, from the outset of its tenure, embarked on undermining the country's democratic system and was in power on Oct. 7, 2023, one of the darkest days for the Jewish people since the end of the Second World War, should still be serious contenders to retain power. But welcome to Israeli politics: what you see is not necessarily what you get. What makes the picture even more murky is that the correlation between voters' political positions on particular issues and their eventual voting choices does not necessarily follow the patterns one might expect. For decades, a basic assumption among election analysts has been that both parties and voters behave rationally. In this context, rationality means voting in accordance with what they perceive to be their best interests or, in other words, seeking to maximize their benefits. With the rise of populism, however, it has increasingly been argued that populist politics reflects a form of voter irrationality, appealing more to our emotions than to our reason. The more voters identify themselves as right-wing, the more likely they are to regard foreign affairs as the decisive issue. In a country as diverse and polarized as Israel, even in the best of times but particularly after a profound national trauma that has activated deep-seated fears and distrust, distinguishing between rational and irrational motivations and using that distinction to predict voting behavior is more complex than ever. To bring some order to our understanding of what primarily motivates Israeli voters, the Viterbi Family Centre for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute recently conducted a survey. Unsurprisingly, it found that the national mood had deteriorated, particularly regarding the future of democratic governance, national security, the economy and social cohesion. Mood is an abstract but potentially powerful political force. Its effect on voting behavior depends partly on whom voters hold responsible for their growing pessimism. That responsibility is not necessarily attributed to those in power. Pessimism can also affect electoral turnout, as a lack of optimism may lead some people to stay at home rather than vote. In a closely fought elec-

tion, participation is crucial and could make a significant difference to the composition of the next government. The survey makes one thing clear: in a country where security or, more accurately, insecurity, reigns supreme, foreign affairs is the most important factor influencing voting choices among Jewish Israelis. The more voters identify themselves as right-wing, the more likely they are to regard foreign affairs as the decisive issue. For Palestinian citizens of Israel, by contrast, personal security takes precedence. Homicide rates in their communities have reached unprecedented and unacceptable levels, while the police have so far done very little to address the problem. Secular, liberal and progressive Israelis feel under attack and increasingly defensive of the institutions and values they hold dear. In Israel's current political discourse, foreign affairs is understood primarily through the narrow lens of security. Security is, of course, a fundamental public good in any society, whether it means maintaining law and order at home or defending the country against external threats. In Israel, however, particularly among Jewish Israelis, the strong association between security concerns and support for the political right is largely framed in terms of military power: the ability to defend the country against, or inflict damage on, states and organizations perceived as hostile, wherever and whenever they pose a threat. Military strength is thus presented as the principal foreign policy tool for ensuring national survival. Yet Israel's most secure borders are arguably those it shares with Egypt and Jordan, both of which signed peace agreements with Israel decades ago. Nevertheless, voters appear remarkably resistant to the argument that peace agreements and diplomatic relations can be among the most effective guarantors of national security. For those who identify themselves as left-wing, the leading priority is the position of political parties on religion, cited by 39 percent of respondents in this group. When this is combined with the 22.5 percent that prioritize parties' positions on judicial reform, a clear picture emerges. These segments of Israeli society, whose share of the electorate has been declining, are deeply concerned with defending the country's liberal democratic character against increasing religious influence in the public sphere. More than ever, attempts by the current government to restrict judicial independence, weaken the system of checks and balances, and undermine the separation of powers, alongside its promotion of increasingly religious legislation, have left secular, liberal and progressive Israelis feeling under attack and increasingly defensive of the institutions and values they hold dear.

The question of religion is also closely connected to the issue of drafting ultra-Orthodox young men into military service, which ranks high among the priorities of voters who identify themselves as centrist or left-wing. This is a matter of practicality as much as principle. Many voters believe that religious parties wield disproportionate influence over the government and, consequently, over Israeli society, while securing financial benefits for their constituents that are not available to others. At the same time, most other Jewish Israelis are required to undertake compulsory military service from the age of 18, generally for two years for women and three years for men, followed by potentially extensive periods of reserve duty that can place them in harm's way. Ultra-Orthodox men have historically enjoyed broad exemptions from military service. This arrangement is particularly contentious given the relatively limited contribution of much of the ultra-Orthodox community to the country's workforce and, hence, government revenues. For centrist and left-wing voters, particularly those in the middle class, but also for many on the right, this has become a crucial question of fairness and social cohesion, especially after several exhausting years of war and national uncertainty. For many, the issue could prove decisive when they cast their ballots. As in other countries, the cost of living, the state of the economy and the identity of a party's leader also influence voting decisions. Anyone visiting Israel quickly realizes how expensive everyday life has become. At the macroeconomic level, the economy has demonstrated considerable resilience despite three years of war. Yet the gap between the haves and the have-nots continues to widen – a development that, perhaps surprisingly, left-leaning parties have struggled to translate into electoral gains. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile, has succeeded in persuading many lower-income voters that the liberal, left-wing elite is responsible for their economic predicament, conveniently diverting attention from the fact he has spent roughly two decades in power, across several periods in office, without resolving many of the problems that continue to affect them. The rational voter model, together with the findings of many opinion polls, would suggest that a government with such a record should lose support. The remaining question is whether that loss of support will be sufficient to bring about a change of government and, if it does, whether the resulting coalition will be sufficiently stable to remain in power for a full term.

– Yossi Mekelberg is a professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the MENA Program at Chatham House. X: @YMekelberg

Briefs

Pak, Maldives
pledge to
boost...

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information technology, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital skills, technology and innovation. The two countries also agreed to enhance cooperation in combating illicit trafficking and the abuse of narcotic drugs. Other agreements covered social protection, health cooperation and collaboration between the Maldives Food and Drug Authority and Pakistan's Drug Regulatory Authority. The two sides also signed MoUs on the recruitment of health professionals, strengthening defence ties and maritime security cooperation. To promote agricultural and fisheries cooperation, Pakistan and the Maldives signed separate agreements in these areas. The two countries also agreed to strengthen technical and vocational education and training, alongside broader educational cooperation. The agreements further covered youth and sports development, air connectivity, tourism, and arts, culture and heritage. Several MoUs were signed between specific institutions of the two countries, including the Maldives Police Service's National College of Policy and Law Enforcement and Pakistan's National Police Academy in Islamabad. Agreements were also signed between the Civil Service Commission of the Maldives and Pakistan's Federal Public Service Commission, as well as between the Maldivian commission and Pakistan's Civil Service Academy.

Pakistan,
Turkiye,
Qatar...

FROM PAGE 01
including Qatar, where it has a military base, bolster their defences amid the US-Israeli war against Iran. In August, it signed a mutual defence pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, under which an attack on one party constitutes an attack on all. Ankara also has close ties with Indonesia, notably in the defence industry. The ministry said the Badr accord would strengthen ties between the countries' defence industries and bolster collaboration to promote security and achieve shared objectives. In a statement released later, Asif said that Pakistan places great importance on strengthening defence cooperation with trusted partners.

Pak reaffirms
resolve to
solidify...

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expanding cooperation and knowledge-sharing in these areas. He expressed Pakistan's desire to elevate the relationship to new heights, particularly through enhanced economic and investment cooperation and stronger business-to-business linkages. The minister also appreciated the development cooperation provided by the Republic of Korea through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), acknowledging its contribution to Pakistan's development efforts and institutional capacity-building.

State counsel
for Imaan,
Hadi case

FROM PAGE 01
hearing and the defence could cross-examine them. "The witnesses are present; you may proceed with the cross-examination," Judge Sipra said. But, Advocate Mandokhail said senior counsel Riasat Ali Azad was not present and that he would cross-examine the witnesses. The judge observed that the accused were lawyers themselves and could conduct the cross-examination in their own case if they wished. Moreover, the court order stated that it was "made crystal clear" at the last hearing that the accused should ensure the presence of their lawyers for cross-examination.

19th Chief of Naval Staff
amateur golf cup kicks off

The tournament will be held from 22 to 25 October 2026, featuring competitions in Men Amateurs (54 holes), Ladies Amateur (36 holes) Seniors match (36 holes) and Juniors match (18 holes), along with an invitational match for guests and sponsors



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Media Brief and Opening Ceremony of 19th Chief of the Naval Staff Amateur Golf Cup 2026 was held at the Margalla Greens Golf Club (MGGC), Islamabad. The ceremony marked the formal

commencement of one of the most prestigious events on the national golf calendar. During the media briefing, Rear Admiral Ahmed Hussain, Patron Pakistan Navy Golf (North), highlighted the salient features of the championship and outlined details regarding its format and participation across various categories. The tournament will be held from

22 to 25 October 2026, featuring competitions in Men Amateurs (54 holes), Ladies Amateur (36 holes) Seniors match (36 holes) and Juniors match (18 holes), along with an invitational match for guests and sponsors. Since its inception in 2007, the Chief of the Naval Staff Amateur Golf Cup has evolved into a prominent fixture on Pakistan's golf

ing circuit. Beyond fostering competitive excellence, the event underscores Pakistan Navy's enduring commitment to promoting sportsmanship, projecting a positive image of the country and encouraging healthy recreational activities within society. The opening ceremony was attended by sponsors, golf players and media representatives.

Pakistani scholars exchange
research insights at RADAR 2026

BEIJING: Pakistani scholars took part in the 2026 CIE International Conference on Radar (RADAR 2026) held in Xi'an, Shaanxi, China, as the event in the field drew experts from 29 countries and regions and set new records for submissions and attendance. The conference was organized by the Radar Society of CIE, National Key Laboratory of Radar Signal Processing, Xidian University. As a top-tier international academic conference on the radar that rotates among China, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Australia, this marked the ninth time China has hosted the series, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. Pakistani participants, including Sana Akbar, a PhD scholar in Information and Communication Engineering and Ilham Ali, a master's student in Optical Engineering, both from Xidian University, said they gained exposure to international research developments in radar technology, electronic systems and advanced engineering. As

international research scholars at the conference, they exchanged research insights, engaged in academic discussions and explored potential collaborations with international experts. They also attended presentations by leading scientists and gained valuable



insights into advanced radar technologies and future research opportunities. "Our participation as Pakistani female scholars also highlighted the increasing role of women in science, technology, engineering, and research, particularly in advanced technical disciplines," they said. The conference featured seven core thematic forums and 14 specialized sub-sessions covering antenna and microwave technology, intelligent radar signal processing, integrated sensing and communication, radar imaging, and radar system applications. Discussions delved into frontier topics including intelligent sensing in complex scenarios, radar system optimization, anti-jamming, AI-enabled radar, cognitive radar, maritime object detection, and multi-source imaging fusion. A total of 1,520 academic papers were submitted from 12 countries and regions, including China, Italy, Romania, Iran, South Africa, France, the Netherlands and Singapore. - APP

Man City fans
stay away from 5-1
Champions League
rout of AEK Athens

DNA

MANCHESTER, England: Manchester City played in front of rows of empty seats as fans stayed away from the Champions League clash against AEK Athens on Tuesday. A well-below capacity crowd attended City's 5-1 win, with swathes of empty rows visible inside the newly-expanded 61,000-seater Etihad Stadium. The official attendance was not immediately revealed by City or European soccer's governing body UEFA. The low turnout was a surprise given City fans have been in defiant mood since the club was found guilty of widespread financial wrongdoing, which could see it face a range of punishments including a huge fine, points deduction or even expulsion from the Premier League. More than 60,000 attended City's last Champions League game against Paris Saint-Germain, when the embattled club put on a pre-match fireworks show and a highlights reel of its greatest moments on the stadium's big screens in what could be interpreted as a defiant response to the ruling, which it has appealed.

Ilenikhena sets
tone for Al-Ittihad

DNA

KHOBAR: A late Tijjani Reijnders winner, a penalty miss by Cristiano Ronaldo and the return of a goal-hungry George Ilenikhena — on Tuesday, some of the Saudi Pro League's main title contenders were made to fight for every point as the table continues to take shape. Al-Ittihad were looking to get their season back on track after a 3-2 defeat by Al-Hilal in the Saudi El Clasico on Oct. 10, followed by a postponed fixture against Al-Shabab. George Ilenikhena did not feature in the loss to Al-Hilal, and he showed his value when he fired Al-Ittihad into the lead against home side Al-Ettifaq after just 16 minutes. Houssein Aouar, Georginio Wijnaldum and Richard Rios combined down the right side before the Colombian fed the ball to Ilenikhena with a slick backheel, and the striker made no mistake. Al-Ittihad looked comfortable for the most part, although Al-Ettifaq manager Arthur Papas did challenge his former J.League rival, Jens Wissing, with a high-pressing 5-3-2 formation that often managed to keep the Tigers at bay.

POA Forms Athletics Committee
for South Asian Games

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a major step towards strengthening preparations for the 14th South Asian Games 2027, the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) has constituted a 17-member special committee to oversee athletics events, athlete selection, training and technical arrangements for the regional sporting spectacle scheduled to be hosted by Pakistan next year. The committee, approved by POA President Arif Saeed, will be headed by Brigadier Zafar Mahmood Abbasi, Director of the Fitness and Sports Directorate, Pakistan Army, while Colonel Nabeel Ahmed Rana has been appointed its secretary. The move aims to establish a coordinated framework for preparing Pakistan's athletics squad and ensuring the smooth and professional conduct of competitions in line with international standards.

The committee brings together representatives from the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Navy, Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), Higher Education Commission (HEC), Wapda, sports organisations and Olympic associations, alongside experienced sports officials and Olympians. The members include Commander Shakeel Haider, Group Captain Sohail Manzoor, Muhammad Umair Aslam Malik, Muhammad Ismail, Athar Ismail, Rizwan Shoukat, Olympians Sadaf Siddiqui, Shabana Akhtar, and Syed Guhar Raza. Wing Commander (retd) Parvaiz Saeed Mir and Muhammad Zafar have been named organising delegates, while Salman Iqbal Butt will serve as competition director and Tariq Mahmood Siddhu as deputy secretary. Representatives of the Pakistan Sports Board and the Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad Olympic Associations will also be part of the committee. Under its mandate, the committee will oversee the selection, training and preparation of athletes and officials for the Games.

Beijing Conference Examines Media's
Role in Shaping Global Views of China

DNA

BEIJING: An international academic conference at Renmin University of China (RUC) has highlighted the role of media, artificial intelligence (AI) and cross-cultural dialogue in shaping global perceptions of China and the United States. Held on October 17, the conference, titled "Exchanging, Connecting, and Co-creating: Shaping New Narratives for International Communication in the AI Age," was combined with the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Belt and Road Cultural Communication Research Center of the China Federation of Radio and Television Associations. It was the research center's first major international academic conference since its establishment. Lars Willnat, a professor at RUC's School of Journalism and Communication and the John Ben Snow Endowed Research Professor at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, presented findings from a survey conducted in 30 countries. The report was co-authored with Zhang Di, director of RUC's Department of International Journalism and Communication, and other researchers. Titled "The Framed Presentation of Great-Power Images: International News, the Use of Artificial Intelligence, and Glob-

al Perceptions of China and the United States," the report explores the factors influencing international public opinion toward the two countries. The findings indicate that perceptions vary by country and issue, with geographical proximity and historical experience often providing stronger explanations than per-capita gross domestic product (GDP). Media exposure was found to play an important role in shaping national images. In some contexts, entertainment media can influence public perceptions more strongly than international news outlets. Exposure to China Global Television Network (CGTN) was associated with more favorable views of China, while exposure to Japan's NHK was linked to more positive views of the United States and less favorable views of China. The report found that domestic media use had a weaker association with favorable perceptions, while AI use currently had limited predictive power in explaining attitudes toward the two countries. Willnat also highlighted a "two-way effect" between media consumption and public opinion. Media exposure can shape perceptions, but people who already hold favorable views of a country may also be more likely to seek out its media, suggesting that media influence

and audience preferences interact. The conference also saw the release of the Chinese and English editions of "The Path of Friendship: Perspectives from Journalists Along the Belt and Road", authored by Zhong Xin, a professor at RUC's School of Journalism and Communication and deputy director of the university's Public Diplomacy Research Center and the Belt and Road Cultural Communication Research Center. Zhong, who chaired the conference, described the book as the product of 12 years of engagement with journalists participating in the China International Press Communication Center (CIPCC). She said it also represents a collaborative educational achievement involving more than 70 students and documents the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through the experiences of journalists from 17 countries. Since 2014, Zhong has led a journalist exchange programme jointly organized by CIPCC and RUC's School of Journalism and Communication. The programme has expanded from an initial group of 10 African journalists to more than 100 journalists annually from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and other regions. To promote interaction between Chinese media students and international journalists, Zhong and undergraduate, master's

and doctoral students have interviewed participants in the exchange programme. Their efforts produced the video interview series "Belt and Road Journalists on China" in 2018, marking the BRI's fifth anniversary, followed by another series in 2023 to mark its 10th anniversary. These interviews contributed to the book, which was published in June 2026 after a three-year collaborative effort involving more than 70 students. The publication presents firsthand accounts of the BRI's impact and China's engagement with partner countries. A Pakistani journalist described how China listened to Pakistan's concerns and helped address its energy crisis. A Lao journalist highlighted the benefits and convenience provided by the China-Laos Railway. A Nigerian journalist argued that whether a loan constitutes a "debt trap" depends on how the borrowed funds are used, describing debt-trap allegations as a narrative promoted by Western media. Zhong stressed that public diplomacy begins with listening and urged readers to pay close attention to journalists who have experienced the BRI firsthand. She said the exchange of perspectives and dialogue among conference participants were particularly meaningful, emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding in international communication.

PM Sharif
congratulates
Romanian...

FROM PAGE 01

the two countries would continue to expand in the years ahead. "Pakistan highly values its longstanding friendship with Romania. It is my earnest hope that our bilateral relations will further strengthen during the days to come," the Prime Minister added. The Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to enhancing cooperation with Romania across diverse sectors and strengthening the bonds of friendship for the mutual benefit of both nations and their peoples.

Baghdad
closes
border...

FROM PAGE 01

New York" last month to attend the UN General Assembly. The source said "all border crossings will be closed except for one crossing in federal territory and one crossing in the Kurdistan region", which is semi-autonomous. The second source added that "the United States has asked all countries bordering Iran to do the same".

In India,
Rubio talks
about...

FROM PAGE 01

"And I think in a way it could be a positive thing, because if we have a relationship and we can speak to them it could perhaps help us — help — it perhaps puts us in a position to help discourage the kinds of things that India is worried about," he said. On the war on Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, he said that it was "very difficult to make a deal with" Tehran. However, he claimed that oil and energy shipments through the straits had reached 80% to 100% of the levels recorded before the Middle East conflict began in February.

Houthi
deny
launching...

FROM PAGE 01

The Strait of Hormuz was supposed to be fully reopened on the sixth day of this period. The Americans informed us that they agreed to these conditions, but they wanted to add a few more clauses," he said. "If they adhere to these conditions, they should know that the strait will be fully reopened, and after that, we will hold further rounds of negotiations until a final agreement is reached," Araghchi said.

Türkiye
plans to
send...

FROM PAGE 01

moving Nato's second-largest army closer to a formal mutual defence pledge with Riyadh as it faces Houthi attacks. The AKP lawmaker said that no Turkish troops deployed to other countries under the pact would take part in offensive operations, adding that technical personnel and experts would be sent initially to help with air defences, electronic warfare technologies, and other defensive support. Earlier, two officials had told Reuters that Türkiye's contribution was expected to be limited to military equipment, intelligence sharing and weapons systems, adding that no other form of deployment had taken place under the alliance so far.

President
Zardari meets
Maldives...

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fresh momentum to their bilateral partnership. Both leaders expressed satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral relations and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in areas of mutual interest. President Zardari recalled Pakistan's longstanding contribution to the development of Maldives, including the Parliament building and the School of Medicine in Malé, which stand as enduring symbols of friendship between the two countries.

Briefs

Coasts drive region's growth but face mounting threats

ISLAMABAD: Asia and the Pacific's coastlines are central to the region's economic future—generating \$7 trillion in annual economic output—but face intensifying threats, some of which if mitigated by investing in resilience could produce benefits up to 20 times greater than the investment required, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report released on Wednesday.

Coastlines across the region are increasingly exposed to rising seas and intensifying hazards, and the costs are already mounting. Annual coastal flood damages in Asia and the Pacific could increase more than sixfold by 2050 and nearly twentyfold by 2100 without adaptation, according to the Asia-Pacific Climate Report 2026: Coastal Risks on the Rise—Actions for a Resilient Future.

Based on estimates across 30 coastal economies, the report estimates that annual flood damages could reach \$172 billion to \$199 billion by 2050 and \$520 billion to \$739 billion by 2100, compared with approximately \$27 billion today.

Keeping flood damages near today's levels would require an estimated \$9 billion to \$19 billion a year in coastal protection, an investment that could avoid \$178 billion to \$360 billion in flood damages each year.

“Coasts are the overlooked engine-room of Asia and the Pacific's growth but are retreating in the face of rising seas and escalating hazards,” said the Director General of ADB's Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department Yevgeniy Zhukov.—APP

PSX rebounds, gains over 779 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) reversed its bearish momentum on Wednesday, gaining 779.34 points, a positive change of 0.47 percent, to close at 165,930.99 points against 165,151.64 points recorded in the previous trading session.

The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 379.905 million shares, compared to 446.842 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value increased to Rs21.281 billion from Rs19.426 billion.

Market capitalisation rose to Rs18.384 trillion from Rs18.308 trillion recorded a day earlier. Out of 497 companies that traded in the ready market, 225 posted gains, 230 suffered losses, while 42 remained unchanged.

Pak Refinery led the volume chart with 49.411 million shares, followed by Energyco PK with 40.074 million shares and Pervez Ahmed Co with 21.682 million shares. Among the top gainers, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited surged by Rs2,535.18 to close at Rs27,886.93, while PIA Holding Company Limited B advanced by Rs620.82 to settle at Rs14,265.33.—APP

Gold prices decline by Rs900 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold continued their downward trend in the local market on Wednesday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola falling by Rs900 to Rs434,536, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Association and Jewellers Guild.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs772 to Rs372,544, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold declined by Rs707 to Rs341,511. In the international market, the price of gold fell by \$9 to \$4,120 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola dropped by Rs27 to Rs6,207, while the price of 10 grams of 24-karat silver decreased by Rs23 to Rs5,321. The price of silver in the international market also registered a decline, falling by \$0.27 to \$57.29 per ounce, the association added.—APP

Dan, Atif for expanding Romania, Pakistan trade ties

We discussed a prospective Pakistani business delegation to Romania and opportunities to strengthen ties between our business communities, expand bilateral trade and explore investment partnerships,” Stoenescu said

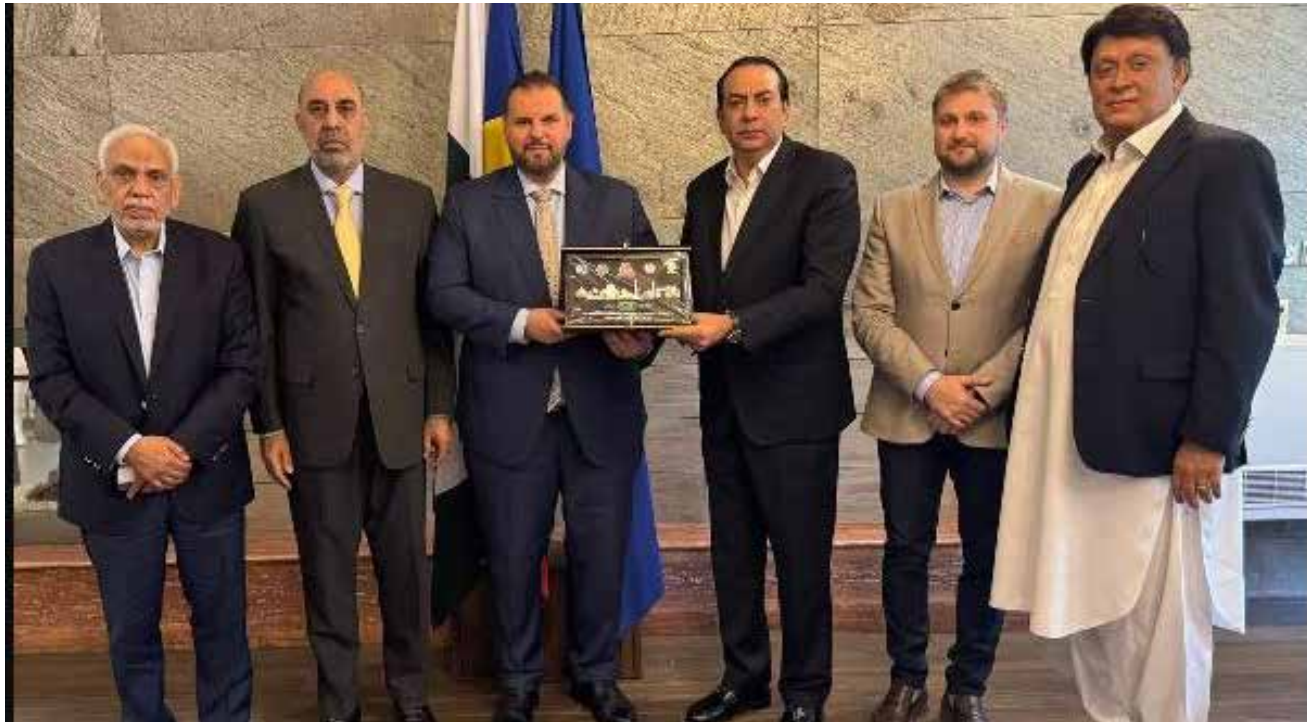
DNA

ISLAMABAD: Romania's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dan Stoenescu, has said that closer cooperation between the chambers of commerce of the two countries can help companies identify complementary interests and transform promising contacts into concrete projects, as he explored the prospects of a Pakistani business delegation visiting Romania.

In a statement shared after meeting a delegation from the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), led by its President Atif Ikram Sheikh, the ambassador said he was pleased with the engagement and that discussions focused on strengthening ties between the two business communities.

“We discussed a prospective Pakistani business delegation to Romania and opportunities to strengthen ties between our business communities, expand bilateral trade and explore investment partnerships,” Stoenescu said.

The envoy underlined that deeper cooperation between the chambers of commerce of Pakistan and Romania could serve as a bridge for companies to identify areas of mutual interest and convert



contacts into tangible projects. “The Embassy of Romania looks forward to supporting these efforts,” he added.

The meeting is seen as part of ongoing efforts to broaden economic engagement between Pakistan and Romania, with both

sides expressing interest in expanding trade volumes and encouraging investment partnerships across sectors.

Tajikistan for stronger security, eco coop within SCO

DUSHANBE: Tajik President Emomali Rahmon met with heads of delegations from member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) who had arrived in Dushanbe for a meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, Qazinform News Agency reports. Welcoming the participants, Rahmon said current global developments underscore the importance of the SCO as a platform for constructive dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation. Read Daily News “We are interested in further strengthening the Organization's role in ensuring peace and stability, sustainable development and an atmosphere of trust throughout its area of activity,” he said. The Tajik leader reiterated Dushanbe's support for the peaceful settlement of conflicts and a stronger central coordinating role for the United Nations. In this context, he highlighted Tajikistan's initiative, approved by the UN General Assembly, to declare 2027-2036 the International Decade of Strengthening Peace for Future Generations. On the economic agenda, Rahmon identified expanding trade and investment, developing transport links, industrial and agro-industrial cooperation, the digital economy and green technologies, as well as strengthening energy and food security as key priorities. Security issues were given special attention. Rahmon called for enhanced cooperation in combating terrorism, extremism, radicalism, cyber threats, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. He also stressed the importance of establishing the SCO Anti-Drug Center in Dushanbe. According to Rahmon, Tajikistan is keen on cooperation in innovative technologies, artificial intelligence and training highly qualified specialists in these fields. The parties also discussed cultural and humanitarian cooperation, climate change adaptation, environmental protection, glacier preservation and rational use of water resources. Earlier, Kazakh Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov urged member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to ramp up trade, transport corridors, and joint digital projects during a meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government in Dushanbe.—DNA

Indonesia's wildfire crisis sparks nationwide anti-govt protests

JAKARTA: Indonesia's devastating wildfires are fueling anger across the country, with protesters demanding action against the toxic haze that has for weeks engulfed Southeast Asia, leaving hundreds of thousands of people ill. Indonesia is struggling to contain fires that have been ravaging vast swaths of Borneo and Sumatra islands since July, which have caused persistent haze that has also smothered other parts of the region, including neighboring Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Timor-Leste, as well as the Philippines and Vietnam. The Ministry of Health has recorded at least 277,000 cases of acute respiratory infections related to the fires so far, of which 60,000 are children under 5. The months-long disasters are triggering a wave of protests

across major Indonesian cities this week, with protesters calling on the government to declare the fires a national emergency. Students and activists, who organized the protests around the two-year anniversary of President Prabowo Subianto's presidency, gathered in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Makassar and Jayapura on Tuesday, calling out what many have perceived as a lack of action and competence from the government. “My forests are burning! Where is my government?” read a poster held by a protester in Jakarta. “This is not a natural disaster. This is a policy disaster,” another one reads. “So much haze over there, (while) officials party at the palace,” one banner read. The demonstrations continued in other parts of Indonesia on Wednesday, with protesters rallying in Pekanbaru, Samarinda, and Malang, the capital cities of three different provinces on three of the country's main islands. “All Eyes On Karhutla,” read one long banner held by a group of protesters in Samarinda, as they rallied in front of the governor's office in East Kalimantan. Karhutla is an Indonesian abbreviation used to refer to forest and land fires. Though Indonesia regularly battles wildfires in the dry season, the blazes this year are the most intense in over a decade, with around 1.9 million acres, or over 7,800 sq. km, of land burned between January and September 2026, according to deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas.—APP

Tirmizi for stronger Pakistan-Russia investment ties

Emphasizing practical measures to strengthen commercial ties, Ambassador Tirmizi called for easier visa procedures, direct air connectivity and effective solutions to banking and payment-related challenges.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Russia should move beyond untapped trade opportunities and forge strong, result-oriented business partnerships to unlock their immense potential for bilateral trade, investment and industrial cooperation, Pakistan's Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, said, emphasizing the need for greater private-sector engagement to translate shared economic interests into tangible commercial gains.

He expressed these views during a meeting with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) President Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia at the Chamber House. Highlighting promising avenues for collaboration, the Ambassador identified healthcare, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, food security, tourism, sports goods and surgical instruments as key sectors offering opportunities for mutually beneficial trade and investment.

Emphasizing practical measures to strengthen commercial ties, Ambassador Tirmizi called for easier visa procedures, direct air connectivity and effective solutions to banking and payment-related challenges. He also discussed preparations for a bilateral business forum, including advance meetings between companies to identify potential partners

and develop concrete business proposals. Improved transport connectivity through Iran, Afghanistan and China was also highlighted as an important means of facilitating bilateral trade. The Ambassador further stressed the importance of expanding cooperation in education, science, engineering and agricultural research through university partnerships and greater student mobility. He highlighted Russian-language teaching, cultural exchanges and collaboration between the media and creative industries as important avenues for promoting mutual understanding and strengthening people-to-people relations. Welcoming the Ambassador, ICCI President Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia emphasized the need to establish joint ventures between Pakistani and Russian entrepreneurs, particularly in the power, steel and other industrial sectors. He said regular business-to-business meetings and strong-

er institutional cooperation could help translate bilateral opportunities into viable investment projects, facilitate technology transfer and promote industrial development in both countries. The ICCI President also called for consistent, long-term economic policies in Pakistan, formulated in consultation with the private sector, particularly the leadership of chambers of commerce and industry. He observed that policy continuity, a predictable regulatory environment and effective government-business coordination were essential to attracting investment, strengthening industrial competitiveness and building sustainable international trade partnerships. Senior Vice President Mohammad Ashfaq Hussain Chattah also stressed the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement and practical business cooperation to strengthen economic relations between Pakistan and Russia.—DNA



Turkish prosecutors order detention of 31 suspects in fund probe

ISTANBUL: Turkish prosecutors ordered the detention of 31 suspects in an investigation into share transactions involving four listed companies, the Istanbul chief prosecutor's office said in a statement on Wednesday. Of those, 26 have been taken into custody, state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

The investigation followed reports and written complaints submitted to prosecutors by Türkiye's Capital Markets Board (SPK), prompting an examination of transactions in shares of Isiklar Enerji ve Yapı Holding, Visne Madencilik, Odine Solutions and Tera Finansal Yatirimlar Holding, the statement said.

The operation marks the latest development in a broad investigation into Türkiye's investment fund sector where dozens of funds are ordered to be liquidated last month.

At 0904 GMT, shares of Odine Solutions were up 7.5 percent, while Visne Madencilik was down 5.58 percent, Isiklar Enerji fell 9.97 percent and Tera Finansal Yatirimlar Holding dropped 10 percent.—APP

El Nino could be 'literally off the monitoring charts

GENEVA: The El Nino weather phenomenon gripping the planet could be off the charts, the United Nations warned Wednesday, saying countries should take urgent action to prepare for the worst.

“The current El Nino event could be unprecedented in strength. Literally off the monitoring charts that we have used for the past four decades,” Celeste Saulo, head of the UN's World Meteorological Organization, told a press conference in Geneva.

“El Nino will peak toward the end of 2026, but its impacts will be felt long after that.”

She said the WMO's latest global seasonal climate updates forecast that sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean — the epicenter of El Nino — may rise to 3.8C above average during November to January; way out of line with typical El Nino figures.

“This will have far-reaching consequences for weather patterns across the world,” said Saulo.

The naturally occurring weather phenomenon is set to bring higher temperatures to much of the planet, the UN's weather and climate agency said, with its impact compounding the effects of man-made climate change.

Saulo was joined by the UN aid chief Tom Fletcher.

“Today, we are issuing a joint call for urgent and coordinated anticipatory action... We cannot stop El Nino, but we can prevent many of its worst human consequences,” she said.

Fletcher said El Nino was set to be a “wrecking ball” of extreme heat, droughts and floods in different parts of the world, triggering “massive humanitarian consequences.” “The damage will not stay in the countries in the immediate path of this El Nino,” he warned. “It will create economic shocks for the global economy and drive further conflict, displacement, migration.”

“I am sounding the alarm that the humanitarian system... cannot alone cope with a threat on this scale.”

He called on countries, development banks and international financial institutions to get money moving “before that damage is done, not afterwards.”

“The choice is clear: we can wait for disaster or we can invest in resilience. We cannot prevent El Nino but we can be serious about the challenges ahead.”

Fletcher said he had released \$50 million to help 11 countries on the front-line, including Chad, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan.

El Nino warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, bringing worldwide changes in winds, pressure and rainfall patterns.

It typically takes place every two to seven years and lasts around nine to 12 months.—APP

Briefs

Islamabad
local govt
polls to be
held under
2015 law

Election body directs officials to issue fresh Islamabad local polls schedule

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday ordered that local government elections in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) be held in accordance with the ICT LG Act, 2015 and directed its officials to issue the LG polls schedule today. A five-member bench, headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, issued the order while hearing a case concerning delays in holding local government elections in the federal capital. The bench directed the commission's officials to prepare and issue the fresh election schedule on Wednesday (today), in line with the 2015 law. The proceedings followed a notice issued by the Commission to the secretary of the Ministry of Interior and the chief commissioner of the Islamabad Capital Territory. The Election Commission had submitted its feedback regarding the Islamabad Local Government Rules to the Ministry of Interior on July 20, 2026, to ensure that legislation and rules were formulated and published in line with the commission's recommendations. The term of the last elected local government system in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) had expired in February 2021, but owing to diverse legal and administrative reasons, fresh elections could not be held hitherto. The statutory requirement under Section 219(4) of the Elections Act, 2017, is that the Election Commission is required to hold new local government elections within 120 days of the term's expiration.

10 killed, 44
injured as
passenger
bus overturns

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Ten people were killed and 44 others injured when a passenger bus overturned after hitting a road divider on the Indus Highway in Rajanpur district's Rojhan tehsil, Rescue 1122 said. The accident occurred in the Bangla Hidayat area at around 5:45am. The bus was reportedly speeding when it collided with the divider and toppled over. The deceased include seven men, two women and a girl, Rescue 1122 said in an incident report. Of the 44 wounded, 38 were being treated at the Rajanpur District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital, while four critically injured persons were referred to Dera Ghazi Khan and two seriously hurt to Rahim Yar Khan's Sheikh Zayed Hospital. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets President of the Maldives H.E. Muhammad Muizzu in Islamabad. — DNA

Putin suggests he and
Trump could meet in China
Russian president offers talk about restoring economic
cooperation between Moscow and Washington

NEWS DESK

ST PETERSBURG: Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed meeting US President Donald Trump in China as he welcomed Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff at talks in St Petersburg on Wednesday, Russian state TV said. The Kremlin has previously raised the possibility that Putin, Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping could hold three-way talks during an Apec summit in China next month. Putin also offered to talk about restoring economic cooperation between Moscow and Washington, state TV said. The talks in St Petersburg, the ninth time that Witkoff has met Putin in person, began with a goodwill gesture from Russia — the release of a retired US school teacher held in Russia. The encounter comes amid concerns in Kyiv and among its allies that the United States is backing away from Ukraine, at times holding back real-time intelligence on Russian attacks and hobbling Ukraine's military communications. The latest talks came more than two years since US President Donald Trump promised in his successful election campaign to end the Ukraine war within 24 hours. Witkoff flew into Russia's second city on Wednesday morning a day after conduct-

ing what a US official called "constructive" talks in Oslo with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the leaders of Finland and Norway and European and Nato representatives, as President Donald Trump said it was time for Ukraine to end the war or face "a very bad thing." US-Ukraine ties have deteriorated sharply since Trump announced a diesel export deal with Russia earlier this month to help lower prices in the United States. High fuel costs since he launched strikes on Iran have hurt his Republicans ahead of November legislative elections. Since the diesel deal, Ukraine has complained of disruption to some intelligence sharing and to its use of the Starshield military satellite system, though Zelenskyy said that Tuesday's Oslo meeting had reached an agreement to resolve those issues. Citing US officials and people familiar with the matter, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that billionaire Elon Musk had last week ordered the slowdown of a military-grade version of SpaceX's Starlink satellite service that Ukraine relies on to track Russian ballistic missile strikes. Reuters could not immediately verify the report. Musk has said any such decision is taken by the US military or the president. Trump has said he was

not responsible. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday signalled the problem lay with the terms of service Kyiv needed to comply with. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday that Witkoff's meeting with Zelenskyy was positive and that Witkoff would share the results with Russia. He also reiterated that Washington had not pulled back Kyiv's ability to access Starlink. "He will now, armed with those ideas, be able to go to St Petersburg and share them with the Russian side, and let's see if we can make some progress," he said. Despite the apparently cordial nature of Tuesday's meeting in Oslo, Trump, as he showed in comments in the White House on Tuesday, remains frustrated with Zelenskyy, whom he has repeatedly rebuked and suggested needs to be replaced. "He's going to have to want to make a deal, because I don't think his people are going to stand for it any longer," Trump told reporters on the eve of the talks in Russia. Putin has shown few signs of compromising on his central war aims, which include full Russian control of the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine and no Nato membership for Kyiv. A US official said Ukraine had brought new ideas and proposals to the Oslo talks, which had made "meaningful progress" towards a coordi-

nated approach to engaging with Russia. The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the talks covered "key elements of a comprehensive peace framework," including security guarantees for Ukraine, a post-war economic plan and a broader European security architecture. Witkoff would aim to "create a pathway towards direct trilateral and broader multilateral negotiations," the official said. Zelenskyy said he hoped to discuss key issues on how to end the war during a trilateral meeting with Putin and Trump. The Kremlin has repeatedly said that any Putin-Zelenskyy meeting would need to be painstakingly prepared in advance by aides to make it worthwhile and that a lot of the legwork required for an overall agreement would need to be in place. Trump said on Tuesday he had raised the idea with Putin of freeing Stephen Hubbard — a 74-year-old retired US school teacher being held in Russia on mercenary charges he denies. Putin told Witkoff that Hubbard was at the airport waiting to fly back to the United States with him. Witkoff thanked Putin for the goodwill gesture. Hubbard was first detained in April 2022 and was later sentenced to six years and 10 months on charges whose veracity his family and US-based lawyer question.

UN warns
world falling
behind on
Climate Goals

WASHINGTON: Losing more ground in the fight against climate change, humanity is heading for a hotter world than experts projected last year — and the United States is a big reason for that, a new United Nations report says. If all the countries do what they promise to reduce heat-trapping emissions, Earth will likely still warm another 2.2° Fahrenheit (1.2° Celsius) above current temperatures, according to Wednesday's update of climate calculations by the United Nations Environment Programme. That's about two-tenths of a degree Fahrenheit (0.1° Celsius) more than last year's projections by the same science team. "This is a worse outcome than expected last year, as a result of the formal withdrawal of the United States of America from the Paris Agreement and revised estimates of historical emissions," the report said. The report also blames the United States for increased emissions last year, saying all the other top 20 major economies reduced their carbon pollution or at least slowed the growth in how much carbon dioxide was spewed from the burning of coal, oil and gas. "In terms of magnitude, the increase in United States of America (133 megatons of CO2 equivalent) far exceeded that of all other countries and was driven by increased electricity demand and a rebound of coal power generation," the report said. — APP

Ship attacked
near Hormuz

DUBAI: A ship was struck on Wednesday by "an unknown projectile" off the coast of Oman, near the Strait of Hormuz, sparking a fire, a British maritime security agency said. The tanker, 11 nautical miles (around 20 kilometers) off the town of Bukha, is "now at anchor," the UKMTA reported. "All crew are reported as safe. There is no reported environmental impact at this time," it said. The Strait of Hormuz carried 20 percent of the world's oil and gas prior to the Middle East war, which erupted with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February. Since then, Tehran has placed a chokehold on the shipping route and regularly targets ships that pass without its authorization. — APP

Man accused of running over
teenager killed in 'encounter'

DNA

MULTAN: The suspect accused of running over and fatally injuring a 14-year-old boy in Multan was killed in an alleged encounter with the Crime Control Department (CCD) in Bahawalpur early on Wednesday, police said. The suspect, identified as Tauqeer, had allegedly escaped from police custody while on remand, a CCD spokesperson said. A Multan court on Tuesday granted police three-day physical remand of the suspect. The suspect was accused of hitting the victim, who used to work for him, with his car in a private housing society. He was arrested on Monday and presented before Judicial Magistrate Saadia Aslam on Tuesday. According to the spokesperson, the CCD

personnel attempted to stop two individuals riding a motorcycle on Bahawalpur's Northern Bypass when an exchange of fire ensued, leaving the suspect dead. On Tuesday, police requested a 14-day physical remand of the suspect for investigation. However, the judicial magistrate granted the police a three-day remand. At the time, Multan City Police Officer (CPO) Akhtar Farooq said while speaking to the media that raids were being conducted for the arrest of a second suspect. "We all are in deep pain," the CPO said, adding that the orphan boy had been "subjected to barbarity." The CCTV footage of the incident shows a boy running on the road after spotting a car. The car is seen swerving and chasing the boy, eventually hitting him. The boy, who fell, then rams into the gate of a nearby house and dies on impact.

No talks with US till
demands met: Tehran

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Iranian media reported that Tehran informed Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir on Tuesday that there would be no talks with Washington until its demands are met, reinforcing its position despite mediation efforts by Islamabad. The Iranian news agency Nour News stated that President Masoud Bezhakian discussed mediation efforts and regional developments during a meeting in Tehran with Munir. Pakistan is a key mediator between the United States and Iran. Previous mediation efforts led to the signing of a temporary peace agreement in June. However, the "Islamabad memorandum" quickly faltered with renewed fighting between Iran and the United States just weeks after its signing. Munir also met with Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf. An Iranian statement regarding the meeting indicated that the Iranian official emphasized that Washington would not be able to gain Tehran's trust unless it meets the seven conditions proposed last month for reopening the Strait of Hormuz. The Iranian conditions include ending the US blockade of its ports, lifting sanctions on its oil exports, and ending hostilities on all fronts in the region. The Secretary-General of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, Mohsen Rezaei, conveyed a similar message during a separate meeting with Munir, stating that there would be no talks with Washington until Tehran's demands are met.

Ready for
diplomacy: Iran

TEHRAN: Iran is ready for diplomacy but will defend itself, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote in an article published in the Financial Times on Wednesday. "While Iran is firmly committed to seeking a dignified peaceful resolution to the conflict, we are also fully prepared to defend ourselves," he wrote. He said the White House had shown no willingness to reach an understanding and that there was little reason to expect progress now. — DNA

Rezaei also mentioned that all enriched nuclear materials would remain in Iran, reaffirming the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei's position that uranium enriched to weapon-grade levels should not be sent abroad. US Vice President JD Vance stated this month that Iran must significantly reduce its uranium enrichment capacity to meet US demands and end the ongoing war between the two countries that has lasted for eight months. Israel, the United States, and other Western countries have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, pointing to its uranium enrichment at 60 percent, a level far higher than what is needed for civilian uses and closer to the 90 percent required to produce a weapon.