

## Murderous attack on brother of well-known social figure Hayat Khan...Page 3



## Curfew imposed in parts of Bajaur amid operation

ISLAMABAD: The district administration has imposed a curfew in 24 areas of Mamond tehsil in Bajaur district as part of a targeted operation against militants. According to a notification, the curfew was approved by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Home Department and will remain in effect from 5pm on August 16 until 5pm on August 21, according to The News on Sunday. During this period, all public movement and outdoor activities are strictly prohibited.

## Dr. Syed Sajjad Hussain Elected President of IVF Society of Pakistan...Page 3



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review on Cashless economy, held at PM House.

## PM Shehbaz orders ministers to supervise relief operations after KP floods leave 314 dead, 156 injured

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday ordered federal ministers to supervise relief operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after flash floods left 314 people dead and 156 injured, along with severe damage to infrastructure. The KP government declared an emergency on Saturday as torrential rains ravaged homes, displaced families, and left a trail of destruction across Buner, Swat, Shangla, Mansehra, and beyond, with authorities warning that dozens of victims may still be trapped

under debris.

According to state-run Radio Pakistan, additional relief goods are being dispatched to the flood-affected areas on the directives of PM Shehbaz, who is personally monitoring the relief operations of the National Disaster Management Authority in all flood-affected districts of KP. "Teams of federal Ministers, on the instructions of the prime minister will participate in the relief operations in the flood-affected areas," Radio Pakistan reported.

Federal Minister for Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs and States and Frontier Regions, Amir Muqam will supervise the distribution of relief goods in districts Shangla and Buner. Minister for Power Division Awaiz Leghari will look after activities in Buner, and Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Yousaf will oversee operations in Mansehra. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Mubarak Zeb will supervise relief distribution activities in Bajaur. -News Agency

## Buner worst hit as K-P floods leave 314 dead, 156 injured: PDMA

PESHAWAR/RAWALPINDI: With the country's northern areas, predominantly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, facing wide-scale destruction and loss of life due to rains and floods, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has warned of more intense torrential rains across the country commencing today (Sunday). "Strong monsoon currents from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal are continuously penetrating into the country. Low Pressure System (LPA) over the Bay of Bengal is likely to move westward from August 17 (today) and intensify this monsoon activity," the Met Office said in a statement.

Also, a westerly wave was present over the country under the influence of these meteorological

conditions, it added. Widespread rain-wind/thunder-showers (with scattered heavy falls at times very heavy) are expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dir, Chitral, Swat, Kohistan, Shangla, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Buner, Malakand, Bajaur, Mohmand, Kohat and Peshawar.

Heavy downpour is likely in Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, Hangu, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Waziristan, Tank and Dera Ismail Khan till August 19 (Tuesday). The forecast comes as the deaths in rain-related incidents across the country, mostly KP, GB and AJK, have surpassed the grim 300-mark with KP reporting the highest tally of 328 fatalities as per a statement issued by the Provincial Disaster Management

Authority (PDMA) on Sunday. GB and AJK have reported 12 and 11 fatalities so far pushing the total death toll in northern areas to at least 337. Giving a breakdown of the deaths in KP, the PDMA said that those killed in various incidents include 264 men, 29 women and 21 children. With 156 left wounded, the rains and floods damaged 159 houses, out of which 97 were partially damaged and 62 have been completely destroyed. Flood-ravaged Buner has reported the highest tally with 209 fatalities, the authority said, adding that rain and flood-related incidents have been reported in Bajaur, Torghar, Mansehra, Shangla and Battagram as well. PDMA relief teams and district administration are in full communication with each other, it said. -News Agency

## 'God made me this country's guardian': COAS Asim Munir dismisses change rumours

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir has ruled out any change in the country's leadership, describing circulating rumours as completely false and against both the government and the establishment.

Speaking to senior journalist Sohail Waraich in Brussels, the army chief said, "God made me this country's

guardian", adding that he has no desire for any other position. He emphasised that political reconciliation is only possible through genuine apologies from all parties involved. In July, rumours began to circulate that President Asif Ali Zardari may be asked to step down and that the COAS would take over the top office.

However, top govern-

ment officials Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi rejected such claims. "Field Marshal Asim Munir has never expressed any desire to become the president, nor is there any such plan in the offing," PM Shehbaz had said, while Naqvi called it a "malicious campaign" targeting President Zardari. -News Agency

## Mohsin Naqvi recalls Pak-India war, praises armed forces' strategy, success

LAHORE: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said that he is an eyewitness to many events of the Pakistan-India war. Speaking at a seminar in the provincial capital, Mohsin Naqvi said that the role of intelligence agencies during the war was very important, and some people still refrain from criticizing them.

He stated that videos of six Indian planes destroyed are in their possession, and they had seen the planes fall

on radar, but they decided not to announce it until concrete evidence was available. "I am an eyewitness to many events of the Pakistan-India war. Our armed forces gave a strong response to Indian aggression," he added.

The federal interior minister said that they knew India's entire plan in advance. India fired seven missiles at one of Pakistan's airbases, but not a single one hit its target. No missiles hit an airbase that

had no valuable assets, and during the war, Pakistan did not target civilian populations. Mohsin Naqvi said that there was no loss in the attack on the Nur Khan Airbase either.

Only at one airbase did soldiers get martyred, while Pakistan's forces achieved all objectives against India. He further stated that Pakistan's success in the war was due to the excellent strategy of the Field Marshal. -News Agency

## CM Gandapur pledges to restore every home damaged in floods

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has said that all destroyed homes will be rebuilt after the flood. Addressing a press conference in Peshawar on Sunday, he reaffirmed his government's commitment to supporting flood victims. He added that residents from flood-affected areas will be relocated to safer locations. The chief minister said that the prime minister and federal ministers have contacted him over the phone and offered assistance, adding, "We fully expect the federation to play its part." Addressing the issue of encroachments, the CM stated that the problem has existed for years and warned that no leniency will be shown to anyone involved. "A model anti-encroachment operation was conducted in Dera Ismail Khan, and we will replicate the same across the province," he said. Gandapur urged citizens to refrain from illegal land grabs and cooperate with the government. He added that Buner district suffered the most damage due to the recent floods. -News Agency

## Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia condole Pakistan on flood losses

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has extended heartfelt condolences to Pakistan over the tragic loss of lives in Pakistan's recent flooding, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a letter to President Asif Ali Zardari, Putin expressed sorrow over the human loss and wished a speedy recovery to the injured, along with strength for the affected families. In a similar gesture, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian conveyed his sympathies to the Pakistani Prime Minister and people over the rain- and flood-related casualties.



LAHORE: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi and others sit on stage during seminar on Global Impact of Pakistan's Military and Diplomatic Victories Over India organized by Prof. Waris Mir Foundation, held at Aiwan-e-Iqbal.

## Mushahid Hussain calls for 'Mandela model' in Asia, strengthening Pak-Africa ties

GHANA: Former senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, addressing a gathering of African political parties, called for emulating the "Mandela Model" of reconciliation in Asia and shed light on Pakistan's historic and strong relations with Africa. He was specially invited to speak at the first-ever conference of African political parties, joining the ranks of leading Asian figures.

The event, hosted in Ghana, brought together over 200 representatives from more than 40 African countries. Mushahid was invited in his capacity as Co-Chairman of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) and President of PAIDAR, Pakistan's first

Africa-focused think tank.

During his visit as an official guest of the Ghanaian government, he held important meetings with Ghana's Vice President Jane Naana, Chief of Staff Julius Debrah, Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister Ibrahim Farah, and other leaders. In his speech, Mushahid recalled Pakistan's consistent policy of supporting African independence movements in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Eritrea, Somalia, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. He also cited the 1955 Bandung Conference, co-hosted by Pakistan, which laid the foundation for Afro-Asian solidarity.

Sharing his personal experiences across Africa—including visits to South Africa, Rwanda, Angola, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia—he also recalled welcoming Nelson Mandela to Pakistan in 1999 as Information Minister. Mushahid introduced PAIDAR as Pakistan's pioneering Africa-focused think tank, now a key platform for fostering Pakistan-Africa ties. Praising the "Mandela Model" as a peaceful and democratic path suitable for Asia, he highlighted its three core principles: Mushahid termed the 21st century as the "renaissance of the Global South," encompassing Asia, Africa, and Latin America. -News Agency



MULTAN: View of the site after train accident got off from railway track as rescue operation is underway, at Lodhran area.

## Pakistan Army deploys additional troops in Buner for flood relief efforts

RAWALPINDI: Additional Pakistan Army troops have arrived in Buner for flood relief operations. Specialised equipment from the Army's Corps of Engineers will be used to rescue injured individuals and recover bodies trapped under mud. Pakistan Army teams are actively engaged in relief efforts in the flood-affected districts.

Furthermore, Army helicopters are delivering rations and other supplies, while evacuating people from flood-hit areas to safer

locations. The operation will continue until all affected individuals are safely rescued and relocated. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's districts of Battagram, Bajaur, and Mansehra, cloudbursts, flash floods, and landslides have claimed 307 lives and injured dozens people, while many remain missing. According to the PDMA, the dead include 279 men, 13 children, and 15 women, while the injured comprise 17 men, four women, and two child.

Heavy rains and flash

floods damaged 45 houses seven completely and 38 partially along with three schools.

The PDMA said incidents occurred in Bajaur, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Swat, Buner, and Shangla, with Bajaur and Battagram suffering the worst damage, where rescue operations are still underway. PDMA had earlier issued weather alerts to all district administrations, directing precautionary measures. -News Agency

## Iran president offers aid as floods claim over 330 lives in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Iranian President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian has expressed deep sorrow over the devastation caused by recent floods in Pakistan and extended an offer of support in relief and rescue operations. In a message shared on social media platform X, the Iranian leader conveyed condolences to the government and people of Pakistan, particularly to the families of those who lost their lives. The Embassy of Iran in Islamabad confirmed that Tehran stands ready to provide all possible cooperation and assistance during the crisis. Pakistan flood deaths The floods have claimed at least 330 lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said on Saturday.

Buner emerged as the worst-hit district, recording 204 deaths in the past 48 hours alone. The district administration also reported 50 people missing and more than 120 injured. Flash floods triggered by torrential rainfall and sudden cloudbursts wreaked havoc in multiple areas, sweeping away homes and infrastructure. Among the casualties were five crew members of a provincial government helicopter that crashed in Mohmand during relief and rescue efforts.

The catastrophe extended beyond Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Gilgit-Baltistan reported 12 deaths, while Azad Jammu and Kashmir confirmed at least nine fatalities. Swathes of the northern region have seen widespread damage

to homes, roads and public facilities.

According to PDMA figures, Shangla reported 36 deaths, Mansehra 23, Swat 22, Bajaur 21, Battagram 15, and Lower Dir five, while one child drowned in Abbottabad. The disaster also left a trail of destruction across infrastructure.

At least 11 houses were completely destroyed and 63 were partially damaged. Educational facilities were not spared, with two schools in Swat and another in Shangla sustaining flood damage.

As rescue operations continue, authorities warn that the death toll may rise further with many still missing and vast areas cut off due to washed-out roads and collapsed bridges. -News Agency



Monday, August 18, 2025

## Crisis to Opportunity: The State of Wheat in Pakistan

By: RIMA BIRI  
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The Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25 presents a sobering snapshot of the country's agricultural challenges, with wheat a cornerstone of national food security bearing the brunt of a turbulent year. The agriculture sector recorded a growth of only 0.56%, far short of the 2% target, primarily due to reduced output in major crops, with wheat production experiencing a significant contraction of -8.9%.

This sharp decline is primarily attributed to erratic weather conditions, particularly prolonged drought and extreme heat, which disrupted sowing and reduced yields across key wheat-producing regions. Input costs, water shortages, and access to timely resources further compounded farmer challenges. These factors have intensified food insecurity risks in both rural and urban populations.

Despite this downturn, wheat retains its pivotal role in Pakistan's agrarian economy. Cultivated on nearly 8.8 million hectares, wheat is the main staple crop for most households and a critical source of employment and income in Punjab, Sindh, and KP. According to the Economic Survey, the estimated wheat production for FY2024-25 stands at 25.5 million tonnes, compared to 28.2 million tonnes the previous year, marking a troubling decline that could place pressure on reserves and imports.

Several government-led interventions aim to stabilize

the sector. The Kissan Card subsidy scheme, fertilizer support, and a partial GST exemption on inputs are among the measures introduced in recent budgets. However, their long-term effectiveness hinges on better water governance, access to high-yield drought-tolerant seed varieties, and adaptive climate-smart farming practices.

Encouragingly, research bodies such as PARC and provincial extension systems have intensified efforts on wheat improvement through adaptive trials, soil health programs, and irrigation modernization. Furthermore, early sowing and zero-tillage strategies are gaining traction in Punjab's wheat zones, reducing production costs while enhancing resilience.

The Economic Survey also emphasizes the need to reform procurement and storage systems, particularly enhancing the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) to mitigate post-harvest losses and ensure stable supply chains.

Wheat's trajectory, while currently facing headwinds, also presents opportunities for structural reform. By focusing on seed technology, efficient irrigation systems, and equitable input access, Pakistan can safeguard its wheat future and ensure national food security in the face of climate unpredictability.

As the backbone of Pakistan's food system, wheat must remain central to all agricultural resilience planning, bridging the gap between subsistence farming and sustainable growth.



By Brig. Karrar Hussain Shah Retired

### INTRODUCTION

Every year, 14th August brings with it an ocean of emotions for the people of Pakistan. The day reminds us of the endless sacrifices made by our forefathers under the dynamic leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his companions, who made it possible for us to live in an independent state. Pakistan Independence Day is not just a celebration of freedom but a renewal of our pledge to safeguard the sovereignty, integrity, and ideology of Pakistan.

In 2025, this day was observed with renewed vigour, coupled with the Marka-e-Haq celebrations that paid glowing tributes to the armed forces and the brave sons of the soil who defended the country with their lives. From the streets of Karachi to the valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, from the embassies abroad to the remotest towns of Sindh, every corner of Pakistan glittered with the light of patriotism.

### Celebrations in Pakistan and Across the World

The Independence Day festivities are not confined within the geographical boundaries of Pakistan. Our embassies and high commissions across the globe hoisted the green crescent flag in symbolic ceremonies. Ambassadors highlighted Pakistan's achievements, reaffirmed its foreign policy principles, and reiterated its commitment to peace and international cooperation. Overseas Pakistanis, deeply connected with their homeland, attended these events with enthusiasm.

Within Pakistan, official and unofficial functions were organized in every province. National songs echoed in schools and colleges, special prayers were held in mosques, and rallies decorated with flags filled

the streets. This year, the celebrations bore a special zeal, as they were combined with Marka-e-Haq commemorations, symbolizing the valour and sacrifices of the defenders of Pakistan.

### A Memorable Celebration in Karachi

Among the numerous grand events held across the country, one particular celebration in Karachi, near the DC East Office behind Civic Centre, stood out as a symbol of unity and patriotism. A vast ground, beautifully decorated with green and white flags, became the venue for a truly unforgettable gathering. Thousands of people, families, children, and youth gathered to participate in the national celebration.

The credit for the flawless organization of this mega event goes to Mr. Sohail Yar Khan, who performed exceptionally well as the chief organizer. His dedication and

Shakeel Shah, and Zakir Mastana showcased their talent and left the crowd in awe. The atmosphere was further uplifted by Mehak Noor, a well-known anchor, who conducted the event with exceptional grace and energy. Her commanding style of compering ensured that the enthusiasm of the audience remained alive throughout the evening.

Tributes to National Heroes  
No Independence Day celebration is complete without remembering the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and his devoted companions. Heartfelt tributes were paid to their tireless struggle for freedom, which paved the way for the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

Special homage was also given to the Pakistan Armed Forces, whose sacrifices continue to safeguard the freedom and dignity of the nation. A glowing tribute was paid to the heroes



commitment ensured that every segment of the program went smoothly and left a lasting impression on the audience.

### Glorious Decorations and Entertainment

The entire ground radiated with beautiful lights that created a magical ambience. The highlight of the evening was the colourful firework display that illuminated the Karachi sky, filling hearts with joy and pride. The sense of unity and patriotism was further enhanced by national songs, skits, and stage performances, which captivated the audience.

Renowned performers such as Amjad Rana, Arshad Mehmood,

of May 2025 Marka-e-Haq, whose bravery and devotion reminded the nation that Pakistan's defence is in safe hands.

### Recognizing Local Heroes - Gadap Municipal Team

One of the most notable parts of the evening was the recognition of efficient Gadap municipal team members. Performance awards were distributed to acknowledge their hard work and services. Their commitment to maintaining the civic facilities and their dedication in contributing to the success of the celebrations was widely appreciated. This recognition not only motivated the team but also set a standard for others to follow.



### Distinguished Guests

The presence of dignitaries and prominent personalities made the event even more prestigious.

Among the honoured guests were: DC Malir Saleem Ullah Odho, Chairman Tariq Aziz Baloch, Ahmed Yar, Municipal Commissioner

Jam Muhammad Jokhio, Vice Chairman, Brigadier (R) Syed Karrar Shah. Their participation symbolized the bond between the government institutions, local bodies, and the people. Each of these leaders appreciated the efforts of the organizers and highlighted the importance of celebrating independence with unity, discipline, and commitment to national progress.

### Marka-e-Haq: Symbol of Sacrifice and Unity

The combination of Independence Day celebrations with Marka-e-Haq tributes gave this year's festivities a unique dimension. Marka-e-Haq was not only about remembering the fallen heroes of May 2025 but also about rekindling the spirit of resilience among the people of Pakistan. It served as a reminder that independence is not a gift but a responsibility that demands constant vigilance and sacrifice.

### National Spirit Through Songs and Skits

The evening was further enriched with national songs and theatrical skits performed by enthusiastic youth and professionals. These performances depicted the struggle of freedom fighters, the sacrifices of the armed forces, and the unwavering spirit of the Pakistani nation. Each performance was met with applause, cheers, and chants of Pakistan Zindabad, reflecting the collective passion of the crowd.

### Conclusion - A Day to Remember, A Future to Build

The 2025 Pakistan Independence Day and Marka-e-Haq celebrations were not just an occasion of festivity but a profound reminder of our history, sacrifices, and responsibilities. The event near the DC East Office in Karachi symbolized how unity, dedication, and patriotism can bring people together for a greater cause.

The flawless organization by Sohail Yar Khan, the exceptional compering by Mehak Noor, the inspiring performances by artists, and the presence of distinguished guests created an atmosphere of national pride. More importantly, the event highlighted the continued relevance of Quaid-e-Azam's message of unity, faith, and discipline in today's Pakistan.

As the fireworks lit up the night sky, every heart silently prayed for the prosperity, peace, and progress of Pakistan. This Independence Day was not only about celebrating freedom but also about renewing the commitment to defend and develop Pakistan as a strong, united, and progressive nation.

PAKISTAN ZINDABAD!

## Pakistan at 78: Remembering the Price of Freedom, Renewing the Promise of Progress



WRITTEN BY: BUSHRA IRSHAD

Every year, as the clock strikes midnight on 13 August, the skies of Pakistan shimmer with fireworks, the streets echo with patriotic songs, and hearts swell with pride. But 14 August is more than a celebration—it is a solemn reminder of the blood, tears, and dreams that birthed a nation. It is a day that rekindles our emotional

bond with the soil that holds our ancestors' sacrifices and our children's future.

Pakistan did not emerge from the pages of history by chance. It was carved out of colonial oppression, communal strife, and a relentless struggle for identity. The Pakistan Resolution of 1940, passed in Lahore, laid the foundation for a separate homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent. Seven years later, on 14 August 1947, that vision materialized—but not without immense cost. Over 10 million people migrated across newly drawn borders, making it one of the largest mass migrations in human history. Nearly one million lives were lost in communal violence. Families were torn apart, homes abandoned, and futures uncertain. Yet, amid the chaos, a new nation was born—one that promised freedom, dignity, and self-determination.

Pakistan was not just a geographical entity; it was a spiritual and ideological sanctuary. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah envisioned a

state where minorities would be protected, justice would prevail, and every citizen would have the right to live according to their faith and values. In his famous speech on 11 August 1947, Jinnah declared: "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan." These words still echo in the hearts of Pakistanis who believe in the pluralistic, inclusive spirit of their homeland.

Today, Pakistan stands as the fifth most populous country in the world, with over 250 million citizens. It is the only Muslim-majority nation to possess nuclear capabilities, having successfully conducted nuclear tests in May 1998 in Chagai, Balochistan. Despite economic challenges, Pakistan has shown resilience in sectors like agriculture, textile exports, and digital entrepreneurship. The rise of startups, fintech platforms, and youth-led initiatives is a testament to the nation's

untapped potential. The literacy rate hovers around 58%, and the youth population—those under 30—makes up nearly 60% of the country. Pakistan's GDP is estimated at around \$375 billion USD, and its armed forces rank among the top six globally. In the digital realm, Pakistan boasts the fourth largest freelancing workforce in the world.

For every Pakistani, 14 August is not just a date—it's a feeling. It's the flutter of the green and white flag in the wind, the echo of "Dil Dil Pakistan" from car stereos, and the sight of children painting their faces with crescent moons and stars. It's the memory of grandparents who witnessed Partition, the pride of soldiers who guard our borders, and the hope in the eyes of students who dream of a better tomorrow. From the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan to the shores of Karachi, from the deserts of Thar to the valleys of Swat-Pakistan breathes in every dialect, every tradition, every prayer.

Pakistan's women have been the

backbone of its progress. From Fatima Jinnah's political leadership to Malala Yousafzai's global advocacy for education, Pakistani women have broken barriers and redefined possibilities. In rural areas, women work tirelessly in fields and homes. In urban centers, they lead businesses, teach in universities, and serve in hospitals. Today, women make up nearly 49% of the population, and their empowerment is key to Pakistan's future.

Yet, all is not perfect. Pakistan faces pressing issues: inflation, political instability, climate change, and educational disparity. The devastating floods of 2022 displaced millions and exposed the urgent need for climate resilience. The youth unemployment rate hovers around 8.5%, and healthcare access remains uneven. But these challenges are not insurmountable. They are calls to action—for policymakers, civil society, and every citizen. The spirit of 1947 must be revived—not just in speeches, but in service.

With over 60% of the population under 30, Pakistan's destiny lies in the hands of its youth. They are the coders, poets, farmers, and activists of tomorrow. They must rise above divisions, embrace innovation, and lead with integrity. Let 14 August be a day of reflection and renewal. Let it remind us that patriotism is not just waving a flag—it's building a school, planting a tree, mentoring a child, and speaking truth to power.

As the sun rises on 14 August, let every Pakistani—at home or abroad—feel the pulse of their nation. Let them remember the sacrifices, honor the heroes, and commit to the ideals that gave birth to Pakistan. Let us not just celebrate freedom, but preserve it. Let us not just sing anthems, but live them. Let us not just remember history, but write it anew—with courage, compassion, and conviction. Pakistan is not just a country. It is a promise. A prayer. A passion. And on this day, we say with pride and love: PAKISTAN ZINDABAD.

## PRAL CEO declines extension

ISLAMABAD: The chief executive officer of Pakistan Revenue Automation Limited (PRAL) has refused to get a temporary extension in his tenure, creating fresh challenges for the government whose decision to either shut down or restructure the entity has already sent ripples among the employees. The PRAL board had offered CEO Amir Malik an extension until a new head was appointed, according to correspondence seen by The Express Tribune. PRAL serves as the backbone of Pakistan's tax system.

Malik's extended tenure is ending next week, which comes just as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed that PRAL be wound up and replaced with a new, more efficient entity. Sources said Malik did not accept the board's offer to stay on temporarily, arguing that neither the PRAL board nor the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) defended the organisation before the prime minister. The government has not yet advertised the position of chief executive in the press. When contacted, a senior

FBR official said that the government would hire a new full-time CEO from the market. Malik did not respond to a request for comments. Uncertainty about PRAL's future first emerged when the prime minister directed its closure last month.

Later, the government said the meeting minutes had not been properly recorded and that the PM wanted to restructure PRAL, not shut it down. After a story appeared in The Express Tribune, the PRAL management and board issued a statement stating that the recent discussions on modernisation had led to a decision to pivot the existing structure of PRAL to a new, state-of-the-art organisation as part of FBR's digital transformation strategy. PRAL will deliver enhanced functionality, financial autonomy, and technological innovation, ensuring a world-class experience for both FBR and taxpayers, according to the statement. It added: "We want to clarify that PRAL will continue its operations without interruption throughout this period."

## "Maarka-e-Haq Flower Show" begins in Gulberg Town

KARACHI: Under the people-friendly efforts of Gulberg Town Chairman Nusratullah, a five-day "Maarka-e-Haq Flower Show" has begun in Block 14 Educational Garden. The exhibition was inaugurated by Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Munem Zafar Khan. On this occasion, he was accompanied by Chairman Gulberg Town Nusratullah, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami District Gulberg Kamran Siraj, Municipal Commissioner Abdul Hameed Sahag, former Town Nazim Farooq Naimatullah, and Director Gardens Nadeem Hanif.

Chairman Gulberg Town Nusratullah took Moanm Zafar Khan to visit the flower exhibition, while Director Gardens Nadeem Hanif briefed him on the details of different types of flowers.

In his address, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Munem Zafar Khan said: "Gulberg Town is the only town in Karachi that organizes a flower exhibition every season throughout the year. This is enjoyed not only

by Gulberg Town but also by people from other areas of the city. Gulberg Town is also providing healthy entertainment to the people along with solving local government issues. This is the result of successful teamwork led by elected representatives of Jamaat-e-Islami. Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman had a vision that we would work beyond our powers, and today this vision is becoming a reality.

Chairman Gulberg Town Nusratullah said:

"Our aim is that people should be close to nature, that youth and children should understand the importance of flowers and plants. The journey from bud to flower requires a lot of hard work, especially the tireless efforts of Director Gardens Nadeem Hanif and



his team."

At the end of the ceremony, other participants also addressed the gathering and finally, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Munem Zafar Khan distributed certificates among the hardworking employees.

The flower exhibition will continue for five days and is open to the public.



The final match of the football tournament festival in connection with the celebration of Pakistan under the auspices of the Town Municipal Corporation Gadap was attended by the special guest, Member of the Sindh Assembly and President PPP District Malir Raja Abdul Razzaq Baloch, Chairman Gadap Town Tariq Aziz Baloch and Municipal Commissioner Ahmed Yaran, along with council members and departmental officers.



## CORPORATE NEWS

## If new provinces are formed for devolution of powers, we will support it, S.M. Tanveer



KARACHI (Commerce Reporter): United Business Group (UBG) Patron-in-Chief, S.M. Tanveer, has called for the devolution of powers to the grassroots level in order to strengthen the national economy.

While addressing a press conference at the Federation House along with FPCCI President Atif Akram Sheikh,

Mian Zahid Hussain, Ikhtiar Baig, Khalid Tawab, Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, and others, and while responding to media questions, he stated:

"At the time of independence, the population of the country was 32 million and there were four provinces. Today, with a population of 240 million, we still have only four provinces. If the

government creates new provinces to ensure the transfer of powers to the grass-roots level, the FPCCI will support it."

S.M. Tanveer said that the country has mineral resources worth billions of dollars and that every division has economic potential. No administrative officer can bring economy.

## Iqbal urges joint push for \$100b exports

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal, on Saturday, called upon the government and private sector to work shoulder to shoulder in achieving an ambitious target of \$100 billion in exports under what he termed an "export emergency."

Speaking at a ceremony titled Marka-e-Haq and 78 years of Independence Day celebrations - Uraan Pakistan - at the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Iqbal said Pakistan's economic stability hinged upon export-led growth, tax reforms, and foreign direct

investment. He stressed that the business community was the main driver of the economy, and the private sector would play a decisive role in steering the country out of past cycles of instability.

The minister said eight sectors had been identified as central to Pakistan's export expansion plan, including hospitality, IT, mining, manpower, blue economy, and creative industries. He urged FPCCI to immediately constitute eight joint working groups with the government to prepare actionable strategies in each sector. "Pakistan has faced severe economic crises in the past two years.



HYDERABAD: Laborers are busy painting on concrete road divider under the supervision of district administration for the beautification of city, at SSP Office road.

## Dr. Syed Sajjad Hussain Elected President of IVF Society of Pakistan

KARACHI (PR): Dr. Syed Sajjad Hussain, Chairman of Australian Concept Infertility IVF & Medical Center, has been elected unopposed as the President of the IVF Society of Pakistan for a two-year term.

Alongside him, Dr. Haroon Latif has been elected as General Secretary, Dr. Shaheen Zafar and Dr. Saqib as Vice Presidents, Dr. Zariab Santha as Treasurer, Dr. Uzma Nayyar as Secretary, while Dr. Naseem Ashraf and Dr. Yousuf Latif have been elected as Senior Members.

In his remarks after the election, Dr. Syed Sajjad

Hussain congratulated the newly elected office bearers and expressed confidence that this development will lead to significant advancements in the treatment and research of infertility across Pakistan.

"Our mission is to bring the joy of parenthood to every family," said Dr. Hussain. "Through modern medical research, innovative techniques, and patient-centered care, we will ensure the best possible treatment facilities. As President of the IVF Society of Pakistan, I am committed to taking this mission to new heights along with my dedicated team."



Experts believe that under Dr. Hussain's leadership, the IVF Society of Pakistan will play a vital role in introducing cutting-edge technologies, promoting medical research, and providing advanced infertility solutions nationwide.

## Government of Pakistan announced the conferment of the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz upon Dr. Mansoor Memon

KARACHI: The Government of Pakistan has announced the conferment of the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz upon renowned physician, humanitarian, and cultural ambassador Dr. Mansoor Memon in recognition of his long-standing services to the nation.

The announcement was made on Independence Day, August 14, 2025. The award will be formally presented to him on Pakistan Day, March 23, 2026.

Dr. Memon is widely regarded as Pakistan's "Ambassador-at-Large" across the globe, owing to his

outstanding contributions in promoting the country's positive image internationally. His journey reflects a steadfast commitment to visionary leadership and public service. A graduate of the Aga Khan University of Health Sciences (March 1992), he has earned international acclaim as a physician, researcher, philanthropist, and leader.

Dr. Mansoor Memon's life stands as a shining exam-



ple of excellence, compassion, and patriotism. The Tamgha-e-Imtiaz is a fitting tribute to his services and serves as an inspiration for generations to come.

## Oil markets bearish after Alaska summit

LONDON: Oil markets are set for a muted price reaction when they open on Sunday after US President Donald Trump's and Russian leader Vladimir Putin's meeting in Alaska, at which Trump said a fully-fledged peace deal was the aim for Ukraine rather than a ceasefire. Trump said he had agreed with Putin that negotiators should go straight to a peace settlement - not via a ceasefire, as Ukraine and European allies, until now with US support, have been demanding.

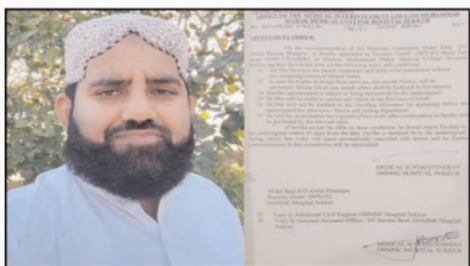
Trump said he would hold off imposing tariffs on countries such as China for buying Russian oil following his talks with Putin. He has previously threatened sanctions on Moscow and secondary sanctions on countries such as China and India that buy Russian oil if no moves are made to end the Ukraine war. "This will mean Russian oil will continue to flow undisturbed and this should be bearish for oil prices," said ICIS analyst Ajay Parmar. "It is worth noting that we think

the impact of this will be minimal though and prices will likely see only a small dip in the very near term as a result of this news." The oil market will wait for developments from a meeting in Washington on Monday between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

European leaders have also been invited to the meeting, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters. "Market participants will track comments from European leaders but for now Russian supply disruption risks will remain contained," said Giovanni Staunovo, analyst at UBS. Brent settled at \$65.85 a barrel on Friday, and US West Texas Intermediate at \$62.80 - both down nearly \$1 before the talks in Alaska. Traders are waiting for a deal, so until that emerges, crude prices are likely to be stuck in a narrow range, said Phil Flynn, a senior analyst with Price Futures Group. "What we do know is that the threat of immediate sanctions on Russia.

## SINDH NEWS

## Ghulam Muhammad Mahar Medical College Civil Hospital on the Verge of Collapse, Appointment of Non-Technical Staff Puts Poor Patient's Lives at Risk



SUKKUR (REPORT KASHIF ALI PHULPOTO) Ghulam Muhammad Mahar Medical College Civil Hospital, located in Sindh's third largest city, has reached the brink of collapse due to mismanagement and nepotism. The hospital administration has allegedly appointed non-technical individuals to various departments, putting the lives of poor patients in grave danger.

According to details, non-qualified and non-technical staff appointed on the basis of favoritism are handling sen-

sitive responsibilities in the hospital's medical wards as well as the X-Ray department, thereby endangering patients' treatment and lives. Sources revealed that Abdul Baqi Mangrio, who was originally recruited as a security guard, has been working for several years as an X-Ray technician. Owing to his influential background, he has remained untouched by any action, despite the fact that numerous poor patients' lives have been put at risk because of his unauthorized role.

It has been reported that repeated complaints were lodged with the Principal of Ghulam Muhammad Mahar Medical College, Dr. Altaf Awan, and Medical Superintendent (MS) Ikhtiar Mirani, yet due to the administration's negligence, Abdul Baqi Mangrio continues to occupy the same post.

Hospital staff as well as members of civil society have expressed grave concern over the situation, stating that for years an influential individual has been playing with the lives of poor citizens, while the indifferent administration has failed to take any action.

Both the hospital staff and social circles have demanded that non-technical individuals be immediately removed from sensitive medical duties; otherwise, they warned, they will be compelled to launch a strong protest against the hospital administration.

## Girls lead the way in HSC Part II exams

KARACHI: Female candidates have secured all top three positions in the HSC Part II (Pre-Engineering Group) annual examinations 2025 conducted by the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK), according to the results announced on Saturday.

The first position was shared by two candidates: Laiba Ansari of Osman Public School Campus-I and Syeda Anzila Haider Zaidi of BMM PECHS Government College for Women as both obtained 1,019 marks out of 1,100,

securing A-One grades, said BIEK Chairman Prof Faqir Muhammad Lakho.

The second position was clinched by Aizal Marha, also from BMM PECHS Government College for Women, with 1,014 marks, while Hafsa Imran of Hamdard Intermediate College for Science and Commerce stood third with 1,010 marks. Both secured A-One grades. Official figures show that a total of 11,547 candidates were declared successful, setting the overall pass percentage at 54.94.

## Manora drowning: second body recovered

KARACHI: The body of a young man who drowned off Manora on Independence Day was recovered from Sandspit on Saturday morning, a day after his uncle's body was found. Police said six friends had gone on a picnic on Aug 14 when two of them were swept away by waves.

Their companions rushed to rescue them, but the strong current pulled six into deep waters. Bystanders managed to save four, while the uncle and nephew went missing. On Friday evening, divers recovered the body of

the uncle, identified as Wasim, from Turtle Beach near Hut No 105. He was laid to rest the same night in Chhipa graveyard, Chakkar Goth, Korangi.

A father of two, Wasim worked at a water supply unit of an RO plant. On Saturday morning, the body of his nephew, identified as Zakir, was also found near Sandspit. Zakir, who worked with his uncle at the same RO plant and was engaged to be married this Rabi-ul-Awal, was buried in Garden after funeral prayers at a local mosque.

## Karachi likely to receive moderate to heavy rainfall through August 23

KARACHI: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast thunderstorms and moderate to heavy rain in Karachi and other parts of Sindh from August 17 to 23. In its latest weather advisory issued today (Sunday), the Met Office said strong monsoon winds are entering parts of Sindh.

Under its influence, rain thunderstorm/rain with few moderate to isolated heavy

falls is likely in Karachi, Hyderabad, Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Larkana, Qambar Shahdadkot, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar, Badin, Thatta, Tharparkar, and surrounding areas. In its weather forecast for Karachi, the weather department said that the port city is likely to experience rainfall with thunder and lightning on Monday and Tuesday, with isolated heavy downpours expected in some areas.

## Murderous attack on brother of well-known social figure Hayat Khan

KARACHI: In the Bihar Colony area of Lyari, the 26-year-old brother of well-known social and businessman Hayat Khan and 6-year-old Azmatullah son of Muhammad Ghani were also seriously injured. The attackers robbed the injured youth and fled. The police have not yet been able to catch the accused.

According to the police report, Hamidullah's elder brother had helped in handing over these accused to the Rangers in 2023 and he himself is on duty in Intelligence City. On August 11, 2025, at 8 pm, two motorcycle-borne attackers, Abbas and Hamidullah, opened fire on well-known social and businessman Hayat Khan and his 26-year-



old brother Hamidullah with the intention of revenge and robbed them of Rs 2.7 million in cash. A case of the robbery and escape incident was registered by ASI Iftikhar Ahmed of Chakiwara Lyari.

The police have recovered two 9mm pistol shells, blood samples and bloody slippers from the scene. Further investigation into the

incident is underway and the police have registered a case and started searching for other accomplices. The family of the injured youth and the child have demanded that the Chief Minister of Sindh, Governor of Sindh, IG Sindh Police and other higher authorities take immediate action against the two attackers, arrest them, punish them and return the looted money.

## Attempted Murder and Robbery in Lyari's Bahar Colony, Suspects Flee with 2.7 Million Rupees

KARACHI (STAFF REPORTER): On Monday night at 8:00 PM, in Lyari's Bahar Colony, suspects Hameedullah son of Ahmed Jan and Abbas son of an unidentified man opened fire. One bullet struck Hameed Khan son of Abdullah in the knee, while another injured a 6-year-old child who hap-

pened to be passing by. While fleeing, the suspects took away 2.7 million rupees in cash.

According to police, the incident occurred on the night of August 11 in Bahar Colony, where two armed men fired shots and escaped with approximately 2.7 million rupees in cash.

Upon receiving information, police reached the scene, collected evidence, and registered case number 256/2025 under Sections 34/379/324 of the Pakistan Penal Code, initiating further investigation. Police stated that raids are being carried out to trace and arrest the suspects.

## Matiari Press Club Revived After Years, Registration Celebrated with a Grand Rally

REPORT BY ASIF ALI SHAIKH  
MATIARI:

A grand rally was held in Matiari to celebrate the official registration of the Matiari Press Club. The rally was led by the President of Matiari Press Club Abdul Ghafoor Mallah, General Secretary Sohail Ahmed Bhaiyo, Chairman Ayaz Hashmani, Vice President Wahid Jan Mari and other office-bearers.

The rally started from the Press Club and culminated at the shrine of Hazrat Sakhi Hashim Shah (RA), where representatives of political and social organizations, civil society and citizens warmly welcomed the press club leadership with garlands and traditional Arjak. On that occasion, press club officials offered a ceremonial Chadar



at the shrine and prayed for the country's peace, prosperity, unity and brotherhood.

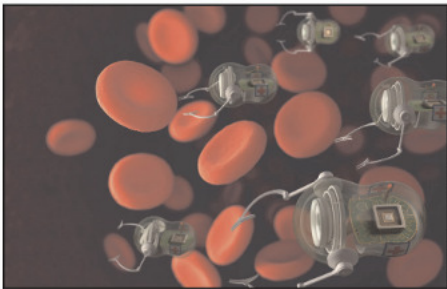
While addressing the gathering, President Matiari Press Club Abdul Ghafoor Mallah said that Matiari Press Club had long been a hub of journalistic activities, but after the building's collapse, it had virtually ceased to exist. For 12 years, neither the club was restored nor registered, which created significant hardships for the

journalist community. "I had pledged to revive and register the Matiari Press Club within 12 months, and today, with the grace of Allah Almighty, that promise has been fulfilled," he said.

Leaders from various political and social organizations expressed joy and hope over the development and announced financial support for the renovation and improvement of the Press Club building.



## How to program DNA robots to poke and prod cell membranes



Scientists have worked out how to best get DNA to communicate with membranes in our body, paving the way for the creation of 'mini biological computers' in droplets that have potential uses in biosensing and mRNA vaccines. UNSW's Dr Matthew Baker and the University of Sydney's Dr Shelley Wickham co-led the study, published recently in *Nucleic Acids Research*. It discovered the best way to design and build DNA 'nanos-structures' to effectively manipulate synthetic liposomes -- tiny bubbles which have traditionally been used to deliver drugs for cancer and other diseases.

But by modifying the shape, porosity and reactivity of liposomes, there are far greater applications, such as building small molecular systems that sense their environment and respond to a signal to release a

cargo, such as a drug molecule when it nears its target.

Lead author Dr Matt Baker from UNSW's School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences says the study discovered how to build "little blocks" out of DNA and worked out how best to label these blocks with cholesterol to get them to stick to lipids, the main constituents of plant and animal cells. "One major application of our study is biosensing: you could stick some droplets in a person or patient, as it moves through the body it records local environment, processes this and delivers a result so you can 'read out', the local environment," Dr Baker says. Liposome nanotechnology has shot into prominence with the use of liposomes alongside RNA vaccines such as the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. "This work shows new ways to corral liposomes into place and then pop them open at just the right time," Dr Baker says.

"What's better is because they are built from the bottom-up out of individual parts we design, we can easily bolt in and out different components to change the way they work. Previously scientists struggled to find the right buffer conditions for lipids and liposomes to make sure that their DNA 'computers' actually stuck to liposomes.

## Open source tool can help identify gerrymandering in voting maps

With state legislatures nationwide preparing for the once-a-decade redrawing of voting districts, a research team has developed a better computational method to help identify improper gerrymandering designed to favor specific candidates or political parties. In an article in the *Harvard Data Science Review*, the researchers describe the improved mathematical methodology of an open source tool called *GerryChain* (<https://github.com/mggg/GerryChain>). The tool can help observers detect gerrymandering in a voting district plan by creating a pool, or ensemble, of alternate maps that also meet legal voting criteria. This map ensemble can show if the proposed plan is an extreme outlier -- one that is very unusual from the norm of plans generated without bias, and therefore, likely to be drawn

with partisan goals in mind. An earlier version of *GerryChain* was used to analyze maps proposed to remedy the Virginia House of Delegates districts that a federal court ruled in 2018 were unconstitutional racial gerrymanders. The updated tool will likely play a role in the upcoming redistricting using new census data. "We wanted to build an open-source software tool and make that available to people interested in reform, especially in states where there are skewed baselines," said Daryl DeFord, assistant mathematics professor at Washington State University and a co-lead author on the paper. "It can be an impactful way for people to get involved in this process, particularly going into this year's redistricting cycle where there are going to be a lot of opportunities for pointing out less than optimal behavior."

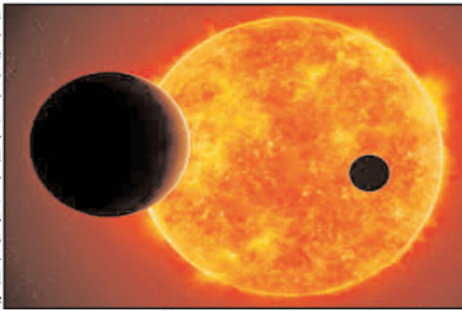
## "Planet confusion" could slow Earth-like exoplanet exploration

When it comes to directly imaging Earth-like exoplanets orbiting faraway stars, seeing isn't always believing. A new Cornell University study finds that next-generation telescopes used to see exoplanets could confuse Earth-like planets with other types of planets in the same solar system. With today's telescopes, dim distant planets are hard to see against the glare of their host stars, but next-generation tools such as the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, currently under development by NASA, will be better at imaging Earth-like planets, which orbit stars at just the right distance to offer prime conditions for life. "Once we have the capability of imaging Earth-like planets, we're actually going to have to worry about confusing them with completely different types of planets," said Dmitry Savransky, associate professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering and of astronomy.

"The future telescopes that will enable these observations will be so huge, expensive, and difficult to build and launch that we can't afford to waste a single second of time on them," Savransky said, "which is why it is so important to think through all of these potential issues ahead of time." By using Earth's own solar system as a model of an unexplored star system, Savransky and doctoral student Dean Keithly, cal-

culated that even with direct-imaging techniques and the increased capabilities of future, high-powered telescopes, exoplanets as different as Uranus and Earth could be mistaken for one another. The research details how measurements estimating planet-star separation and brightness can cause "planet confusion."

The modeling finds that when two planets share the same separation and magnitude along their orbits, one planet can be confused for the other. Keithly and Savransky identified 21 cases within their solar system model in which an individual planet had the same apparent planet-star separation and brightness as another planet. Using this data, it was calculated that an Earth-like planet could be misidentified with a Mercury-like planet in 36% of randomly generated solar systems; with a Mars-like planet in about 43% of randomly generated solar systems; and with a Venus-like planet in more than 72% of randomly generated solar systems. In contrast, confusion between Earth-like planets and larger gas-giant planets sim-

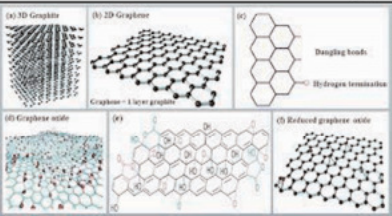


ilar to Neptune, Saturn and Uranus was less likely, and could occur in 1-4% of randomly generated solar systems. Confusing planets for one another can be an expensive and time-consuming problem for scientists. Extensive planning and funds go into each use of a high-powered telescope, so the false identification of a habitable exoplanet wastes valuable telescope time. With this problem identified, researchers can design more efficient exoplanet direct-imaging mission surveys. The researchers warn that further improvements to instrument contrast and inner-working angles could exacerbate the problem and advise that future exoplanet direct-imaging missions make multiple observations to more accurately differentiate between planets.

## Flexible device could treat hearing loss without batteries

Some people are born with hearing loss, while others acquire it with age, infections or long-term noise exposures. In many instances, the tiny hairs in the inner ear's cochlea that allow the brain to recognize electrical pulses as sound are damaged. As a step toward an advanced artificial cochlea, researchers in ACS Nano report a conductive membrane, which translated sound waves into matching electrical signals when implanted inside a model ear, without requiring external power. When the hair cells inside the inner ear stop working, there's no way to reverse the damage. Currently, treatment is limited to hearing aids or cochlear implants. But these devices require external power sources and can have difficulty amplifying speech correctly so that it's understood by the user. One possible solution is to simulate healthy cochlear hairs, converting noise into the electrical signals processed by the brain as recognizable sounds. To accomplish this, previous researchers have tried self-powered piezoelectric materials, which become charged when they're compressed by the pressure that accompanies sound waves, and triboelectric materials, which produce friction and static electricity when moved by these waves. However, the devices aren't easy to make and don't produce enough signal across the frequencies involved in human speech. So, Yunming Wang and colleagues wanted a simple way to fabricate a material that used both compression and friction for an acoustic sensing device with high efficiency and sensitivity across a broad range of audio frequencies. To create a piezotriboelectric material, the researchers mixed barium titanate nanoparticles coated with silicon dioxide into a conductive polymer, which they dried into a thin, flexible film.

## The mathematics of repulsion for new graphene catalysts





# Johannesburg Hosts Successful 2nd Pak-Africa Trade Summit 2025

JOHANNESBURG: The 2nd Pak-Africa Trade Summit was successfully held in Johannesburg followed by B2B meetings in Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town, bringing together business leaders and government representatives for meaningful dialogue on trade and investment opportunities between Pakistan and Africa. On this occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Pakistan SADC Chamber Trade Federation (PSCTF) and the Minara Chamber of Commerce, further strengthening institutional ties.

Following the Johannesburg conference, the Pakistani delegation visited Durban and met with local business leaders. A luncheon was hosted in their honor, where delegates underscored the need for stronger trade cooperation. Durban's business community welcomed the initiative and pledged support for deeper commercial ties between Pakistan and South Africa.

The two-day summit, held on 12-13 August 2025 at LalQila, Sandton, was organized by PSCTF in collaboration with the Pakistan High Commission, GGDA, the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (DTIC), South Africa Chamber of Commerce, Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, Minara Chamber of Commerce, CBE, and other partner organizations.

The summit was attended by high-level dignitaries including South African Deputy Minister for Social Development Ganief Hendricks, Quaiser Ahmed Shaikh, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Malik Farooq, Pakistan's High Commissioner in Pretoria, South African Minister of Small Business Development Stella Ndabeni Abrahams, Neil Pollock, Vice President, SACCI, Charles Manuel, Director Investment Promotion, Farah Khan, Trade & Investment Attaché, Pakistan High Commission, Marcus Baliso, Head of Invest SA Gauteng, Donald Mabusela, Director, DTIC along with more than 40 Pakistani delegates, senior government officials, and industry leaders.

Muhammad Rafiq Memon, Chairman of PSCTF and Chief Organizer of the Summit, welcomed delegates, called this an honor for him and his team to



host the second part of this record trade summit in partnership with the Pakistan High Commission and our valued South African stakeholders. For the first time in over three decades, so many key organizations have come together to support Pakistan-Southern Africa economic ties. This is a milestone in our journey to strengthen trade and investment linkages. He reaffirmed PSCTF's role as the premier representative body of Pakistani entrepreneurs in Southern Africa, with the vision of building robust bilateral trade between the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Pakistan.

Malik Farooq, High Commissioner of Pakistan, emphasized the summit's importance. He said that this gathering reflects the strong will of our nations to explore opportunities, deepen partnerships, and chart a new course for economic cooperation. Quaiser Ahmed Shaikh, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Board of Investment, described South Africa as a "gateway to Africa" while positioning Pakistan as a gateway to Central Asia and China. He stressed the untapped trade potential, noting current bilateral trade stands at \$200 million in Pakistani exports to South Africa and \$400 million in South African exports to Pakistan.

Delivering the keynote, Stella Tembisa Ndabeni Abrahams, South Africa's

Minister for Small Business Development, highlighted opportunities in agriculture, livestock, technology, power, and manufacturing. She said that "the halal market, engineering capabilities, and technological expertise of Pakistan present significant opportunities for collaboration. Our countries not only share business interests but also have strong cultural and historical ties, and this summit reflects our shared commitment to growth."

Ganief Hendricks, Deputy Minister for Social Development, praised PSCTF's role in fostering closer relations, even suggesting that its Chairman, Mr. Rafiq Memon, could represent South Africa in Parliament for his dedication to strengthening bilateral trade. He further relayed offers from South African traditional leaders willing to provide land for Pakistani investors to establish factories.

Other notable speakers included Neil Pollock (SACCI), Rhoda Masupye (NRCS), Ngadiman Ramela (Gauteng Tourism Authority), Thabile Nkunjana (NAMC), Dr. Kenny S. Hlela (Gemini Advisory), and Donnee Kruger (TIKZN). They collectively emphasized that the summit's success lies in PSCTF's leadership and commitment, which brought together government ministers, business leaders, and community representatives under one platform.



Delighted in receiving lifetime achievement award from Government Pakistan. This is presented in Jeddah through Pakistan consulate in a big reception of Pakistan independence day. This is due to, dedication and passion to continuously promoting Pakistan in last many decades.

Regards: Mohammed Amil Usmani

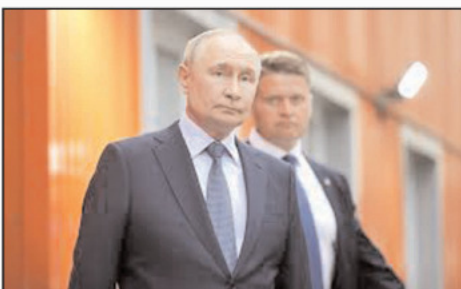
## Putin's offer for Ukraine war peace deal takes shape

Russia would relinquish tiny pockets of occupied Ukraine and Kyiv would cede swathes of its eastern land which Moscow has been unable to capture, under peace proposals discussed by Russia's Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump at their Alaska summit, sources briefed on Moscow's thinking said. The account emerged the day after Trump and Putin met at an air force base in Alaska, the first encounter between a US president and the Kremlin chief since before the start of the Ukraine conflict.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is due to travel to Washington on Monday to discuss with Trump a possible settlement of the full-scale war, which Putin launched in February 2022. Although the summit failed to secure the ceasefire he said he had wanted, Trump said in an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity that he and Putin had

discussed land transfers and security guarantees for Ukraine, and had "largely agreed". "I think we're pretty close to a deal," he said, adding: "Ukraine has to agree to it. Maybe they'll say 'no'." The two sources, who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, said their knowledge of Putin's proposals was mostly based on discussions between leaders in Europe, the US and Ukraine, and noted it was not complete.

Trump briefed Zelenskyy and European leaders on his summit discussions early on Saturday. It was not immediately clear if the proposals by Putin were an opening gambit to serve as a starting point for negotiations or more like a final offer that was not subject to discussion. Ukrainian Land For Peace At face value, at least some of the demands would present huge challenges for Ukraine's leadership to accept.



## Mona J Salon Marks 19th Anniversary with Jashan-e-Azadi Celebrations



evening's celebrations.

The event not only marked nearly two decades of success but also reinforced Mona J Salon's commitment to creating beauty, fostering connections, and delivering exceptional experiences. The management expressed gratitude to everyone who contributed to making the day memorable and looked forward to many more years of growth, creativity, and cherished moments.

KARACHI: Mona J Salon proudly celebrated Jashan-e-Azadi and its 19th anniversary in a grand gathering with staff and valued clients. The event was filled with patriotic songs, warm smiles, heartfelt conversations, and a vibrant atmosphere, reflecting the salon's long-standing values of unity, beauty, and excellence. Guests enjoyed delicious food catered by Cafe Cafeela, while the salon's dedicated staff impressed everyone with stunning decorations. Photographer Zeeshan Bhatti beautifully captured the day's highlights, preserving precious memories for years to come. Adding to the lively spirit, singer Vince Victor Daniel delivered soulful performances that elevated the



## US-India trade talks scheduled for August delayed

A planned visit by US trade negotiators to New Delhi from August 25-29 has been canceled, delaying talks on a proposed bilateral trade agreement, Indian business and financial news network NDTV Profit reported on Saturday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The current round of negotiations for the proposed bilateral trade agreement is now likely to be deferred to

another date, the report said, dashing hopes of some relief before the August 27 deadline for the additional tariff on Indian goods kicks in.

Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump imposed an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods, citing New Delhi's continued imports of Russian oil in a move that sharply escalated tensions between the two nations. The new import

tax, which will come into effect from August 27, will raise duties on some Indian exports to as high as 50% - among the highest levied on any US trading partner.

Trade talks between New Delhi and Washington collapsed after five rounds of negotiations over disagreement on opening India's vast farm and dairy sectors and stopping Russian oil purchases.

## Indonesian Consulate in Karachi Commemorates 80 Years of Independence with Unity and Cultural Celebration



On Sunday morning, 17 August 2025, the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Karachi held flag hoisting ceremony commemorating the 80th Anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Indonesia. The ceremony was presided over by H. E. Mr. Dewanto Priyokusumo, Charge de Affairs of the Consulate.

This year's celebration was anchored in the theme "Bersatu Berdaulat Rakyat Sejahtera Indonesia Maju," which translates to "United, Sovereign, Prosperous People for a Progressive Indonesia." The ceremony was attended by Indonesian citizens living in Karachi, including mixed-married families of Indonesian and Pakistani descents, as well as Indonesian students, all participating in a solemn and respectful manner.

In his address, H. E. Mr. Dewanto Priyokusumo con-

veyed key messages from President Prabowo's national address, which underscored the critical importance of freedom from poverty and hunger, as well as the necessity for economic sovereignty to meet the needs of the populace. He called upon all segments of society to unite in the pursuit of independence ideals by upholding the rule of law and combatting corruption. President Prabowo also highlighted the government's achievements in enhancing welfare through initiatives such as the Free Nutritious Meals program and infrastructure development, emphasizing the vital role of education in fostering a healthy and productive generation.

After the ceremony, Indonesian diaspora in Karachi were entertained with various fun engaging games and Indonesian traditional dishes. The celebration was a sensory feast, bring-



ing the exquisite flavors of Indonesia to Karachi.

These activities created atmosphere of joy and camaraderie, thereby strengthening the bonds of friendship among Indonesian families residing in Sindh Province.

This celebration not only marked Indonesia's significant journey toward independence but also reinforced the spirit of unity and collaboration among its citizens, both domestically and abroad.

Notably, both Indonesia and Pakistan shared independence days momentum on the same month of August, respectively 14 August for Pakistan and 17 August for Indonesia. This resemblance may bring the two biggest Muslim countries mutual understanding and common goals to foster the relation between the two independent nations.

## Hamas condemns Israel's Gaza relocation plan as 'new wave of genocide'

Palestinian group Hamas said on Sunday that Israel's plan to relocate residents from Gaza City constitutes a "new wave of genocide and displacement" for hundreds of thousands of residents in the area. The group said the planned deployment of tents and other shelter equipment by Israel into southern Gaza was a "blatant deception". Hamas said in a statement that the deployment of tents under the guise of humanitarian purposes is a blatant deception intended to "cover up a brutal crime that the occupation forces prepare to execute".

Gaza residents will be provided with tents and other shelter equipment starting from Sunday ahead of relocating them from combat zones to the south of the enclave "to ensure their safety," the Israeli military said on Saturday. This comes days after Israel said it intended to launch a new offensive to seize control of northern

Gaza City, the enclave's largest urban centre, in a plan that raised international alarm over the fate of the demolished strip, home to about 2.2 million people. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last Sunday said that before launching the offensive, the civilian population will be evacuated to what he described as "safe zones" from Gaza City, which he called Hamas' last stronghold.

The shelter equipment will be transferred via the Kerem Shalom crossing in southern Gaza by the United Nations and other international relief organisations after being inspected by defence ministry personnel, the military said. A spokesperson for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs expressed concern over Israel's plans to relocate people to southern Gaza saying it would only increase suffering.





## Journalist Khawar Hussain found shot dead in Sanghar

ISLAMABAD: Khawar Hussain, a Karachi-based journalist and reporter for Dawn News channel, was found shot dead on Sunday in Sanghar, police said. Hussain had been sitting in his car for hours outside a private hotel on Hyderabad Road in Sanghar city, according to police. DIG Faisal Bashir said CCTV footage from outside the hotel is under review. At one point, according to Dawn News reporter Asim Khan, Hussain was seen going into the restaurant in the CCTV footage.

He asked for the washroom and then returned to his car. Witnesses told the police that no sound of gunfire was heard. The car windows were rolled up, and no evidence was found of anyone nearby or any commotion around the vehicle. The DIG said call data records were being retrieved and would be available within 24 hours. The body has been placed at a Hyderabad mortuary, while the post-mortem is awaited.

Sanjhay Sadhwani, a colleague of Hussain, said the journalist had been a political reporter for 10 years, having worked with Apna News and Aaj News before joining Dawn News.

The Karachi Press Club, where Hussain was an active member, has demanded an impartial investigation and announced a three-day mourning period. Iqbal Khattak, Executive Director of Freedom Network and Pakistan representative of Reporters Without Borders, said they were working to determine the motive behind the murder of journalist Khawar Hussain. He added that all aspects of the investigation must be shared to establish whether the killing was work-related. "Sindh remains critical for safety of journalists despite having special law for protection of journalists. The commission working under this law is hoped will take the lead to get all details of this journalist's murder." -News Agency

## SC transport policy defines vehicle, security entitlements for judges

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has issued a policy regarding the use of official vehicles by judges. The policy, called the Transport Entitlement Policy for the Judges of the Supreme Court 2025, will apply to incumbent and retired judges of the apex court. According to the Supreme Court Judges (Leave, Pension, Privileges) Order 1997, read with the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights Division's letter dated 07.06.2007, on elevation, a Supreme Court judge is entitled to use two official cars up to 1800cc.

"One vehicle shall be used as the 'primary car' (for official purposes), whereas the other one as the 'secondary/family car'. The vehicles so provided shall be maintained at government expense through the budgetary allocation of the Court with POL in both the cars up to 600 litres per month (as prescribed monthly ceiling or actual use) on production of a certificate by the respective

Private Secretary of the Hon'ble Judge, as decided by the Full Court on 20.01.2010."

Each judge shall also be entitled to the provision of two drivers: one provided by the Court from regular strength and the other appointed on a contingent basis. In exceptional circumstances or on an urgent-need basis, if requisitioned, a third car may be provided subject to availability after the approval of the Registrar for a maximum period of two weeks. -News Agency



**KARACHI:** A large number of citizens are enjoying and cooling themselves as they are consuming their holidays, during pleasant evening of summer season, at Seaview Beach.

## Train derailment near Lodhran leaves one dead, injures 24

LODHARAN: A person was killed and at least 24 passengers were injured when four carriages of the Awam Express derailed near Lodhran railway station in the wee hours of Sunday. Lodhran Deputy Commissioner (DC) Dr Lubna Nazir said the injured included four women, three children, and 16 men. Of the 24 injured, 17 were given first aid and discharged, while three passengers remain under treatment at the District Headquarters Hospital but are out of danger.

Earlier, the official had reported 19 people affected; however, the number of injured rose after more passengers were pulled out of the derailed train. As per initial reports, the injured were rushed to Bahawal Victoria Hospital, where one of them succumbed to injuries. Rescue teams quickly completed evacuation

operations, pulling passengers out of the damaged coaches. "The exact cause of the derailment is still under investigation," Dr Nazir said.

Federal Minister for Railways Khawaja Muhammad Hanif Abbasi expressed grief over the death of a passenger and ordered an inquiry into the accident, directing that a report be submitted within seven days. He further instructed authorities to ensure all injured passengers receive complete medical treatment. Abbasi said no trains were affected on the up track and ordered that the down track be restored at the earliest. The train was travelling from Peshawar to Karachi when the incident occurred. The minister said train traffic on the up track has been restored, while efforts are under way to fully clear the down track. -News Agency

## Bail extended in Balaj murder case

LAHORE: A district court on Saturday extended the pre-arrest bail of Khawaja Aqeel alias Gogi Butt until September 1 in the murder case of Ameer Balaj, son of the late Arif Ameer, widely known as Tippu Truckanwala. The court directed the accused to cooperate fully with the police and formally join the investigation, which is being carried out at the Chung Police Station, where the case was originally registered.

During the proceedings, Gogi appeared in court under strict security arrangements. His counsel argued that he had been falsely implicated in the case due to enmities, maintaining that the

allegations listed in the FIR had no connection to him. The defence contended that the case was an attempt to settle scores rather than based on evidence. The investigation officer (IO) informed the court that despite earlier assurances, the accused had not yet joined the investigation.

Taking notice, the judge instructed Gogi Butt to appear before the police and cooperate in the inquiry. Earlier, Gogi Butt had secured pre-arrest bail on August 16, arguing that while he wished to cooperate with the authorities, he feared immediate arrest if he approached the investigators. The court had

granted him temporary relief, which has now been extended. The case has drawn widespread attention due to the stature of the victim's family.

In February last year, Ameer Balaj, owner of a goods transport network, was shot dead during a wedding ceremony in the Chung area. His murder sent shockwaves through Lahore's transport community. Balaj was the son of the slain Arif Ameer alias Tippu Truckanwala, who himself was gunned down in 2010 at Lahore airport in a high-profile killing that exposed violent rivalries in the city's transport sector. -News Agency



**SWAT:** Federal Reserve Police officials are carrying out rescue and relief operations in flood hit areas.

## CM Gandapur announces Rs2m compensation for each flood victim in Buner

BUNER: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Saturday announced Rs2 million compensation for the families of those who lost their lives in Buner following the recent cloudburst and flash floods.

The CM visited the affected areas, reviewed the damage, and assured that restoring access roads remains a top priority. He added that while human loss cannot be com-

pensated, financial relief will be provided to cover damages.

During a briefing at the Deputy Commissioner's office, officials reported that floods damaged 5,380 houses across seven village councils, leaving 209 dead, 134 missing, and 159 injured. Gandapur will continue visits to flood-hit areas today, while additional helicopters have been requested to expedite relief and rescue operations. PTI

Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan thanked the provincial government for standing with Buner's people in this difficult time. Heavy rains and flash floods have wreaked havoc across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, claiming more than 400 lives in a matter of days. Torrential downpours triggered landslides, road collapses and swelling rivers that swept away bridges. -MD

## Dozens of villages cut off as water levels rise in Punjab rivers

LAHORE/ BAHAWALNAGAR/ CHINIOT: Rising water levels in Punjab's rivers have triggered flooding across several districts, cutting off dozens of villages, destroying crops, and forcing residents to evacuate. Authorities have set up flood relief camps and deployed rescue teams. In Kasur, the Sutlej River overflowed, inundating multiple villages and severing road links.

According to PDMA, water discharge at Ganda Singh Wala headworks has reached 75,000 cusecs, with the Sutlej recorded at 19.60 feet at Kikar Post this morning. Officials fear further water release from India's Harike Headworks

could worsen the situation. Crops and hundreds of acres of farmland have been devastated. Rescue 1122 teams are using boats for evacuations, while flood relief camps provide medical aid, rations, and livestock fodder.

In Zafarwal, Nullah Dek is experiencing high flood levels with 22,000 cusecs of water flowing—just 8,000 cusecs short of maximum capacity. Villages including Lehri Kalan and Dioli have been submerged, with crops and houses damaged. Rescue teams have set up four relief camps and issued flood warnings for nearby settlements. In Bahawalnagar, embankments along the Sutlej

have collapsed, allowing floodwaters to spread into farmlands. Authorities have imposed Section 144 to prevent public gatherings. Several villages, including Toogera Sharif and Rajeka, face heavy erosion, with rescue teams actively relocating residents.

In Chiniot, the Chenab River is witnessing low-level flooding, carrying over 110,000 cusecs of water. Villages such as Sahmal, Pir Kot Taja Da, and Kharkan have been inundated, submerging crops and settlements. District authorities are moving families to safety, with five relief camps already operational. -News Agency

## Initial autopsy shows journalist Khawar Hussain died by suicide

HYDERABAD: The initial autopsy of the journalist Khawar Hussain, whose body was found in his car, has indicated that he died by suicide, police said on Sunday. Hussain, a young journalist associated with a private news channel, was found dead in his car in mysterious circumstances Saturday night on Hyderabad Road in Sanghar, SSP Sanghar Abid Baloch told reporters. As per the initial post-mortem report, the bullet recovered from his head was fired from his licensed pistol.

"The evidence so far indicates suicide," a civil surgeon involved in the examination said. Police said they have collected fingerprints, CCTV

footage and other material for forensic review. Video evidence shows Hussain entering and leaving a local restaurant twice before returning to his vehicle, where he stayed for nearly two hours, investigators said. Police have also recovered one of the two mobile phones in use, while the other remains missing.

The investigators say it may have been misplaced, dropped, or left behind, and efforts are underway to trace it. The recovered device has been sent for forensic analysis. According to police, the investigation is being conducted "with minute attention to detail" to establish the exact sequence of events leading to

the journalist's death. The journalist had been stationed in Karachi for nearly 10 years, working with different media organisations during his career. The tragic incident drew a quick notice from Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, who asked the provincial police chief to submit a report at the earliest. Shah directed the Sindh Inspector General of Police (IGP) Ghulam Nabi Memon to assign the case to the best investigators and leave no stone unturned in the investigation. He also offered condolences to Hussain's family, prayed for their strength, and instructed the administration to extend them support. -News Agency

## Sindh government dispatches aid to flood-hit regions

KARACHI: The Sindh government has dispatched a water filtration plant to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and 10 trucks loaded with ration bags and other essential food items for the flood-affected families, a statement said. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah also held a telephonic conversation with the governor of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and extended condolences over the loss of lives caused by the floods.

The Sindh CM Secretariat also established contact with the GB CM Secretariat to coordinate possible assistance. CM Shah conveyed deep grief over the loss of lives in GB and assured

that the Peoples Party government will extend every possible support to the flood-hit population of the region.

"The Sindh government shares the pain of our brothers in Gilgit-Baltistan and will provide all possible assistance in the time of need," he affirmed. Meanwhile, the CM held a meeting with a high-powered Ethiopian delegation to discuss climate change cooperation, mass plantation and green development initiatives. The delegation, led by Ethiopia's Ambassador Dr Jemal Bekir Abdula, briefed the CM on the Green Legacy Initiative, under which Ethiopia has planted more than 40 billion trees since 2019. -MD



**HYDERABAD:** IBA Test passed candidates are holding protest demonstration for demanding appointment letters, at press club.

## Pakistan reaches critical environmental tipping point as forest cover shrinks by 18%

ISLAMABAD: Experts have warned that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the rest of Pakistan have reached a critical environmental tipping point due to 18% decline in the country's forest cover exposing the environment, economy, and national security to serious threats. The News reported on Sunday. Deforestation, the destruction of rangelands, forest fires, and climate change-related threats are directly contributing to devastating floods, landslides, and cloudbursts. Since 1992, forest area has decreased by 18%, while rangelands are producing only 20-30% of their potential biomass, with KP having the largest share in this decline.

The catastrophic floods of 1992, 2010, and 2025 prove that the destruction of forests and rangelands has turned the

watersheds of the upper regions into "flood factories". Environmental experts say forests in Pakistan are not just trees but the country's first line of defence for the environment, economy, and national security. They absorb rainwater to prevent flash floods, recharge groundwater, protect agricultural land from erosion, and sustain soil fertility for farming.

They balance the climate by reducing temperatures, storing carbon, and regulating rainfall. The forests also provide fuel, fodder, fruits, medicines, and tourism opportunities while protecting biodiversity. They shield the country from floods, landslides, and droughts, safeguarding infrastructure, agriculture, and human settlements. The conclusion is clear without urgent restoration

and strict measures. Pakistan faces severe environmental and economic risks but with effective policies and action forests can play a decisive role in securing the nation's future.

In Pakistan, forest cover has dropped from 3.78 million hectares in 1992 to 3.09 million hectares in 2025—an 18% reduction. Annual deforestation, which was on peaked at about 40,000 hectares in 1992, has declined due to government intervention to 11,000 hectares in 2025, but international organisations say that even today, Pakistan continues to lose about 11,000 hectares of forest annually. Alarming situation Rangeland area has fallen from 60% to 58% and rangeland biomass production has dropped from 100% of potential yield to just 20%. -News Agency

## Increasing Incidents of Divorce and separation cause Psychological disorders, resulting in committing of serious crimes in society

(Karachi) It is unbelievable that a mother who is the symbol of love, affection, peace, and security for her children could commit such a heinous, horrible crime like the one which has been witnessed in defense phase viii on Thursday, 14th August 2025. A divorced woman, "Adeeba," who was living separately after the divorce, was allowed to meet with her children, and her ex-husband often sent the children, eight-year-old Zamar and four-year-old Samia, to their mother's home at DHA phase VIII. Similar happened on 14th August when children were sent to

meet their mother, but this resulted in one of the most horrible and gruesome incidents.

Adeeba called her ex-husband and told her that she had killed two children. When the father of the two children reached there, he saw that both children had been slaughtered by their mother. This is the second incident, as a few days before, a father committed suicide, throwing himself with his two children into the sea. Such incidents shook the whole society, and people demanded serious steps to protect the children. There

is a need to promote tolerance, and parents, grandparents, and other elders should play their due role to patch between couples.

Before or after divorce, both husband and wife consult with a psychiatrist, and children, when they meet with their mother, there must be someone to monitor and protect the children. Lawyers and judges try their best to discourage divorce, and every effort must be made for reconciliation and patching up. Religious scholars and ulema should also play their role, and this topic must be discussed at Friday sermons.

## Govt extends Hajj application deadline

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has announced a one-day extension in the deadline for receiving applications under the government's Hajj-2026 scheme. According to ministry spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt, designated banks will continue accepting applications on Monday, August 18, under the "first-come, first-served" policy.

However, the ministry's online portal, which remained open until midnight on August 16, will not be made operational again. The spokesperson said that more than 110,000 applications had been received over the past 12 days, while around 7,000

seats remain vacant under the official quota. He clarified that once all seats are filled, the receipt of applications will be stopped immediately.

Applicants, as reported by The News, are required to deposit Rs500,000 for the long-duration package and Rs550,000 for the short-duration package.

The federal cabinet recently raised the government's share of the Hajj quota from 50% to nearly 67% as a move officials said had helped restore public confidence in the official scheme. The government's quota also includes 2,000 seats reserved for hardship cases and 1,000 for the labour community. -News Agency