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Institutional reforms to ease burden on national exchequer, says PM

Cabinet Committee proposes curtailing 150,000 vacant government posts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Cabinet Committee on Institutional Reforms Friday recommended for curtailing 150,000 vacant positions, banning contingency recruitment, and outsourcing non-core services like cleaning, janitorial work, which will gradually phase out many positions in grades 1 to 16.

In a meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, for reducing public sector size and expenses, the committee, chaired by the Federal Finance Minister, presented its recommendations for right-sizing in the federal government departments. The Ministry of Finance was asked to oversee the cash balances of other federal ministries.

The committee provided a detailed briefing on recommended reforms for five federal ministries: the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, the Ministry of State and Frontier Regions, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, the Ministry of Industry and Production, and the Ministry of National Health Services.

The committee proposed merging the Ministry of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan with the Ministry of State and Frontier Regions (SAFRON).

The proposal involves closing 28 institutions across these five ministries, transferring the Privatization Ministry and some other ministries to federal units, and merging 12 institutions within these ministries.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister directed that these proposed reforms should be approved by the Federal Cabinet and that a comprehensive plan for their implementation be presented.

He emphasized that curtailing government expenditure was his top priority.

The goal of the government's institutional reforms was to lessen the burden on the national treasury and enhance the quality of services provided to the public, he said.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Rightsizing of Government Size.

COAS vows to support youth for prosperous Pakistan

Army Chief appreciates Arshad Nadeem's remarkable achievement at Paris Olympics, attributes his commitment, perseverance

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Friday appreciated Arshad Nadeem's remarkable achievement of winning Pakistan's first-ever gold medal in a singles' event and setting a new Olympic record in javelin throw, attributing it to his commitment, perseverance, and passion for excellence.

The Army Chief hosted a ceremony at Army Auditorium GHQ to honour Olympian Arshad Nadeem's historic achievement in Paris Olympics 2024 here, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The COAS highlighted Arshad's inspirational journey from humble beginnings to achieving greatness, emphasizing the importance of hard work and determination.

The Army Chief recognized Arshad Nadeem's achievement as a national pride and highlighted that he has been honoured by the complete nation befitting his achievement.

The COAS reaffirmed the commitment to support and empower not only sportsmen, but the entire wealth of Pakistani youth to achieve excellence towards a prosperous Pakistan. The COAS highlighted the need for Youth Engagement, Development and Entertainment as essential cardinal points of a healthy and prosperous society.

The event was attended by sports teams and legendary olympians including 1984 Olympic and National Hockey Teams, National Cricket Team, Street Football Team, Army Polo Team, Visually Impaired Cricket and Women Goal Ball Teams, Medal Winners of Common Wealth, SAF and Asian Games and participants of Paris Olympics 2024. Notable legends included Jehangir Khan, Isalsh Ud Din, Shahbaz Senior, Sohail Abbas, Muhammad Asif and Aisam-ul-Haq. The event was also attended by Arshad Nadeem's close relatives, associates and coaches. Athlete, Arshad Nadeem expressed gratitude and emphasized the immense potential of Pakistani youth, stressing the importance of hard work, positivity, and perseverance in overcoming challenges and achieving success.

PM hails Punjab govt's historic relief Nawaz Sharif announces Rs 14 per unit electricity relief in Aug, Sept bills

PML-N supremo blames Imran-led govt for skyrocketing inflation

LAHORE (APP): In a significant move aimed at providing financial relief to the people of Punjab, Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has announced a reduction in electricity prices.

Addressing a news conference alongside Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Friday, he revealed that the Punjab government would provide a relief of Rs 14 per unit for electricity bills up to 500 units for the months of August and September.

The decision, according to Nawaz, comes after careful reduction of expenditures across various sectors, allowing the government to allocate Rs 45 billion towards this relief effort. The move is expected to ease the financial burden on citizens during these hard months. He highlighted that this is not the first relief effort from the government. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had announced similar support for consumers rising up to 200 units of electricity per month.

Nawaz Sharif emphasised that the Punjab government's actions demonstrate the deep concern of his party, the prime minister, and the chief minister for the lives of ordinary citizens.

He also mentioned another significant project introduced by the chief minister, which involves providing solar panels to people in need. The project, with an estimated budget of Rs 700 billion, aims to bring comfort to poor, lower-middle, and middle-class citizens.

He expressed his hope that these measures would alleviate the financial strain on the common people and praised both the PM and the CM for their commitment to the welfare of citizens.

He called on other provinces to follow Punjab's example and take similar steps to improve the lives of their people. He also reflected on the government's ongoing efforts over the past six to seven months to provide relief to the public.

Reflecting on past political challenges, Nawaz Sharif lamented that Pakistan's progress had been repeatedly disrupted by conspiracies against him.

He recalled how his government had successfully managed the economy, reducing interest rates to 5.25 per cent and maintaining a stable dollar rate. He questioned who was responsible for the current economic challenges, including the high interest rates and the return of the IMF. He especially named the PTI chief for this situation and financial crunch facing by the country.

Nawaz Sharif concluded by vowing to stay connected with the people and continue working towards the betterment of the country.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday welcomed the historic package for the electricity consumers announced by Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif under the leadership of PML-N President and former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Asim Munir presenting a shield to Arshad Nadeem, Javelin Throw Olympian Gold Medalist during a ceremony in his honor held at Army Auditorium General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan refrains foreign govts from interfering in internal affairs

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch Friday said that foreign governments should refrain from interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs.

The spokesperson of the Foreign Office stated in the weekly briefing that no information has been provided by the US government regarding Asif Merchant. Pakistan is waiting for it.

She added that the people of Bangladesh can solve their problems, but Pakistan is worried about the situation in the Middle East.

Mumtaz Zahra further said that Iran has every right to defend itself. Israel should be held accountable for such actions.

The spokesperson of the Foreign Office also stated that Israel's humanitarian atrocities are continuing in Gaza. 40,000 innocent civilians have been killed in Gaza so far. Pakistan condemns the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza. Israel should be held accountable for the genocide in Gaza.

She continued to say that Indian atrocities are continuing in Occupied Kashmir, Pakistan condemns the martyrdom of four Kashmiris in Occupied Kashmir. United Nations should take notice of human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir.

Mumtaz Zahra said that Pakistan has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Iraqi government regarding arrangements for pilgrims.

Talking about the health issues, the spokesperson stated: "We have seen the World Health Organization (WHO) advisory on monkeypox, the Ministry of National Health can only give a formal response in this regard". The spokesperson of the Foreign Office added that there are active diplomatic missions of Pakistan and Afghanistan and there are high-speed contacts in all areas of mutual relations between the two.

PTI has nothing to do with arrests of former army officers: Gohar

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar has clarified that he has not accepted the resignation of PTI Punjab president Hammad Azhar.

Responding to a query on recent arrests of former army officers, Gohar said that he had already given his statement on this issue.

Barrister Gohar further said, "Arrests of Faiz Hameed and others have nothing to do with the party and leadership. Our stand on the current arrests is clear."

He urged that speculations should not be made on this issue.

The PTI chief said that the army has its code of conduct. He asserted that a military trial of a civilian cannot take place.

Arrest of retired military personnel internal affair of Pakistan: Pentagon

WASHINGTON (Online): US Department of Pentagon Defence has said arrest of retired military personnel is Pakistan internal affair.

US Department of Pentagon Defence Press Secretary Maj Gen Patick Ryder has said in a statement there is stable partnership between Pakistan and US. Arrest of retired military personnel is internal matter of Pakistan. US is committed to work with Pakistan.

The spokesperson further said US will continue to help Pakistan for regional security and achievement of common objectives.

The military and political leadership from both the countries continue to hold talks. We are aware of report and causes of arrest of retired military personnel.

Ishaq Dar declares arrest of Gen (Retd) Faiz Hamed a miracle

ISLAMABAD (Online): Declaring the arrest of Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed a miracle, deputy Prime Minister (PM) Ishaq Dar has said such thing have happened for the first time.

I was also among the affects of Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed. Gen (Retd) Faiaz had apologized to me in the mid of October, he said this while talking to journalists in Parliament house Friday. The dirty politics has reduced the country to miserable condition, he alarmed. The 24th world economy has lowered to 47th position due to dharnas and dirty politics, he regretted.

Due to restrictions on passport thousands of Pakistanis could not return to Pakistan, he stated.

Bomb blast targeting police van injures four in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): A remote-controlled device bomb blast, targeting a Police van in the Pir Bala area on Warsak road, injured four people including two policemen here on Friday.

According to Rescue 1122 authorities, the Police van was patrolling on Warsak Road and upon reaching at Pir Bala area was targeted by the blast.

Among the injured two were policemen and two were passersby who all were rushed to Lady Reading Hospital for treatment.



Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif addressing the press conference along with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz in Lahore.

Installation of firewall, closure of internet challenged in IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Petition has been filed in Islamabad High Court (IHC) against closure of internet owing to installation of firewall.

The petition was filed on Friday making cabinet secretary, IT secretary, and interior secretary respondents. PTA and ministry of human rights are also included in the respondents.

Security forces kill three terrorists in N. Waziristan

RAWALPINDI (INP): Security forces have killed three terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) area of Razmak, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Friday.

"On 16 August 2024, security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in the general area of Razmak, District North Waziristan, on the reported presence of Khwarji," the army's media wing said in a statement.

"During the conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between the troops and Khwarji, as a result of which, three Khwarji of Fitna al Khawarij were sent to hell, while one Kharij got injured." Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the terrorists, who were actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces as well as the targeted killings of innocent civilians, it added.

The statement further said that the process of sanitisation in the area is underway to eliminate any other terrorists found in the locale as security forces are determined to wipe out the menace of "khawarij" and terrorism from the country.

KP minister Shakeel Ahmad resigns over 'corruption, bad governance'

CM says he has already sent a summary to de-notify the minister

PESHAWAR (INP): The development came days after incarcerated PTI founder Iman Khan, in a stern message from Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, warned members of his party's government in KP that they would be held accountable for corruption and governance issues in their departments.

Shakeel said that he had sent his resignation to KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

The development came days after incarcerated PTI founder Iman Khan, in a stern message from Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, warned members of his party's government in KP that they would be held accountable for corruption and governance issues in their departments.

In line with the directions of Khan, the PTI constituted a three-member committee to monitor corruption and governance in KP, where the party formed government after the February 2024 general elections.

It should be noted that Khan decided to constitute the committee after provincial minister Shakeel, during a meeting with him in jail, complained about embezzlement in various departments of KP.

PNS Hunain visits Turkish Ports of Golcuk, Aksaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): The newly commissioned Pakistan Navy Ship HUNAIN, during maiden voyage from Romania to Pakistan, visited Turkey and participated in EX TURGUTREIS-X with Turkish Coast Guard Ship GELIBOLU.

The exercise focused on various Joint Maritime Operations with the aim to enhance interoperability between both Navies, a Pakistan Navy news release said. Earlier, PNS HUNAIN visited Turkish Naval ports at Golcuk and Aksaz. Upon arrival at the ports, the ship was received by Senior Officials of Pakistan Embassy and Turkish



Navy: During stay at Golcuk, Commanding Officer of PNS HUNAIN called on Turkish Navy Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Kadir Yildiz and Commander of Golcuk Naval Base Rear Admiral Ali Tuna Baysal.

During the meeting, professional matters of mutual interest and enhancement of bilateral cooperation between both the navies were discussed. During stay at port Aksaz, Commander 2nd Destroyer Squadron of Turkish Navy, Commodore Captain Cenk TASLI along with Commanding Officer of TCG GELIBOLU visited onboard ship and appreciated Navy's role.

Governor KP lauds efforts of ICRC, suggest to improve health, education sectors

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday lauded the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and suggested to improve health and education sectors.

He said this during a meeting with Nicolas Lambert, Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), at the Governor House. Edith Joseph, the ICRC Sub-Delegation Head for Peshawar, was also present during the meeting.

During the discussion, the ICRC delegation briefed the Governor on the services provided by

the organization. A detailed report was presented, outlining the ICRC's initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially in the merged districts. The report highlighted improvements in the capacity of hospitals and the provision of essential medicines in districts such as Khyber, Kurram, and Bajaur. The ICRC emphasized its commitment to supporting families affected by disasters in Pakistan.

The delegation also shared their ongoing efforts to address emergency situations and natural disasters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through partnerships. The ICRC has

previously provided substantial relief to earthquake and flood victims in 2010 and 2022.

The Governor Kundi acknowledged the valuable contribution of the ICRC in the province's relief activities, particularly during natural disasters.

Faisal Karim Kundi suggested that the ICRC focus on enhancing health and education services in the merged districts.

He noted the significant impact of environmental changes and terrorism on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, emphasizing the need for better health and education systems in the province's rural southern districts.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi is called on by ICRC delegation Head in Pakistan Nicolas Lambert at Governor House.

KPCM calls for immediate implementation of Ehsaas Rozgars, Housing Programs

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has emphasized urgent need to address the issue of unemployment in the province.

He has directed the immediate finalization and implementation of Ehsaas Nauwan Rozgar, Ehsaas Hunar and Ehsaas Rozgar Programs.

Similarly, in order to cater for the housing needs of low income house holds in the province and raise their socio-economic

Gul Khan appointed as focal person for merged areas

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, has appointed former MNA from Bajaur, Haji Gul Zafar Khan, as the Focal Person to the Chief Minister for merged areas.

According to a notification issued by the CM Secretariat, his services will be provided on an honorary basis without any compensation or remuneration.

13 killed in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 13 people were killed and 1,356 others injured in 1,236 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many 611 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 745 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The data analysis showed that 704 drivers, 33 underage drivers, 132 pedestrians, and 481 passengers were among the victims of road crashes. The statistics showed that 284 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 319 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by Faisalabad with 84 accidents and 74 victims, and at third Gujranwala with 72 accidents and 70 victims.

Punjab Governor says: Everyone should play a positive role for development and stability of the country

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan today visited the residence of Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. During the meeting parliamentary affairs and the current situation of the country was discussed. Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq expressed good wishes for Punjab Governor.

Speaking on this occasion, Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that everyone should play a positive role for the development and stability of the country. Governor



LAHORE: Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan during his visit to residence of Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq discussed the parliamentary affairs and the current situation of the country.

IPO enhances collaboration with PIPRA

KARACHI (APP): In a bid to promote transparency and inclusivity in the intellectual property (IP) sector, the Chairperson of IPO-Pakistan, Ambassador (Rtd.) Farukh Amil, met with a delegation from the Pakistan Intellectual Property Rights Association (PIPRA).

The discussions centered on IP-related challenges, including Pakistan's accession to international agreements, amendments to IP laws, and fee structures. The Chairperson emphasized the crucial role of the private sector in advancing the IP system.



RAWALPINDI: Members of the Christian community held a protest demonstration outside the Press Club against the Jaranwala incident.

LHC reserves verdict on petition against disruption of internet services

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday reserved its verdict on a petition filed against the disruption of internet service across the country. The single bench, comprising Justice Shakil Ahmed, heard the petition filed by Advocate Nadeem Sarwar. During the proceedings, the court summoned a federal law officer and ordered him to seek instructions from the relevant quarters until 12 pm, while adjourning the hearing for a short while.

PDWP approves two development schemes

LAHORE (APP): The 18th meeting of Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) FY 2024-25 was held under the chairmanship P&D Board Chairman Barrister Nabeel Ahmad Awan, in which two development schemes of Social Welfare and SHC&ME sector were approved with an estimated cost of Rs 3366.896 million.

The approved schemes are as follows: CM Himmat Card Programme for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) at the cost of Rs 2,658.120 million. Establishment of Paeds Burn Centre at Children Hospital, Lahore at the cost of Rs 708.776 million Secretary P&D Board Dr Asif Tufail, Chief Economist P&D Board Masoud Anwar, Members P&D Board, Head of relevant departments and other representatives of the relevant provincial departments attended the meeting.

UNDP GLOG-II project benefiting people massively

PESHAWAR (APP): The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recently hosted an exposure visit for journalists, showcasing the significant achievements of the GLOG-II Project. The visit provided journalists with a firsthand view of the project's impact on local communities across the targeted valleys, says a press release issued here on Friday.

During the visit, journalists observed several key achievements of the GLOG-II Project including 70 channels, 19,859 meters in length, benefiting 9,512 men and 9,262 women, protection walls of 178 schemes, benefiting 15,354 men and 14,955 women.

They also observed base Platforms for 61 systems installed.

Slope Stabilization and Bio Engineering: 13 schemes covering 280 hectares, benefiting 4,957 men and 4,859 women.

Renovation of PMD Observatories: 5 observatories renovated.

Renovation of Conservation Sites for Forest Department: 2 sites renovated in Utror and Kalam.

International News

Gaza ceasefire negotiations extend to another day as death toll exceeds 40,000

Monitoring Desk
DOHA: Negotiators were to meet in the Qatari capital Doha on Friday in an effort to hammer out a Gaza ceasefire agreement as Israel continued to slam targets in the Palestinian enclave. Gaza health officials reported separately on Thursday that the death toll there had surpassed 40,000 people after more than 10 months of fighting.

This round of negotiations opened on Thursday, and the talks would resume on Friday for a second day, Qatari and US officials said.

A US official briefed on the discussions in Doha, who declined to be identified, told Reuters that Thursday's talks were "constructive."

"This is vital work. The remaining obstacles can be overcome, and we must bring this process to a close," US national security spokesperson

John Kirby told reporters at the White House. Israel, meanwhile, pressed its assault on Gaza. Gaza health officials said at least six Palestinians were killed on Thursday night in an Israeli air strike on a house in Jabalia in northern Gaza Strip. Israeli troops earlier hit targets in the southern cities of Rafah and Khan Younis. In a statement issued late on Thursday on Telegram, Hamas politburo member Hossam Badran said Israel's continuing operations were an obstacle to progress on a ceasefire. Hamas officials did not join Thursday's talks.

Badran said the talks must move toward implementation of a framework agreement accepted previously and achieve a complete ceasefire, withdrawal of Israeli forces, return of displaced Palestinians and



Pheu Thai Party's leader Paetongtarn Shinawatra reacts during a press conference after the Thai parliament confirms her as the country's next prime minister, in Bangkok, Thailand.

UN rights chief deplors 'grim milestone' of 40,000 Gaza dead

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: The UN human rights chief on Thursday deplored the "grim milestone" of 40,000 Palestinians reported killed in Israel's 10-month assault on Gaza, accusing the country's military of breaking the "rules of war".

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk blamed Israel for the soaring death toll in the territory.

The health ministry in

Mpox kills 548 in DR Congo this year

Monitoring Desk
KINSHASA: The Democratic Republic of Congo said on Thursday an mpox outbreak has killed 548 people there this year, as the first case outside Africa of the virus's more dangerous variant was recorded in a traveller in Sweden.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Wednesday declared the mpox surge in Africa a global public health emergency, worried by the rise in cases in the DRC and the spread to nearby countries.

Thaksin's daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra is elected Thailand's prime minister

Monitoring Desk
BANGKOK: Thailand's Parliament elected Paetongtarn Shinawatra as prime minister Friday, continuing the legacy of the political dynasty that began with her father Thaksin Shinawatra, one of Thailand's most popular but divisive political figures.

Thaksin, a former Prime Minister, was ousted by a military coup in 2006, which triggered decades of deep political divisions. Paetongtarn appears to be the beneficiary of a deal her father made with his old conservative foes, allowing the populist party led by her to take power while pushing aside the more progressive party that finished first in last year's election.

Paetongtarn becomes Thailand's third leader from the Shinawatra family, after her billionaire father, who returned from exile last year, and her aunt Yingluck Shinawatra, who lives in exile. Paetongtarn also is Thailand's second female prime minister after her aunt, and the country's youngest leader at 37.

As the only nominee, she was confirmed by 319 votes in favor, with 145 against and 27 abstentions. Paetongtarn is the leader of the Pheu Thai party, the latest of a string of parties linked to Thaksin. She is not an elected lawmaker as that was not required for her to be a candidate for prime minister.

"I really hope that I can make people feel confident, that we can build opportunity and quality of life," she said.

"I hope that I can do my best to make the country go forward."

Iran hackers target Harris and Trump campaigns: Google

Monitoring Desk
SAN FRANCISCO: Google confirmed that hackers backed by Iran are targeting the campaigns of US presidential rivals Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. A hacker group known as "APT42" linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps went after high-profile individuals and organizations in Israel and the United States, including government officials and political campaigns, according to a threat report released by Google.

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris's campaign said Tuesday it had been targeted by foreign hackers, days after rival Donald Trump's campaign suggested that it had been hacked by Iran.

"In July, the campaign legal and security teams were notified by the FBI that we were targeted by a foreign actor influence operation," a Harris campaign official told AFP. "We have robust cybersecurity

White House says deals struck to cut prices of popular Medicare drugs that cost \$50 billion yearly

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The Biden administration said Thursday that drug price negotiations will knock hundreds of dollars — in some cases thousands — off the list prices of 10 of Medicare's most popular and costliest drugs.

The discounts, agreed to after months of negotiations with drug manufacturers, range between 38% and 79% on the medication's list price, which is the cost of medication before discounts or rebates are applied — not the price people actually pay for prescriptions.

Medicare spent \$50 billion covering the drugs last year and taxpayers are expected to save \$6 billion on the new prices, which do not go into effect until 2026. Older adults could save as much as \$1.5 billion in total on their medications in out-of-pocket costs. Administration offi-

Jamaica declares southern state of emergency after Sunday night killings

Monitoring Desk
KINGSTON: Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness declared a state of emergency in the Caribbean nation's southern Clarendon parish after eight people were killed in separate gun attacks on Sunday night, including a seven-year-old boy.

"This is an opportunity for the government to mobilize fully to have a very serious focus on gangs," Holness told a press conference at his office. "We cannot allow murders to be normalized in our country."

The prime minister did not immediately detail what regulations would be imposed, but these can typically involve nightly curfews, longer detention periods without formal charges and the ability by police to search properties without warrants.

In Beirut, US envoy says 'no more time to waste' on Gaza ceasefire

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Visiting US envoy Amos Hochstein warned Wednesday the clock was ticking for a Gaza ceasefire that could also help end 10 months of cross-border exchanges between Lebanon's Hezbollah and Israel.

His Lebanon trip comes a day before ceasefire negotiations between Hamas and Israel are set to resume, with top diplomats scrambling to avert all-out war after Iran and Hezbollah vowed revenge for recent high-profile killings.

Hochstein told a Beirut news conference that he and parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally, discussed "the framework agreement that's on the table for a Gaza ceasefire, and he and I agreed there is no more time to waste and there's no more valid excuses from any party for any further delay."

"The deal would also help enable a diplomatic resolution here in Lebanon and that would prevent an outbreak of a wider war," Hochstein said.

UK police charge two teenagers with right-wing terror offences

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Two teenagers suspected of extreme right-wing terror offences will appear in court in London on Friday, with police saying they both face "extremely serious charges".

Metropolitan Police (the Met) said that an 18-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman were charged on Thursday following a "proactive investigation" by its Counter Terrorism Command unit.

