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US Vice President says more emphasis on lower oil prices

Detailed News On Page-01

General Jawwad appointed UN force commander

Detailed News On Page-08



Ahsan pushes Pharma industry for more exports

Detailed News On Page-02



Meets Natalie Baker

DPM reaffirms Pak commitment to regional peace

The US envoy lauded Pakistan's constructive role in promoting stability across the region and extended felicitations to the Deputy Prime Minister on Pakistan's Independence Day. She underscored Washington's appreciation for Islamabad's efforts in fostering dialogue and building bridges among regional stakeholders

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A. Baker called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday, where discussions focused on Pakistan-U.S. bilateral cooperation and evolving regional dynamics. During the meeting, Senator Dar highlighted the positive trajectory of Pakistan-U.S. relations, stressing that dialogue and diplomacy remain the cornerstone of lasting peace. He reiterated that the implementation of the Islamabad MoU of June 18 in letter and spirit is essential for advancing mutual understanding. The Deputy Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to regional peace and security while safeguarding national interests. The U.S. envoy lauded Pakistan's constructive role in promoting stability across the region and extended felicitations to the Deputy Prime Minister on Pakistan's Independence Day. She underscored Washington's appreciation for Islamabad's efforts in fostering dialogue and building bridges among regional stakeholders. Pakistan's role in the broader Middle East and South Asia was also discussed. Officials noted Islamabad's quiet but significant contribution to the U.S.-Iran dialogue process, where Pakistan has consistently advocated for de-escalation and peaceful resolution of disputes. Diplomatic sources suggest that Pakistan's backchannel facilitation has helped keep communication lines open between Washington and Tehran, reinforcing Islamabad's reputation as a credible peace broker. In addition, Pakistan's trilateral defence cooperation with Türkiye, Saudi Arabia,

Continued on Page 06

UK envoy calls on Dy PM

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: UK High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar. DPM/FM appreciated the positive momentum in Pakistan-UK relations. He recalled his recent meeting with UK Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila and highlighted the importance of sustained high-level contacts. They discussed key areas of mutual interest and ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation. Recent regional and international developments also figured in the discussion. DPM/FM stressed that the Islamabad MoU should be implemented by the parties in letter and spirit and reaffirmed that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only way forward to address outstanding issues. The UK High Commissioner conveyed warm wishes on Pakistan's Independence Day. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar spoke today with Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty. FM Badr Abdelatty extended warm greetings on Pakistan's Independence Day to the leadership, government

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at the President House, on Friday. – DNA

President, PM hold important meeting

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday appreciated the efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Field Marshal and Chief of Defence Forces, Syed Asim Munir for transforming the longstanding fraternal ties among Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan into a stronger strategic partnership. PM Shehbaz called on the president at the Aiwan-e-Sadr and felicitated him on the occasion of Independence Day, a statement said. The prime minister briefed the president on the "historic" Makkah Joint Defence Agreement reached among Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan on August 7. Under the agreement signed during the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit for Joint Defence, an armed attack against any one of the three countries would be regarded as an attack against them all.

Continued on Page 06

GCC condemns attack on UAE tankers in Hormuz

JD Vance says the United States is now placing greater emphasis on maintaining lower oil prices rather than focusing exclusively on Iran's nuclear program

NEWS REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has strongly condemned the recent attack on United Arab Emirates (UAE) tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, calling it a "dangerous escalation" that threatens maritime security and global energy supplies. The GCC urged the international community to take swift measures to ensure the safety of shipping lanes in one of the world's most critical oil transit routes. The statement emphasized solidarity with the UAE, noting that such acts of aggression not only endanger regional stability but also undermine global economic security. The GCC reiterated its commitment to safeguarding freedom of navigation and

Continued on Page 06

Iran grants 'general approval' to strategic action plan

DNA

TEHRAN: A senior Iranian official has said the general principles of a strategic action plan to manage the Strait of Hormuz have been agreed upon in a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Councils, Al Jazeera reports, citing Iranian media. Valiullah Bayati, a spokesperson of the committee, told Iran's Tasnim news agency that "the strategic

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Balochistan home minister unhurt in attack

DNA

QUETTA: Six people, including three police personnel, were injured in an armed attack on the convoy of Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove in Mastung on Friday. A senior police official told Dawn that the home minister remained unhurt in the attack, which occurred as his convoy reached the Khad Kocha area of Mastung. He said that Langove was on his way to Quetta from Kalat. The official added that six people sustained bullet injuries in the attack, three of whom were police personnel. Nawab Raisani Memorial Hospital's Dr Sana also confirmed to Dawn that six injured had been brought to the hospital and two of them were in serious condition. She said two of the others were referred to Quetta. Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation. Langove, who is from the Balochistan Awami Party, was sworn in as provincial home minister in March.

Senate, NA sessions on Aug 17

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday approved summaries forwarded by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, including one for the summoning of the National Assembly and the Senate on August 17. In a post on the social media platform X, the President's Secretariat said, "The president has approved the awarding of military honours to 1,172 personnel from the armed forces and civil armed forces." "The president has approved summoning the National Assembly session on August 17 at 5pm and the Senate session at 4pm," it added.

After wildfires Hundreds evacuated from resorts in Croatia and Greece

The European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service warned of "very extreme" conditions across a large area of central and eastern Europe, with additional pockets over southern Britain, Ireland, northern France and southern Sweden

NEWS DESK

OMIS: A wildfire engulfed homes in a picturesque Croatian resort overnight, injuring 40 and forcing 1,200 to evacuate, officials said, as EU officials warned that pockets of "very extreme" wildfire conditions were stretching right across the continent. Hundreds more were evacuated from a beach resort in northern Greece and from a village in southwest France, while a major grass fire engulfed houses in England, officials said. Record-breaking heat and drought that scientists link to climate change have created ideal conditions for wildfires across Europe this summer, especially in France, Spain and Greece. The Balkans region has also endured several heatwaves. Flames enveloped settlements and trees over 1,000 hectares, around Omis, a scenic town on Croatia's prized Dalmatian coast surrounded by trees and rocky hills, officials said. The blaze turned the night sky red. The fire "swept everything in its way ... there has been huge material damage," Chief Fire Commander Slavko Tucakovic said. The fire appeared to have calmed on Friday morning with no open flames, he added. Of 40 people treated by ambulance services, seven were in a serious condition, health officials said. In northern Greece, people wearing face masks, some clutching children or pets, boarded dinghies and boats in the seaside town of Siviri as the fire ate through a forest and columns of smoke turned the cloudless sky a dark grey.

Continued on Page 06

Afghan soil being used against Pak, Naqvi tells Espen

During the meeting, Eide lauded Pakistan's "constructive and active" role in the US-Iran war. The two sides also discussed measures taken against illegal immigration to Europe from Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday met with Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, where the two sides discussed counterterrorism cooperation, particularly the use

of Afghan soil in terror attacks against Pakistan. Eide arrived in Pakistan a day earlier on a two-day visit – the first by a Norwegian foreign minister in a decade. According to a handout issued by the interior ministry, the two leaders discussed strengthening bilateral relations and the regional situation. Naqvi and Eide also agreed to improve cooperation in counterterrorism, prevention of illegal immigration, police training, and mutual legal assistance. The two sides held discussions on the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan and the activities of proscribed organisations operating from the neighbouring country.

Continued on Page 06





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Progress towards economic stability highlighted

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) commemorated the 79th Independence Day of Pakistan with a flag-hoisting ceremony at SBP Karachi. The SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad hoisted the national flag to mark the occasion. Addressing the ceremony, he said that Pakistan's economy has made important progress towards stability during the past year, supported by prudent fiscal and monetary policies, and greater economic discipline. He said that the country is continuing to move from economic stabilisation towards sustainable growth. Highlighting developments in price stability, the Governor noted that average inflation during FY26 was 7.1 percent. He said that SBP's assessment is that the current monetary policy stance remains appropriate to maintain inflation within the 5-7 percent medium-term target, while providing adequate room for economic activity, investment, and job creation. Ahmed said that prudent fiscal and monetary policies have also supported economic growth, which stood at 3.7 percent in FY26. Economic growth is expected to remain between 3.5 and 4.5 percent in FY27. He added this is an encouraging indication that the economy is continuing to move towards sustainable growth following a period of stabilisation.

Referring to developments in the external sector, the SBP Governor said that overseas Pakistanis have expressed their confidence in the country's economic progress through record remittances, which exceeded USD 41 billion in FY26 and are expected to reach USD 44 billion in FY27. The increase in remittances and a low current account deficit are contributing to the improvement in the country's foreign exchange reserves, which reached USD 18.4 billion by end-FY26. Reserves are expected to exceed USD 21 billion during FY27, he added.—APP

Aug 14 symbol of faith, freedom, national resolve

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Friday said August 14 was not merely a date but a symbol of faith, freedom, sovereignty and national resolve. Addressing the national Independence Day ceremony at the Convention Centre in Islamabad, he said the day reminded the nation of the historic struggle of Muslims of the subcontinent. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry and other government officials attended the ceremony. A large number of people, students and artists, also attended the event. Students and artists presented national songs on the occasion. Gilani paid tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and those who sacrificed their lives during the Pakistan Movement. He also paid tribute to the martyrs who laid down their lives for the security and defence of the country.—APP

Kundi reaffirms support for security forces on I-Day

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday hoisted the national flag at the Governor House here during a dignified ceremony held to mark Pakistan's 79th Independence Day, reiterating the nation's resolve to work for peace, stability and prosperity. A smartly turned-out police contingent presented a guard of honour, while Iranian Consul General Ali Banafsheh Khah also attended the ceremony. The event began with the national anthem, followed by a special prayer for Pakistan's progress, prosperity, peace and stability. Governor Kundi and the Iranian Consul General also cut a cake to celebrate the Independence Day. Speaking to the media, the Governor extended heartfelt greetings to the nation on Independence Day and expressed gratitude to Allah for the blessing of living in a free country.

Referring to the inauguration of the Yad-gare-Fateh monument in Islamabad on Thursday night, he said President Asif Ali Zardari inaugurated the memorial in the presence of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif,

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the chiefs of the armed forces and ambassadors from various countries. The Governor paid tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country's sovereignty and security. He also lauded the officers and personnel of the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps, Police and other security forces for their invaluable services and sacrifices, saying the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stood united with the security forces for lasting peace, security and development. Commenting on Pakistan's diplomatic role during the Iran-US tensions, Governor Kundi said Pakistan played a positive and responsible role that was appreciated internationally. He said the Prime Minister, the Field Marshal, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Interior Minister made significant contributions towards regional peace and stability. He urged the nation to remain united and play its role in ensuring Pakistan's progress, prosperity and stability. On the occasion, Iranian Consul General Ali Banafsheh Khah congratulated the government and people of Pakistan,

particularly those of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on the country's 79th Independence Day.

He said Iran was also celebrating the 79th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Pakistan and reaffirmed his country's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation in culture, trade and economy. The Consul General appreciated Governor Kundi's efforts in promoting relations between the two neighbouring countries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and expressed best wishes for Pakistan's peace, prosperity and continued progress. He reiterated Iran's commitment to further strengthening the bonds of friendship and brotherhood between the two countries. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, in his message on the 79th Independence Day, extended heartfelt greetings to the nation, particularly the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and said August 14, 1947, marked a historic milestone achieved through the visionary leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the unparalleled sacrifices of the founding generation. —APP

Ahsan pushes pharma industry for \$10b exports

The minister also called for regulatory reforms that ensure compliance and quality while facilitating industry growth, urging stakeholders to identify administrative and regulatory hurdles that restrict expansion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday called for a one-month industry-wide consultation to identify priorities, reforms and government support needed to develop Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector into a competitive, innovation-driven and globally export-oriented industry. Chairing a roundtable with pharmaceutical industry stakeholders, the minister said the sector must build on its record \$457 million exports in FY2025, the highest in 20 years, and contribute substantially to the national ambition of achieving over \$100 billion in exports by 2035. Adviser to the Prime Minister for Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan and Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal also attended the meeting. Ahsan Iqbal said the proposed consultation should involve industry, academia and research institutions and produce a clear medium- and long-term roadmap extending to 2030 and beyond, identifying regulatory, administrative, financing, production and market-access barriers and the support required from the government. "The question is whether, in the next 10 years, we can make Pakistan a pharmaceutical hub of the world," he said, stressing the need to build missing links in domestic and international value chains so that "Made in Pakistan" becomes a mark of quality and trust in global markets. He said the government's role was to facilitate the private sector, create a conducive business environment and ensure policy continuity to enable industries to grow, innovate and compete globally. The pharmaceutical sector recorded Rs523 billion in revenue in FY2025, up 19.4%, while the industry currently has 662 manufacturers. Its roadmap envisages increasing exports from \$457 million to \$2 billion, followed by \$3 billion through PharmEx within three years and \$10 billion within eight years. The minister stressed that international regulatory compliance and quality standards must remain central to the export strategy. Pakistan currently has access to 52 WHO Level 2 markets, while WHO Level 3 status is targeted for April 2027, potentially opening access to more than 150 markets. He called for identifying regulatory gaps to enable more Pakistani companies and products to enter sophisticated international markets and for diversifying export destinations. Ahsan Iqbal also stressed reducing import dependence, noting that around 85% of active pharmaceutical ingredients



(APIs) were imported, with China supplying about 85-90% of them. He called for greater focus on research, innovation, technology and higher-value manufacturing to strengthen the domestic value chain. He urged stronger linkages among universities, pharmacy departments, research institutions and pharmaceutical companies, saying Pakistan's investments in laboratories and human-resources development must translate into commercially relevant research and innovation. The minister also called for regulatory reforms that ensure compliance and

quality while facilitating industry growth, urging stakeholders to identify administrative and regulatory hurdles that restrict expansion. He asked the industry to respond with clear priorities, measurable export targets, identified bottlenecks and practical recommendations, while assuring full government support to create a "clean runway" for the sector's expansion into global markets. The roundtable was part of a consultative series organised by the Planning Commission to promote Pakistan's high-value export sectors and clusters.

Sindh CM vows to rehabilitate drug-affected kids

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to rehabilitating children affected by drug addiction and psychological trauma, pledging to provide them with education, skills, and opportunities to become productive and respected members of society. The Chief Minister made these remarks while addressing an Independence Day ceremony organised by the Aas Foundation at Haji Sakhiyo Goth, where he hoisted the national flag, cut the Independence Day cake, and joined children, women, persons with special needs, and recovering drug addicts in celebrating Pakistan's 79th Independence Day. Provincial Ministers Mukesh Kumar Chawla, Tariq Talpur, and Saleem Baloch accompanied the Chief Minister. He was received by Aas Foundation Chairman Abdul Rehman Allana, members of his family, and Dr Fauzia Sadiq. The ceremony began with a flag-hoisting event and the national anthem, followed by special prayers for Pakistan's progress, prosperity, and national unity. The event highlighted the values of patriotism, social inclusion, and service to humanity. Addressing the gathering,

CM Murad Ali Shah said that Pakistan came into existence 79 years ago through the vision and leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, adding that Sindh holds a unique place in the country's history as the Sindh Assembly was the first legislature to pass a resolution supporting the creation of Pakistan. The Chief Minister said he had personally met children undergoing rehabilitation and was deeply encouraged by their aspirations. "Some of these children want to become doctors, some engineers, and others wish to serve in the Pakistan Armed Forces," he said. He stressed that the government's responsibility extends beyond treatment and rehabilitation. "Today, some of these children have been abandoned by their families, but we will rehabilitate them, educate them, and equip them to become useful and dignified members of society. Once they rebuild their lives, their families will proudly accept them again," he said. Murad Ali Shah emphasised that the true progress of Pakistan can only be achieved when every individual is given equal opportunities to succeed. He described the rehabilitation of people affected by drug ad-

diction and psychological trauma as a national responsibility and assured that the Sindh Government would further strengthen its collaboration with rehabilitation centres and social welfare organisations. "The education, training, and welfare of special children and individuals recovering from addiction remain among our top priorities. Rehabilitation must be accompanied by vocational training and employment opportunities so that people can re-integrate into society as productive citizens," he said. Earlier, CM Murad visited the Children's Primary Unit and Children's Halfway House, where he met children, women, persons with special needs, and individuals recovering from addiction and psychological trauma. He interacted warmly with the children, inquired about their well-being, and encouraged them in their educational and rehabilitation journeys. The children briefed the Chief Minister on their activities and achievements, while foundation chairman Abul Rehman Allana informed him about treatment, rehabilitation, and educational programs being implemented at the facility.—APP

I-day celebrated across KP with zeal, enthusiasm

PESHAWAR: Like other parts of the country, the 80th Independence Day was celebrated across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with traditional zeal and enthusiasm. Functions and events were held all over the province to mark the day and to highlight sacrifices of Muslims for creation of separate homeland in subcontinent. Functions and events were held in all government offices in connection with independence day celebrations. A impressive ceremony was held in Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines Peshawar that was attended by Inspector General Police KP, Zulfiqar Hameed, Capital City Police Officer, Dr. Mian Saeed and high ranking police officials. Tribute was paid to martyrs and commitment was reiterated to work for country's progress and prosperity. Flags were hoisted on all police stations to mark the day. A impressive flag

hoisting ceremony was held at office of Commissioner Peshawar Division that was attended by Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsum, Secretary Regional Transport Authority Qaiser Khan along with officers and staff of the commissioner's office, attended the event. Participants expressed their commitment to national unity, patriotism and the preservation of Pakistan's independence. Special prayers were offered for the security, sovereignty, peace, stability and progress of the country. A dignified flag-hoisting ceremony was held at the Corps Headquarters in Peshawar on the occasion of Independence Day wherein Corps Commander hoisted the national flag. The national anthem was played followed by a special prayer for the security, progress, and prosperity of the country. On the occasion, the Corps

Commander Peshawar addressed the officers and soldiers and highlighted the significance of Independence Day. Chief Justice Peshawar High Court, Justice S.M. Attique Shah hoisted national flag on court premises and extended warmest felicitation to legal fraternity and people on independence day. The ceremony was attended by judges of High Court, former judges, Principal Staff Officers, representatives of KP Bar Council, Peshawar High Court Bar Association and District Bar Association. A smartly turned out police contingent presented guard of honor while police band played the National Anthem. The Chief Justice emphasized that the true meaning of independence lies in an impartial, accessible and progressive justice system that protects the fundamental rights of every citizen. He reaffirmed the Peshawar High Court's commitment to moving beyond traditional paradigms by embracing technology and innovation for speedy and transparent justice.—APP

Modern policing requires tech, community engagement

NATHIAGALI: Deputy Inspector General of Police Hazara Nasir Mahmood Satti has said that modern policing is no longer confined to crime prevention and enforcement of law, but also requires the effective use of modern technology, intelligence, community policing and strong public engagement to maintain peace and ensure quality public service. He expressed these views while addressing the Criminology Summer School 2026 seminar organized by the University of Peshawar's Bara Gali Campus, where he attended as the chief guest. DIG Satti said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, in line with the vision of Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed, was taking practical measures to provide free justice and modern, technology-based services to citizens. He said the establishment of Police Facilitation Centres was an important step in this regard. Twenty Police Facilitation Centres had been established at tehsil level across the Hazara region, providing citizens with multiple police services under one roof. He added that various mobile applications had also been introduced to facilitate citizens, enabling them to submit complaints, suggestions and other information to police officers from their homes. The DIG said stronger interaction between police and educational institutions could play an important role in promoting respect for law, responsible citizenship and a spirit of public service among young people. He urged students to make hard work, discipline, honesty and positive thinking part of their lives and to strive for excellence in their chosen fields. He also emphasized the importance of respecting parents and teachers and benefiting from their guidance and experience. DIG Satti said the student years were a crucial stage in building the foundation for practical life, urging young people to set clear goals and work consistently to achieve them. Upon his arrival at the Bara Gali Campus, Chairman Department of Criminology Professor Dr. Basharat Hussain welcomed the DIG and briefed him about the campus and its academic activities. At the conclusion of the seminar, students asked DIG Hazara questions about policing and crime-related matters. He responded to their questions in detail.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

AUGUST

Aug 01/China
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzerland
National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01 /Syria
Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Bukino Faso
National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea
Independence Day

Aug 15/India
Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland
Armed Forces Day

Aug 17 /Indonesia
Independence Day

Aug 24/Ukraine
Independence Day

Aug 25/Uruguay
Independence Day

Aug 30 /Turkey
Armed Forces Day

Aug 31/Kyrgyz Republic
Independence Day

Aug 31/Malaysia
National Day

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

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....

PIA Flight Info.....

PIA Cargo.....

Railway Inquiry.....

Railway Exchange.....

WASA Rawalpindi.....

CAA.....

115

114

9280979

117

9270831-5

5555489

9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....

MH.....

Cantt Hospital.....

DHQ.....

RGH.....

Holy Family.....

PIMS.....

Polyclinic.....

Shifa International.....

5611111

561116

9270907-11

5556311-4

9290301-7

9290322-7

9261170-79

9218300-09

4603666



Departments

CDA.....

CDA.....

Met Office.....

RDA.....

TMA.....

Cantonment Board.....

9221334-43

9208301-04

9250360-6

5555864

5770886

9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....

Potohar Town.....

Rawal Town.....

Water Tank

Islamabad.....

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PIO hails sacrifices that made Pakistan’s freedom possible

Referring to the visits of international journalists to Pakistan during recent events, she said they witnessed the country’s peaceful environment, rich culture, spirit of harmony and hospitality, and returned with a positive impression of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Principal Information Officer Raisa Adil, in her message on Independence Day, extended heartfelt greetings to the nation and paid tribute to the martyrs and elders whose sacrifices laid the foundation for Pakistan’s freedom, security and sovereignty. She said Independence Day was a reminder of the immense sacrifices made by the founders of Pakistan, martyrs and generations of elders who struggled for the country’s creation and security. “Today, we salute all those martyrs and elders who sacrificed their lives for this country and its security. It is because of their sacrifices that we are living as free citizens in Pakistan,” she said. Raisa Adil said Pakistan was steadily strengthening its position and identity in the international community and emerging with renewed confidence and optimism. She said the country had played a constructive role in promoting regional and global peace through diplomatic engagement and efforts to prevent escalation of conflicts. Referring to the visits of international journalists to Pakistan during recent events, she said they witnessed the country’s peaceful environment, rich culture, spirit of harmony and hospitality, and returned with a positive impression of Pakistan. The Principal Information Officer said Pakistan’s engagement with Türkiye and Saudi Arabia in support of peace and cooperation was another significant development that would further strengthen the country’s role and standing in the Muslim world. She urged the nation to celebrate Independence Day with pride while remembering the sacrifices that made freedom possible and reaffirming the commitment to building a peaceful, prosperous and strong Pakistan. “Pakistan is the fulfilment of a dream, and that journey continues. Pakistan has a bright future ahead. InshaAllah, Pakistan will always remain strong and prosperous,” she said.—DNA



National cyber security operations centre inaugurated

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja inaugurated the National Cyber Security Operations Centre (NC-SOC) at National CERT, marking a major step towards strengthening Pakistan’s cyber resilience, protecting critical infrastructure and safeguarding citizens’ data. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister paid tribute to the founding and current leadership of Pakistan and congratulated the nation on the independence day. She said, that the Centre represented a new dimension of freedom and sovereignty in the digital age. The Minister highlighted that as Pakistan expands digital government, e-governance and citizen-centric services, cybersecurity must remain

at the core of digital transformation. The NCSOC will provide enhanced capabilities to monitor, detect and respond to cyber threats in real time. “As we mark 79 years of independence, I am happy to inaugurate something that protects the digital half of that independence – the National Cyber Security Operations Centre,” she said. Highlighting the achievements of Marka-e-Haq, Minister Shaza Fatima said Pakistan’s cyber defence capabilities remained actively engaged during the heightened threat environment, monitoring malicious activity, protecting critical information infrastructure and helping ensure continuity of essential digital service. She said the experience underscored that national security today extends be-

yond physical borders to the digital domain. “Independence in the digital age is not just about the services we put online. It is about our ability to defend them ourselves – with our own people, our own institutions and now, our own Operations Centre,” she added. In his presentation, Dr. Haider Abbas, DG National CERT underscored Pakistan’s progress in cybersecurity, highlighting its Tier-1, Role-Modelling status in the ITU Global Cybersecurity Index 2024, and the Pakistan Information Security Framework 2026. The NCSOC marks a significant milestone in Pakistan’s journey towards a secure, resilient and sovereign digital ecosystem, ensuring that the country’s digital freedom is protected alongside its national independence.—APP

China-Pak inked to advance cotton research collaboration

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Cotton Research (ICR) of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) and Muhammad Nawaz Shareef University of Agriculture, Multan (MNSUAM), Pakistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote long-term cooperation in cotton germplasm resources, biotechnology and related research fields. The MoU was signed during a visit by a delegation led by Prof. Dr. Asif Ali (T.I), Vice Chancellor of MNSUAM, to the ICR,

CAAS in Anyang, Henan, China this month, China Economic Net (CEN), reported on Friday. Under the agreement, the two sides will establish a long-term bilateral research cooperation mechanism and carry out joint research by leveraging their respective scientific strengths. During discussions, Asif Ali spoke positively of ICR’s research capabilities and scientific platforms and expressed expectations for future cooperation between the two sides. He outlined key challenges facing Pakistan’s cotton sector, including shrinking cultivation areas, declining yields, limited germplasm resources and increasing pressure from extreme climate conditions. He proposed cooperation in molecular breeding, gene editing, mechanized cultivation and joint laboratory development. Experts from both sides also exchanged views on cotton germplasm resource sharing, breeding disease-resistant and heat-tolerant varieties, joint training of young researchers and cotton industry chain upgrading.—APP

E-Cluster to build local manufacturing bases for clean energy

ISLAMABAD: In a pioneering move towards building local capacity in renewable energy, an “E-Cluster” model is being implemented in Pakistan with the aim of establishing an integrated clean-energy manufacturing ecosystem across the country. Qasim Kamal, Group Director of Suzhou IBI Engineering (Belt & Road Economic and Trade Center) which led the initiative, told China Economic Net (CEN) that high-end technological capabilities, manufacturing know-how, quality standards and supply-chain expertise will be progressively introduced and localized in major industrial hubs in Pakistan. “At the heart of the initiative is the transfer and localization of Chinese technology and industrial expertise. The goal is to build Pakistan’s own production capabilities and develop competitive ‘Made in Pakistan’ products and brands,” he said. Through a phased localization strategy, production will adopt a CKD (completely knocked down) assembly model in the initial stage, allowing manufacturing to begin while local capabilities are developed. Over time, the localization of key components will increase, eventually leading to the establishment of a comprehensive domestic supply chain, according to CEN’s report. “For the first time, the ‘3+3’ model is developed in Pakistan. Chinese side provides technology transfer and R&D support, manufacturing lines and integrated supply-chain

capabilities. Local partners, meanwhile, provide land, regulatory approvals and NOCs, as well as market development and sales capabilities,” Qasim introduced. Joint R&D projects are being established in cooperation with Pakistani universities and local industry partners. The aim is to cultivate indigenous research capacity, develop new technologies and pursue patent applications, creating a stronger foundation for technology-driven industrial development. The programme is also looking beyond current technologies. “Work is under way to explore hydrogen fuel-cell technologies to develop solutions capable of competing in the market in the coming years as hydrogen technologies mature,” Qasim said. Having evolved from an idea conceived in 2022 into an implementation phase in 2026, the initiative has brought four to five partners into the programme, covering areas including battery manufacturing, electric-vehicle production and energy-storage systems. Large-scale production is expected to begin within the next five to six months. Pakistan has become one of the fastest-growing new energy markets in Asia and globally, with cumulative solar PV deployed capacity reaching 38 GW by FY25, from less than 2 GW three years ago. Lithium-ion battery energy storage system (BESS) imports rose 220% year-on-year (YoY) to 4.6 GWh in calendar year 2025.—APP

Flag hoisting at SC building marks 79th IDay

ISLAMABAD: A dignified and inclusive flag-hoisting ceremony was held at the Supreme Court of Pakistan building on Friday to commemorate the 79th Independence Day. The ceremony was attended by the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Judges of the Supreme Court, the Registrar, officers, staff and their children. In a symbolic expression of Pakistan’s constitutional commitment to equality, inclusion and religious harmony, the national flag was hoisted by children of the minority community, the Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court, a Hindu Pandit, a Christian Priest, and a Muslim Cleric. The national anthem was played by the Police Band, adding a sense of solemnity and national pride to the occasion. The participation of people from diverse religious communities in the flag-hoisting ceremony underscored the message that Pakistan belongs equally to all its citizens and that the country’s strength lies in its diversity, unity and shared commitment to the ideals of the Constitution. The Chief Justice interacted warmly with the children and guided them through Court Room No.1, acquainting them with the working environment of the Supreme Court and making the occasion a meaningful and memorable experience for them.—APP

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Tarrar condoles with PM House photographer over brother's death

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarrar visited the residence of senior photographer at the Prime Minister’s House, Basit Baloch, and expressed condolences over the death of his young brother. Prime Minister’s Media Coordinator Badar Shahbaz Waraich also accompanied the federal minister. Attaullah Tarrar expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to Basit Baloch and his father over the bereavement. “The death of Basit Baloch’s brother is a great tragedy,” the minister said, adding that he and his family stood with the bereaved family in this hour of grief. He prayed to Allah Almighty to grant the departed soul a high rank in Jannat-ul-Firdous and give patience and fortitude to the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss.—APP

Press Room at the Supreme Court inaugurated

ISLAMABAD: A dedicated Press Room was inaugurated at the Supreme Court of Pakistan Friday in the presence of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afriidi, and the Judges of the Supreme Court, as part of the Court’s continuing efforts to enhance media access, institutional transparency and public awareness of judicial proceedings and reforms. The Press Room was inaugurated by Imran Waseem, President, Press Association of Supreme Court of Pakistan, and Amanat Raza Gishkori, General Secretary, Press Association of Supreme Court of Pakistan. The facility provides court reporters with a dedicated and conducive workspace within the Supreme Court, enabling timely and effective coverage of judicial proceedings and institutional activities and improved access to court-related information. The initiative complements the Supreme Court’s broader measures to expand access to information, freedom of expression and the press. By strengthening institutional connectivity with the media, it seeks to facilitate accurate and timely dissemination of information and enhance public understanding of the administration of justice.—APP

Briefs

Indonesia
envoy
reaffirms
enduring
friendship
with Pak

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo has extended warm felicitations and greetings to the government and people of Pakistan on the occasion of the country's 80th Independence Day, reaffirming the longstanding bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two brotherly nations. In his message on the Independence day of Pakistan, Ambassador Sukotjo highlighted the special significance of the August celebrations for both countries, noting that Pakistan observes its Independence Day on August 14, while Indonesia celebrates its Independence Day just three days later on August 17. The envoy said the close timing of the national days provided a unique opportunity for both nations to celebrate their shared spirit of independence, friendship and solidarity. The ambassador emphasized that Indonesia-Pakistan relations were rooted in longstanding historical, religious and cultural connections, which have continued to bring the peoples of the two countries closer together. The Ambassador noted that Indonesia and Pakistan have maintained more than 75 years of diplomatic relations marked by mutual respect, trust and cooperation. Bilateral engagement has expanded over the years in a number of important areas, including trade, defence, culture and people-to-people contacts. Ambassador Sukotjo also highlighted the efforts of the Embassy of Indonesia in Islamabad to promote stronger ties between the two countries through cultural activities, community festivals and exhibitions showcasing Indonesia's rich heritage. He said initiatives aimed at expanding business-to-business linkages were also contributing to greater economic cooperation and creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses in both countries. The ambassador expressed hope that the historic friendship between Indonesia and Pakistan would continue to deepen, with increased cooperation in diverse fields for the mutual benefit of the two nations.—APP

SSP orders
heightened
vigilance

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza on Friday visited Faisal Mosque and the G-6 Imambargah during Friday prayers to review security arrangements, directing deployed personnel to remain on high alert and intensify action against suspicious persons and criminal elements. An ICT Police spokesperson told APP that the SSP met police officers deployed at both places and personally reviewed security measures and checking arrangements. Qazi directed the personnel to perform their duties with complete vigilance, commitment and professional responsibility, stressing that there should be no compromise on security during religious gatherings. He ordered officers to maintain a close watch on suspicious individuals and criminal elements and take prompt action in accordance with law wherever required. The SSP Qazi stressed that honesty, integrity and professional policing were essential to controlling crime and providing a secure environment to residents of the federal capital. He also directed personnel conducting security checks to treat citizens with respect and courtesy, while ensuring that established security procedures were implemented effectively. "Making citizens feel safe and protected is our responsibility," Qazi said, adding that protection of lives and property and effective control of crime remained top priorities of Islamabad Police.—APP

Int'l Youth and Humanitarian Law Days marked

PRCS urges youth to champion humanity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) observed International Youth Day and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Day 2026 with a ceremony titled "Youth as Advocates for a Better Tomorrow" at its National Headquarters. International Youth Day was observed under the theme "Different Contexts, Common Aspirations." The event was attended by ambassadors and diplomats, humanitarian and relief organizations, Heads of Delegation and representatives of IFRC, ICRC, Norwegian Red Cross, Turkish Red Crescent (K z lay), German Red Cross, PRCS staff and volunteers. Addressing the gathering, PRCS Chairperson Mrs. Farzana Naek highlighted the crucial role of youth in promoting humanity, protecting dignity and building a better future. Referring to the recent launch of the Red Million Initiative, she said PRCS strengthening its volunteer network by equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, training and confidence required to serve communities and support vulnerable people during emergencies. Mrs. Naek said PRCS was also preparing youth to address emerging humanitarian challenges, including IHL, protection and harmful information. She urged young people to become responsible advocates of humanity both online and in their communities, emphasizing the importance of verifying information before sharing it and promoting understanding rather than division. IFRC Head of Delegation Mr. Andreas von Weissenberg highlighted the growing humanitarian impact of harmful information, referring to the World Disasters Report 2026, which identifies it as a de facto humanitarian crisis that can undermine access to aid, erode trust, destabilize social cohesion and increase risks for humani-



tarian personnel and communities. He appreciated the leadership of PRCS, its staff and volunteers in advancing awareness and action on this emerging challenge. In his welcome address, PRCS Secretary General emphasized that the convergence of the two observances highlights the vital role of youth in promoting humanity and protecting dignity. He said volunteers are the backbone of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the strength of PRCS, with young volunteers contributing to disaster response, first aid, health, social welfare and community resilience. He also underscored the importance of IHL, responsible communication and continued Movement support. The program featured

an interactive session on International Humanitarian Law, moderated by ICRC Legal Advisor in Pakistan Mr. Usman Khan, beginning with a video presentation and followed by a question-and-answer session. A documentary on the history of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the auxiliary role of PRCS was also screened, along with video messages from IFRC and ICRC regional representatives on harmful information, misinformation and disinformation. Volunteer-produced documentaries from the Youth Mentorship Programme were showcased, while a powerful tableau on "Misinformation and Crisis Response" highlighted the effects of harmful information during emergencies and received

strong appreciation from the audience. Certificates were distributed among Youth Mentorship Programme graduates, while shields were presented to representatives of PRCS Youth Clubs in recognition of their humanitarian services. A special shield was awarded to Mr. Imran Shah, an RFL volunteer serving at the Humanitarian Service Point at the Pak-Afghan Chaman border, for his outstanding contribution and dedicated service to the Restoring Family Links Programme. The ceremony concluded with appreciation for PRCS staff, volunteers, youth clubs and Movement partners for their continued commitment to strengthening humanitarian action, volunteerism and community resilience across Pakistan.

Chinese language
experience course launched
at Islamabad museum

ISLAMABAD: A four-day Chinese language and culture experience course kicked off on Monday, bringing together approximately 50 Chinese and Pakistani students, guests and staff in a hands-on celebration of shared heritage under the banner "The Language of the Eastern Silk Road – Bridging China and Pakistan, Celebrating Shared Cultural Splendor", CEN reported. Held at the Department of Archaeology and Museums (DoAM) through August 13, the program is organized by the China Cultural Center in Islamabad, DoAM, and the Pakistan-China Cultural and Economic Promotion Association. The curriculum packs six sessions each running 60 to 90 minutes, covering contents from Pinyin basics and Chinese character strokes to calligraphy, traditional festivals and a dumpling-making session that promises to be as tasty as it is educational. "Language and cultural exchange are vital to strengthening people-to-people contacts and further deepening the enduring friendship between our two countries," said Pakistani Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi at the opening ceremony. He highlighted that while political, economic and infrastructural cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor remains robust, "the true foundation of the bilateral relationship lies in people-to-people contacts and cultural exchange." Cultural Counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Chen Peng, drew attention to the deep historical threads connecting the two civilizations, with the Silk Road as a living bridge. He singled out the cultural resonance between Gandhara and Dunhuang, noting that bilateral cooperation in archaeology and heritage protection has delivered encouraging results. "Through mutual learning and the protection of cultural heritage, we can write a new chapter of shared understanding," he said. For Bai Jie, chairperson of the Pakistan-China Cultural and Economic Promotion Association, the real magic happens when participants move beyond screens and textbooks. "When the first Chinese character is written on rice paper, and when dumplings made by their own hands are served steaming hot, those distant stories suddenly acquire warmth, flavor and tangible form," she told China Economic Net. The course comes at a time of surging demand for Chinese language learning in Pakistan and reflects a shared commitment to cultural and educational investment, a cornerstone of the all-weather strategic partnership that has now flourished for 75 years. With a mix of lively drills, artistic expression and culinary fun, the course offers participants a taste of China that goes far beyond words.—DNA

Panel discussion
on youth and
Pakistan held at
IMCG G-10/4

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Model College for Girls (Post-graduate), G-10/4, Islamabad organized a thought-provoking panel discussion on "Youth and Pakistan" in connection with independence day celebrations. The event brought together distinguished scholars, writers, academics, and renowned personalities from diverse fields to engage students in an inspiring dialogue on the meaning and significance of independence. Professor Dr. Ehsan Akbar presided over the ceremony, while Professor Saadia Ibrar, Principal of the college, hosted the event. Before the discussion commenced, Professor Saadia Ibrar warmly welcomed and thanked the distinguished guests and delivered an insightful address highlighting the importance of independence and the value of Pakistan as a free nation. She emphasized the need for young people to under-

stand the sacrifices behind independence and to recognize their responsibility towards the country. The distinguished panelists included Honourable Hameed Shahid, Dr. Ravesh Nadeem, Dr. Sanobar Altaf, Amad Azhar, Dr. Farhat Asif, and Nasir Ali Nasir. The programme commenced with a vibrant cultural dress show, in which students beautifully presented the traditional attire and cultural heritage of Pakistan's provinces. The presentation reflected the country's rich cultural diversity and created an atmosphere of national pride and celebration. During the panel discussion, the speakers explored the meaning of independence, its importance, and the responsibilities that come with freedom. They highlighted the role of young people in nation-building and encouraged students to contribute positively to the progress, unity, and development of Pakistan. The discussion provided students with an opportunity to listen to diverse perspectives and reflect on their role as responsible citizens. In his concluding address, Professor Dr. Ehsan Akbar emphasized that independence is among the greatest blessings bestowed by Allah Almighty and that the nation should remain grateful for the freedom it enjoys. He encouraged the younger generation to value this blessing and play a constructive role in the future of the country. The event proved to be an intellectually stimulating and thought-provoking experience for the students, leaving them with a deeper appreciation of independence, national identity, and their responsibilities towards Pakistan.

Rana celebrates I-Day with
Danish school students

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan celebrated Pakistan's 79th Independence Day with Daanish School students in Islamabad on Friday, calling them the torchbearers of the country's future and urging them to turn the privilege of education into a lifelong mission of excellence, national service and unity. Addressing the students at the Independence Day ceremony, Rana Mashhood said youth empowerment is aimed at breaking barriers of privilege and opening the doors of opportunity for talented children from every corner of Pakistan. He said Daanish School students had earned their place through a merit based selection process from across the country, describing the initiative as a decisive move away from the culture of influence and personal connections. "We have ended the culture of invitation," he said, stressing that talent, rather than privilege, should determine a child's opportunity to succeed. Rana Mashhood said children from less privileged backgrounds possessed extraordinary potential and, when given quality education and a level playing field, could surpass even those who enjoyed greater opportunities. Citing the recent achievement of a Danish School student who secured second position across Punjab in board examinations, he said the success is a powerful testament to the ability and resilience of Pakistan's young generation. He said students from Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Waziristan, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan and other regions are a living embodiment of Pakistan's diversity and national strength. Referring to the sacrifices made by the

people of these regions for Pakistan, Rana Mashhood said the country is built through the blood, courage and determination of its elders and must never be allowed to be weakened by hatred or division. He invoked the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, saying the creation of Pakistan had transcended provincial and ethnic identities. "There is no Sindhi, Balochi, Pathan, Punjabi or Kashmiri today; under this green flag, there is Pakistan," he said. Rana Mashhood warned that attempts to undermine Pakistan through hatred, division and disinformation could be as dangerous as conventional threats, urging the younger generation to become guardians of national unity and cohesion. He said Pakistan had repeatedly demonstrated its resolve and capacity to defend its sovereignty and had once again shown its strength during the recent confrontation with India. He added that while direct aggression might be deterred, efforts to destabilise Pakistan through conspiracies could continue, making an educated, confident and united youth the country's strongest shield. Rana Mashhood said Pakistan would continue to raise its voice for the oppressed people of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine, while playing a constructive role in regional peace and diplomacy. Turning to the students' responsibilities, he urged them to remain steadfast in their studies, respect their teachers and parents and make the fullest use of the opportunities available to them. He also asked successful students to become catalysts for others rather than allowing achievement to create distance from those still struggling.—DNA

Jinnah's vision
continues to guide
strong Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: British-Pakistani entrepreneur and educationist Bilal Sheikh has paid tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on Pakistan's 80th Independence Day, saying the founder's vision, constitutional struggle and leadership gave the Muslims of the subcontinent a separate homeland that has grown into a strong and resilient nation of nearly 250 million people. He was speaking at an art exhibition titled "Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah: A Legacy Beyond Time," organised by the Mont Rose Foundation at the prestigious National Liberal Club on Whitehall Place in central London to mark Pakistan's Independence Day and celebrate the enduring legacy of its founding father. The event was attended by Pakistan's newly appointed High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Tipu Usman, artist Amara Rashid, prominent members of the British-Pakistani community, educationists, entrepreneurs and other dignitaries. In his keynote remarks, High Commissioner Tipu Usman said Quaid-e-Azam firmly believed in the rule of law, reasoned argument, dialogue and political negotiation, even when dealing with political differences and opponents. He said Jinnah's legacy was not only about remembering the historic struggle that led to the creation of Pakistan, but also about understanding and upholding the principles and values that guided that struggle. The High Commissioner appreciated Bilal Sheikh, CEO of the Mont Rose Foundation, for organising the exhibition and for commissioning a portrait of Quaid-e-Azam that has been permanently placed at the National Liberal Club. Sheikh, founder of Mont Rose College in London, which teaches thousands of adult students each year, said Pakistan's creation was the result of Jinnah's extraordinary constitutional struggle, political determination and commitment to securing a future in which the Muslims of British India could determine their own political, economic and social destiny.—DNA

IESCO notifies
power
suspension
programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, in Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 5 am to 10 am, Jhata Hatyal, Bhal, Jarrar Camp, from 6 am to 10 am, Chowk Pindori, feeders. In Attock Circle, electricity will remain suspended from 5 am to 12 pm, Industrial State Bathar, Lala Zar, feeders. In Jhelum Circle, electricity will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Karyala, Metro City, Grand City, Bolani, New Cantt Jhelum Saeela, Nougiran, Qazian, Chappar Sharif, feeders. Similarly, in Shakwal Circle, electricity will remain suspended from 6 am to 11 am, Abdullah Pur, Jalal Pur, Sagharpur, CWO, feeders. In GSO Circle, electricity will remain suspended from 06:30 am to 05:00 pm, 132KV T/Line MES-/Town Ckt, 132KV T/Line MES-KTM Ckt, from 06:30 am to 02:00 pm, Millatabad, Chairing Cross, Askari-Xi, from 09:00 am to 04:00 pm, 132kv AWC HMC Taxila and 132KV Sangiani-Burhan, from 08:00 am to 06:00 pm, 132KV Kahuta City- Palandri, 132KV New Wah-Bahtermore along with related earth switch, and surrounding areas. IESCO apologized to consumers for the temporary inconvenience and said electricity supply would be restored before the scheduled time if the maintenance work was completed earlier than expected.—APP

Youth
country's
most valuable
asset:VC

ISLAMABAD: Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science & Technology (FUUAST), celebrates Pakistan's Independence Day with a flag-hoisting ceremony held at Islamabad Campus. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Zabta Khan Shinwari hoisted the national flag, while university security staff presented a salute to the national flag. Faculty members, administrative officers and other university officials were also present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, the Vice Chancellor highlighted the significance of the day and unique beauty and diversity of Pakistan, saying that the country stretches from sea level to the towering heights of K2, with beautiful beaches, fertile plains and rich natural and cultural diversity.—APP

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Inside America's Sham-Marriage Industry



QAMAR BASHIR

AMERICA'S enduring attraction has created both lawful immigration and lucrative criminal markets—but the exposure of an alleged 1,000-marriage network reveals the scale, sophistication and international complications of exploiting the American dream. The United States remains one of the world's most desirable destinations. Its economic opportunities, constitutional protections, respected universities and comparatively open society attract people from virtually every region. For those living with poverty, unemployment, political repression or limited educational opportunities, America represents not merely another country but the possibility of rebuilding an entire life. Most immigrants pursue that aspiration lawfully through employment, family sponsorship, humanitarian protection, investment or diversity programs. Others enter without authorization, overstay visas or manipulate legal channels. Among the most serious abuses is marriage fraud: entering a marriage solely to evade immigration law and secure permanent residence. The scale of that underground business was exposed on August 12, 2026, when the Justice Department unsealed an indictment in the Southern District of New York charging 11 people with operating what prosecutors called one of the largest marriage-fraud conspiracies in American history. According to the indictment, the network arranged more than 1,000 sham marriages—primarily between Chinese nationals and U.S. citizens—from at least 2016 through July 2026. The charges remain allegations, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Nevertheless, the indictment provides an extraordinary picture of how organized immigration fraud can transform marriage—a deeply personal and legally protected institution—into a multimillion-dollar commodity. According to prosecutors, foreign nationals paid facilitators as much as \$100,000 for a marriage and assistance in obtaining lawful permanent residence. Participating Americans allegedly received up to \$30,000, usually in installments tied to milestones such as marriage, application submission, immigration interview and green-card approval. Recruiters could earn approximately \$5,000 for every U.S. citizen enlisted. The difference between the customer's payment and the citizen spouse's compensation reportedly financed a sophisticated supporting network. Prosecutors say facilitators, recruiters, assistants, marriage officials, attorneys, tax preparers, insurance providers and other service providers helped manufacture the appearance of genuine married life. This was allegedly not a casual exchange between two individuals. The network operated across New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida—and internationally in China and Vanuatu. Prosecutors believe the enterprise collected tens of millions of dollars over approximately a decade. Some couples allegedly met for the first time immediately before obtaining their marriage licences. They then participated in staged ceremonies, wore wedding clothes and posed for photographs designed to create a convincing romantic history. Joint bank accounts, utility services, insurance policies and tax returns were reportedly established to manufacture documentary evidence of a shared household. When USCIS interviews were required, participants were allegedly coached on how to answer questions and conceal the true nature of their relationships. Prenuptial agreements reportedly waived claims involving property,

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inheritance, child support and other marital rights—allowing participants to remain financially and personally separate while presenting themselves to the government as genuine couples. Marriage to an American citizen does not automatically guarantee citizenship. The foreign spouse must submit documentation, undergo security checks and establish that the marriage is genuine. If the marriage is less than two years old when residence is approved, the immigrant generally receives conditional permanent residence and must later petition to remove those conditions. The route is nevertheless attractive because spouses of U.S. citizens are classified as “immediate relatives” and are not restricted by the annual numerical limits governing many other family-preference categories. Criminal organizations consequently see marriage as a valuable immigration channel worth infiltrating. Marriage fraud can carry up to five years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. The defendants also face a charge of conspiring to encourage unlawful residence, carrying a maximum sentence of 10 years. Fraudulently obtained permanent residence can be revoked, while citizenship secured through concealed fraud may potentially be challenged. The consequences could extend far beyond the 11 defendants. The Justice Department says at least hundreds of allegedly fraudulent green-card applications were submitted. Investigators must now examine more than 1,000 marriages, including cases involving people who may already possess permanent residence or citizenship. Enforcement, however, must remain evidence-based. The prosecution of one alleged network must not stigmatize legitimate Chinese immigrants or international couples. Most marriage-based immigration applications are genuine, while Chinese immigrants have contributed substantially to American science, medicine, education, technology and commerce. The willingness to pay as much as \$100,000 demonstrates the continuing financial and psychological power of the American dream. Some customers may draw upon family savings, sell property or accumulate debt because they calculate that lawful employment and long-term residence in the United States will eventually repay their investment. Other Chinese migrants have taken the dangerous zouxian, or “walking the line,” route through Latin America and the U.S.-Mexico border. More than 37,000 Chinese nationals were encountered at the southwest border in fiscal year 2023—a dramatic rise from earlier years. Social-media instructions, transit countries and smuggling networks helped facilitate the journey. China officially opposes irregular migration and says it will accept people verified as Chinese nationals. Its practical cooperation, however, has been inconsistent. Beijing accepted five U.S. charter flights carrying hundreds of deportees during 2024 and initially received approximately 3,000 returnees, but its cooperation subsequently slowed. By May 2026, more than 100,000 Chinese nationals were estimated to be living in the United States without lawful status. More than 30,000 had final removal orders, while approximately 1,500 remained in immigration detention. Washington consequently considered visa restrictions under Section 243(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to pressure Beijing into accepting more verified returnees. Identity verification and missing travel documents may explain some delays. Wider U.S.-China disagreements over tariffs, technology restrictions and Taiwan may also affect cooperation. China has additionally prioritized the return of selected corruption suspects and fugitives through programs such as Operation Fox Hunt while moving more slowly on ordinary immigration cases. China's National Immigration Administration declares that illegally crossing borders, organizing unlawful migration and transporting people across national boundaries are criminal offences. Police and immigration agencies have been directed to punish migrants where legally applicable while concentrating on planners, smugglers and criminal organizers. Beijing has also conducted operations against “snakehead” networks operating along China's southwestern frontier and in neighbouring countries. Chinese authorities report dismantling groups involved in illegally transporting citizens as well as telecommunications fraud, online gambling, narcotics trafficking and other transnational offences. China's strategy is consequently multilayered: criminalize unauthorized crossings, prosecute smugglers, scrutinize suspicious departures, disrupt international transit corridors and selectively accept repatriated citizens. Its effectiveness, however, will remain limited unless Beijing consistently receives verified nationals ordered to leave the United States.

Implementing President Xi thought to advance China-Pakistan governance ties

Jiang Zaidong



SINCE the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core has put forward a series of new ideas, new thinking and new strategies centered on the major issue of the era—what kind of long-term governing Marxist party to build and how to build it—giving rise to Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building. As an important component of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building carries significant practical relevance and far-reaching guiding significance for strengthening the Party and the nation. It explicitly sets forth the “14 commitments”, namely: adhering leadership by the CPC as the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics; upholding the centralized, unified leadership of the Party Central Committee; exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance; staying true to the Party's original aspiration and founding mission; taking strengthening the Party politically as the overarching principle; building cohesion and inner strength with the Party's latest theory; forging strong Party spirit; improving the organizational system to ensure vertical coherence and effective implementation; cultivating high-caliber officials capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation; making sustained and effective efforts to improve conduct; governing the whole Party with strict discipline; taking integrated steps to ensure that officials do not have the audacity, opportunity or desire to conduct corruption; governing the Party through systems and regulations, and ensuring that the political responsibility for Party self-governance is fulfilled. The “14 commitments” represent a concentrated summary of General Secretary Xi Jinping's landmark, guiding new ideas and strategies on party building in the new era. They serve as the fundamental guideline for the CPC in strengthening party building, as well as a Chinese approach for political parties around the world to enhance self-improvement and state governance. China and Pakistan are ironclad friends and all-weather strategic cooperative partners. We are ready to deepen exchanges and mutual learning with Pakistan on party building and governance, work together to improve people's well-being and promote prosperity and development, and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. We must put people first and ensure that China-Pakistan cooperation delivers greater benefits to the two peoples. The CPC has always upheld building the Party for the public good and exercising state power for

the people. Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building explicitly stresses “remaining true to the original aspiration and founding mission”, namely to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. Back in 2012, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that our Party is dedicated to serving the people wholeheartedly; the people's desire for a better life is the goal we strive to work for. Guided by this profound devotion to the people, in the well-known poverty elimination campaign in China, General Secretary Xi Jinping set a shining example through personal commitment. He conducted more than 50 field research visits on poverty alleviation, covering all 14 contiguous poor regions across China. Based on thorough investigations, he put forward and applied the concept of targeted poverty alleviation, setting a brilliant example of integrating the power of truth with moral integrity. Under his leadership, China won the poverty alleviation campaign, built a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and embarked on a new journey of advancing national rejuvenation and building a great modern socialist country through Chinese modernization. Practice since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has fully demonstrated that the historic achievements and transformative changes in the cause of the Party and the country are fundamentally attributable to the steady guidance of General Secretary Xi Jinping as the core of the CPC Central Committee and of the Party as a whole, and to the scientific guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Under the strong leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping and the Party Central Committee, over 3 million first secretaries of CPC village committees and village-based officials, together with nearly 2 million township officials and millions of village officials, fought in unison to eliminate absolute poverty. This fully demonstrates the CPC's capacity to mobilize resources to accomplish major undertakings, and embodies two core principles highlighted in Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building, which is “adhering to the leadership by the CPC as the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics” and “upholding the centralized, unified leadership of the Party Central Committee. It is precisely because the CPC always puts people first and regards delivering people's wellbeing as its paramount achievement that it enjoys enduring popular support and stands as the most reliable backbone for the Chinese people. Beyond seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation, the CPC also strives for progress for humanity and the common good for the world. As General Secretary Xi Jinping noted, we Chinese not only aspire for good living for ourselves, but also hope people in other parts of the world lead a decent life. This is fully reflected in the development of China Pakistan relations in the new era. General Secretary Xi Jinping has always been concerned about and supported Pakistan's national development and the improvement of people's livelihoods. He and Pakistani leaders established the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries and reached important consensus on building an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. General Secretary Xi Jinping has stressed that China's friendly policy toward Pakistan is always oriented toward all Pakistani people, the planning and layout of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) should take into account all regions of Pakistan, so that the fruits of development can benefit all the Pakistani

people. To date, CPEC has brought in over 25.9 billion US dollars in direct investment, created more than 260,000 jobs, added over 8,000 MW of power generation capacity, built 510 kilometers of highways and 886 kilometers of core national power transmission networks. It has injected strong momentum into Pakistan's economic and social development and improvement of people's livelihood, served as a powerful exemplar for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and become a vivid embodiment of the China-Pakistan community with a shared future. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. General Secretary Xi Jinping has reached important new consensus with President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on advancing bilateral cooperation, which our two sides are working earnestly to implement. Less than two weeks ago, we visited the industrial park in Faisalabad. We were pleased to learn that 39 Chinese private enterprises operate there, most of them soundly run and profitable, thanks to the enabling business environment fostered by Pakistan. These enterprises also give back actively to local communities. Five ceramic enterprises alone pay nearly 20 million US dollars in annual taxes and provide more than 5 000 local jobs. There are many such inspiring examples of mutual commitment delivering tangible benefits for our peoples. We stand ready to work with Pakistan to fully apply the people-centered philosophy of development, advance both major signature projects and “small and beautiful” livelihood projects, and march hand-in-hand toward greater people's wellbeing and common prosperity. To better strengthen practical cooperation and benefit the two peoples, we must pursue mutual learning and continuously deepen exchanges on party building and governance. As changes unseen in a century accelerate and the world enters a new period of turbulence and transformation, humanity is once again at a crossroads about where to go. Political parties worldwide face the common challenge of “what kind of political party to build and how to build it”. In this turbulent world, the CPC stands firm on the right side of history and on the side of human civilization and progress. Through unremitting struggle, it has profoundly reshaped global development trends and landscape, led the people in advancing Chinese modernization and created a new form of human advancement. In this great endeavor, Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building embraces a global vision, linking the CPC's self-improvement to the future of humanity and contributing Chinese wisdom to global party governance. In particular, Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building stays committed to self-confidence, self-reliance, upholding fundamental principles and breaking new ground. It has opened new pathways for addressing internal challenges through one's own efforts, regarding “exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance” as the strategic policy for party building in the new era, advancing the coordinated efforts to ensure officials “do not have the audacity, opportunity or desire to conduct corruption” with the sense of mission that “failing several corrupt officials rather than failing 1.4 billion”, continuously promoting the Party's self-reform with the tenacity of “always being on the road”, and guiding a great social revolution through a great self-revolution, ensuring that the Party always remains the strong leadership core for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is precisely because Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building

demonstrates noble values and distinctive intellectual strength that it offers valuable reference for political parties especially in developing countries to strengthen themselves and independently explore paths toward modernization, thus contributing to progress in human political civilization. An increasing number of political parties and statesmen around the world are asking: “Why is the CPC capable?” General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that political parties in different countries should enhance mutual trust, strengthen communication and close coordination, and explore to build a new type of party-to-party relationship based on a new type of international relations, featuring seeking common ground while shelving differences, mutual respect, and mutual learning. They should establish a network of international party-to-party exchanges and cooperation in various forms and at multiple levels, pooling a mighty force for building a community with a shared future for humanity. We are pleased to see that exchanges and mutual learning between the CPC and political parties in Pakistan continue to deepen. Our two sides have signed MOUs on inter-party exchanges and cooperation, established the CPEC Political Parties Joint Consultation Mechanism, and convened the China-Pakistan Political Parties Forum. Each year, China invites multiple groups of Pakistani political party representatives to visit and attend conferences in China, and continues to support “small and beautiful” livelihood projects in Pakistan through platforms such as the Silk Road Workshop. In this milestone year of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, a high-level Pakistani political party delegation visited Hubei in May, making positive contributions to advancing sub-national cooperation. Also in May, the second China-Pakistan Political Parties Forum and Meeting of CPEC Political Parties Joint Consultation Mechanism was held, drawing leaders from 12 major Pakistani political parties. Broad consensus was reached on consolidating traditional friendship and advancing practical cooperation. On August 12th, we hosted the Symposium on Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building, putting us at the forefront of the CPC's global exchanges with political parties on party building and governance experience. We want to extend our sincere gratitude to Pakistani political parties, and stand ready to continue to implement the important consensus reached by our leaders, further expand “political party plus” cooperation on the existing basis, and carry forward our ironclad China-Pakistan friendship through successive rounds of inter-party mutual learning. We will also continue to deepen exchanges on party building and governance with Pakistani political parties, inject fresh impetus into China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperation, enable new achievements in Chinese modernization to bring new opportunities for our Pakistani brothers and sisters, and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

— Jiang Zaidong is the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan

Artificial intelligence and food fraud

Eman Saleem



WHEN we purchase honey, milk, spices or cooking oil, we expect these products to be real and safe. Despite this, these are not always the case. Globally, unethical practices such as mixing cheap ingredients with expensive foods or adding harmful chemicals to enhance appearance have become progressively common. This issue, known as food fraud, endangers consumer health, ruins business reputations, and lowers confidence in the food industry. As food production and international trade continue to grow, recognizing illegal products has become more challenging. However, advances in technology are giving new solutions and ideas. In these innovations, AI has emerged as one of the most dominating tool for protecting and providing food quality. By analyzing huge amounts of data rapidly and accurately, AI is changing the way of identifying or inspecting the food frauds. Food fraud is the intentionally harming the consumers by change or misrepresenting food products for gaining the profit. Unlike accidental or by chance contamination then,

food fraud is carried out deliberately to lowers the production costs or increase profits. Some common examples in our society are: • Diluting milk with water or other substances to gain profit. • Mixing papaya seeds with black pepper. • Adding artificial dyes to spices. • Selling sugar syrup as a name of pure honey. • Blending high-quality edible oils with cheaper ones. Although these practices may seem profitable for dishonest producers, they can have serious impact on consumer health and weakens the worth of food industry. Some food adulterants contain harmful chemicals that may lead to all food poisoning, allergies and long-term illnesses. Consumers also lose money by paying for products that are not real. In the meanwhile, honest manufacturers suffer because they cannot compete fairly with businesses that lower costs through dishonest practices. Moreover, repeated scenarios of food fraud reduce public confidence in food brands and create hurdles for countries trying to export food products to international markets. Artificial Intelligence are computer systems designed to learn from recognize patterns, information and make decisions with minimal human intervention. Instead of replacing people, AI helps experts to perform complicated or complex tasks more efficiently and accurately. In food science, AI can detect thousands of samples within a very short period of time, identify unusual patterns and detect signs of adulteration that might be difficult for the human eye to notice. AI works by collecting information from different sources such as smart sensors, laboratory instruments, and chemical analysis. It compares this information with databases containing authentic food samples. If the system finds any unusual characteristics, it quickly recognizes the product as potentially adulterated. Food inspectors can also perform additional laboratory testing practices to confirm the results. This process improves accuracy, saves time and allows food authorities to inspect far more products than traditional methods alone. Artificial Intelligence is already promising a

positive impact in several sectors of food industry. In dairy processing, AI can detect diluted milk, identify any changes in milk composition and also monitor product quality during processing and production. For spices, image identification technology can separates real products from those containing artificial colors or any foreign materials. Honey producers use AI-based chemical analysis to check fake honey prepared from sugar syrups. AI offers several important advantages: • Rapid analysis of food samples. • Consistent and reliable results. • Reduced human error. • Continuous monitoring throughout production. • Early detection of adulteration. • Improved food traceability. • Increased consumer confidence. These benefits allow food manufacturers to maintain higher quality standards while improving operational efficiency. However, AI has enormous potential, it is not without limitations. One of the greatest challenge is the high cost of purchasing and maintaining advanced equipment. Small food industries may struggle to afford these technologies. AI systems also depend on high-quality data. If incorrect or incomplete information is used during training, the system may produce inaccurate results. One of the concern is cybersecurity. Because AI depends upon digital information, protecting sensitive data from unauthorized access is very essential. Finally, skilled professionals are still required to operate AI systems, interpret results, and make final decisions or find out solutions to overcome errors. Most of the people believe that AI will eventually replace food inspectors. But actually, the reality is quite different. Artificial Intelligence is perfect at processing information rapidly and identifying patterns, but it cannot replace human judgment, scientific reasoning, or ethical decision-making. Food scientists understand regulations, evaluate unexpected situations, and make informed decisions based on their experience. AI should therefore be viewed as a powerful assistant instead of replacement for human expertise. The most effective and reliable food safety system combines

advanced technology with knowledgeable professionals. Food adulteration remains a important issue in Pakistan. Reports of adulterated milk, spices, edible oils, sweets and beverages continue to appear in the media. Although government authorities regularly conduct inspections, increasing food demand and limited laboratory facilities make complete monitoring difficult. Introducing AI into food testing laboratories could greatly improve inspection efficiency. Portable testing devices, smart quality-control systems, and AI-assisted laboratories would help to recognized adulterated products more efficiently and accurately. Collaboration with universities, government agencies, and the food industries will be necessary for making this transition successful and more efficient. Artificial Intelligence play a greater role in food safety over the coming years. Future technologies may allow consumers to verify and identify the authenticity of food products using smartphone applications connected to AI databases. Smart packaging, block chain technology, and Internet of Things devices may further improve the food traceability from farms to dining tables. These innovations have the great potential to create a safer, more transparent, and more trustworthy food systems in all over the world. To fully benefit from AI in food safety, several actions should be considered: • Invest in AI research and modern laboratory infrastructure. • Strengthen food safety laws and their implementation. • Encourage cooperation between research institutions and food industries. • Increase public awareness about food fraud. • Support small and medium-sized food businesses in adopting affordable AI technologies. • Ensure responsible use of consumer and industrial data. By embracing Artificial Intelligence responsibly, we can move towards a future where every consumer can trust that the food on their table is authentic, safe and of the highest quality.

Briefs

DPM Ishaq Dar reaffirms Pakistan commitment to regional...

FROM PAGE 01

and its own armed forces was highlighted as a stabilizing factor in the region. The defence agreement among the three countries is seen as a strategic partnership aimed at enhancing collective security, counter-terrorism efforts, and regional stability. Analysts believe this cooperation strengthens Pakistan's position as a key player in the Muslim world, capable of balancing relations between rival blocs while promoting unity. The meeting also touched upon Pakistan's broader vision for peace, which includes supporting reconciliation in Afghanistan, encouraging dialogue in the Gulf, and maintaining strong ties with both the U.S. and China. Senator Dar emphasized that Pakistan's foreign policy is rooted in constructive engagement, regional connectivity, and economic diplomacy. The U.S. envoy's acknowledgment of Pakistan's role in regional peace is being viewed as a diplomatic success for Islamabad, particularly at a time when global powers are recalibrating their strategies in the Middle East and South Asia.

UK envoy calls on Dy PM

FROM PAGE 01

and people of Pakistan, and conveyed his best wishes for continued peace, progress and prosperity. The two leaders reaffirmed the close and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Egypt and expressed their shared commitment to further strengthening cooperation across all areas of mutual interest, including through enhanced high-level exchanges and close institutional engagement. They also exchanged views on regional and international developments of mutual interest and agreed to remain in close contact.

Afghan soil being used against Pak, Naqvi tells Espen

FROM PAGE 01

During the meeting, Eide lauded Pakistan's "constructive and active" role in the US-Iran war. The two sides also discussed measures taken against illegal immigration to Europe from Pakistan. "Pakistan's effective measures have led to a 47 per cent reduction in illegal immigration to Europe," the statement quoted Naqvi as saying, adding that "a zero-tolerance policy has been adopted against illegal immigration". He said that Pakistan's measures against illegal immigration were also appreciated by the European Union. "Promoting legal immigration is very important for effectively curbing illegal immigration," he said. According to the statement, Naqvi told Eide that "Afghan soil is continuously being used for terrorism in Pakistan" and that Pakistan stood "as a wall" between the world and terrorist elements. "Everyone must work together for the complete eradication of terrorism," Naqvi was quoted as saying. He also told Eide that his visit would be an "important milestone" in strengthening bilateral relations between Norway and Pakistan. In the meeting, Eide appreciated the "active role" of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway and their contributions in sectors ranging from politics to health.

Fifa crisis timeline: From WC final to global standoff

Bypassing six regional confederations, Infantino pitches investment scheme in a letter to presidents of each of Fifa's 211 member associations

HERE is a timeline of events where Fifa president Gianni Infantino introduced a proposal to sell a slice of the World Cup's commercial future that backfired and sparked a global revolt in the sport: July 19 – The first 48-team World Cup concludes at New York New Jersey stadium with Infantino and US President Donald Trump, booed as they walked onto the pitch, presenting the trophy to Spain after their 1-0 win over Argentina. July 28 – Shortly after a leak in the British media, Fifa announces it wants to create a \$20 billion subsidiary to run the World Cup and other competitions, raising \$4.2 billion for soccer development by selling a 20% stake to external investors. Bypassing the six regional confederations, Infantino pitches the scheme in a letter to the presidents of each of Fifa's 211 member associations, promising each \$40 million if they agreed to the scheme by September 19. July 28 – European confederation Uefa criticises the move, saying Fifa's proposal "crosses a line that football's governing bodies should never cross". None of us are the owners of football. It is not Fifa's to sell," Uefa says. July 29 – Concacaf, which runs football in the Caribbean, North and Central America, says it was not consulted before Fifa came up with the proposal and that it learned of the matter through media reports and a subsequent media release. July 29 – The Asian confederation (AFC)

says it is disappointed that a proposal of such magnitude was introduced before they had the opportunity to examine it, adding that such initiatives should be based on "good governance, transparency and meaningful consultation." July 30 – Uefa nations hold a virtual emergency meeting and unanimously vote to boycott the World Cup and other Fifa competitions in protest over the proposal. "The World Cup is not for sale," Uefa says. July 30 – CONCACAF rejects Fifa's stake-sale proposal after a meeting with its 41 member associations, while the Mexican Football Federation says it will study the plan before deciding its position. CONCACAF says the discussion reinforced the need for greater transparency and proper governance. July 30 – AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa says Fifa's lack of consultation over the plan is "totally unacceptable", adding that its unilateral actions appear to undermine "the very foundations of continental football." July 31 – Fifa says it will move forward with the consultation process for the stake sale. It says the process had been disrupted by incorrect media reports and that member associations should be able to vote based on the facts. July 31 – The AFC backs Uefa and CONCACAF's opposition to Fifa's proposal, saying it "stands in solidarity" with them. July 31 – Infantino senior adviser Carlos Cordeiro resigns in protest, calling the proposal "a bad deal for football".

"Let me be clear: I had no involvement in this proposal, and I oppose it unequivocally," he says. July 31 – Infantino says the plan has been scrapped. "Having listened carefully to all the views, it has become clear that the project has created divisions ... no longer in the interest of the objective set out in the first place," he says. August 1 – Uefa and the AFC welcome Fifa's decision to abandon the initiative. Uefa says it will work with member associations and other confederations to "reflect on how this happened and devise a plan to make sure that it cannot occur again." August 1 – Uefa and CONCACAF say they have lost confidence in Infantino's leadership. "This recent unilateral and egregious act of poor governance and leadership follows a pattern of missteps and similar behaviour. A comprehensive reckoning with this presidency is imperative," CONCACAF says in a statement. August 1 – The Qatar Football Association welcomes Fifa's decision to abandon the sell-off plan, while adding that the QFA fully supports "Infantino's continued efforts to develop football around the world." August 3 – Wales, Serbia and Sweden withdraw their support for re-electing Infantino at the Fifa presidential election in March next year. August 4 - Jordan Football Association president Ali bin Hussein accuses Infantino of "blackmail". Prince Ali alleges that Fifa verbally communicated during the World Cup that endor-

ing Infantino "would go a long way to helping our FA out" after months of the world soccer governing body refusing assistance on various matters. August 5 – Infantino holds a crisis meeting in Morocco, where Fifa leadership reaffirms its support for him. August 5 – Fifa says it has apologised to its member associations for mistakes made over its abandoned proposal, and announces a review of the process. August 6 – UEFA stays firm on its threat to boycott the World Cup and all Fifa competitions, saying some of its conditions had not been met while reaffirming their lack of confidence in Infantino. August 6 – Players' union FIFPRO says Infantino's proposal "negotiated behind closed doors" was not just a governance failure but a "profound abuse of presidential power". August 6 – African confederation CAF unilaterally backs Infantino's leadership. "We are committed to continue working together with Fifa, its member associations, other football Confederations and stakeholders to safeguard and adhere to governance, due process, and transparency," CAF President Patrice Motsepe says. August 6 – South America's CONMEBOL releases a statement rejecting any attempt to oust Infantino that does not involve a vote of all 211 members. August 7 – The Mexican Football Federation (FMF) breaks ranks with CONCACAF to back Infantino. – APP

GCC condemns attack on UAE tankers in Hormuz

FROM PAGE 01

protecting member states against external threats. Meanwhile, in Washington, U.S. vice president JD Vance signaled a shift in American priorities regarding Iran. Speaking to reporters, Vance said the United States is now placing greater emphasis on maintaining lower oil prices rather than focusing exclusively on Iran's nuclear program. "Global energy stability is vital for our economy and for our allies. While Iran's nuclear ambitions remain a concern, ensuring affordable oil supplies has become a top priority," he remarked. Analysts view this as a recalibration of U.S. policy in the Middle East, where energy security and economic considerations are increasingly shaping strategic decisions. The attack on UAE tankers has heightened fears of supply disruptions, pushing Washington to balance its stance on Iran with the need to stabilize oil markets. Regional observers note that Pakistan, with its longstanding ties to Gulf states and its role in promoting regional peace, could play a constructive part in easing tensions. Islamabad has previously facilitated dialogue between Washington and Tehran, and its defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye positions it as a credible partner in regional security frameworks. Meanwhile, At least four Asian refiners bought US crude this week, as the Strait of Hormuz remained effectively closed and refiners sought alternative supplies for delivery later this year, traders said, according to Reuters. South Korea's GS Caltex bought two million barrels of Mars crude from Shell for November arrival. The crude was priced at a premium around \$13-14 per barrel above the October Dubai benchmark, traders said. Japan's third-largest oil refiner, Cosmo Energy Holdings, bought Mars crude from Trafigura, while Eneos Corp, Japan's biggest refiner, purchased 2m barrels of West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude from Trafigura for November delivery with a premium over \$10 per barrel above the October WTI price. Taiwan's state-owned CPC Corp bought 2m barrels of WTI via a tender at a premium of around \$8 to \$9 a barrel to Dated Brent. CPC also purchased crude from West Africa via the tender, the people said.

Iran grants 'general approval' to strategic action plan

FROM PAGE 01

action plan to ensure the security and progress of the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf was reviewed by the Councils' Commission and, after hearing the opinions, its general outline was approved". One of the resolutions in the plan prohibits the passage of vessels and equipment owned by the US, Israel, and other "hostile countries" through the Strait of Hormuz, the report added. "This is because these countries have used the Strait of Hormuz to carry out hostile actions against our country, and have committed unjust and aggressive acts against the Iranian people," Bayati said.'

President, PM hold important meeting

FROM PAGE 01

The president expressed his best wishes for effective implementation of the trilateral peace agreement, particularly in promoting defence cooperation, regional peace and stability and the security of the Muslim Ummah.

Saudi Arabia POS spending stays above \$3.5 billion

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's point-of-sale transactions remained above \$3.5 billion in the week ending Aug. 8, underscoring resilient consumer spending even as activity moderated from the previous week, official data showed. According to the latest data released by the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, total POS transaction value stood at SR14.60 billion (\$3.89 billion), down 10.5 percent from the seven days prior. The total number of transactions also slipped, dropping 5.1 percent to 253.4 million, compared to 267.1 million the week before. The broad-based pullback affected nearly every sector and city tracked in the weekly report, but educa-

tion spending bucked the trend, jumping 54.1 percent to SR274.1 million. The number of education-related transactions also rose 1.6 percent, making it the only category besides hotels to post a gain in transaction volume. Hotels were the lone other bright spot, with transaction numbers edging up 0.4 percent, even as the value of hotel spending dipped 1.1 percent. All other categories tracked by SAMA recorded declines in both transaction value and transaction volume. Telecommunications spending saw the sharpest drop, falling 21.8 percent to SR192.5 million, followed by freight transport, postal, and courier services, which declined 21.7 percent to

SR57.9 million. Auto and equipment rentals fell 18.7 percent to SR68.7 million, while pharmacies and medical supplies dropped 18.4 percent to SR225.1 million. Food and beverages remained the largest spending category despite a 15.3 percent decline, with transaction value totaling SR2.28 billion. Restaurants and cafes held the second-largest share, slipping 7.1 percent to SR1.9 billion, while apparel, clothing and accessories came in third at SR1.26 billion, down 10.6 percent. Transportation and gas stations rounded out the top spending categories, at SR1.09 billion and SR1.03 billion respectively, both posting declines of more than 8 percent. – APP

Swiatek beats Rybakina

TORONTO: Seventh-seeded Iga Swiatek beat second-seeded Elena Rybakina 6-2, 6-3 on Thursday in the National Bank Open for her first WTA Tour title of the year and 26th overall. Swiatek, from Poland, broke Rybakina's serve early in the match and went on to take the opening set in 29 minutes. Swiatek had another break at 2:22 in the second set before closing out the win in a tidy 75 minutes. The hard-serving Rybakina – who leads the tour in aces – struggled to find her rhythm. Swiatek kept her on her heels with a consistent attack, few errors and excellent range on court. A six-time Grand Slam champion, Swiatek is projected to move up two spots to sixth in the new world ranking. Rybakina will remain No. 2. – APP

Farage beats Count Biface to win UK by-election: officials

CLACTON-ON-SEA, United Kingdom: British hard-right leader Nigel Farage has won a snap UK election he triggered in Clacton on Friday, comfortably beating satirical opponent Count Biface as was expected, according to results. Farage, who did not attend the result announcement, received 22,239 votes, electoral officials said, while runner-up Count Biface exceeded expectations with 9,455 votes. Farage had declared victory in front of a crowd of supporters earlier on Friday, while the vote count was still ongoing. Farage was largely expected to win in the constituency, where he was already an MP and where none of the country's main parties were running. Farage and Biface both beat a long list of joke candidates, independents and members of fringe political parties. Candidates on stage at the Clacton Leisure Center, where the count was held, were seen cheering for each other as the results were announced, with many receiving fewer than 100 votes. Voter turnout in Thursday's election was 44 percent, lower than the 59 percent turnout recorded at the 2024 general election, but not unusual for a by-election. The result was called just after 6 a.m. (0500 GMT), with officials warning earlier in the night that the vote count would take longer than usual because of the long ballot papers. – APP

Hundreds evacuated from resorts in Croatia and Greece

FROM PAGE 01

The coast guard said that more than 300 people had been evacuated by boat from the town, which sits on a picturesque peninsula of woodland, olive groves and beaches south of Greece's second city, Thessaloniki. More than 140 firefighters, nine aircraft and seven helicopters were deployed to battle flames, while fishing vessels took part in the evacuation. In France, authorities evacuated 525 people from the village of Luglon after a wildfire broke out in the southwestern Landes region, not far from an area already devastated by major blazes this summer. Authorities in Spain removed the remains of three kings who ruled the Aragon region in the 11th century from a monastery threatened by a wildfire. The European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service warned of "very extreme" conditions across a large area of central and eastern Europe, with additional pockets over southern Britain, Ireland, northern France and southern Sweden, in its outlook for the week to August 19.

Abdoulaye Senegal's Kane meets Badr Medkouri

Senegal's Kane has won all five of his wins by stoppage, with four knockouts and one submission. Medkouri has eight knockouts in nine career victories, and will look to win in front of a hometown crowd

CASABLANCA, MOROCCO: The Professional Fighters League has announced the six semifinal matchups, and heavyweight main event for PFL Africa: Morocco on Oct. 10, as the league's continental tournament reaches its penultimate round across the bantamweight, welterweight and lightweight divisions. Winners from each bout will advance to the PFL Africa Finals later this year. The event will take place at the Mohammed V Sports Complex in Casablanca, with the PFL hosting Morocco's biggest-ever MMA event. In the headlining bout, Senegal and Morocco go head-to-head, as Abdoulaye Kane meets Badr "Dastan" Medkouri in a heavyweight showdown. Senegal's Kane has won all five of his wins by stoppage, with four knockouts and one submission. Medkouri has eight knockouts in nine career victories, and will look to win in front of a hometown crowd. The co-main event will see a bantamweight semifinal, as unbeaten Algerian-Canadian Karim "The Kryptonian" Henniene faces Nigeria's Raphael Uchegbu. Henniene is riding the momentum of a first-round submission win at PFL Africa: Nigeria in June.

It was on the same card that Uchegbu announced his arrival to the promotion with a dominant unanimous decision win. The other bantamweight semifinal clash between Liberia's Dwight Joseph and Angola's Boule Godogo will kick off the main card. Welterweight action sees two semifinals, with Angola's Shido Boris Esperanza taking on South Africa's Peace Nguphane, and Guinea-Bissau's Rivaldo Pereira squaring off against Nigeria's David Samuel. The lightweight tournament narrows to its final four with an all-Nigerian semifinal between Patrick Ocheme and Cornel Thompson, alongside Senegal's Demba Seck against Chad's Hussain Al-Kurdi. Algeria, Nigeria, Angola, South Africa, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Chad, Liberia, and Morocco are represented across the semifinal round, reflecting the continental scope of PFL Africa's tournament format. The Moroccan card marks the PFL's first event in North Africa and continues the league's continental rollout under General Manager Elias Schulze, who added: "We're looking to go to all four corners of the continent." – APP

How wars are weaving a toxic legacy

LONDON: In a war that has seen tankers in the Gulf and the Red Sea repeatedly targeted, it was clear that a massive oil spill was an environmental disaster just waiting to happen – and that disaster is now unfolding. On June 30, the Caroline Bezegi, a tanker carrying more than 800,000 barrels of oil, ran aground on an island 50 km off the coast of southern Oman. The ship, under sanctions by the UK and the EU as a consequence of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, loaded its cargo at Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk in April, and had transited the Suez Canal on May 30. On June 8, having just exited the eastern end of the Maritime Security Transit Corridor in the Gulf of Aden, and while still in waters off Yemen, it suffered an explosion. It seems that the tanker sailed out of one war only to fall victim to another. The Houthis have fired on shipping in the Red Sea, but so far no state or organization has claimed responsibility for the attack on the Caroline Bezegi. A satellite image shows the Caroline Bezegi, a sanctioned vessel, appeared to be covered in a coat of algae, off the coast of the Dhofar Governorate, Oman, July 19, 2026. 2026 Planet Labs (PBC)/Hand-out via REUTERS THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN SUPPLIED BY A THIRD PARTY). After four days the crew of the ship were rescued and the tanker was driven by heavy seas onto rocks off Al-Qiblyah, one of the Hallaniyat Islands. Here, in the heart of an Omani nature reserve that is home to diverse wildlife including Socotra cormorants and humpback whales, it is now leaking vast

amounts of oil, which has already begun to wash up on the beaches of the mainland, in an area known as the Turtle Coast. On Thursday, Oman's National Committee for Emergency Management said it was "monitoring the repercussions of the fuel tanker grounding incident." As devastating as such incidents are, oil spills are only the most visible of the multiple environmental consequences of warfare, as a recent analysis shows. Researchers at Queen Mary University of London, Lancaster University and the Climate and Community Institute found that in the first 14 days alone the current Iran war generated more than 5 million tons of carbon dioxide – equivalent to the entire carbon output of Iceland for a whole year. Put another way, the study estimates that the emissions generated by the war between Feb. 28 and March 14 March "are equivalent to the annual output of around 1.1 million petrol cars, with associated climate damages exceeding \$1.3 billion." The research looked at direct and indirect emissions, including those caused by military operations, destruction of infrastructure and damage to fuel and oil facilities. "Emissions from armed conflict remain largely invisible in global climate policy," said Benjamin Neimark, a human geographer and political ecologist at Queen Mary University's School of Business and Management. A satellite image shows the damaged vessel Caroline Bezegi and oil slick off the Hallaniyat Islands, off the coast of Dhofar Governorate, Oman, August 5,

2026. "They are rarely counted, rarely reported and rarely discussed. But without proper accounting, we are underestimating the true drivers of climate change and missing a critical part of the picture." In a previous piece of research, published in the journal One Earth in March, the researchers estimated that by January 2025 Israel's war in Gaza had generated more than 30 million tonnes of carbon emissions – comparable to the total emissions of Jordan for 2024. Both pieces of research revealed that the bulk of the environmental impact of conflict, in terms of carbon pollution, at least, is largely unseen. For example, although TV news coverage of the Iran war has featured endless dramatic footage of munitions striking targets, the intensive use of missiles and drones in the first two weeks of the conflict accounted for little more than 1 percent of the 5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent generated. By far the largest share of carbon cost – almost half of the total – was attributed to the "embodied carbon emissions" from the destruction of airports, military structures, homes and commercial buildings. The destruction of oil facilities in Iran and around the Gulf accounted for 1.8 million tonnes, fuel expended by aircraft in combat and support operations cost 529,000 tonnes and the loss of "embodied carbon" in destroyed ships and aircraft added up to 172,000 tonnes. In other words, the environmental costs of war are not limited to obvious consequences, such as the oil spill now threatening Omani waters, are not nec-

essarily obvious at the time, and may have long-term consequences. And, occasionally, those consequences may be very long-term indeed, as an incident that took place in the Arabian Gulf in the wake of the Second Gulf War demonstrated. Through the early months of 2011, a team of British maritime security experts had been painstakingly clearing the way for a new pipeline that would reconnect Iraq's war-battered mainland oil industry to its deep-water tanker terminals, some 50 km offshore. On May 7, sonar scans had identified a series of six large, seemingly unnatural deposits arranged in a rough line over several hundred meters on the seabed – right in the path of the advancing pipeline. Divers had managed to free a barnacle-encrusted metal object from one of the rock-like piles and, when it was brought it to the surface and examined it on the deck of the survey ship, it became clear that they had recovered an exploded artillery shell of some kind. The team of ex-military divers had already found plenty of explosives on this job, relics of Iraq's wars including large numbers of anti-personnel mines, mortar rounds, artillery shells and even rocket parts. But this, as a quick call to the NATO-funded Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technical Information Cell in the UK determined, was different. What they had found was a British-made white phosphorous shell from the First World War – and there were 4,000 more of the things, encased in coral on the seabed, where they had lain undisturbed for almost 100 years. – APP

Briefs

Oman offers up to \$260m in 7-year govt bonds

RIYADH: Oman launched a government bond offering worth up to 100 million rials (\$260 million) as the Gulf state expands domestic borrowing to finance budget needs and refinance maturing debt. According to the Oman News Agency, the Central Bank of Oman said the 84th Government Development Bonds issue carries a base size of 80 million rials, with a green shoe option of up to 20 million rials and a seven-year maturity. Subscription runs from Aug. 16 to Aug. 20, the auction is scheduled for Aug. 23, and the bonds will settle on Aug. 25. Interest will be paid semiannually on Feb. 25 and Aug. 25 until maturity on Aug. 25, 2033. The sale forms part of Oman's domestic borrowing program as the government continues to fund budget needs and refinance maturing obligations through local debt markets. According to the Ministry of Finance's first-quarter 2026 fiscal bulletin, public debt stood at 14.5 billion rials at the end of March, up 2 percent from 14.3 billion rials a year earlier. Under the 2026 state budget, the government plans to raise approximately 850 million rials through government development bonds and sovereign local sukuk to help meet financing needs and refinance maturing obligations. "These bonds constitute a direct and unconditional guarantee from the Ministry of Finance, and can be used as collateral for loans from licensed local banks, in addition to being tradable through the Muscat Stock Exchange," ONA reported. The issue is open to both resident and non-resident investors. Bids must be submitted through licensed commercial banks, while investors bidding 1 million rials or more may apply directly to the CBO with their bank's endorsement. The bonds can be pledged as loan collateral and traded on the Muscat Stock Exchange, with allotments recorded by Muscat Clearing & Depository Co. This follows the 80th to 83rd Government Development Bonds issues, which were sold between January and April 2026. Oman also returned to international debt markets earlier this year with a 385 million rials sukuk issuance, part of the proceeds of which was used to buy back Eurobonds maturing in June. —APP

Egypt plans to launch car tire factory

RIYADH: The Egyptian government plans to tender a project to establish a passenger car and light commercial vehicle tire factory with an estimated investment of about \$500 million, with the aim of meeting local market needs and reducing reliance on imports, according to an official document seen by Asharq Bloomberg. Egypt needs about 500,000 tires annually and imports nearly 8 million tires each year at an estimated cost of about \$1.25 billion. China's Sailun is the only company in the country operating in the passenger car tire manufacturing sector and is expected to begin production in the Suez Canal Economic Zone in the coming period, according to the document. The new factory is scheduled to be developed in the industrial zone of 10th Ramadan City on a 217-feddan site under a partnership with the private sector. The project falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of State for Military Production. Last July, Mohamed Zada, assistant minister of industry for strategic industries, said Egypt did not have a passenger car tire manufacturing industry, despite the presence of factories producing tires for buses and trucks. Most of these factories focus on producing tires for trucks and two- and three-wheeled vehicles, locally known as tricyles and tuk-tuks. The Pyramids factory, the largest in the country, began production operations about six years ago with private-sector investments amounting to nearly 3 billion Egyptian pounds (\$59.6 million). —APP

ICCI takes Pak's business excellence to global stage

Greater B2B engagement to unlock Pakistan-Turkiye economic potential: Mehmet Sulun

ISTANBUL: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) hosted its prestigious International Excellence Awards 2026 in Istanbul, bringing together senior Turkish government officials, diplomats, leading Pakistani and Turkish business figures and representatives of the business community to celebrate Pakistan's entrepreneurial excellence and forge stronger economic ties between the two brotherly countries. Around 40 prestigious awards were presented to prominent Pakistani business leaders from diverse sectors in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the national economy. The impressive ceremony was attended by senior Turkish government officials, representatives of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, Pakistani diplomats and a large number of business leaders from both countries. The awards were presented by Deputy Governor of Istanbul Mehmet Sulun, alongside Consul General of Pakistan in Istanbul Khawaja Khurram Naeem, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, Executive Board Member Istanbul Chamber of Commerce Munir Ustun, and ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub. Speaking as Chief Guest, Deputy Governor of Istanbul Mehmet Sulun congratulated the award recipients and appreciated ICCI for bringing Pakistan's business community to Türkiye. He said initiatives of this nature provided an effective platform for strengthening people-to-people and business-to-business contacts and could open new avenues for trade, investment and joint ventures between Pakistan and Türkiye. He said these business leaders were not merely conducting trade but were also building bridges of friendship and understanding between the two brotherly nations. He expressed gratitude to ICCI, Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, the Consulate General of Pakistan in Istanbul and all institutions that contributed to the successful event, expressing the hope that the friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and



Türkiye would continue to grow stronger and endure for generations. Consul General of Pakistan in Istanbul Khawaja Khurram Naeem appreciated ICCI's initiative and

said that stronger business-to-business linkages were vital to translating the excellent political and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Türkiye into greater trade

and investment. He assured the Pakistani business community of the Embassy's continued support in promoting commercial cooperation between the two countries. In his inaugural address, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood highlighted the deep-rooted brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and reaffirmed ICCI's determination to take bilateral trade and investment to the ambitious level envisioned by the leadership of the two countries. He said ICCI was positioning itself as a global business bridge for Pakistan by promoting exports, investment and international partnerships, while working closely with the Government of Pakistan and relevant institutions to improve the ease of doing business and create a more competitive environment for the private sector. Munir Ustun, Executive Board Member, Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, appreciated ICCI's efforts to deepen economic and business relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and stressed the importance of stronger institutional and private-sector linkages. He said regular business exchanges, B2B engagements and joint initiatives could unlock the considerable untapped potential in bilateral trade and investment. Zohair Majeed, Director Faisal Town Group, said the recognition of Pakistani business leaders on an international platform was a strong message that Pakistan's private sector possessed the talent, resilience and entrepreneurial capacity to compete successfully in global markets. He emphasized that stronger Pakistan-Türkiye business partnerships could generate new opportunities for investment, technology transfer, exports and sustainable economic growth. The ceremony was widely appreciated as a landmark initiative by ICCI to project Pakistan's business potential on the international stage and strengthen the foundations for sustained Pakistan-Türkiye trade, investment and business-to-business cooperation. —DNA

Kushner to visit Israel to bridge gaps on Gaza plan

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's envoy and son-in-law Jared Kushner will visit Israel next week in hopes of bridging gaps on a Gaza plan rejected by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, officials said Friday. Kushner and Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza of Trump's so-called Board of Peace implementing the deal, will visit both Israel and key mediator Egypt. The trip comes after Netanyahu publicly rejected a 15-point plan announced by Mladenov in which Hamas agreed to hand over its weapons to a new Palestinian governing committee in Gaza. A Board of Peace official said Kushner and Mladenov hoped for "constructive conversations" on advancing Trump's overall peace plan that began with the October 2025 declaration of a ceasefire, which has reduced but not ended Israeli strikes in Gaza. "The United States and Israel agree on the end state, which is a demilitarised Hamas," the official said on condition of anonymity. "We will hear the concerns that have been raised and talk about next steps. What is critical is that we both agree on the desired outcome and are finding ways to accelerate progress." The latest part of the Gaza plan, to which Hamas agreed in late July, would start a phased Israeli withdrawal from much of the Gaza Strip, according to an initial version released by the Board of Peace. —APP

Yemeni vessel recount their chaotic rescue after Houthis' deadly attack

MOKHA, Yemen: Crew members of a Yemeni commercial ship who survived a deadly attack by Houthi rebels earlier this week said a second missile struck the vessel just as rescue efforts from the initial strike were underway, causing even more chaos and casualties. In all, three ballistic missiles fired by the Iran-backed Houthis struck the ship in the Bab El-Mandeb Strait, just off Yemen's coast, as it was coming into port, killing six people and injuring at least nine others, according to Yemeni authorities. It was part of an escalating campaign by the Houthis and their first deadly attack this year on a vessel navigating the strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and accounts for roughly 12 percent of global trade. "People were burning ... it was a strange scene of doomday," said Zaheer Ahmed, a Pakistani crew member recovering at a hospital in the port city of Mokha. "I shouted for help and a Yemeni soldier came to my aid," said Ahmed, who was injured in both legs. Above, damage on the commercial vessel Thimamah on Aug. 10, 2026. (Ministry of Transport — Republic of Yemen via Reuters) All three of the crew members The Associated Press interviewed Wednesday at the hospital described intense fire, panic and damage aboard the ship, which was struck before dawn on Tuesday. Muhammad Alteno, an Indonesian crew member, said he was in "complete shock" after witnessing another Indonesian crew member — a friend — die in the attack. Alteno said he had tried to rescue his friend, who was trapped inside the room they shared, after the first missile strike. "But the flames were so intense that I couldn't breathe," Alteno said. "I managed to escape with some of the (other) crew members." Two members of Yemen's government-allied National Resistance Forces were killed in the attack, as were three crew members from Pakistan. The attack was one of many in recent weeks by the Houthis, who have killed government forces and civilians in an escalating campaign on the government-held city of Mokha and other areas, according to the Yemeni military. The rebel group has also intensified its attacks on troops and oil facilities in neighboring Saudi Arabia. The attacks risk reigniting Yemen's civil war following a 2022 UN-brokered truce, and could open a new front in the Middle East war. —APP

Yemen leader urges Houthis to disarm

AL-MUKALLA: The chairman of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, has urged the Iran-backed Houthis to lay down their arms and become a political party, saying the internationally recognized government seeks permanent peace rather than another temporary truce as the militia continues drone and missile attacks on government-controlled areas. Speaking to a gathering of editors from local media outlets, Al-Alimi said the PLC had unified previously divided military and security forces under a single command and vowed to respond to the latest Houthi escalation. "The opportunity is still available to lay down arms, engage in political life, and compete through the ballot box on an equal footing with all other Yemenis," Al-Alimi said, describing his appeal as a "final message" to the Houthis. He said the PLC, established in April 2022, was more unified and stronger than at any point since its formation, having overcome differences that had hampered efforts to bring anti-Houthi military and security forces under a unified command. "We have unified political, military, security and economic decision-making. Today, we can say that there are Yemeni armed forces operating under a single command center and a supreme commander of the armed forces. ... These forces are ready to fulfill their role in defending Yemen." Al-Alimi also rejected the prospect of another extension of the UN-brokered truce that took effect in April 2022, saying the government would instead pursue a permanent settlement that restored state authority and places all weapons under its control. "We are not in favor of a new truce or ceasefire. We are in favor of a lasting and sustainable peace where the state has a monopoly on the possession of weapons, there are no militias outside the state's control, and there is a constitution that governs the people." He accused the Houthis of exploiting periods of reduced hostilities to regroup, replenish their weapons stockpiles, train fighters and prepare for renewed conflict. "This does not mean that we are warmongers. On the contrary, we are advocates of peace. There is no contradiction between deterring the Houthi militias and pursuing peace. Our experience with the Houthis over the past 10 years has shown that, for them, a truce is merely an opportunity to rebuild their military capabilities before returning to war." Among the PLC's other achievements, Al-Alimi cited efforts to curb smuggling networks linking the Houthis with militant groups such as Al-Qaeda across Yemen's eastern desert, preserve state institutions, reduce infighting among anti-Houthi factions and implement economic reforms that have increased government revenues. —APP

Seven workers killed in India tunnel accident

NEW DELHI: At least seven workers were killed and 13 injured following a landslide that sent water and debris gushing into a tunnel under construction in north India, officials said Friday. The incident occurred late Thursday in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, where workers were constructing a tunnel for a state-run hydropower project. At least three workers are still missing, while 19 were rescued from the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation site, the State Disaster Management Authority said in a statement. Videos shared by local authorities showed rescue workers equipped with head-mounted torches using makeshift rafts to reach the flooded section of the tunnel. Uttarakhand has been battered by heavy monsoon rains in recent days. Accidents on large construction sites are common in India, but ecologists say excessive development projects have led to more disasters in the fragile Himalayan areas. Last month, 20 people working in a tunnel for another state-run hydroelectric project were killed in the remote northeastern state of Sikkim. In 2023, 41 workers were rescued after being trapped for 17 days inside a tunnel that collapsed in Uttarakhand. Hundreds of people have been killed in floods and landslides across the country since the start of the annual monsoon season in June. Experts say climate change, coupled with poorly planned development, is increasing the frequency, severity, and impact of the disasters. —APP

Chadian president pardons nine jailed opp leaders

N'DJAMENA: Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Deby on Friday pardoned jailed ex-prime minister and leader of the main opposition party Succes Masra and eight other opposition leaders. Deby has led Chad since 2021 after taking charge of a military transition following the death of his father, Idriss Deby Itno, who was killed by rebels after 30 years leading the central African country. Analysts and the opposition had said that long jail terms imposed on opposition figures showed Chad was sliding further from democratic principles under Deby. Masra, one of the president's fiercest critics, was sentenced to 20 years in prison a year ago, convicted of hate speech, xenophobia and inciting a massacre, in what Human Rights Watch called a politically motivated trial. The eight other party leaders all belonged to the Political Actors' Consultation Group (GCAP), the main opposition coalition, which was dissolved by the Supreme Court in April. They were arrested while organizing a demonstration banned by the authorities and jailed in May for eight years after being found guilty of inciting an insurrection. The presidential pardon entails a "full remission of custodial sentences for the convicted," according to a decree published on the presidency's Facebook page. With a pardon rather than an amnesty, detained opponents regain their freedom but the conviction remains: they keep their criminal record, their civil and financial penalties and they become ineligible to stand in elections. Abdoulaye, GCAP spokesman, hit out at what he called "democratic regression" in the country. "Arbitrarily arresting political leaders, hauling them before the courts, convicting them on fabricated charges and pardoning them a few months later while stripping them of their civil and political rights. It is simply abject and a very serious democratic regression," he told AFP. Ndoembai Sade Njesada, vice president of Masra's The Transformers party, said the president had "braved the obstacles and chosen to move forward in the spirit of national unity that is now coming into being." "We hope at last to sit down around a table to move peace forward," he added. Deby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) also welcomed the "beneficial" development which allows the political leaders to return to their families, a spokesman said. Like other opposition figures, Masra, 42, an economist, had fled Chad after the army and police opened fire on demonstrators protesting an extension of the political transition under the Deby-led ruling junta in October 2022. Masra returned from exile and signed a reconciliation deal with Deby before being named prime minister five months ahead of the 2024 presidential election. Deby was elected head of state with just over 60 percent of the vote, in a contested ballot boycotted by a majority of opposition parties. Masra faced off against Deby in that vote, coming second with nearly a fifth of the vote, but claimed victory. He was arrested in May 2025 and sentenced three months later to 20 years in prison on charges of inciting inter-communal violence in Mandakao, southwestern Chad, where 42 people were killed, most of them women and children. —Agencies

Endangered whales, turtles at risk as Oman oil spill reaches coast

DUBAI: An oil spill spreading along Oman's coast is threatening fragile marine ecosystems that support endangered Arabian Sea humpback whales, critically endangered hawksbill turtles and vulnerable seabirds, raising concerns over the long-term impact on some of the region's most threatened wildlife. Crude oil has been leaking from the tanker Caroline Bezengti — a sanctioned tanker believed to be part of Russia's "shadow fleet" — that was carrying nearly 1 million barrels of oil when it reported an explosion in June. According to satellite image analysis, the spill expanded to cover an area of 1,700 sq. km as of August 13. Oman's Environment Authority confirmed that oil has reached the shore at Ras Madrakah, roughly 200 km north of the tanker's location, affecting an estimated 40 km of coastline. Forecasts indicate oil may reach the southern coast of Masirah Island within hours. According to satellite image analysis, the spill expanded to cover an area of 1,700 sq. km as of August 13. Oman's Environment Authority confirmed that oil has reached the shore at Ras Madrakah, roughly 200 km north of the tanker's location, affecting an estimated 40 km of coastline. Forecasts indicate oil may reach the southern coast of Masirah Island within hours. (Supplied) Home to the Arabian Sea humpback whales, critically endangered hawksbill turtles and many types of seabirds, Ras Madrakah is one of the most impacted areas in Oman. All life forms within the perimeters of the spill are at risk of being

critically affected, regional campaigns lead at Greenpeace MENA, Hanen Keskes, told Arab News. The spill is particularly concerning because it is affecting a Marine Protected Area established to safeguard some of Oman's most sensitive marine habitats and species. The protected area has ecosystems including coral reefs and seagrass meadows, as well as habitats used by sea turtles, seabirds and the Arabian Sea humpback whale. "The area has a thriving marine biodiversity that accounts, among many species, the IUCN-classified critically endangered Hawksbill turtle, the endangered Arabian Sea humpback whale and the vulnerable Socotra cormorant," Keskes said. The spill is affecting a highly sensitive marine environment, and with oil spreading toward the Hallaniyat Islands and reaching mainland shores around Ras Madrakah, the impact can leave a lasting damage on the ecosystem. "Thick crude oil can smother beaches, rocky shores and shallow coral reefs, while heavier petroleum trapped in sand, rocks and sediments can leach toxic hydrocarbons back into the water over time," Keskes said. "The spill can also disrupt the foundations of the food web, affecting plankton, crabs, shellfish and other organisms, with consequences for fish, seabirds, turtles and the endangered Arabian Sea humpback whale, as well as local fisheries and coastal communities. "The oil is directly contaminating a globally critical sanctuary for rare ecosystems. Standard chemical cleanups within

MPAs are banned, as these chemicals could sink and permanently poison the same ecosystem respondents are trying to protect, namely vulnerable coral reefs," she said. "Wildlife could be affected through both direct exposure and disruption of the wider ecosystem. Birds can lose the waterproofing and insulation of their feathers when coated in oil and may ingest it while preening," she said. The threat also extends far beyond animals that come into direct contact with the oil. As crude contaminates plankton, shellfish, crabs and fish at the lower levels of the food chain, the effects can move upward to larger predators, including dolphins and whales, by reducing or contaminating their sources of food. "The timing is particularly concerning because the area is important for nesting and breeding, meaning contaminated beaches can affect turtle eggs and hatchlings, while seabird colonies may suffer reduced breeding success," Keskes said. Hawksbill turtles face particular risks because the coastline provides important nesting habitat. Oil reaching beaches can contaminate nesting areas and expose eggs and hatchlings to pollution at some of their most vulnerable stages of development. Keskes said that with oil contaminating the habitat, coral reef communities were at high risk damaging the homes of many fish and invertebrate species. Among the species facing concern is the Arabian Sea humpback whale, an endangered population found only in the Arabian Sea. —APP

Briefs

President Zardari 100-day remission for prisoners

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday approved several summaries sent by the Prime Minister, including the conferment of military and civil awards and a special remission of sentences for eligible prisoners. According to the President's Media Wing, President Zardari approved military awards for 1,172 personnel of the Armed Forces and Civil Armed Forces in recognition of their services. The president also approved the summoning of the National Assembly session on August 17 at 5:00 p.m., while the Senate session will be held at 4:00 p.m. on the same day. On the occasion of Independence Day and Eid Milad-un-Nabi, President Zardari approved a special 100-day remission in the sentences of eligible prisoners. In addition, the president approved the conferment of national civil awards on citizens from various civilian fields in recognition of their contributions and services. — APP

Maula Jatt wins two awards in China

BEIJING: Pakistan's acclaimed action film *The Legend of Maula Jatt* has won two prestigious "Iron Man" awards at the 7th Jackie Chan International Action Film Week, further strengthening the cultural and cinematic ties between Pakistan and China. The awards were announced at the closing ceremony held a couple of days ago. The Pakistani blockbuster received honours for Best Action Art Direction and Best Creative Team. *The Legend of Maula Jatt* was also the first winner to take the stage at this year's gala, receiving the opening award of the evening. The film's director Bilal Lashari and distributor Nadeem Mandviwalla received the awards on behalf of the production team. The recognition comes as Pakistan and China mark 75 years of diplomatic relations, adding further significance to the film's success on the Chinese cultural stage. Distributed in China under a revenue-sharing model, *The Legend of Maula Jatt* has emerged as a notable example of growing cinematic cooperation between the two countries. The two awards highlight the international appreciation for the film's distinctive action design, artistic direction and creative execution, while also underscoring the potential for greater collaboration and exchange between the Pakistani and Chinese film industries. — APP

Chinese ambassador meets FM Ishaq Dar

Ambassador Jiang Zaidong extended warm congratulations to the people and leadership of Pakistan on the occasion of Independence Day, reaffirming the close and time-tested ties between the two countries

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China H.E. Mr. Jiang Zaidong called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. DPM/FM conveyed condolences on the tragic death of a Chinese mountaineer following an avalanche incident at Broad Peak in Gilgit-Baltistan and assured full facilitation for the repatriation of the deceased's remains. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong appreciated Pakistan's prompt assistance and support following the incident. Views were also exchanged on regional developments and other matters of mutual interest. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong extended warm congratulations to the people and leadership of Pakistan on the occasion of Independence Day, reaffirming the close and time-tested ties between the two countries.



Pak envoy to Sweden calls on Ishaq Dar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar received Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Sweden, Ahmed Amjad Ali, for a call today. DPM/FM underscored the importance of further advancing Pakistan-Sweden economic ties, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, technology, renewable energy, agriculture, education and skills development. He directed the Ambassador-designate to actively promote business-to-business linkages, facilitate greater investment and strengthen people-to-people contacts. He also emphasized the need for efficient and timely provision of consular services, particularly for Pakistani students and the diaspora.

Air India A320 briefly lost key flight controls during 300-foot drop: report

AN Air India Airbus A320 that dropped about 300 feet this month, injuring 24 people on board, briefly lost key flight controls after registering losses in all three hydraulic systems, according to a preliminary Airbus analysis reviewed by Reuters. The August 4 incident occurred on Air India flight AI2379 from Phuket to Delhi, which landed safely in Delhi despite the altitude loss. Aircraft lost elevator and aileron control for four seconds before systems recovered, says Airbus. The aircraft's elevators and ailerons, which control its pitch and roll, were unavailable for about four seconds, during which the plane pitched upward, Airbus said in a communication responding to an Air India request for an assessment. During that period, the first officer applied a full nose-down input, but there was "no direct response" from the flight-control surfaces before the hydraulic systems recovered within seconds.

Major General Jawwad Ahmed appointed MINURSO Force Commander

Pakistan says Maj Gen Ahmed's appointment reflects its continued commitment to UN peacekeeping



NEWS DESK

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed Major General Jawwad Ahmed as the new Force Commander of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), succeeding a Bangladeshi general who completed his assignment earlier this month. Major General Ahmed brings more than 35 years of leadership and operational experience in the Pakistan Army and UN peacekeeping to the post, according to the United Nations and Paki-

stan's Permanent Mission to the UN. He succeeds Major General Md Fakhru Ahsan of Bangladesh, whose assignment ended on August 2. MINURSO paid tribute to Ahsan at a farewell ceremony at its headquarters in Laayoune, where the mission's Special Representative and head, Alexander Ivanko, praised his professionalism, leadership and contribution to the mission, said the UN press release. Major General Ahmed has held several senior command and staff positions in Pakistan, including Director General at the Ministry of Defence in Rawalpindi, where he oversaw command and control, local governance and administration of cantonment areas across the country, according to the release. He previously served as General Officer Commanding of an infantry division, Director General of the Inspection and Evaluation Directorate at General Headquarters and Force Commander Northern Areas, said the release. His other senior appointments included brigade commander in cantonment and high-altitude field areas, as well as Chief Instructor at the National Command and Staff College in Quetta.

Vladimir Putin congratulates Pakistani leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of Russia Vladimir Putin has extended warm felicitations to President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on the occasion of Pakistan's Independence Day. In his messages to the president and the prime minister, President Putin conveyed his sincere congratulations to the leadership and people of Pakistan on their national day, the foreign office spokesperson said in a statement on Friday.

The Russian president noted that Russia-Pakistan relations were developing successfully, with Moscow and Islamabad maintaining productive cooperation in the political, trade, economic and humanitarian spheres, as well as on important regional and global issues.

President Putin expressed confidence that the two countries would continue their constructive joint efforts to further strengthen the entire spectrum of their partnership for the benefit of the friendly peoples of Russia and Pakistan and in the interests of enhancing international security and stability.

He also wished President Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz good health and every success, and prayed for peace and prosperity for the people of Pakistan.

Crew of Yemeni vessel recount their chaotic rescue

MOKHA: Crew members of a Yemeni commercial ship who survived a deadly attack by Houthi rebels earlier this week said a second missile struck the vessel just as rescue efforts from the initial strike were underway, causing even more chaos and casualties. In all, three ballistic missiles fired by the Iran-backed Houthis struck the ship in the Bab El-Mandeb Strait, just off Yemen's coast, as it was coming into port, killing six people and injuring at least nine others, according to Yemeni authorities. It was part of an escalating campaign by the Houthis and their first deadly attack this year on a vessel navigating the strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and accounts for roughly 12 percent of global trade. "People were burning ... it was a strange scene of doomsday," said Zaheer Ahmed, a Pakistani crew member recovering at a hospital in the port city of Mokha. "I shouted for help and a Yemeni soldier came to my aid," said Ahmed, who was injured in both legs. Above, damage on the commercial vessel Tihamah on Aug. 10, 2026. (Ministry of Transport – Republic of Yemen via Reuters. All three of the crew members The Associated Press interviewed Wednesday at the hospital described intense fire, panic and damage aboard the ship, which was struck before dawn on Tuesday. Muhammad Altano, an Indonesian crew member, said he was in "complete shock" after witnessing another Indonesian crew member – a friend – die in the attack. Altano said he had tried to rescue his friend, who was trapped inside the room they shared, after the first missile strike. "But the flames were so intense that I couldn't breathe," Altano said. "I managed to escape with some of the (other) crew members." Two members of Yemen's government-allied National Resistance Forces were killed in the attack, as were three crew members from Pakistan. The attack was one of many in recent weeks by the Houthis, who have killed government forces and civilians in an escalating campaign on the government-held city of Mokha and other areas, according to the Yemeni military. The rebel group has also intensified its attacks on troops and oil facilities in neighboring Saudi Arabia. The attacks risk reigniting Yemen's civil war following a 2022 UN-brokered truce, and could open a new front in the Middle East war. The Houthis declared a blockade several weeks ago on Saudi-linked ships leaving the Bab El-Mandeb strait in retaliation for a yearslong Saudi siege on Yemen and recent attacks on the Houthi-controlled capital. Sanaa. – APP

Transporters call off nationwide strike after negotiations with govt

ISLAMABAD: In a major relief to the nation on Independence Day, the Pakistan Transport Council (PTC) announced the immediate end of its nationwide strike following successful negotiations with the federal government. The announcement was made during a joint press conference led by Central President Tanveer Ahmad Jatt, Patron Muhammad Altaf, and Founder Rao Tahir Khan, alongside Central Vice President Ashraf Gujjar, Lahore Chairman Zubair Shakir Bajwa, Sheikhupura President Amjad Sandhu, and other senior office-bearers at National Press Club Islamabad. With the strike officially called off, goods transporters across the federation and

all provinces have been directed to immediately resume freight operations and vehicle movement. The breakthrough came after high-level talks conducted by a special committee formed on the directives of the Prime Minister and headed by Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan. During the negotiations, the government formally accepted eight urgent and legitimate demands raised by the transporters, while dedicated committees were constituted to resolve all remaining issues. To cement the resolution, representatives from 15 major goods transport organizations officially signed the agreement with government authorities. – APP

Afghanistan marks five years under Taliban

NEWS DESK

KABUL: As Afghanistan's Taliban rulers mark five years since sweeping back to power, some Kabul residents said they feel safer after decades of conflict and upheaval but stressed the leaders should now focus on creating jobs and expanding access to schools in the country where girls above the age of 12 are banned from education.

"Thank God, the past five years have passed in safety," said Mohammad Qasim, 30, reflecting on the anniversary that comes against a backdrop of economic hardship in a conflict-stricken country. "Our wish and hope from the government is to create job opportunities for the youth."

"We, along with the entire nation, call upon the government to create employment opportunities for the youth and to encourage them to pursue education," he added.

Taliban curbs women's rights despite pledge The Taliban regained control of Afghanistan on Aug. 15, 2021, after it launched an offensive as the US and other NATO troops withdrew from the country after two decades of war. The withdrawal led to chaotic scenes at and around Kabul's airport with thousands wanting to leave.

The group initially pledged to protect women's rights but soon banned girls and women from attending secondary school and higher education, citing its interpretations of Islamic laws. It later also imposed restrictions on women's employment and traveling without a male guardian.

While the UN has acknowledged that the country has become more stable since the takeover, it has warned that lasting stability cannot be possible unless the Taliban rul-

ers — who remain isolated internationally — lift restrictions on women and girls, protect basic rights and address terrorism concerns. “A reduction in conflict has brought tangible benefits for many Afghans and created opportunities to focus on recovery, development and regional economic cooperation,” the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, or UNAMA, said in a statement ahead of the anniversary. It added, however, that the restrictions on women and girls impede Afghanistan’s recovery and its reintegration with the international community.

UN says Afghanistan in world’s most severe women’s rights crisis In a statement this week, the UN’s agency on women’s rights, said Afghan women and girls are living under the world’s most severe restrictions, which not only violate their rights but also threaten the country’s social and economic future. “Half a decade after the Taliban takeover in August 2021, Afghanistan has systematically dismantled the rights of half its population, making it a global outlier with no parallel in the modern world,” UN Women said.

“In the past year alone, this exclusion of women and girls from education, employment, public life, justice systems and health care has only intensified, entrenching what remains the world’s most severe women’s rights crisis,” it said. Fazila Soroush, a 39-year-old Kabul-based entrepreneur and an advocate for women’s rights, said the government had “demonstrated its worth to the people through its actions in every area.”

“We consider it essential that the officials of the Islamic Emirate who had announced the closure of schools and universities until further notice, now make a clear and practical decision regarding this matter,” she said.

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