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Türkiye President says Egypt could join defence pact

Detailed News On Page-08

Taliban regime has become a proxy, says Asim Iftikhar

Detailed News On Page-08



Sardar Yasir launches new tourism App

Detailed News On Page-04



Missing Iranian pilots

Iran urges Qatar to allow investigation

Meanwhile, the Arab League issued a strong condemnation of Israel's latest airstrikes on Lebanon. The organization described the attacks as a violation of international law and a threat to regional stability

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN/DOHA/BEIRUT: Tensions between Iran and Qatar have escalated after Tehran urged Doha to permit a fact finding mission into the fate of Iranian pilots allegedly missing since March. Iranian officials claim the pilots disappeared after an incident involving Qatari airspace, while Qatar firmly denies holding any Iranian personnel. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called on Qatar to allow investigators into the country, insisting that transparency is essential. "We must know the fate of our pilots," he said, stressing that the matter has become a humanitarian concern. Qatar, however, rejected the allegations outright, stating that Iranian aircraft violated its airspace earlier this year. Officials in Doha emphasized that no Iranian pilots are in custody and described Tehran's claims as baseless. In parallel, Araghchi addressed speculation linking the pilot dispute with broader regional negotiations. He clarified that discussions with Oman and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz are "two separate issues." Analysts note that Iran is attempting to compartmentalize its diplomatic agenda, ensuring that bilateral disputes do not derail wider regional talks. Meanwhile, the Arab League issued a strong condemnation of Israel's latest airstrikes on Lebanon. The organization described the attacks as a violation of international law and a

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Briefs

Hockey WC: Argentina, Australia win their matches

SPORTS DESK

AMSTERDAM: In a thrilling day of action at the Hockey World Cup, the Netherlands showcased their attacking prowess with a commanding 5-1 victory over New Zealand. The Dutch side controlled possession from the start, combining sharp passing and clinical finishing to secure their place among the tournament's top contenders. Argentina followed suit with a confident 3-0 win against Japan, demonstrating their trademark discipline and flair. The South American champions capitalized on early chances, maintaining pressure throughout the match and never allowing Japan to recover.

Cop martyred in Bannu

NEWS DESK

BANNU: A police constable was martyred when unidentified armed men opened fire on him in the Sorani area of Bannu on Sunday morning, police said. According to a police statement, the martyred police official – Constable Saifullah Khan, a resident of Surani – was returning home after performing his duty at the Mirzabet Shah Surani Township police post when he came under attack by unidentified armed men as he entered his village. He sustained multiple bullet wounds and was martyred at the scene. Police termed the incident was an act of terrorism, and a search operation had been launched to arrest the perpetrators. The funeral prayer of the martyred constable was offered at the Bannu Police Lines. District Police Officer Bannu Captain (retired) Muhammad Furqan Bilal, senior police officers.

Iran offers \$30,000 bounty for killing US soldiers

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's military announced othat it was offering a bounty equivalent to \$30,000 for killing or capturing US soldiers, with the reward doubled if carried out by a woman, reports AFP. Army Chief Amir Hatami said the plan had been drawn up following "the large number of requests" to participate in the financial support, according to the IRNA state news agency. "Anyone who kills or captures and hands over an invading American military personnel will receive a reward equivalent to \$30,000 or 5 billion toman from Islamic Republic of Iran's Army," Hatami said, using an informal unit equivalent to 10,000 Iranian rials. "Courageous Iranian women who carry out such an action will receive double the reward," he added.

Seven India-backed terrorists killed in Balochistan's IBO

Weapons, ammuniton and other military equipment recovered from militants' hideouts, say sources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed seven India-backed terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Kharan district of Balochistan, security sources said on Sunday. The operation was conducted in the Lajay area after information was received about the presence of militants in the area, according to security sources. Security sources said that seven militants belonging to Fitna al-Khawarij were killed during the operation, while several others were wounded. Weapons, ammunition and other military equipment were recovered from the militants' hideouts, the sources added. One motorcycle and two vehicles were also found at the militants' hideouts, destroyed by the security forces, the sources said.

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President, PM commend security forces

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Sunday, commended the security forces for their successful intelligence-based operation against terrorists in Kharan district, Balochistan. The president observed that the destruction of hideouts of Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists and the recovery of a large quantity of weapons and ammunition were significant achievements, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

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Crime wave in Islamabad raises alarm; masses demand action

Citizens lament that Islamabad's reputation as a safe city is fading. Rising incidents of street crime, robberies, and unchecked settlements have created an atmosphere of fear. Many blame political interference, alleging that police leadership is appointed to serve the interests of politicians rather than the public

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad, once regarded as one of Pakistan's safest cities, is now facing an alarming surge in crime. Residents across multiple sectors have expressed grave concern over the deteriorating law and order situation, pointing to the absence of effective police patrolling and unchecked criminal activity. In recent days, armed dacoits targeted a shopkeeper in G-11/1 Street 22 as he was about to close his shop. In the same sector, a senior journalist was robbed at gunpoint, further highlighting the vulnerability of citizens. Despite these incidents, locals complain that no police action has been taken, leaving communities exposed. Much of the crime is reportedly linked to the Mehrabadi settlement in Sector G-12, which has become a hideout for criminals. Residents describe G-12 as a "no-go area" even for law enforcement.

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Naqvi comes in defence of IGP, CDA chief

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: In the widely circulated video, Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman retired Lt Sohail Ashraf and the Islamabad Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi are seen riding into the parade in a horse carriage. Even as the attendees are prompted to applaud for the officials, no claps are heard in the video. The video sparked criticism on social media, with many likening the act to a "colonial" mindset. Meanwhile, Naqvi issued a clarification on X, stating that it was not the officials' fault.

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JI begins protest against price hike

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Jamaate-Islami (JI) began its latest round of protests and sit-ins in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta on Sunday against the petroleum levy, rising petroleum product prices and rising inflation. The protests formed the next phase of the party's nationwide campaign after demonstrations were held at hundreds of locations earlier this month. In Lahore, JI workers continued their sit-in at Faisal Chowk on Mall Road. The protesters had marched along Mall Road before reaching Faisal Chowk near the Chief Minister's House. Punjab JI chief Javed Qasuri and other party leaders participated in the demonstration,

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AJK by-polls schedule announced

STAFF REPORT

BAGH: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission on Sunday announced the schedule for the election of reserved seats in the AJK Assembly, with polling scheduled for August 24. In a notification, the Commission said, "In exercise of the powers conferred by Rule 76 (2) of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Elections Rules, 2020 (Election to Reserved Seats), the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission is pleased to call upon the directly elected members of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly to elect members to the following reserved seats in the Assembly:

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More rains expected in parts of country

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: More rain and thundershowers, accompanied by gusty winds, are expected across the upper and central parts of the country from Aug 17 to 21, with occasional breaks, the Punjab Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said, citing the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). According to the Met Office, monsoon currents are continuing to penetrate the upper parts of the country and are expected to persist over the coming days.

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MANILA: H.E. Dr. Asima Rabbani, Ambassador of Pakistan paid a courtesy call on Hon. Pamela Baricuatro, Governor of Cebu Province, the Philippines. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. – DNA

To evolve consensus

MQM-P for national dialogue for creation of new provinces

Siddiqui says country's administrative structure no longer meets growing governance and population needs

NAZIR SIYAL / DNA

KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Chairman Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Sunday called for a national dialogue on the creation of new provinces, saying Pakistan's existing administrative structure no longer corresponds to the country's demographic realities and governance requirements. The call comes amid a renewed debate on administrative reforms after Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi proposed last month the creation of new administrative units, arguing that Pakistan's "collapsed" governance structure requires restructuring to meet growing administrative challenges. Siddiqui, addressing a press conference alongside senior MQM-P leaders Dr Farooq Sattar and Mustafa Kamal in Karachi, urged political parties to

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Transport Alliance calls off strike

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: The All Pakistan Goods Transport Alliance on Sunday announced suspending its nine-day nationwide strike for 40 days after the federal and Sindh governments gave assurances on key demands including petroleum pricing. Addressing a joint press conference alongside Sindh Governor Nehal Hashmi, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab and Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan,

Continued on Page 06



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ChenOne marks 29 years of excellence

LAHORE: Leading retail chain ChenOne on Sunday celebrated the successful completion of 29 years, reaffirming its commitment to quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction in the garments and furniture sectors. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Ashfaq stated that the company has earned public trust by consistently offering high standards of quality and contemporary design. He noted that ChenOne's garments combine international fashion trends with premium fabrics, while its furniture division has established a strong reputation for providing stylish and durable products for homes and offices. Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq attributed the company's success to the dedication of its workforce, adding that ChenOne has contributed to Pakistan's retail industry by creating employment opportunities and promoting local manufacturing. Director Mian Umar Ashfaq described the milestone as a reflection of the company's contribution to the national economy and expressed confidence in its continued expansion, while Director Muhammad Arab praised the adherence to quality standards. The ceremony concluded with the distribution of shields and souvenirs among outstanding employees in recognition of their performance.—APP

Continuous reforms vital for sustainable eco growth

LAHORE: Coordinator to the Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif ur Rehman on Sunday said nations that embrace continuous and systemic change were better positioned to achieve sustainable economic growth and social progress in an ever-evolving global environment. Addressing a seminar titled "State of Flux," organised in collaboration with Zia Family Food Products here, he said rapid changes in global economies, technology and social dynamics required countries to strengthen their institutions and adopt best practices to remain competitive. He said developed nations continuously reformed their policies and systems in response to changing circumstances, adding that people's knowledge, work patterns, priorities and sources of income also evolved over time. Referring to the Holy Quran, Saif ur Rehman said meaningful societal change begins with self-reform, citing the Quranic verse: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11). He added that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also introduced reforms that transformed society during his mission. Describing change as a universal law of nature, he said continuous transformation was essential for growth, adaptation and long-term success in every sphere of life. Saif ur Rehman said leading global companies had sustained their success for decades by continuously adapting to changing market conditions, consumer needs and technological advancements. He urged institutions and businesses to foster a culture of innovation and adaptability to ensure long-term competitiveness and national development.—APP

ICCI, Pakistan Cultural Forum hold I-Day mushaira

Chairman Pakistan Cultural Forum Zafar Bakhtawari said that Pakistan is our identity and freedom is our greatest blessing. He said that holding a Mushaira on Independence Day reflects our collective thoughts and sentiments about the country and the nation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A prestigious Mushaira (poetry gathering) was organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pakistan Cultural Forum to mark Independence Day. The event was presided over by renowned poet and intellectual Professor Jaleel Aali, while Dr. Najiba Arif, Chairperson of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, was the chief guest. A large number of prominent poets, writers, intellectuals, and literary enthusiasts attended the event. Addressing the gathering, Chairman Pakistan Cultural Forum Zafar Bakhtawari said that Pakistan is our identity and freedom is our greatest blessing. He said that holding a Mushaira on Independence Day reflects our collective thoughts and sentiments about the country and the nation. Poets and writers played an important role in the Pakistan Movement. Allama Iqbal was the visionary behind the idea of Pakistan, while Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah gave practical shape to his dream. The national anthem was another great gift to the nation by poet Hafiz Jalandhari. Poets and writers provide intellectual guidance to society and help steer the nation in the right direction. He said that the journey toward realizing Allama Iqbal's dream is still continuing, while Pakistan's role at the international level is becoming increasingly important. Pakistan's role in connection with the Makkah Agreement and unity among Muslim countries is a manifestation of its global significance. Poets and writers should use their creative works to connect the younger generation with their culture, national language, and national values. Poetry and literature play a fundamental role in promoting patriotism, national unity, and positive thinking. Organizing literary activities on Independence Day is an effective way of acquainting the younger generation with the



struggle for the creation of Pakistan and the everlasting sacrifices of their elders. Presiding over the ceremony, Professor Jaleel Aali said that the dream of Pakistan was envisioned by a poet, while the unparalleled poet Allama Iqbal awakened a new spirit among Muslims across the world. Even today, Iqbal's poetry remains a major source of intellectual resistance against global imperialism. He said that Pakistan has maintained its existence despite eight decades of ups and

downs. Freedom is not merely about celebrating one day; rather, it is a continuous responsibility. We must follow the principles of Quaid-e-Azam and take Pakistan forward on the path of knowledge, education, peace, and development. Chief Guest and Chairperson of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, Dr. Najiba Arif, said that industry and commerce are the backbone of the national economy. However, the intellectual commitment of businesspeople toward the country and nation, alongside their business interests, is also commendable. She said that the purpose behind the creation of Pakistan was to protect human rights, ensure the supremacy of law and justice, and establish a society where every individual has equal opportunities for progress. Knowledge and literature are among the most important means of achieving these objectives. The business community's role in promoting knowledge and literature is highly commendable. She said that Pakistan's independence is the result of the everlasting sacrifices of our elders and martyrs. Therefore, writers and poets have a responsibility to promote patriotism and national consciousness among the younger generation through their creative works. Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Irfan Chaudhry, welcomed all the guests and said that culture and literature are the means of keeping the hearts and spirit of nations alive. He said that alongside strengthening the economy, we must also strengthen our literary and cultural heritage. On the occasion of Independence Day, he said, we renew our commitment through poetry to making Pakistan a dignified, prosperous, and developed country. At the Mushaira, renowned poets including Shakeel Jazib, Dr. Junaid Azar, Professor Rashida Maheen Malik, Saeed Raja, Dr. Shazia Akbar, Dr. Mehnaz Anjum, Dr. Rubab Tabassum, and others presented their poetry. Through their verses, the poets highlighted their love for the homeland, the value and significance of freedom, national unity,

Murad for transforming Ketī Bandar into economic hub

The Chief Minister reiterated that the project would be implemented in phases. The first phase would focus on establishing mini fish harbours at Ketī Bandar and Shah Bandar, equipped with modern auction halls, cold storage facilities, docking infrastructure and related fisheries services. The second phase would involve developing a full-fledged commercial deep-sea port

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday directed the Investment Department to prepare a comprehensive Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for the development of Ketī Bandar, in accordance with the vision of former prime minister Shaheed Mohterma Benazir Bhutto. Presiding over a meeting of the Investment Department at the CM House, the Chief Minister said that Ketī Bandar must be transformed into a large-scale maritime and economic development project centred on a modern deep-sea port and an integrated economic corridor. "I want a comprehensive and bankable PPP model proposal for Ketī Bandar. The project must be developed in line with the vision outlined in the provincial budget and should position Sindh as a leading maritime, logistics, industrial and energy hub of the region," the Chief Minister said. The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Qasim Naveed, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Agha Wasif, Chairman

Planning & Development Board Najam Shah, Secretary Investment Raja Khuram, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, Secretary Finance Asghar Memon and other senior officials. The Chief Minister directed the relevant departments to undertake detailed planning and present a phased development strategy covering port infrastructure, industrial development, logistics, fisheries, energy facilities and tourism-related investments. Murad Shah said the proposed Ketī Bandar Integrated Corridor would serve as a catalyst for economic growth, employment generation and foreign investment while unlocking the development potential of Sindh's coastal belt and the Indus Delta region. The proposed development plan envisages Ketī Bandar as a world-class maritime, logistics, industrial and energy hub under a PPP framework. The major components include a deep-sea port, logistics and warehousing facilities, industrial zones, energy infrastructure, fisheries and seafood processing facilities, tourism projects and export-oriented eco-

nomics activities. The Chief Minister noted that the Ketī Bandar Maritime, Fisheries and Petroleum Economic Corridor, announced in the Sindh Budget 2026-27, has the potential to attract investments ranging from \$1 billion to \$2.5 billion. The corridor would comprise a modern fishing harbour, seafood export processing facilities, petroleum handling terminals, logistics infrastructure and industrial support zones. He further directed officials to incorporate plans for developing Ketī Bandar as a future energy gateway. The proposal includes establishing LNG/RLNG and LPG import facilities, along with other strategic energy infrastructure. A feasibility study has already identified approximately 4,000 acres for the proposed development. Murad Shah also called for detailed planning of supporting infrastructure, including road, rail and maritime connectivity, with particular emphasis on linking Ketī Bandar with industrial and energy projects in the province.—APP

Meghwar community vows enduring loyalty to Pakistan

KARACHI: The Meghwar community of Sukkur Division celebrated Pakistan's 79th Independence Day with a large gathering in Mirpur Mathelo, district Ghotki, reaffirming its enduring loyalty to Pakistan and expressing a collective resolve to contribute to the country's progress while addressing social challenges confronting the community. The gathering was attended by Panchayat leaders, Sadhus and Sants, community elders, representatives and a large number of young people. The event combined the spirit of Independence Day with a serious discussion on community development, social responsibility and the need to review certain traditional practices in the light of changing social and economic realities. The first session was dedicated to Jashan-e-Azadi, during which a cake cutting was performed to mark the 79th anniversary of Pakistan's independence. Prayers were also offered for the peace, stability, prosperity and progress of the country.

Participants paid tribute to members of the Meghwar community serving in the Pakistan Army, Police and Education Department, acknowledging their sacrifices, professional services and contributions to Pakistan. Speakers said the Meghwar community had remained an integral part of the country's social fabric and had consistently contributed to national institutions and public service. The gathering was addressed and attended by prominent community representatives, including Mukhi Santosh Kumar, Bhagwan Das Mangi, Manik Ram, Wishin Das, Ameet Kumar, District Councillor Ameet Kumar, Mukhi Babu Hardas, Mukhi Daulat Ram, Mukhi Daryano Mal, Mukhi Dadan Arshi, Mukhi Nand Lal, Mukhi Sho Lal, Mukhi Vapari Lal, Vijesh Kumar and Comrade Kishin Lal, among others. Sadhus and Sants participating in the gathering included Sant Mohan Lal Kabir Panthi, Sant Ajmal Sadh, Sant Nand Lal, Sant Vijay Kumar Sadh and Sant Panhu Sadh. The presence of community elders, spiritual figures, Panchayat representatives and young people provided an opportunity for dialogue between generations and different sections of Meghwar society. Participants described the gathering as an important platform for combining national celebration with constructive community reflection. During the second session, participants held an open and detailed discussion on a range of social issues, including marriage practices, substance use among young people, education, girls' access to higher education, exchange marriages and responsible family planning. Speakers expressed concern over engagements and marriages being arranged in haste, sometimes resulting in relationships breaking down prematurely.—APP

286 early warning systems installed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is installing 286 early warning systems across 24 vulnerable valleys in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the \$37 million GLOF-II project, as the government moves to strengthen preparedness against glacial lake outburst floods and other climate-related hazards. According to a document available with Wealth Pakistan, the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) has undertaken a series of initiatives focused on early warning systems, GLOF risk reduction and glacier preservation. Of the 24 valleys covered under GLOF-II, 18 are in Gilgit-Baltistan and six in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The document puts the total cost of the project at \$37 million. The operationalisation and handing over of early warning systems installed under GLOF-II to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) is also

among the initiatives listed by the ministry. To strengthen the institutional mechanism for addressing GLOF risks, a Technical Committee on GLOF Risk Reduction was established in May 2026. The ministry also submitted a Regional Glaciers Preservation Initiative to the PMO in August 2025. According to the document, the initiative proposes scaling up adaptation finance, strengthening regional cooperation and data sharing, deploying satellite monitoring and advanced sensors, expanding multi-hazard early warning systems, and promoting nature-based and climate-resilient infrastructure. Apart from GLOF-II, five early warning systems are covered under the Sustainable Action for Ecosystem Restoration in Pakistan (SAFER) project – four in Gilgit-Baltistan and one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The document puts their cost at \$1.86 million out of the project's total \$10 million cost. Another two early warning systems are covered under the Buner and Shangla project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with one system each for Buner and Shangla districts. Their cost is listed at \$0.45 million out of the project's total cost of \$9 million. The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) project, meanwhile, includes an assessment of all early warning systems installed across the country. The document puts the cost of this component at \$1.4 million out of the project's \$2.9 million cost. The document also lists the UNDP-Tailored Intelligence for Actionable Early Warning System (TIAEWS) among the initiatives being pursued in this area. Together, the initiatives cover early warning infrastructure, assessment of existing systems, glacier monitoring, institutional coordination and measures aimed at strengthening preparedness against climate-related hazards.—APP

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Unlocking KP gemstones treasures awaits govt patronage

PESHAWAR: In the narrow, time-worn streets of Namak Mandi, Peshawar, the rhythmic hum of gemstone-polishing machines echoes through bustling workshops, telling a story of hope, resilience and an industry with enormous untapped potential. At the heart of one such workshop is 64-year-old Fayaz Khan, a gemstone trader who has spent decades watching rough, unremarkable stones transform into objects of extraordinary beauty and value. Around him, young artisans carefully cut and polish emeralds from Swat, rubies from Chitral, peridot from Kohistan and topaz from Mardan. Their skilled hands are turning the province's natural wealth into a source of income and livelihood for families associated with mining, trading, cutting, polishing and jewelry making. For Fayaz, gemstones are more than merchandise. They are a lifeline that offers people the opportunity to earn a respectable living with dignity amid rising prices and growing economic hardships. "Every stone we touch here has a story, a struggle, a journey and a dream," he said, holding a deep-green emerald that shimmered under the workshop lights. "We only need the support of the KP government to train miners, modernize the sector

and showcase our gemstones before the world." Fayaz's family entered the gemstone trade in the early 1980s. What began as a modest family business has survived two generations and provided employment and valuable skills to scores of people. His story reflects the experience of thousands of workers and traders whose livelihoods depend on a sector that experts believe could emerge as a significant contributor to Pakistan's export economy. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is endowed with an extraordinary variety of precious and semi-precious stones. Along with Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and parts of Balochistan, the province forms part of Pakistan's richest geological belt, containing ruby, emerald, sapphire, aquamarine, peridot and topaz. Yet much of this hidden treasure remains trapped between the mine and the international market because of inadequate official patronage, outdated mining practices, limited technology and insufficient value addition. According to gemstone traders, more than 350,000 people are directly or indirectly associated with the gemstone trade in KP, with Namak Mandi regarded as one of the country's oldest and most important trading centres. The market has remained active since the

1970s, connecting miners and traders with domestic and international buyers. However, the sector's economic potential is far greater than its current contribution. Fayaz said emeralds could fetch prices of up to Rs25,000 per carat, while properly processed, high-quality rubies could generate substantial returns. Such figures demonstrate the value that can be created when rough stones are transformed locally through cutting, polishing, grading and certification instead of being exported in their raw form. This, industry representatives say, is one of KP's greatest challenges. Traditional mining techniques often result in considerable wastage of valuable material while exposing miners to serious safety risks. Outdated machinery, inadequate technical training and limited access to modern geological and mining technologies prevent workers from extracting the maximum possible value from mineral deposits. "Precious material is wasted because mining is still largely carried out through traditional methods," traders said, stressing the urgent need for modern equipment, professional expertise and safer mining practices.—APP

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

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Independence Day

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Independence Day

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Independence Day

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Potohar Town.....9209224

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Water Tank

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30% regional trade can rise with sustained policy

Ambassador Saleem observed that Pakistan’s trade with Central Asia remained below \$500 million despite the region’s population of approximately 75 million. He stressed that geography alone does not create trade; connectivity, effective agreements, functioning financial channels and policy continuity do

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) hosted a seminar titled “Advancing Pakistan’s Regional Trade in an Evolving Geopolitical Landscape,” bringing together trade officials, business leaders and policymakers to explore ways of leveraging Pakistan’s strategic geography to expand regional commerce. Speaking at the seminar, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, noted that regional trade accounts for just over 10 percent of Pakistan’s total external trade, compared with 26 percent for ASEAN and 52 percent for NAFTA. He said this gap reflected Pakistan’s underutilized geographical and economic potential, particularly in relation to Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran and other neighbouring markets. Ambassador Saleem observed that Pakistan’s trade with Central Asia remained below \$500

million despite the region’s population of approximately 75 million. He stressed that geography alone does not create trade; connectivity, effective agreements, functioning financial channels and policy continuity do. He said CPEC’s next phase should place greater emphasis on regional connectivity, trade, logistics and export-oriented investment. Pakistan, he added, should seek to position itself as a commercial bridge linking China and South Asia with Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and the wider Middle East. Highlighting Pakistan’s approximately 11-million-strong diaspora and record remittances of \$41.6 billion during the year, Ambassador Saleem said the diaspora should be viewed not only as a source of remittances but also as a bridge to markets, investment, technology and global business networks. He called for regional trade to be made an integral part of Pakistan’s economic and foreign policy and

said that, with sustained political commitment, better infrastructure, effective implementation of existing agreements and improved trade facilitation, Pakistan could raise the share of regional trade to 20–30 percent of its total external trade over the medium term. Usman Shaukat, President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), observed that the global order was becoming increasingly multipolar, with economic strength a key determinant of influence. Referring to the 2026 US-Israel-Iran conflict and the ensuing oil crisis, he highlighted Pakistan’s potential role as a mediator and stressed that diplomatic engagement should also yield economic dividends. He called for an integrated approach to CPEC, Gwadar Port and the TAPI gas pipeline. Muhammad Naseer, Chief Executive of the Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company

and former Senior Director General at TDAP, noted that Pakistan’s combined trade with Afghanistan, Iran, India and Central Asia was only \$2.45 billion during the last fiscal year, less than one-tenth of its trade with China. He said exports to Afghanistan had declined by 74 percent in one year, while trade with Iran remained constrained by the absence of a banking channel despite a finalized free trade agreement. He identified Central Asia as a positive exception, where Pakistan maintains a trade surplus, and called for stronger implementation of existing trade agreements and targeted measures to expand exports, particularly in agriculture and horticulture. He also emphasized that realizing Pakistan’s regional trade potential would require institutional coordination, improved trade facilitation, reliable financial mechanisms and consistent policy implementation

ISLAMABAD: Newly elected office bearers of Rawalpindi Islamabad Photojournalist Association pose for group photo with president Sajjad Haider after winning election unopposed at press club on Sunday.

Dengue SOP violations 1,670 FIRs registered, 440 premises sealed

RAWALPINDI: The District Health Administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had registered 1,670 First Information Reports (FIRs) and sealed 440 premises for violations of anti-dengue standard operating procedures (SOPs) from January 1 to date. District Coordinator, Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr Jawad Ahmed, said on Sunday that the authorities had also issued 1,565 challans and imposed fines totalling Rs1,974,000 on violators across the district. Giving details of surveillance activities, he said 1,460 anti-dengue teams had conducted indoor inspections at 391,747 houses since January 1 and detected lar-

vae at 74,392 houses. During outdoor surveillance, the teams inspected 1,338,647 locations and found larvae at 87,408 sites, he added. Dr Jawad Ahmed said six confirmed dengue cases had been reported in the district so far this year, compared with 68 during the corresponding period in 2025, 33 in 2024 and 73 in 2023. A comprehensive anti-dengue campaign was being carried out across Rawalpindi district to prevent the spread of the virus, the health officer said. He said prevention of the disease was a priority of the government and the district health administration was working round the clock to avert any possible outbreak. The

dengue situation in the Rawalpindi region was under control, he said and added that the city’s hospitals had made extensive arrangements for the treatment of dengue patients, adding that all possible preventive measures were in place to deal with any eventuality. He urged residents to remain vigilant and regularly check junkyards, schools and under-construction buildings, which could serve as breeding grounds for dengue mosquitoes. The health officer also advised citizens to prevent stagnant water from accumulating in or around their homes and workplaces to help curb dengue breeding.—APP

Rain, thunder-showers forecast

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast an extended spell of rain, wind and thundershowers over the upper and central parts of the country from August 17 to 21, with occasional breaks. According to officials, monsoon currents are currently penetrating the northern regions of the country and are likely to persist over the coming days. While a westerly wave is expected to enter the upper parts of Pakistan from August 17, and the combination of these two weather systems is expected to bring widespread precipitation to much of the country. In Kashmir, scattered rain accompanied by wind and thundershowers, including isolated heavy falls, is expected across Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber and Mirpur, beginning on the evening of August 16 and continuing through August 21 with intermittent gaps. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is also expected to see significant rainfall, with rain-wind and thundershower activity, including isolated heavy falls, forecast for Dir, Chitral, Swat, Kohistan, Malakand, Nowshera, Charsadda, Swabi, Shangla, Battagram, Buner, Kohat, Hangu, Kurram, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Peshawar and Mardan from August 17 through August 21. The southern districts of the province, including Karak, Tank, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu and Waziristan, are expected to receive rain somewhat later, on August 20 and 21. Islamabad and the upper parts of Punjab will not be spared either, with rain, wind and thundershowers, including isolated heavy falls, forecast for Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Galliat, Jhelum, Chakwal, Talagang, Attock, Sialkot, Narowal, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafiznagar, Wazirabad, Lahore, Kasur, Okara, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Sargodha, Khushab, Mianwali and Noorpur Thal, starting from the evening of August 16 and lasting until August 21. Meanwhile, Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Layyah, Bhakkar, Sahiwal, Pakpattan, Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur and D.G. Khan are expected to receive rainfall on August 20 and 21. In Gilgit-Baltistan, rain, wind and thundershower activity is forecast for Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche and Shigar from August 18 to 21, again with occasional gaps. —APP

Webinar on ‘Digital Kaizen in Manufacturing’

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar on “Digital Kaizen in Manufacturing” on August 17 (Monday), aimed at helping manufacturing professionals understand how digital technologies can improve productivity, quality and operational efficiency. The session aims to equip participants with an understanding of Digital Kaizen, which merges the Japanese philosophy of continuous, incremental improvement, or Kaizen, with real-time data, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies, said an NPO document.—APP

Water-testing equipment installed in 46 labs

ISLAMABAD :Water-testing equipment has been installed in 46 laboratories across Islamabad, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while nine mobile water-testing laboratories have been made operational under an initiative to strengthen water-quality monitoring and surveillance. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the project has strengthened water-quality monitoring, surveillance and management systems in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, while also strengthening institutional and policy arrangements. The initiative has focused on building the capacity of relevant stakeholders in water-quality moni-

toring and testing. Technical staff of concerned federal and provincial entities have been trained and equipped with the knowledge and skills required to conduct water-quality tests and surveys. As part of the initiative, water-quality assessments have been conducted at all filtration plants in Islamabad in collaboration with the Capital Development Authority (CDA), while filters have been changed where required. The project has also developed a country report containing recommendations for improving Pakistan’s legal and administrative systems related to SDG 6 and water resources management. An action plan has also been developed for smart water management in Islamabad’s water-supply system. A federal-level water-quality surveillance mechanism is being established through comprehensive knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, and periodic reporting arrangements. According to the document, such a mechanism did not exist before the intervention and will contribute towards achieving SDG 6, particularly target 6.1. The initiative is also contributing to regular reporting on drinking-water quality to improve service delivery.—APP

Silent wheels bring faster response to Islamabad streets

ISLAMABAD: On Islamabad’s quiet, tree-lined roads, a new kind of police patrol is quietly taking shape, one that arrives without the roar of an engine, leaves no exhaust behind and moves into action without delay. The city’s new electric police vehicles are bringing a silent but significant change to the way policing is carried out in the capital. With no fuel burning while standing idle and no lengthy starting process, Islamabad Police’s newly inducted electric vehicles are bringing a quieter and potentially faster dimension to policing in the capital. The initiative is aimed at modernizing the force, improving mobility and ensuring that police teams remain ready when citizens need immediate assistance. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, accompanied by Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, handed over the new vehicles to Islamabad Police as part of efforts to strengthen the force’s operational

capacity. The arrival of 30 vehicles for 27 police stations after a gap of 14 years has attracted attention across the capital. Yet their importance goes beyond their modern appearance. The real question is whether these vehicles can make police response quicker, patrolling more reliable and the city’s streets cleaner. For Tahir Azad, a local resident and government employee, improved police transport can directly contribute to better policing. “Giving police reliable and fast vehicles means they can respond quickly and pursue criminals more effectively,” he told APP. “An electric vehicle can remain ready for action without wasting fuel while standing.” That readiness could prove particularly useful for officers who spend long hours at checkpoints and duty points. Conventional vehicles often require their engines to remain running while officers wait, consuming fuel and producing emissions even when the vehicle is station-

ary. The electric vehicles remove that need. Inspector Tajammul Hussain Shah said the vehicles could remain stationary without burning fuel, while also avoiding unnecessary engine noise and emissions. For Islamabad, where green spaces, parks and tree-lined avenues are central to the city’s identity, the environmental benefit could be significant. Environmental experts generally view the shift from conventional fuel-powered vehicles to electric transport as a positive step for reducing tailpipe emissions and urban noise. They also point out that the overall environmental advantage depends partly on how electricity is produced and how batteries are maintained, re-used and eventually disposed of. For a public institution operating vehicles for extended periods, however, moving towards electric transport can be an important step in reducing direct pollution.—APP

Efforts afoot to make beggars’ free Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: An important meeting was held in the chair of Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters ADCG Maliha Sehar to review measures for eliminating professional begging and making the anti-begging campaign more effective across the district. Officials from the relevant departments attended the meeting, where a detailed review was conducted of ongoing operations against professional beggars, progress on the anti-begging campaign and the future course of action. Maliha Sehar directed the concerned officers to intensify and streamline operations against professional begging. She ordered special measures at major roads, intersections, traffic signals, markets, commercial centres and other public places to curb the practice. She said professional begging was not only a social issue but also a source of inconvenience for citizens. Therefore, all relevant departments must coordinate closely and take effective measures to address the problem. The Additional Deputy Commissioner further directed officials to deal sympathetically with deserving and genuinely needy individuals and connect them with available government welfare programmes.—APP

Integrated planning key to secure energy future

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan’s energy future will increasingly depend on adopting an integrated planning approach that treats electricity, petroleum, gas and major energy-consuming sectors as parts of one interconnected system, energy-sector expert Talha Khalid said. Speaking at a recent discussion hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) on Energy Sector Reforms and Way forward, Talha Khalid said that decisions in one segment of the energy value chain increasingly have implications across others, whereas making coordinated long-term planning is essential for achieving energy security, affordability and sustainability. “Pakistan’s path towards energy security, affordability and sustainability increasingly depends on integrated energy planning and coordinated implementation,” he said. Drawing on his experience in the energy sector, Talha noted that conventional sector-by-sector planning needs to evolve towards a whole-of-energy-system perspective. “He noted that growing electrification, distributed renewable energy, storage technologies, energy efficiency and changing fuel dynamics are creating stronger linkages between electricity, gas, petroleum, transport and industry.—APP

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GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

AND INTERFAITH HARMONY

HIRING OF SERVICES FOR HAJJ

MEDICAL MISSION FOR HAJJ - 2027

Ministry of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony (M/o RA & IH) invites applications from Regular Government Servants working as Medical Officers, Public Health Specialists, Pharmacists & Paramedics working in Federal, Provincial, G.B and AJ&K Government Health Departments / Hospitals (up to BPS - 18) for provision of Medical related services to the pilgrims in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) during Hajj Operation 2027. The selection will be made through **Open Testing Service (OTS)** against the prescribed Federal/Provincial/Regional FPSC quota.

The number of positions is subject to increase, decrease or cancellation based on the actual requirement, Hajj quota and Saudi Taleamat.

Selection will be conducted through **written test** through OTS in accordance with the approved eligibility criteria, quota and selection mechanism. **The last date for submission of applications is 27.08.2026.**

Applicants are advised to carefully read the **detailed eligibility criteria, quota distribution, terms & conditions, syllabus, test requirements and "How to Apply"** instructions available on the official websites of the **Ministry of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony** , (www.mora.gov.pk) and/ or **Open Testing Service (OTS)**, (www.ots.org.pk).

Applicants should regularly visit the OTS website and applicant portal for important updates regarding Roll Number Slips, Test Schedule, **Results and other recruitment-related announcements.**

PID (I) 1554/26

Section Officer (PW)

Briefs

Aerial firing
lands 7
behind bars

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Khanna Police Station apprehended seven suspects allegedly involved in aerial firing, recovering illegal weapons and ammunition from their possession in a swift operation in the federal capital. An ICT Police official told APP on Sunday that the action was taken immediately after police received information about aerial firing within the jurisdiction of Khanna Police Station. The official said that on the directions of SP Soan Zone Khurram Ashraf, SHO Khanna Police Station Shahid Zaman, along with his team, rushed to the spot and apprehended seven suspects allegedly involved in the firing. Police also recovered illegal weapons and ammunition from the possession of the suspects, while legal proceedings were initiated against them. The official said aerial firing posed a serious threat to human life and Islamabad Police would show zero tolerance towards illegal weapons, display of arms and aerial firing. He said strict and indiscriminate legal action would continue against those who endangered the lives and property of citizens through such unlawful activities.—APP

Churches' security put under close watch

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Qazi Ali Raza on Sunday inspected security arrangements at various churches across the federal capital, checking surveillance cameras and directing deployed personnel to maintain heightened vigilance and closely monitor suspicious activities. An Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police spokesperson told reporter that Qazi visited different churches, met police officers deployed on security duties and personally reviewed arrangements made for the protection of worshippers. During the visits, the SSP Qazi also checked security cameras and surveillance arrangements to assess monitoring around the places of worship. He directed police personnel to remain alert throughout their duties, maintain a close watch on suspicious persons and activities, and immediately respond to any security concern. Qazi stressed that effective security and monitoring should be maintained at churches to ensure that citizens visiting the places of worship were provided a safe and peaceful environment. He also instructed the deployed personnel to perform their duties with vigilance and professional responsibility and ensure that there was no lapse in security arrangements. The SSP said Islamabad Police remained committed to protecting places of worship and ensuring the safety of citizens across the federal capital.—APP

ICCI wants greater Pakistan-Turkey economic partnership

The Turkish business counterparts warmly congratulated the people of Pakistan on the country's 79th Independence Day, expressing their sincere wishes for Pakistan's continued peace, stability, prosperity and economic progress

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) delegation, led by President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, joined Turkish business leaders in Istanbul to celebrate Pakistan's 79th Independence Day. The two sides jointly cut the Independence Day cake, reaffirming the enduring bonds of friendship, brotherhood and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye. Speaking on the occasion, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said the freedom enjoyed by Pakistan was achieved through the immense sacrifices of the nation's forefathers, making it the responsibility of every citizen to contribute to the country's progress and prosperity. He paid rich tribute to the Armed Forces of Pakistan, under the command of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, for their unwavering commitment, courage and sacrifices in safeguarding the



country's sovereignty and national security. He said the nation remains deeply grateful to its armed forces for standing as a strong shield of Pakistan and preserving the peace and security essential for economic development and

prosperity. He went on to say that Pakistan and Türkiye are bound by deep-rooted historical, cultural and fraternal ties, adding that the relationship now needs to be translated into a stronger and more dynamic economic part-

nership. He stressed that greater engagement between the private sectors of both countries can unlock substantial opportunities in trade, investment and joint ventures. Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to facilitating stronger commercial engagement between Pakistani and Turkish businesses. He said the Chamber would continue providing platforms for entrepreneurs and investors from both countries to explore new markets, develop partnerships and convert mutual goodwill into tangible economic opportunities. The Turkish business counterparts warmly congratulated the people of Pakistan on the country's 79th Independence Day, expressing their sincere wishes for Pakistan's continued peace, stability, prosperity and economic progress. They reaffirmed that the deep-rooted bonds of brotherhood between Türkiye and Pakistan would continue to grow stronger, particularly through enhanced trade, investment and business-to-business cooperation.

Weapon-free Islamabad drive nets 379

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police apprehended 379 suspects, registered 373 cases and seized 365 firearms during a 46-day crackdown from July 1 to August 15, 2026, as the capital intensified its drive against illegal weapons, display of arms and aerial firing. An ICT Police spokesperson told on Sunday that the Weapon-Free Islamabad campaign, launched on the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, was being pursued through targeted operations across the federal capital. The spokesperson said the seized firearms included 29 Kalashnikovs, 18 rifles/carbines and 318 pistols of different calibres, besides 32 daggers and a large quantity of ammunition recovered during the special campaign. Police warned that possession of illegal weapons, display of arms and aerial firing were offences under the law and violators would face strict legal action. SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza said ICT Police were pursuing a zero-tolerance policy against illegal weapons and display of arms and would further intensify targeted operations to rid the capital of such weapons. He urged citizens in possession of licensed weapons to ensure their registration with the relevant police stations, while those in possession of illegal arms should surrender them to the police. Qazi also called upon citizens to immediately report any instance of illegal weapon possession or display of arms to police. Abide by the law and support Islamabad Police in maintaining a peaceful capital, he said. The SSP said targeted operations and crackdowns would continue with greater intensity to curb illegal weapons and ensure a peaceful and secure Islamabad—APP

Sardar Yasir launches AI-powered tourism platform GOPKZ

STAFF REPORTER

Pakistan's tourism sector took a major step towards a technology-driven future with the launch of GOPKZ, an artificial intelligence-powered digital tourism ecosystem, with Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Advisor and National Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Tourism, leading the ceremony as chief guest. Held at a local hotel in Islamabad, the launch brought together representatives of Pakistan's tourism industry, the diplomatic community and the private sector, highlighting the country's vast tourism potential and the growing need to connect it with technology, investment and global markets. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan has emerged as a prominent voice for the development and international promotion of Pakistan's tourism industry, advocating

greater private-sector participation, investment and modern infrastructure to transform the country's tourism potential into a sustainable economic opportunity. His presence at the GOPKZ launch underscored the growing convergence between national tourism leadership and technology-led private-sector initiatives aimed at making Pakistan a more accessible and competitive destination for international travellers. Speaking on the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan emphasised the importance of harnessing Pakistan's immense tourism potential and creating an environment in which innovation, investment and private enterprise can contribute meaningfully to the sector's growth. GOPKZ brings accommodation, tours, experiences, transportation and intelligent trip planning together within a single digital ecosystem. Its AI-pow-

ered travel companion, Nigebhan, enables travellers to communicate their requirements through simple prompts and receive personalised travel recommendations and solutions. The initiative is being led by Muhammad Shahroz Habib, Group Executive Vice President of Siddiqi Hospitality and GOPKZ, who has overseen the platform's strategy, development and execution. The launch was also attended by Managing Director PTDC Aftab ur Rehman Rana, diplomats, tourism representatives and members of the corporate community. For Pakistan, the significance of technology-enabled tourism extends well beyond convenience. The country possesses an extraordinary range of tourism assets, from the high mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to its historic cities, cultural heritage and coastal destinations.

Suspected Europe-bound transit attempt foiled

The passenger was offloaded and handed over to the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle (AHTC) Islamabad for forensic examination of his mobile phone and further legal proceedings

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Immigration at Islamabad International Airport offloaded a Swat resident after detecting an alleged fake Netherlands visit visa, thwarting a suspected attempt to use Saudi Arabia as a transit point for onward travel to Europe. An FIA official told reporter on Sunday that the passenger was intercepted during secondary profiling on August 14, 2026, while preparing to travel to Saudi Arabia aboard Airblue flight PA-270. The official said detailed scrutiny of the travel documents revealed that the Netherlands visit visa affixed to page 18 of the passenger's passport was fake, raising suspicion about his possible links with a human smuggling network. A review of

the passenger's travel history showed that he had previously travelled several times to different countries, including Malaysia, Thailand and Saudi Arabia. The FIA said the travel pattern, coupled with the allegedly forged visa, strengthened suspicions requiring further investigation into possible links with a human smuggling network. The passenger was offloaded and handed over to the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle (AHTC) Islamabad for forensic examination of his mobile phone and further legal proceedings. The FIA said investigators would examine the digital evidence to identify any facilitators allegedly involved in arranging the forged visa or assisting the attempted journey. Further investigation is underway.

The AI daughters Pakistan loses to wedlock

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's universities produce over 12,000 female Information and Communication Technology (ICT) graduates every year, yet many qualified women are forced out of the workforce as marriage, motherhood and family expectations take priority. Their exit comes at a cost to an economy increasingly hungry for digital and AI talent. Women make up only 17% of Pakistan's IT workforce, and in AI, machine learning and data science, the figure is believed to be even lower. Although women continue to graduate with computer science degrees, only 14-17% enter the workforce, compared with 83% of their male counterparts. The gap reflects a broader national reality. Pakistan's female labour force participation stands at 24%, among the lowest in the world, placing the country 153rd out of 156 on the Global Gender Gap Index. Women are earning the degrees. They are just not getting, or keeping, the jobs. The imbalance is visible even before recruitment begins. When Haleema Mehmood, an HR professional at a multinational company, reviewed applications for a technical role, she received more than 900 resumes. "Fewer than 100 were from women. The numbers spoke for themselves" she shared while talking to reporter. The shortage comes at a time when demand for AI and data talent has never been greater. According to the World Economic Forum's

Future of Jobs Report 2025, Big Data Specialists and AI and Machine Learning Specialists are the world's two fastest-growing jobs, with Big Data roles projected to grow by 110% by 2030. Pakistan, however, continues to leave much of its talent on the sidelines. Research by McKinsey shows gender-diverse teams perform 25% better and produce 19% more innovative solutions. Yet many decisions involving hiring, healthcare and public services in Pakistan are still being shaped by overwhelmingly male technical teams. The landmark Gender Shades Project at MIT found facial recognition systems developed by IBM, Microsoft and Face++ recorded error rates of less than 1% for lighter-skinned men, but more than 34% for dark-skinned women. The study underscored a simple reality: when the people building AI do not represent the people using it, the technology does not work equally for everyone. For Haleema Mehmood, one intervention has consistently made the biggest difference. "A female in a leadership role, leading the team," she says. The challenge, however, is not a lack of qualified women. Sarah Tariq, Programme Head of Business Data Analytics at COMSATS University, talking to this scribe said, women currently account for 45% of enrolment in her programme. They perform on par with, and often outperform, their male classmates.—APP

IIUI research publications recorded for 2025

Expressing pride in the colleagues who achieved this distinction, President IIUI, Prof. Dr Ahmed Saad Alahmed, will distribute the prizes among them

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of Pakistan's Independence Day celebrations, the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) proudly announced that 105 faculty members produced 331 high-quality, ranking-relevant research publications during 2025, strengthening IIUI's research profile nationally and internationally. According to the university, this achievement was accomplished under the Research Excellence Incentive Framework, launched in August 2025 by IIUI President Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed as part of his Initiative for Scholarly Recognition. The President's vision placed research excellence at the centre of institutional progress, while his personal efforts secured Rs. 4.83 million, with support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to reward eligible publications, it stated. Working as a team under the President's leadership, Prof. Dr. Ahmad Shuja Syed, Vice President, Research and Enterprise, guided the framework's implementation and its alignment with national research standards and international ranking indicators. Dr. Rashid Farooq, Director of the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC), coordinated the submission and review process. Their efforts transformed the initiative into a transparent and workable mechanism that produced measurable results within its first year. The IIUI, President said, this milestone demonstrates IIUI's growing contribution to knowledge production and lays the foundation for greater research productivity, wider faculty participation and a stronger institutional presence in global university rankings. Expressing pride in the colleagues who achieved this distinction, President IIUI, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed, will distribute the prizes among them.—APP

Sherry for collective action against plastic pollution

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Sunday called for collective action by the government, educational institutions and the public to fight against plastic pollution. Speaking to a private news channel, she said universities and colleges to organize awareness seminars on plastic pollution to educate students about its harmful impacts. She said that an anti-plastic law had already been introduced in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Responding to a question, she said plastic bottles and bags were among the major contributors to plastic pollution, saying that plastics contain numerous potentially harmful chemicals that can pose serious risks to human health and the environment. Senator Sherry Rehman said innovations were already emerging in the field of plastic waste management. She particularly appreciated the students of the University of Balochistan for making efforts to develop innovative ideas and working on practical solutions to address the issue.—APP

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SCAN TO VISIT WEBISTE

Bahrain Is Not Cairo



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

FOR decades, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has occupied a central place in the study of Sunni Islamism. Founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, the movement became the reference point for scholars seeking to understand the relationship between Islam, politics, social organisation and the state in the modern Middle East. Its long history of confrontation, accommodation and political participation made Egypt

appear to be the natural starting point for understanding Brotherhood movements elsewhere. Yet there is a problem with treating the Egyptian experience as a universal model. The Muslim Brotherhood is not a single political actor operating according to one strategy across different countries. Its branches have developed within very different political systems, and their choices have often been shaped less by an abstract transnational ideology than by their immediate relationship with the state in which they operate.

The Brotherhood's presence in Bahrain has developed through the local organisation known as the Islamic Minbar, which has participated in parliamentary politics and maintained a relationship with the country's political establishment. Its political behaviour cannot simply be explained by referring back to the experience of the Egyptian Brotherhood. Bahrain's political structure, sectarian balance, ruling family, constitutional arrangements and relations between the state and political groups have created a different environment.

In Egypt, the Brotherhood spent much of its history confronting a powerful central state. It experienced imprisonment, repression, underground organisation and political exclusion. Even when it entered electoral politics, its relationship with the state remained deeply contested. The brief presidency of Mohamed Morsi after the 2012 election represented an extraordinary moment in the organisation's history, but the subsequent military intervention and repression once again pushed the Brotherhood into a position of severe confrontation with the Egyptian state. The Bahraini experience has been markedly different. The local Brotherhood has operated within the institutions permitted by the Bahraini political system and has, at various points, maintained close relations with the ruling authorities. Rather than positioning itself permanently as an opponent of the regime, it has often calculated its political interests within the existing order. This does not mean that the Bahraini Brotherhood lacks an Islamist identity. Nor does it mean that ideological connections with the wider Brotherhood tradition are irrelevant. The point is more straightforward: ideology does not operate in a political vacuum. The same broad ideological tradition can produce different political choices when it encounters different states. A movement facing repression may develop an oppositional strategy. A movement granted access to political institutions may prefer negotiation and participation.

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Another branch may place greater emphasis on social activity, while another may become closely associated with the ruling establishment. Much of the traditional literature on the Brotherhood has implicitly treated the organisation as though its various branches were parts of one coherent international political machine. Such an approach places too much weight on common origins and organisational links while giving insufficient attention to the political environments in which individual branches operate. There may be shared historical roots, common symbols, ideological influences and organisational relationships. But these connections do not necessarily produce identical political behaviour. Local circumstances can be more decisive than transnational affiliation. Bahrain demonstrates this clearly. The political calculations of the Bahraini Brotherhood have been influenced by its relationship with the ruling establishment and by the wider structure of Bahraini politics. Its position cannot be understood simply by importing an Egyptian framework and applying it to the island state.

The history of the Brotherhood across the Middle East suggests that political movements rarely remain unchanged when they cross national borders. Ideas travel more easily than political strategies. An organisational tradition may be reproduced in another country, but it encounters a new state, a new political elite, a different social structure and different opportunities. That is why the Egyptian and Bahraini cases should not simply be placed on a scale measuring degrees of Islamist commitment. They should instead be examined as distinct political experiences. The lesson extends beyond the Brotherhood. Scholars frequently classify political movements according to their ideological labels and then expect those labels to predict behaviour. But political organisations are also products of institutions, interests and circumstances. Their choices are often shaped by the political environment in which they have to survive.

The future study of the Muslim Brotherhood should therefore move beyond Cairo. Egypt should remain an essential case, but it should no longer be treated as the master key to every Brotherhood movement. Bahrain, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and other cases demonstrate that the relationship between Islamist movements and states can take very different forms. The important question is not simply whether these organisations belong to the Muslim Brotherhood tradition. The more revealing question is what they do with that tradition in their own political surroundings. Seen from this perspective, the Brotherhood is neither a single actor nor a collection of completely unrelated groups. It is a political tradition whose branches have developed distinct identities and strategies through their interaction with local regimes. The Bahraini experience makes the point particularly well. It reminds us that political Islam cannot be understood solely through ideology or organisational lineage. To understand why Islamist movements cooperate, compete or confront, one must examine the political systems in which they operate. The real story of the Muslim Brotherhood, therefore, is not only about what connects its branches. It is also about what separates them and those differences may tell us more about the future of Sunni Islamism than the idea of a single, unified Brotherhood ever could.

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Consciousness, Creation and the Search for Global Harmony

Qamar Bashir



Human spirituality long predates modern science and many organized religious institutions. Across civilizations, people have prayed, sought forgiveness, honoured the dead and appealed to a power greater than themselves. Different traditions have named and understood that ultimate reality differently, but their persistence reveals humanity's enduring awareness of mystery, dependence and moral responsibility. Ancient achievements, including the pyramids, deepen our admiration for earlier civilizations. Their magnificence still teaches an important lesson...

FOR centuries, humanity has treated the visible world as ultimate reality. A table appears solid, the human body seems physical, and mountains, oceans and buildings look independent of whoever observes them. Modern physics, however, has revealed that matter is far more mysterious than ordinary experience suggests. What appears solid consists mostly of space, while its subatomic constituents are described through fields, probabilities and wave-like behaviour. The quantum physics has decisively challenged the old assumption that reality is simply composed of solid, separate and independently existing objects. It leaves humanity facing profound questions about observation, knowledge and existence. Max Planck, a founder of quantum theory, reportedly spoke of a conscious and intelligent mind behind the forces sustaining matter. The statement expresses a powerful intuition: the visible universe may not be the whole of reality. What we experience as matter could be the outward manifestation of a deeper order that our senses cannot directly penetrate. Our beliefs influence what we notice, how we interpret events, how we treat others and which possibilities we pursue. Thoughts can affect stress, behaviour, relationships and health. Change the mind, and one may not instantly change the universe, but one can certainly change one's participation in it. The world perceived by a human being is not identical to that perceived by every other creature. A blind person constructs spatial understanding without sight. A bat navigates largely through echolocation. Some animals detect ultraviolet or infrared wavelengths invisible to human eyes. Darkness transforms a familiar landscape, while light restores colours and shapes. The environment remains, yet every organism experiences only the portion its sensory system can receive and its nervous system can interpret.

Our perceived world is therefore a meeting between external reality and internal consciousness. We do not experience existence in its entirety; we experience a biologically filtered and mentally interpreted version of it. This recognition should produce humility. If no individual, culture or species possesses the complete picture, then differences of perception need not automatically become grounds for hatred. In this context, the seven principles presented in The Kybalion—a modern work published in 1908 and attributed to “Three Initiates”—can be considered philosophical tools such as mentalism, correspondence, vibration, polarity, rhythm, cause and effect, and gender. These principles offer a framework for examining relationships among mind, nature and society. Their relevance lies not in pretending that ancient philosophy and quantum mechanics are identical, but in asking whether these principles can guide humanity toward harmony. Mentalism reminds us that every human institution begins as an idea. Wars, borders, constitutions, systems of oppression and movements for liberation first take shape in consciousness. Hatred repeatedly cultivated in the mind can become discrimination and violence.

Compassion, equally, can become reconciliation, justice and peace. Changing collective consciousness can consequently change political and social structures.

Correspondence—expressed through “as above, so below”—encourages us to see connections between the individual and the larger world. A society cannot expect peace while families are governed by cruelty, institutions by injustice and international relations by humiliation. The values cultivated within people eventually appear in the systems they construct. Vibration can be interpreted metaphorically as the recognition that nothing remains completely static. Individuals, civilizations and relationships continually change. Despair should therefore never be treated as permanent, nor power as eternal. Humanity can move from hostility toward cooperation when ideas, emotions and institutions are consciously redirected. Polarity teaches that apparent opposites may belong to a connected spectrum. Heat and cold describe degrees of temperature; light and darkness describe degrees of illumination. Political, religious and cultural conflicts are also frequently intensified by treating differences as absolute divisions. Recognizing gradations does not eliminate moral distinctions, but it creates room for dialogue and transformation. Rhythm reminds us that life moves through recurring phases—growth and decline, activity and rest, peace and conflict. Understanding cycles helps communities avoid arrogance during prosperity and hopelessness during adversity. Wisdom lies not in denying change but in preparing for it and maintaining balance through it.

Cause and effect restores human responsibility. Thoughts alone do not guarantee outcomes, because circumstances, institutions and other people also exert influence. Yet actions have consequences. Violence generates trauma; injustice produces resentment; generosity builds trust. Harmony cannot be achieved merely through positive thinking. It requires deliberate conduct, fair institutions and accountability. Gender, in the Hermetic sense, refers to complementary generative principles rather than a rigid scientific division between masculine intellect and feminine emotion. Modern neuroscience does not support reducing the brain's hemispheres or human abilities to such stereotypes. The valuable lesson is complementarity: reason needs empathy, strength needs care, initiative needs receptivity, and creation requires cooperation. Human spirituality long predates modern science and many organized religious institutions. Across civilizations, people have prayed, sought forgiveness, honoured the dead and appealed to a power greater than themselves. Different traditions have named and understood that ultimate reality differently, but their persistence reveals humanity's enduring awareness of mystery, dependence and moral responsibility. Ancient achievements, including the pyramids, deepen our admiration for earlier civilizations. Their magnificence still teaches an important lesson: technological modernity does not grant us a monopoly over intelligence, wisdom or imagination. Humanity may never perceive reality exactly as it is in itself. Science continues to investigate the measurable universe, while philosophy and religion address meaning, purpose and moral direction. These paths need not destroy one another. Science can protect spirituality from superstition, and spirituality can remind science that knowledge without compassion may become destructive. The continuing journey of human learning since The Kybalion was published in 1908 reinforces a timeless truth: harmony depends upon balance. When individuals, families, tribes, societies and nations resist destructive extremes and remain within the boundaries of patience, tolerance, perseverance, justice and compassion, conflict becomes manageable and peaceful coexistence becomes possible. This middle way does not mean remaining neutral between justice and injustice, tolerating oppression or compromising with cruelty. It means pursuing justice without hatred, exercising power without arrogance, expressing disagreement without dehumanization and defending legitimate interests without destroying innocent human beings, animals or the natural world. A family can escape the cycle of emotional distress, bitterness and feuds when its members restrain anger, listen to one another and refuse to cross the limits of dignity and mutual respect. A society can reduce hunger, exclusion and instability when competition is balanced by compassion and individual freedom by collective responsibility. Nations can avoid wars and atrocities when ambition is restrained by international law, dialogue and recognition of shared humanity. This principle of balance is also central to religious wisdom. Islam particularly teaches wasatiyyah—the just and balanced path—and describes Muslims as a “middle community.” It discourages excess, commands justice even toward those whom one dislikes, and places mercy, patience and moderation at the centre of human conduct. Similar appeals to balance and compassion appear across the world's spiritual traditions. Harmony, therefore, is not passivity, weakness or the absence of disagreement. It is the disciplined ability to keep disagreement from becoming hatred, strength from tyranny, desire from greed and pain from becoming revenge. If this consciousness is cultivated within individuals and families, it can rise through communities and institutions into national and international life. The world may then witness fewer wars, less hunger, reduced emotional suffering and greater respect for every form of life. The deepest lesson is not that consciousness magically controls everything, but that consciousness carries immense responsibility. The pictures we hold in our minds influence the world we build together. The ultimate relevance of these principles is therefore practical: by restoring balance within ourselves, we help restore harmony in the world we collectively create.

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Former Press Minister,
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Reforming the Security Council without Entrenching Privilege

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



India's claim to a permanent seat invites particular scrutiny. Permanent membership requires sustained confidence in a state's fidelity to the Charter. India's refusal to implement successive Security Council resolutions on Jammu...

THE United Nations was founded in 1945 after the League of Nations had failed to preserve peace. Its Security Council was designed for the world that emerged from the Second World War, with five permanent members holding the veto and a small number of elected seats. That basic architecture has scarcely changed since 1965, when the non-permanent membership rose from six to ten. The veto was meant to keep the great powers inside the system and to prevent open conflict among them. Eight decades later the organisation still carries the imprint of 1945 while the membership of the United Nations has grown to 193 states and the global population exceeds eight billion. The Council's composition therefore no longer reflects the international community it is supposed to serve.

In 2008 the General Assembly launched the Intergovernmental Negotiations to consider reform. The discussions have centred on five linked questions: categories of membership, the veto, regional representation, the size of the Council and its working methods. Africa still has no permanent seat. Latin America, South Asia and large parts of the Muslim world remain under-represented. The present arrangement is widely seen as a remnant of the colonial order that concentrates power among a few states. Many argue that emerging powers and significant regional actors—Pakistan, Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria, Indonesia, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Mexico and India among them—ought to enjoy greater weight if the Council is to regain legitimacy and effectiveness. Yet the debate is locked. The Group of Four seeks permanent seats for itself and two for Africa. The African Group demands two permanent seats with full veto rights. France and Mexico urge the permanent members to refrain vol-

untarily from using the veto in cases of mass atrocity. The Uniting for Consensus group, led by Pakistan and supported by Italy, Mexico, Argentina, Canada and South Korea, rejects any enlargement of the permanent category. It proposes instead an expansion of elected seats that would be longer-term and renewable. The rival camps cancel one another's majorities, leaving the process stalled.

Enlarging permanent membership would not reform the Council so much as entrench new privileges. Additional veto-holders would multiply the occasions on which national interests can block action. The repeated American vetoes that have shielded Israel and allowed the destruction of Gaza to continue illustrate how a single permanent member can nullify the will of the rest. More permanent members would introduce further competing interests and raise the risk of paralysis. Once granted, permanent status is effectively irreversible; the new members would be free to obstruct any future attempt to revise the arrangement. India's claim to a permanent seat invites particular scrutiny. Permanent membership requires sustained confidence in a state's fidelity to the Charter. India's refusal to implement successive Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, its rejection of a United Nations-supervised plebiscite and its unilateral constitutional changes in the territory sit uneasily with that standard. Concerns about human-rights practices in the disputed region and elsewhere, the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, reports of transnational repression, the Citizenship Amendment Act, the treatment of Rohingya refugees and a foreign policy that has offered strategic comfort to Israel all raise legitimate questions. India's status outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty adds a further layer of unease.

Germany's candidature faces different objections. Europe already holds two permanent seats. Adding a third would deepen regional imbalance. Recent German positions on Gaza have been criticised as inconsistent with the very humanitarian principles permanent members are expected to uphold. The country's failure to secure even a non-permanent seat in a recent election suggests that its aspirations do not command the necessary breadth of support.

The Uniting for Consensus proposal offers a more measured path. Expanding the elected membership from ten to twenty would open opportunities for Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean without creating new permanent centres of power. Periodic elections would keep members accountable to the wider membership. Rotation would allow more states to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security. Broader participation could improve the quality of deliberation on intractable questions such as Palestine, Ukraine and other long-standing disputes, without multiplying vetoes that have so often produced deadlock.

Reform should strengthen the Council's legitimacy without sacrificing its capacity to act. Expanding permanent membership would create additional privileged seats, heighten the risk of institutional paralysis and make subsequent change more difficult still. Wider geographical representation is better achieved by enlarging the elected ranks. The Uniting for Consensus approach preserves the existing institutional framework, enhances inclusivity, promotes accountability through regular elections and reflects the interests of the membership as a whole. Sustainable reform therefore lies in widening participation and reinforcing regional balance rather than in extending permanent privilege and the veto.

Briefs

Iran urges Qatar to allow investigation

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threat to regional stability. Member states expressed solidarity with Lebanon, warning that continued escalation could destabilize the wider Middle East. The condemnation adds to mounting criticism of Israel's military actions, which have drawn concern from humanitarian groups and international observers. The overlapping disputes highlight the fragile state of Middle Eastern diplomacy. Iran's demand for a fact finding mission underscores its mistrust of Qatar, while Doha's denial reflects its determination to protect sovereignty. At the same time, the Arab League's rebuke of Israel signals growing frustration among Arab states over repeated military confrontations in Lebanon.

Seven India-backed terrorists....

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According to the sources, the militants were involved in planning extortion, kidnapping, target killings and suicide attacks. Security sources said that operations aimed at eliminating terrorism were continuing under Operation Rad-ul-Fitna-3. The IBO comes just a day after security forces killed 10 terrorists during an exchange of fire in the Khuzdar district. Security sources said on Saturday that the operation was conducted in the Shor Parod mountainous range following reports of the presence of terrorists affiliated with Indian proxy Fitna al-Hindustan.

Crime wave in Islamabad...

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The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has long struggled with illegal settlements in this sector. Attempts to demolish encroachments often lead to violent clashes, while efforts to auction land in G-12 have failed due to poor response. Experts argue that even in the next two decades, the sector may remain undeveloped. Similarly, Sector G-14/1 faces occupation by illegal residents. Announced in 2004, the sector has yet to be handed over to its rightful allottees, many of whom have passed away without receiving possession. The lack of progress by the housing authority has fueled frustration among families who invested in the project more than twenty years ago.

MQM-P for national dialogue...

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rise above partisan differences and build a consensus on administrative reforms. He argued that the issue should be addressed through an inclusive national discussion rather than political confrontation. He said support for the proposal was growing across the political spectrum, adding that MQM-P was prepared to engage with all stakeholders to develop a framework for the establishment of new provinces where they were needed. Siddiqui maintained that Pakistan's provinces were originally formed on linguistic considerations and had since evolved into large administrative units.

Transport Alliance...

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alliance president Malik Shahzad Awan said that the federal and provincial governments have assured to resolve key issues including toll tax reduction, parking issues, petroleum pricing and axle load limits. He noted that several issues had already been resolved by the federal and provincial governments, while others would be taken up at the cabinet level – for which assurances had also been given. He said committee meetings would continue and expressed hope that all commitments and promises would be honoured.

Pakistan Hockey's World Cup mismanagement sparks outrage

Before departing for Europe, the Belgian and Dutch embassies hosted a dinner in honor of the Pakistani squad. Instead of presenting themselves as ambassadors of the sport, the players arrived in casual attire – some even wearing slippers. Guests struggled to recognize them, repeatedly asking where the team was. PHF President Mohiuddin Wani, when confronted, admitted he had no idea the players would attend in such fashion. Observers were left wondering

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's national hockey team has once again found itself at the center of controversy during the ongoing World Cup in Europe. What should have been a proud moment for the country has instead turned into a series of embarrassing episodes, exposing deep flaws in management, preparation, and professionalism. Pakistan lost to England 4-1. In a bid to revive the sport, the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) hired foreign coaches. However, the appointments came too late, and the coaches themselves lacked the necessary experience to handle a team under immense pressure. Worse still, they received little support from local management. Internal groupings and politics within the federation left the coaching staff isolated, un-

able to implement a coherent strategy. This lack of unity has been described by critics as "non-professional at the peak of competition." Before departing for Europe, the Belgian and Dutch embassies hosted a dinner in honor of the Pakistani squad. Instead of presenting themselves as ambassadors of the sport, the players arrived in casual attire – some even wearing slippers. Guests struggled to recognize them, repeatedly asking where the team was. PHF President Mohiuddin Wani, when confronted, admitted he had no idea the players would attend in such fashion. Observers were left wondering: If the president doesn't know, then who does? The incident highlighted a glaring absence of discipline and respect for international representation. The problems did not stop at appearances. In their opening match against England, Pakistan's captain was benched following a bizarre

sequence. England was awarded a penalty stroke early in the game, but Pakistani players were unprepared – they had not brought their safety gear onto the field. The match was delayed as players scrambled, having forgotten to carry the equipment from the locker room. Such negligence shocked international audiences. World Cup organizers were forced to pause the game, an unprecedented move in modern hockey. Commentators described the incident as "a shameful lapse that simply does not happen anywhere else." Further embarrassment followed when Pakistan was seen fielding 12 players instead of the standard 11 in one match. In short-format play, six players were spotted on the field instead of five. These fundamental errors, which no professional team would commit, reinforced the perception that Pakistan hockey is adrift. Critics argue that these mis-

takes reflect not just poor training but a complete breakdown in management oversight. PHF President Mohiuddin Wani has publicly expressed frustration. "We are spending money, but when will these players gain basic sense? Mistakes that never happen in world hockey are routine for us," he lamented. His remarks underline the growing divide between federation officials and the players, with accountability seemingly absent at every level. The reaction from fans and former players has been swift and harsh. Many believe Pakistan hockey has reached a point where only a professional overhaul can save it. Calls are growing for the federation to bring in a disciplined, experienced management team that can instill professionalism both on and off the field. Supporters argue that without structural reform, Pakistan will continue to embarrass itself on the international stage.

Pakistani journalists boycott World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan over mismanagement

DNA

BISHKEK/ISLAMABAD: The World Nomad Games 2026, currently underway in Kyrgyzstan, have been overshadowed by controversy after Pakistani sports journalists announced a complete boycott of the event. The decision comes amid allegations of mismanagement by Kyrgyz sports authorities and failure to provide promised facilities for international media. Pakistani journalists say organizers failed to honor commitments regarding accreditation, accommodation, food, and transport. Despite repeated assurances, basic facilities were not provided, leaving visiting reporters frustrated. In protest, Pakistani media representatives withdrew their coverage of the Games,

accusing the administration of negligence and lack of professionalism. The journalists have decided to lodge a formal complaint with the International Sports Press Association (AIPS). They argue that the treatment of Pakistani media violates international standards for sports coverage. "We were promised facilities, but nothing was delivered. This is unacceptable," one senior journalist remarked. The boycott is expected to draw attention from global sports bodies and could tarnish the reputation of the World Nomad Games. The Pakistan Traditional Games Association (PTGA) also announced its boycott, aligning with the journalists' stance. PTGA officials criticized the organizers for failing to respect the role of media and for undermining Pakistan's participation.

Their decision adds weight to the protest, signaling broader dissatisfaction within Pakistan's sporting community. More than 80 Pakistani athletes are competing in the Games across various disciplines. Concerns have been raised that the media boycott may affect morale and visibility of their performances. Without coverage, athletes risk losing recognition at home, where fans rely on journalists for updates. Observers warn that the dispute could overshadow the athletes' achievements and damage Pakistan's image in international sports. Local sports bodies in Kyrgyzstan have faced sharp criticism from both domestic and foreign media. Commentators argue that the failure to provide facilities reflects poorly on the country's ability to host major international events.

Germany beat Malaysia 5-1 in world cup hockey match

DNA

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysia national hockey team's World Cup campaign got off to a rough start after they lost 5-1 to defending champions Germany in Wavre, Belgium, on Saturday (Aug 15). The Speedy Tigers were shaken at the start of the match as Germany wasted no time asserting their dominance, scoring three goals in the opening 10 minutes through Jakob Brilla, Christopher Ruhr, and Justus Weigand. Malaysia managed to pull one back and get themselves on the scoreboard in the 40th minute after Azrai Aizad Abu Kamal converted a penalty corner to give his side a glimmer of hope. But the consolation goal did not stop Germany from adding more to their goal tally after Justus Warweg and Paul-Philipp Kaufmann extended their lead in the 45th and 53rd minutes respectively.

Novak Djokovic ousted from Cincinnati Open

MASON, Ohio: Novak Djokovic's stay at the Cincinnati Open was a short one. The 24-time major champion fell to Thiago Agustin Tirante 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 on Saturday in a match that took 2 hours, 44 minutes in hot and humid conditions. A 25-year-old from Argentina, Tirante is ranked No. 50 in the world. The 39-year-old Djokovic – a three-time Cincinnati Open champion and No. 5 in the rankings – was playing for the first time since his loss to top-ranked Jannik Sinner in the semifinals at Wimbledon. Thiago Agustin Tirante returns a shot against Novak Djokovic during the Cincinnati Open at Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio, on Aug 15, 2026. (Aaron Doster-Imagn Images) Up next for Djokovic is the US Open, which starts Aug. 30. Djokovic appeared to struggle physically in the heat and had his 10-match winning streak in Cincinnati snapped. He won the title in 2020 and 2023. Djokovic saved 13 of the 15 break points he faced. Tirante broke Djokovic's serve in the ninth game of the final set and then served it out. "I think this is the best win of my career," Tirante said. "I think I really did a good job inside the court. I managed very well the nerves of playing against a legend like Novak." Eala and Pegula win in women's draw On the women's side, Alexandra Eala of the Philippines continued her run of strong play with a victory over Elena-Gabriela Ruse, who lost the first set and stopped playing in the second with an ankle injury. Eala – who is No. 20 in the rankings – won her first WTA singles title in Washington earlier this month and has won eight of her last nine matches. American Jessica Pegula beat Simona Waltert 6-3, 6-2, improving her record to 25-6 on hard courts in 2026. The third-ranked Pegula won the title in Cincinnati in 2024. – APP

Jl begins protest against...

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while JI Emir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman also reached the sit-in. Addressing the protesters, Hafiz Naeem said that a sit-in was also continuing outside the Governor House in Karachi. He criticised the government over rising petroleum prices and taxes, saying the rulers had created difficulties for the people.

Naqvi comes in defence of IGP...

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"The chief guest and I were delayed due to the president's meeting with the prime minister. The crowd had been waiting since 5pm, and at around 6:00 pm, when it became clear that we would be late, we instructed the officers to start the programme because we did not want the public to wait any longer." Naqvi maintained that the carriage was arranged for the chief guest but had to be used by officers "due to unavoidable circumstances".

AJK by-polls schedule announced

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Five seats reserved for women. One seat reserved for Ulema-e-Deen or Mushaikh. One seat reserved for Jammu & Kashmir State Subjects residing abroad; and One seat reserved for technocrats and other professionals. According to the schedule, polling for the reserved seats will be held in the AJK Assembly on Aug 24 from 10am to 1pm. On Aug 20, candidates can file their nomination papers with the returning officer (RO) from 9am to 2pm. After the deadline, the RO will scrutinise the nomination papers and publish a list of validly nominated candidates.

More rains expected in parts...

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It added that a westerly wave was likely to enter the upper parts of the country on Aug 17. In its advisory, the Punjab PDMA forecast rain and thundershowers, accompanied by gusty winds and isolated heavy falls, in several parts of the province from Aug 16 to 21, with occasional breaks. The affected areas include Rawalpindi, Murree, Galyat, Jhelum, Chakwal, Talagang, Attock, Sialkot, Narowal, Mandi Bahaudin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Wazirabad, Lahore, Kasur, Okara, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Sargodha, Khushab, Mi-anwali and Noorpur Thal.

President, PM...

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He reiterated that operations against terrorist elements, operating with external support, were essential to safeguarding Pakistan's national security. President Zardari said the entire nation stands firmly with Pakistan's security forces in the fight against terrorism.

Morocco detains dozens of migrants

RABAT: Moroccan authorities have intercepted dozens of migrants seeking to cross into the Spanish North African exclave of Ceuta, reports say. More than 100 people were blocked trying to make their way to the border on the outskirts of the town of Fnideq, according to Moroccan security sources cited by Spanish media and news agency Reuters. It comes a fortnight after roughly 78,000 migrants arrived in the exclave by sea in a matter of hours - 100 of whom died, according to the city's mayor, who also said the vast majority of arrivals had returned to Morocco. Security had been stepped up in the area after the influx and amid suggestions on social media of a second mass crossing attempt this weekend. The security sources said 111 people had been detained in or around Fnideq - known in Spanish as Castillejos - about 3km (1.8 miles) from the border, the majority of whom were from sub-Saharan Africa.

Moroccan police - including some in riot gear - reportedly used tear gas to disperse groups of migrants gathered on nearby hills. Earlier this week, Morocco's government said it was monitoring "the circulation of social media posts and messages of unknown origin" calling for a mass crossing on Saturday, and warned that it would prosecute organisers and participants. EPA/Shutterstock Spanish military personnel at the Tarajal border in Ceuta, SpainEPA/Shutterstock Spain has deployed more than 1,500 officers to patrol the area Security at the breakwater entrance was "10 times stronger than the previous day", Spanish newspaper El Pais reported. Morocco had dispatched army officers, navy speedboats and drones to the border on Saturday, it said. Meanwhile, Madrid deployed more than 1,500 security officers to patrol the area. Spain has also installed a metal fence and a floating barrier following last month's influx. – APP

Bangladesh claim first Test win in Australia as Green ton in vain

Victory marks Bangladesh's second win over Australia, and first in the country

MELBOURNE: Bangladesh chased down 57 runs to complete a landmark nine-wicket victory over Australia in the series-opener in Darwin on Sunday in one of Test cricket's greatest upsets. Mominul Haque cut Beau Webster to the fence for the winning runs to seal Bangladesh's first Test win in Australia within four days in stifling heat at Marrara Oval, foiling a valiant century from home all-rounder Cameron Green. The winning boundary triggered jubilation among Bangladesh's players, who jumped and shouted on the sidelines. Flooring a full-strength Australia, the world's top-ranked Test nation in their own backyard, will be regarded by many as the South Asian nation's finest victory in 26 years of playing the game's longest format. It took 23 years for Australia to host Bangladesh in a second Test, series since sweeping them 2-0 in 2003, so Najmul Hossain Shanto's side were determined to prove their worth. They did far more than that, as they dominated the World Test Championship leaders with bat, ball and in the field in virtually every session. Bangladesh had heroes throughout the match, but on day four it was spin-bowling all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz standing up to strike the

decisive blows as Australia were bowled out for 284. Having scored 65 with the bat in Bangladesh's first innings and caught-and-bowled Australia's traditional saviour Steve Smith for 44 on day three, Miraz took another four wickets on the final day after Australia resumed on 161 for four, still 67 runs in arrears. "It was excellent, a great moment for us," Miraz said. "The way we are playing shows our character. Everything was perfect." The grinning 28-year-old had wicketkeeper Alex Carey caught behind for 30 and bowled all-rounder Beau Webster for five with a pair of sumptuous deliveries to bring Australia's tail into play. Australia captain Pat Cummins was caught in close for eight, with Miraz inducing a bat-pad catch for Shadman Islam. Mitchell Starc dug in with Green for a defiant eighth wicket partnership of 43 but he was caught behind for 18 off the bowling of fellow seamer Taskin Ahmed. Green held on to raise his third Test century and first on home soil after lunch with two runs off Taskin. The defiant knock was a timely response to critics of Green's place in the side but he was bowled soon after for 104, becoming Hasan Mahmud's ninth wicket for the match by playing onto his stumps. With only a 50-run lead and tailenders Nathan Lyon and Josh Hazlewood clinging to the last wicket, Green's departure was effectively game over for Australia. Miraz wrapped up Australia's innings by trapping fellow spinner Lyon lbw for 15. With clumps of delirious Bangladesh fans chanting between every ball, Shadman and Haque mowed down the runs efficiently. – APP

PSB, ACTIVIT mark Independence Day with sports gala

The festival featured competitions in boxing, cycling, football, weightlifting and wrestling, attracting participation from young athletes. Competitions were held across the five disciplines, with top performers receiving trophies and cash prizes

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), in collaboration with ACTIVIT, organised a multi-sport festival at the PSB Coaching Centre to mark Pakistan's 79th Independence Day. The festival featured competitions in boxing, cycling, football, weightlifting and wrestling, attracting participation from young athletes. Competitions were held across the five disciplines, with top performers receiving trophies and cash prizes. In the cycling competitions, Kishwar Saleem claimed the gold medal in the professional women's category, followed by Noor Chaudhry with silver and Arooj with bronze. In the amateur women's event, Shumail secured gold, Iffat Arif won silver, while Noor earned bronze. In RPW Freedom FightFest 2 boxing contests produced thrilling action, with Harry Prince defeating Rafay, Basit Aktan overcoming Talha Taram, and Mohsin Khan emerging victo-

rious in a three-way contest against Altat and Uzair. In the headline bout, Mateen Shahzad defeated Hayn Zar to become the new RPW Pakistan Champion. PSB Lahore Centre Director Noorish Sabah

attended the closing ceremony as chief guest. ACTIVIT Ambassador Moazzam Khan Klair and Event Coordinator Amjad Khan were also present. The competitions were conducted by the respective sports associations under



the supervision of the PSB Lahore Centre. Addressing the participants, Noorish Sabah congratulated the winners and encouraged the athletes to continue working hard to improve their performances. She also acknowledged the support provided by ACTIVIT CEO and Director of National Hospital DHA Lahore, Dr. Rizwan Aftab Ahmed, for organising the event. "We need more sponsors to come forward and support Pakistan's athletes and sporting activities," she said. "Greater support for sports persons can contribute to the development of a stronger sports structure and help athletes compete at international and Olympic levels." Speaking on the occasion, Moazzam Khan Klair said Pakistan had considerable sporting talent, but athletes needed sustained opportunities and support to develop. "Pakistan has no shortage of talent. What our athletes need is consistent, all-round support so they can fulfil their potential and compete successfully at the international level," he said.

Briefs

Ukraine launches largest aerial attacks on Russia

KYIV: Ukraine launched hundreds of drones across Russia on Sunday, killing at least six people in one of Kyiv's largest aerial attacks of the war. Kyiv has stepped up its attacks on Russia this year, with long-range missiles and swarms of drones targeting military industries and energy facilities. It has also increasingly pummeled giant Wildberries depots, burning billions of dollars' worth of merchandise belonging to the Russian online retail giant. Those attacks have brought the war home to the Russian public nearly 4 years into Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine also came under Russian attack, with drone strikes destroying homes and torching Kyiv's landmark book market. Russia's Ministry of Defense said it had destroyed 822 Ukrainian drones overnight. Some 600 drones were detected headed toward the Russian capital, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said, with a third of those destroyed over the Moscow region itself. An 83-year-old man was killed after a Ukrainian drone hit a private home in the Moscow region, local Gov. Andrey Vorobyov said. He also confirmed that a Ukrainian attack had sparked a blaze at a Wildberries warehouse in the town of Podolsk. A drone attack targeted three towns in Russia's southwestern Rostov region, killing five people, local Gov. Yuriy Slyusar said. The attack, with more than 150 drones, damaged several homes and a railway station and sparked a forest fire.—APP

Firefighters battle second day of blaze on Greek island

ATHENS: Firefighters battled for a second day on Sunday to contain a forest fire on the Greek Aegean island of Skyros, as the local mayor voiced hope it could soon be brought under control. "Within the day I believe the fire will be fully extinguished," Skyros mayor Kyriakos Antonopoulos told state TV ERT. The fire, which broke out on Saturday, prompted the evacuation of two small communities, but Antonopoulos said no inhabited areas were under threat on Sunday. Reinforcements to the island of some 3,000 have been rushed in from neighboring areas. After largely escaping the heatwave temperatures that blanketed much of Europe earlier this summer, Greece has been hit with several major wildfires since late July, fueled by unusually strong winds. Five firefighters have died so far, including a Danish pilot killed in a mid-air collision between two Bell helicopters while battling a blaze near Athens earlier this month.—APP

Oman insurers post 5% H1 profit growth

JEDDAH: Net profits of Muscat-listed insurance and takaful companies rose 5 percent to 20.9 million Omani rials (\$54.3 million) in the first half, from 19.9 million rials, despite pressure on earnings from rising claims. Financial results showed improved performance by most listed companies, while three recorded declines in net profit, according to the Oman News Agency. Oman's insurance sector has been expanding as insurers increase their investments and diversify their portfolios, strengthening their role as institutional investors in the economy. Total investments by insurance companies operating in the Sultanate reached 876.3 million Omani rials in the first quarter of 2026, up 10.3 percent from a year earlier, with the Financial Services Authority saying the increase reflected the sector's growing contribution to economic activity and growth.—APP

Pak delegation explores Luoyang's heritage, culture

"These artifacts tell us that exchanges between China and Pakistan had already begun their prologue in the annals of history," said Dr. Awan.

DNA

BEIJING: To commemorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan, Host Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Sargodha, led a delegation of more than 10 faculty members and students to HeroBoss Technology (China-Pakistan Economic and Cultural Exchange Center) in Luoyang, Henan. It was for a one-day cultural event titled "Tasting Millennia-Old Heluo, Celebrating China-Pakistan Friendship – Multi-Dimensional Chinese Cultural Experi-

ence Event." Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. The event featured a range of immersive activities: opera, dumpling making, calligraphy, a museum visit, and a heritage night tour. Henan Opera took centre stage at the opening, with classic excerpts from "Mu Guiying Takes Command" and "Chaoyanggou" captivating the audience. Afterwards, several students tried their hand at traditional sleeve play and dramatic poses under the guidance of local artists. "All emotions in Chinese opera are conveyed through the eyes and expressions – no translation needed," one participant remarked. They also visited the Luoyang Museum, where they

lingered over Silk Road relics such as Tang Sancai figurines of Central Asian merchants, Eastern Roman gold coins and Persian silverware. "These artifacts tell us that exchanges between China and Pakistan had already begun their prologue in the annals of history," said Dr. Awan. An intangible cultural heritage inheritor then introduced the Luoyang spade, explaining its evolution from an archaeological prospecting tool to modern construction applications, providing a tangible link to ancient Chinese craftsmanship. In the evening, the delegation donned traditional Hanfu and strolled through Luoyi Ancient City. A drone formation rose above the

illuminated Wenfeng Pagoda, tracing patterns reminiscent of the Silk Road, a striking fusion of tradition and technology that embodied China's philosophy of "preserving heritage while embracing innovation." HeroBoss Technology will regularly organize youth study tours, heritage exhibitions, and cultural salons between the two countries, ensuring that people to people friendship extends beyond celebratory events. Dr. Awan announced that the Confucius Institute will designate Luoyang as a key destination for Pakistani students' practical training in China, aiming to "bring more young people along the Silk Road and send them home with stories to tell."



ISLAMABAD: Women busy in chit chat under the colorful umbrellas installed in a local park during pleasant weather after the rain at sector I-8, in the Federal Capital.

SCCI delegation explore S Africa markets for export

SIALKOT: A trade delegation from Sialkot has arrived in South Africa to explore new international markets for the city's export-oriented industries and strengthen direct trade links with the South African business community, here on Sunday. Chairman Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Departmental Committee on Fair and Exhibition Qaiser Baig, in a statement, said that in the prevailing global economic situation, exploring new markets for Pakistani products and expanding exports was the need of the hour. He said trade delegations help establish direct contacts with foreign buyers, importers and business organizations, paving the way for new partnerships and contributing to growth in the country's exports. Qaiser Baig said the delegation represented major export sectors of Sialkot, including sports goods, leather, surgical instruments and other important industries. The visit was aimed at strengthening trade ties with the South African business community, exploring markets for Sialkot-made products and identifying new export opportunities. During the visit, delegation members will hold meetings with business leaders, importers and representatives of trade organizations. The discussions will focus on promoting bilateral trade, developing joint ventures, exploring investment opportunities and increasing the presence of Sialkot products in the South African market, he added. He said Sialkot's industrialists and exporters had established a strong position in international markets through quality, innovation and hard work. He stressed the need to further strengthen marketing and trade relations in traditional markets as well as in Africa and other emerging regions. Qaiser Baig expressed hope that the visit would open new avenues for Sialkot's export industries, help establish long-term business relationships with foreign buyers and contribute to increasing Pakistan's overall exports.—APP

UK minister condemns 'settler terrorism' in occupied West Bank

LONDON: Britain's minister of state for the Middle East on Saturday condemned what he called "settler terrorism" in the occupied West Bank, after reports that Israeli settlers had surrounded at least two Palestinian homes in the village of Qusra, south of Nablus. Stephen Doughty said the violence must stop and urged Israel's government to enforce the law against those responsible. In a video posted on X, Doughty said he was "horrified" by scenes in the West Bank in recent days, citing the siege of families in Qusra and what he described as daily attacks on Palestinian communities, including the town of Taybeh. "Settler violence and settler terrorism are appalling and must end," he said. He urged the Israeli government to enforce the law against those involved, saying violent settlers too often act with impunity and that the lack of accountability fuels further extremism. "Violent settlers must face the full force of the law," Doughty said. He added that the violence was tied to the expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, which he said threatened the two-state solution Britain continues to support. "These activities are illegal," Doughty said. "They harm innocent civilians, and they only serve to take us further away from peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis. They must end now." His comments came as settlers reportedly continued to encircle Palestinian homes in Qusra, where civilians have been cut off from water and electricity for nearly a week, according to media reports. The violence has also drawn criticism from the United States. US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee on Thursday called settlers besieging a Palestinian home "Israeli terrorists." Reuters reported on Friday that White House officials were urging Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to publicly condemn the settlers' actions. Britain has repeatedly described Israeli settlement expansion and settler violence as illegal and as a threat to the viability of a two-state solution. At an Aug. 11 UN Security Council meeting on Palestine, Sarah MacIntosh, Britain's permanent representative to the UN, condemned escalating violence across the West Bank. "Recent attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian villages and communities, in some cases alongside Israeli Defense Force personnel, are appalling," MacIntosh said, adding that "these are not isolated incidents." The Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission said settlers carried out 3,488 attacks against Palestinian communities, residents and property during the first half of 2026. It also said 17 Palestinians were killed by settlers during that period, while 42 new Israeli outposts were established and about 4.4 square kilometers of Palestinian land were seized. Separately, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded more than 1,300 settler-related incidents in July affecting more than 250 Palestinian communities. MacIntosh called for an end to settlement expansion in the West Bank, saying the settlements are "illegal under international law.—APP

Mohmand Dam HPP launches 54,000-sapling plantation drive

Speaking on the occasion, project officials said the plantation drive aims to create a greener and cleaner environment, restore the area's natural landscape, reduce pollution, and enhance biodiversity around the dam site

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A large-scale plantation campaign has been launched at the Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project, with a target of planting 54,000 trees and plants of various indigenous species across the project area to promote environmental sustainability and ecological restoration. The plantation drive was launched on Friday to mark Pakistan's Independence Day, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Sunday. As per details, the initiative is being carried out in collaboration with the Mohmand Forest Division. General Manager and Project Director Mohmand

Dam, Fasihullah Paracha, led the campaign by planting a sapling at the project site. He was joined by the Chief Engineer (Civil), Director Agronomy, Director Social Resettlement and Environment, representatives of contractors, and senior security officials. Speaking on the occasion, project officials said the plantation drive aims to create a greener and cleaner environment, restore the area's natural landscape, reduce pollution, and enhance biodiversity around the dam site. They noted that tree plantation is an integral part of the project's environmental management strategy and reflects its commitment to sustainable development. The Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project is be-

ing developed by the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) on the Swat River in Mohmand District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The project is being constructed by a joint venture comprising China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) and Descon Engineering Limited. As per WAPDA, once completed, the multipurpose project will have an installed hydropower generation capacity of 800 megawatts, produce approximately 2.86 billion units of clean electricity annually, store around 1.29 million acre-feet of water, help mitigate floods in the Peshawar Valley, and irrigate nearly 18,233 acres of new agricultural land while supplementing irrigation supplies 160,000-acre feet existing land.

Pope calls end to West Bank violence against Palestinians

CASTEL GANDOLFO: Pope Leo called on Sunday for an end to violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, amid a surge of attacks by militant settlers and a siege in the territory's village of Qusra. Israeli settlers encircled houses after cutting off water and electricity, in what rights groups have said is a concerted effort to seize more land, and further eat into territory where Palestinians aim to establish a state. "I renew my appeal for an end to the repeated violence against the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank," the Pope said, without mentioning specific confrontations or attacks. "I urgently ask the international community to take action so as to advance the two-state solution, for a fair and lasting peace," the Pope added after noon prayers at his Castel Gandolfo residence outside Rome. The Vatican has long backed the idea of a future Palestinian state, which has been recognized by more than 150 of 193 UN member states as encompassing the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing coalition government has overseen massive settlement construction in the West Bank that Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich says is aimed at burying the idea of such a state. The United Nations and most governments consider the settlements to be illegal under international law related to military occupation. Israel seized the West Bank in the 1967 war, but argues the territory is disputed rather than occupied.—APP

26 more bodies recovered in Zimbabwe's ferry disaster

HARARE, Zimbabwe: Eighteen children were among more than 70 people killed when an overloaded ferry capsized on Lake Kariba in Zimbabwe this week, police said Saturday after rescuers recovered more bodies. The ferry capsized in strong waves on Tuesday. Police said that 26 more bodies had been recovered since then, bringing the death toll to 72. The aging ferry was traveling from the town of Kariba to rural and fishing communities in the country's northwest, where roads are damaged and public transportation is scarce. Authorities have not said how many people were aboard or how many remain missing. Estimates have put the number of passengers as high as 153, while authorities say the ferry's capacity is 90. Zimbabwe's disaster management agency has said 77 people were rescued. Authorities initially said the number of children aboard was unknown because those below ticketing age were not included in passenger estimates.—APP

MENA economy set for 8.5% rebound in 2027

RIYADH: The Middle East and North Africa region is projected to return to growth in 2027, expanding 8.5 percent, after a contraction this year, according to a forecast from BMI, a Fitch Solutions company. BMI expects the MENA economy to contract by 3.3 percent in 2026, a sharper decline than the 0.9 percent contraction it forecast in June. The 2026 contraction would mark the deepest MENA-wide downturn in four decades, exceeding the 2.5 percent decline recorded during the 2020 pandemic, BMI said. The downgrade reflects a longer disruption to traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, delaying the recovery in hydrocarbon production, trade, investment and services. The forecast follows a broader downgrade from the International Monetary Fund in July, which projected growth across the Middle East and Central Asia would slow to 0.7 percent in 2026 before rebounding to 6.5 percent in 2027, down from April estimates of 1.9 percent and 4.6 percent, respectively. Mariette Ras Khanna, associate director at BMI, told Arab News that the Gulf Cooperation Council's gross domestic product would depend heavily on the Strait of Hormuz.—APP

Briefs

GCC secy
general
condemns
Iranian
attacks

DOHA: Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Albu-daiwi strongly condemned the repeated Iranian attacks on ADNOC tankers belonging to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as well as commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday. He underscored that such deliberate and brutal attacks constitute an unacceptable escalation and a grave violation of the security and safety of maritime navigation. The GCC Secretary-General stressed the urgent need for Iran to immediately cease all hostile actions that threaten regional and international security and stability. He also called on the international community to exert pressure on Iran to end these hostilities and uphold the safety and freedom of maritime navigation. He concluded his statement by reiterating the GCC's full and unwavering solidarity with the UAE, standing by its side and supporting all measures it takes to protect its security, territorial sovereignty, and interests. — APP

Iran war a
boom for
China's
e-trucks

BEIJING: China's exports of electric trucks to other Asian countries have spiked, adding to a surge in domestic sales as higher fuel costs as a result of the Iran war accelerate regional electrification. China's rapid adoption of e-trucks — from lighter vehicles to tractor-trailers — has partially shielded the world's biggest auto market from the impact of the conflict. Now other countries are scrambling to follow. In the four months after the U.S. and Israel launched the war on February 28, China's exports of heavy e-trucks more than doubled from the same period last year to 16,823 vehicles. Half went to South and Southeast Asia, with shipments to South Asia up more than fivefold and to Southeast Asia nearly tripling. — APP

Taliban regime has itself become a proxy trying to destabilize the region

Asim Iftikhar Ahmad traced the international community's current frustration to expectations set out during the 2020 Doha talks between the US and the Taliban, and reaffirmed as the group took power the following year

MONITORING DESK

NEW YORK CITY: Five years after the Taliban swept into Kabul, Pakistan's ambassador to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, is not walking back Defense Minister Khawaja Asif's February declaration that the two countries are in "open war." "The trends are posing grave concern," Ahmad told Arab News in an interview marking the fifth anniversary of the takeover, pointing to reports from the UN's own sanctions monitoring team and the secretary-general on Afghanistan's renewed role as "a safe haven for a number of terrorist groups." Ahmad described a steady deterioration in Kabul's conduct since the Taliban returned to power on Aug. 15, 2021. "Pakistan's basic position and basic approach towards Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan remains the same," he said, describing the two countries as "next door neighbors" bound by "deep rooted and longstanding" ties. He stressed that Islamabad's quarrel is not with ordinary Afghans, who he said have borne the brunt of "decades of instability and conflict." Pakistan, he added, has "felt and has been impacted directly by the consequences of that period of instability" more than any other country. Ahmad traced the international community's current frustration to expectations set out during the 2020 Doha talks between the US and the Taliban, and reaffirmed as the group took power the following year. There were three core benchmarks: an inclusive government, respect for human rights — particularly the rights of women and girls — and a guarantee that Afghan soil would not be used to stage terrorism against any other country. Pakistan did not simply wait to see whether Kabul would deliver, Ahmad said. Within four months of the takeover, Islamabad convened an extraordinary session of the Organization of Islamic Co-operation's foreign ministers in December 2021 to rally international support for Afghanistan's recovery. Five years on, he said, the record is one of regression rather than progress on all three fronts, with continued restrictions on girls' education and women's employment as evidence on the human rights front, and an exclusionary governance structure that has failed to broaden. Ahmad said the frequency and intensity of attacks linked by Pakistan to militant groups operating from Afghanistan had surged. He cited



more than 5,200 terrorism-related incidents in Pakistan in 2025 and more than 1,300 deaths — figures that include categories broader than independently verified attacks traced to Afghan soil. Behind those numbers, Ahmad named three groups he holds primarily responsible: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Balochistan Liberation Army and the Majeed Brigade, alongside Daesh's regional affiliate. He described the first three as increasingly acting "as proxies to our adversaries in the region." Asked directly whether the Taliban are deliberately sheltering the TTP or simply unable to rein it in, Ahmad said the evidence, from UN monitoring team reports and Pakistan's own intelligence, points to the more serious explanation. "In fact, the way the whole thing is operating now, it's basically the Taliban regime itself is a proxy, trying to destabilize the entire region," Ahmad said, arguing this serves neither Pakistan's interests nor those of ordinary Afghans.

The Taliban has denied fostering ties with the TTP or other militant groups. Pressed on what should happen next — whether the burden falls on Pakistan's military, or on outside powers with leverage over Kabul — Ahmad said responsibility lies squarely with the Afghan side, even as he acknowledged Pakistan's own forces have paid "a heavy toll" patrolling the porous, roughly 2,600-kilometer Durand Line and striking militant targets. He raised the possibility of a formal religious edict, or fatwa, from senior Taliban clergy against groups like the TTP, paired with "concrete, verifiable steps" to deny them safe haven and financing. Ahmad listed Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, China and Qatar as "common friends" of both Islamabad and Kabul who have attempted to mediate — all of whom were involved in brokering the ceasefire and subsequent Istanbul talks earlier this year — but said the Taliban side has consistently declined to give the assurances sought. Asked who, if anyone, the Taliban leadership actually listens to, Ahmad was blunt: "It's a strange situation. I think it's up to them to decide," adding that "some serious introspection is in order" given Afghanistan's isolation, frozen assets and lack of formal recognition — outcomes he said the group could reverse if it wanted development and investment instead. Ahmad argued that the "time and space" given by the international community to the Taliban after 2021 — including through the UN's own engagement framework — has yielded no reciprocal steps from Kabul on any of the three benchmarks. He drew a comparison with Washington's approach to the Taliban's detention of American nationals, noting that the US has denied the group's leadership travel-ban exemptions over what it calls "hostage diplomacy." If that standard applies to individual hostages, Ahmad argued, it should apply with even greater force to a "continuous stream of attacks" against Pakistani citizens that he says Kabul actively enables. On whether fellow Muslim-majority states retain unique leverage over the Taliban, Ahmad recalled Pakistan working alongside Indonesia and Saudi Arabia after 2021 to make the case — including on girls' education — that the Taliban's restrictions on women "are not actually in line with Islamic teachings or traditions." Western governments, he added, have no objection in principle to an Islamic system of government in Kabul, only to policies that discriminate against women or minorities — an obstacle he said is entirely within the Taliban's power to remove.

Erdogan says Egypt could join the defence pact

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said Egypt could become the next country to join a newly established mutual defence pact between Turkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Erdogan described Cairo's possible accession as one of several options being considered as the alliance looks to expand its membership. The agreement, formally known as the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, was signed in the Saudi holy city last Friday by Erdogan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Under the pact, an armed attack against any one of the three signatory states would be treated as an attack against all of them, committing the countries to a coordinated response in the event of an external threat. "This agreement has sent an important message to the world," Erdogan told Al Jazeera's Ali

Al Dafiri during an interview for the programme Al Muqabala. While the collective defence clause has prompted comparisons with NATO's Article 5, Pakistani officials have cautioned against describing the agreement as a regional equivalent of the Western military alliance. Islamabad has also said the pact is not aimed at any particular country. Erdogan said the agreement remained open to additional members and indicated that Egypt's participation was possible. His comments come as regional governments seek to deepen security cooperation amid continuing wars and political instability across the Middle East. During the interview, the Turkish president also addressed tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, as well as the conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. Erdogan said reopening the Strait of Hormuz was a priority for Ankara, arguing that the continued disruption of the strategic waterway was damaging to all sides. The strait is one of the world's most important energy corridors, linking Gulf oil and gas producers with international markets.



He also praised Qatar's role in regional mediation efforts, saying Doha had contributed significantly to attempts to reduce tensions and bring an end to ongoing fighting. On Syria, Erdogan said Turkiye would continue to support efforts to restore stability and would not abandon its neighbours during a period of regional turmoil.

Thousands evacuate after Indonesia quake kills 51, cuts roads

SIKKA: Around 5,000 people have been evacuated after a magnitude-7.7 earthquake smashed an area in eastern Indonesia, killing at least 51, blocking roads and causing landslides, authorities said on Sunday. Thirty-six people were seriously injured in the Saturday morning quake in East Nusa Tenggara province, while 77 had minor injuries, Deputy Health Minister Benjamin Paulus Octavianus told a televised meeting. The quake, followed by some 341 aftershocks, is the Southeast Asian nation's worst in years. Hundreds died after a 2022 earthquake in West Java. More than 3,300 people in the Sikka region self-evacuated or were stranded in a sports arena, said the disaster mitigation agency BNPB. Some Sikka residents were stranded outside collapsed homes under a makeshift tent made out of tarp, while some people received treatment in a tent outside a hospital in the port town of Maumere. "Almost all of Sikka's residents didn't dare stay indoors, so they slept on a porch or a tent outside," Simon Subandi, deputy regent of Sikka, told news channel KompasTV. More than 3,500 military and police officers have been deployed to the region, Cabinet Secretary Teddy Indra Wijaya said in a statement. Rescuers were able to access parts of Maumere that had been blocked by landslides, Indonesia's search and rescue agency said. Most of those missing were trapped under rubble, and more than 1,300 homes were damaged, BNPB said. — APP

RCCI Strengthens Pak-Spain economic and cultural ties



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of Spain to Pakistan, H.E. Carlos Aragón Gil de la Serna, visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), where he held a meeting with RCCI President Usman Shaukat to discuss opportunities for strengthening bilateral trade, investment, economic cooperation and cultural relations between Pakistan and Spain. Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, former presidents, Executive Committee members and a large number of RCCI members were also present. President Usman Shaukat highlighted the vast potential for expanding Pakistan-Spain trade and emphasized the need to promote stronger business-to-business linkages, enhance market access and facilitate greater cooperation in investment, technology and innovation. He noted that Spain offers promising opportunities for Pakistani exporters, particularly in textiles and agro-based products, while Pakistan can benefit from Spanish expertise in modern agriculture, precision farming, irrigation systems, agricultural mechanization, greenhouse technology and water management.

The meeting assumed added significance in view of recent Pakistan-Spain consultations regarding the establishment of a Joint Working Group on Agriculture, which could provide a structured platform for expanding cooperation in the agricultural sector. Pakistan has also identified rice, ethanol, potatoes and maize as products with significant potential for increasing exports to the Spanish market, while textiles remain among Pakistan's leading exports to Spain. Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, who attended the ceremony as Chief Guest, along with RCCI President Usman Shaukat, presented the Spanish Ambassador with a football manufactured in Pakistan for the FIFA World Cup. The gesture highlighted Pakistan's world-class sports manufacturing capabilities and symbolized the growing friendship between the two countries. The Ambassador also participated in RCCI's Independence Day celebrations and cake-cutting ceremony, reflecting the warm people-to-people, cultural and diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Spain. The RCCI leadership expressed its commitment to facilitating stronger institutional and private-sector linkages between the two countries and exploring new avenues for mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

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