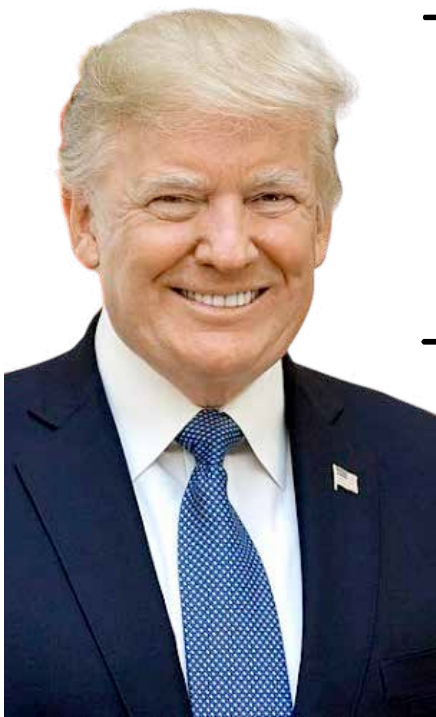




Islamabad POST

Tuesday, August 18, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

US President says will attack Oman if it sides with Iran

Detailed News On Page-01

Pakistani greatly values relations with Kazakhstan

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No unjustified challans to be issued: Aleem

Detailed News On Page-04



‘Bold and important first step’

Trump hails three-country defence pact

US President Donald Trump on Monday threatened to bomb Oman if it “gets in the way” of a deal with Iran on the Strait of Hormuz and called for Iran to surrender

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: US President Donald Trump has hailed the joint defence pact recently signed between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, terming it a “bold and important first step”. “It shows how the Middle East is coming together, and how Countries will finally be able to defend themselves in a more meaningful way,” Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social on Monday. The US president congratulated the leadership of the three nations on the signing of the pact, saying it was “a big, bold, and important first step”. Regional powers are looking to strengthen security ties amid the US-Israel war on Iran, which started on February 28, and has had a major impact on the region – drawing in several Gulf countries and paralysing maritime traffic through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement on August 7 during the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit, attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The accord stipulates that an armed attack against any member would be regarded as an attack on all, similar to Nato’s Article 5 collective defence clause. The joint defence pact was signed a year after Islamabad signed a mutual defence agreement with Riyadh, committing both sides to treat any aggression against either country as an attack on both. Days after the summit, PM Shehbaz said that the trilateral

Continued on Page 06

Trump orders to reduce drills with South Korea

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has instructed the Pentagon to reduce joint military exercises with South Korea substantially, he said in a social media post that also mentioned Seoul’s refusal to take part in actions against Iran. Hours before exercises were scheduled to begin, Trump said in a post on his Truth Social site that although it was too late to cancel the exercises entirely, he was “not happy” that the United States had previously agreed to participate. The annual Ulchi Freedom Shield joint military exercises are scheduled to run from August 17 to 27, with about 18,000 South Korean military personnel participating. The drills are expected to include operations to counter drones, disrupt GPS signals and counter cyberattacks to adapt to North Korea’s evolving capabilities, officials said last week.

Continued on Page 06

PM calls for modern digital services to citizens

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed the National Information Technology Board to pay special attention to providing citizens with easy, efficient and modern digital services. He was chairing a meeting in Islamabad today to review ongoing reforms in the National Information Technology Board (NITB) and progress on the construction of Islamabad Technology Park. The Prime Minister further directed all relevant institutions to work in a coordinated manner to ensure timely, transparent and convenient digital services for the people. He said facilitating citizens in obtaining government services is a key priority of the government. He directed that all government digital platforms be further improved in line with contemporary requirements.

Continued on Page 06

FM Dar meets graduating officers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar met with the graduating officers of the 45th Specialized Diplomatic Course and position holders of the 44th SDC at the Foreign Service Academy, Islamabad. DPM/FM distributed medals to the position holders of the 44th and 45th SDCs and certificates to the graduating officers of the 45th SDC. He congratulated the officers on successfully completing their training and wished them success in their future careers in the service of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding reforms in NITB and the construction of Islamabad Technology Park. – DNA

Govt formation in progress

PML-N has clinched two-thirds majority in AJK elections: Rana

PM’s aide thanks Sajid Iqbal – elected from LA-14 Bagh-I – for joining PML-N team

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Monday claimed that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has secured a two-thirds majority after three phases of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections. Addressing a presser in the federal capital, Sanaullah said that his party would form the government in AJK with a two-thirds majority after reserved-seat elections. “PML-N has secured a two-thirds majority in the 53-member assembly,” Sanaullah said, adding that the party had won 25 seats in the AJK elections. The PML-N emerged as the leading party in AJK by securing 25 seats in the region’s elections held in three phases. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which is an ally of the PML-N in the Centre, secured 11 seats and accused the PML-N of rigging in the AJK polls, with Sindh senior minister Sharjeel Memon saying the elections would be remembered in history as “Form 47 Plus”. During today’s presser, the senior PML-N leader said that the party had re-

ceived a clear mandate from the people to improve the situation in the region. Sanaullah vowed that the PML-N government would fulfil the promises it had made to the people, saying elections could not be held on six seats due to law and order situation. He thanked Awami Dast-o-Baazo party’s Sajid Iqbal – elected from LA-14 Bagh-I – for joining PML-N’s team for the development of the region. “Sajid Iqbal will work with us for the betterment of Azad Kashmir,” he said. Referring to the situation in AJK, he said those participating in the sit-in were their brothers, adding that around 1% to 1.5% of participants might be with elements seeking to provoke unrest. “The people of Kashmir are as much owners of Pakistan as Pakistanis,” Sanaullah said. According to the senior PML-N leader, the law and order situation in the region was the top priority for the party, reiterating that peaceful protest was every citizen’s right. However, Sanaullah said that the proscribed Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) wanted elections in AJK to be delayed, warning that the

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

2 terrorists killed in Balochistan

DNA

RAWALPINDI: At least two terrorists were killed, and three others injured during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Balochistan’s Killi Zaik area, security sources said on Monday. The operation was carried out between Killi Zaik and Kaghli, around 12 kilometres north of the Ba-seema camp, after security forces received information about the presence of terrorists, said security sources. Security forces also recovered ammunition, hand grenades, magazines and material used to make improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from the terrorists, the sources said. The intelligence-based operations were carried out as part of the ongoing Operation Rad-ul-Fitna-3, which the military’s media wing described as a counterterrorism effort targeting Indian proxies.

Iran considers missing pilots tobe prisoners in Qatar

TEHRAN: Iran’s foreign ministry said on Monday it will consider three missing pilots to be prisoners in Qatar, despite Doha’s denials, until it clarifies their fate. Tehran has said the Iranians went missing while carrying out an operation against the United States’ Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar on March 2, shortly after the outbreak of the Middle East war. On Saturday, Iranian authorities alleged for the first time that the pilots had been captured in Qatar, after previously saying one pilot had been killed and three others were missing following their sortie. “It is imperative to obtain clarification on their situation,” foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei told a weekly press briefing. – APP

Imran Khan’s eye vision ‘almost returned to normal’: jail official

Adiala jail superintendent submits details about ex-PM’s health and meetings at the prison to top court

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan was treated by top ophthalmologists in the twin cities, with his affected eye having “almost regained normal vision”, claimed a medical report submitted to the Supreme Court on Monday. The two-page report, submitted by the superintendent of Adiala jail, provided details about the former prime minister’s health and meetings at the prison. Imran, 73, has remained in prison since August 2023 following convictions he and his party describe as politically motivated. Since his ouster in April 2022 following a no-confidence vote, he has faced multiple legal cases, including allegations of state gifts and an unlawful marriage case. While some convictions have been suspended or overturned, several appeals remain pending before higher courts. Imran and his party continue to deny all allegations of wrongdoing. The jailed PTI founder was diagnosed with central

Continued on Page 06

Govt says talks offer to Opposition still on table

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry told the opposition on Monday that the government’s offer for talks remained on the table, urging them to demonstrate seriousness. Speaking on the floor of the Senate, the minister said, “The solution lies in seriousness,” and called on the opposition to agree on a time and venue for negotiations. “On one hand you are not serious about talks, and on the other, you want to derail the system,” Chaudhry remarked. Senator Abdul Qadir also called for dialogue during Senate proceedings, saying political

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan refiner Cnergycico expands US crude imports

Pakistan’s US import payments rose by \$914 million to \$3.27 billion in that fiscal year, central bank data shows, making Cnergycico’s purchases equivalent to about 80% of the increase

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s largest refiner Cnergycico is buying more US crude as Islamabad seeks to diversify the country’s energy supplies after disruption caused by the Iran war exposed its dependence on Gulf routes. Pakistan also wants to increase imports from the US to help narrow its trade surplus and secure reductions in trade tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump. Cnergycico, which first bought US crude last year, is also considering spot purchases against longer-term contracts with Vitrol and other suppliers based on “pricing, reliability and supply security”, Vice Chairman Usama Qureshi told Reuters. Cnergycico imported about 8.1 million barrels of US crude over nine months, including 7.1 million worth about \$750 million in the fiscal year ended June,

Continued on Page 06

PPL explores oil reserves in Sindh

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The state-owned Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) on Monday announced a “pioneering” gas and condensate discovery from its operated exploratory well, Dolphin X-1, at Sirani Block in Sindh’s Sujawal district. “This is the first-ever hydrocarbon discovery from Jurassic-age Chiltan Formation in Lower Indus Basin, opening up a new hydrocarbon play” in hitherto “untapped, challenging frontiers”, one of the country’s top oil and gas producers said in a statement. With the discovery, PPL said it had “opened up a new exploration frontier

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Kundi urges early start of Chashma project

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday stressed the need for the early execution of the Chashma Lift Canal Project, describing it as a long-standing demand of the people of the province and a project of national importance for Pakistan's agricultural and economic development. The Governor expressed these views during a meeting with Federal Secretary for Climate Change and Water Resources, Owais Manzoor Sumra and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, Mehr Ali Shah. The meeting discussed the Chashma Lift Canal Project, other ongoing water sector initiatives and water-related issues facing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Governor Kundi said the Chashma Lift Canal Project should be launched without further delay, adding that its completion would not only benefit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also contribute significantly to the country's agricultural growth and economic prosperity. The participants also exchanged views on the Kachi Canal Project and reviewed proposals aimed at the efficient use of water resources, water conservation and addressing future water challenges. The Governor announced that an important event on the Indus Waters would be organised at the Governor House in Peshawar, where experts, representatives of relevant institutions and other stakeholders would be invited to deliberate on water-related issues and explore sustainable solutions. The meeting agreed that ensuring the efficient and equitable utilisation of the country's water resources was essential for national development and the long-term stability of the agricultural sector.—APP

Summer-zone schools reopened in KP

PESHAWAR: Schools in the summer zone of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reopened on Monday after the summer vacation, with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department suspending morning assemblies for the remaining days of August. According to a notification issued by the Directorate of Elementary and Secondary Education, morning assemblies at middle, high and higher secondary schools in the summer zone will remain suspended from August 17 to 31, 2026. However, regular academic activities will continue during the period, the notification said. Schools in the winter zone, including primary, middle, high and higher secondary institutions, will continue functioning according to their existing schedule and timetable. The department said all schools across the province would resume their normal routine and timetable from September 1. The concerned district education officers and monitoring officers have been directed to ensure implementation of the instructions.—APP

Rotten mango supply foiled

MUZAFFARGARH: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Monday foiled a bid to supply a large quantity of rotten mangoes to the local market by destroying 65 maunds of decayed fruit and imposing a fine of Rs.50,000 on two suppliers. According to a PFA spokesperson, food safety teams led by the Deputy Director Operations established checkpoints at Pul Shamsabad and Khangarh and inspected vehicles entering the district. The teams recovered rotten and insect-infested mangoes from the vehicles. The suppliers failed to produce any purchase or sale record for the consignment, the spokesperson said. He said thousands of kilograms of substandard mangoes were intended to be sold in the local market at low prices.—APP

Over 40,000 QR panic buttons installed in Lahore

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday chaired the fifth consecutive review meeting on the provision of clean drinking water, directing the authorities to expedite water supply projects across the province and ensure reliable access to safe drinking water in water-scarce areas

LAHORE: Acting on the special directives of Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the City Traffic Police Lahore (CTPL) have installed more than 40,000 QR panic buttons in public transport vehicles, rickshaws and ride-hailing cabs to enhance passenger safety and strengthen technology-based traffic management across the provincial capital. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Lahore, Syed Abdul Rahim Shirazi said the installation campaign was progressing rapidly with traffic police teams currently working at 45 locations across the city to equip public transport vehicles with QR panic buttons. He said dedicated teams had been deployed in every traffic sector for the initiative, while 12 additional teams had been assigned exclusively for rickshaws to expedite the process. The CTO said QR panic buttons had become mandatory for public transport in view of legal requirements and public safety considerations. Earlier, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday chaired the fifth consecutive review meeting on the provision of clean drinking water, directing the authorities to expedite water supply projects across the province and ensure reliable access to safe drinking water in water-scarce areas.

The meeting reviewed ongoing and proposed drinking water schemes in Chakwal, Rawalpindi, Rajanpur, Faisalabad, Murree and Attock, with a special focus on improving water availability in underserved communities. It agreed in principle to accord top priority to the provision of clean drinking water to eight water-deficient villages in Chakwal. The participants also considered a proposal to launch pilot water supply projects in Rajanpur, Jampur, Chak Shigari and Dajal. The meeting approved, in principle, a pilot scheme for supplying clean drinking water to Chak Jhumra and suburban areas of Faisalabad. Chairing the meeting, the chief minister directed the authorities to prepare and verify authentic data on water requirements in accordance with population figures to ensure effective planning and equitable distribution of resources. She also ordered the immediate provision of 21 water bowlers in Rajanpur to address the immediate needs of residents and directed the authorities to accelerate beautification and other development projects in Rojhan. For Murree, the chief minister ordered the provision of additional water storage tanks to improve the supply of drinking water and directed the

authorities concerned to initiate work on developing a new water source for the hill station to meet growing demand. The Punjab Clean Water Authority and deputy commissioners gave detailed briefings on the prevailing water supply situation, progress on filtration plants and the implementation status of ongoing projects in their respective districts. The meeting was further informed that Murree had five operational filtration plants, with 90 more under construction, whereas Faisalabad had 343 functional filtration plants, four surface water treatment plants and 180 additional filtration plants under construction. Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif reiterated that ensuring access to clean drinking water remained one of her government's foremost priorities. "We will not rest until clean drinking water is available at the doorsteps of the people of Punjab," she said. The CM said that areas where people were still forced to carry water over long distances had been placed among the government's highest priorities. "I consider the provision of clean drinking water across Punjab my responsibility because serving the people is my duty," she added.—APP

Cervical cancer vaccination campaign in KP

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department has announced a province-wide vaccination campaign against cervical cancer, with around 2.93 million girls aged 9 to 14 years set to receive the vaccine from November 2 to 14. The announcement was made at an awareness event organized by the Health Department on Monday, where health experts highlighted the importance of vaccination and screening in preventing cervical cancer. WHO consultant Dr Rizwan said more than 5,000 cervical cancer cases were reported in Pakistan every year, while around 3,000 women die from the disease annually. Dr Muhammad Ayaz said timely vaccination and regular screening could significantly reduce the risk of cervical cancer. Dr Idrees stressed the need for preventive measures, describing the disease as a serious and potentially fatal health threat.—APP

Pakistani robotics firm calls for joint labs, ventures with China

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani maker of AI-based garment inspection systems says it can now build most of its inspection system at home. The precision parts inside an industrial robot are another matter, and its founder says Chinese partners could help close that gap according to a carried by China Economic Net, (CEN) on Monday. Awais Yasin, founder and CEO of Robionix Technologies, called for joint laboratories tied to industrial projects, joint ventures with defined localisation targets and long-term training between Chinese and Pakistani engineers in a written interview with CEN. The company's system, MagicQC, checks whether a finished garment matches the buyer's order. The garment goes on a measurement bed, a camera identifies the measurement points, and the system returns a pass or fail. Getting that right matters in Pakistan's largest export industry, where measurements must meet buyer specifications and tolerances. Textiles earned \$17.88 billion in the 2024-25 fiscal year, about 56 percent of the country's merchandise exports, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

In a recent installation, Yasin said, only three major components came from abroad: the industrial camera, the operator touchscreen and its mounting assembly. The measurement bed, lighting, display, computer and electrical parts were made or sourced in Pakistan, as was the integration work. Robionix has deployed systems at factories in Karachi, Faisalabad and Sialkot, though commercial installations remain limited, he said. A robot is harder. An inspection system stays still and looks. A robot arm has to move to a point and return to it with the accuracy, repeatability, speed and reliability expected of industrial equipment, which depends on servo motors, precision encoders, harmonic or planetary gear reducers and servo drives. Yasin said Pakistan lacks local sources for those components at the precision and scale required. It can design the structure, the electronics, the control software and the vision system, Yasin said. What it lacks is the precision manufacturing base those parts demand, which leaves the fully indigenous six-axis industrial arm he has wanted to build for years out of reach. "The robot itself is not the biggest

problem," he said. "The missing ecosystem around the robot is the bigger challenge." He saw that ecosystem while studying for a robotics PhD at the Beijing Institute of Technology in the 2010s: universities doing advanced research, companies building robots, suppliers producing precision components, factories deploying them at scale. China installed 295,000 industrial robots in 2024, 54 percent of the world's total, according to the International Federation of Robotics. Pakistan, meanwhile, was buying finished automation equipment, said Yasin, who is also a professor at the National University of Technology in Islamabad. The gap has narrowed in awareness, research and startups but remains wide in industrial scale and component manufacturing. China's production base in motors, reducers and controllers makes Chinese suppliers potential partners, Yasin said. Such cooperation should start with localising integration and manufacturing, he said, then move towards making the critical parts in Pakistan, with Pakistani engineers building alongside their Chinese counterparts.—DNA

400-acre Port Qasim garment project announced

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has announced plans to establish a 400-acre apparel zone at Port Qasim, with its first phase projected to create more than 138,000 jobs and generate annual exports of around \$2.2 billion. Chairing a meeting on a proposed garment city project, the minister said the export-oriented manufacturing cluster would focus on high-value apparel production and attract private investment.

According to the project plan, the first phase would cover 250 acres, with 35 per cent allocated for internal roads, utilities and green areas. The project is envisaged as a public-private partnership. The proposed commercial structure comprises 32 industrial plots of five acres each, although the plot size could be reduced to two or three acres to accommodate more investors and manufacturing units. The Port Qasim Authority (PQA) would provide infrastructure and utilities. Each industrial unit would have access to up to 400,000 gallons of water a day, two megawatts of on-grid electricity and 23,100 pounds of industrial gas a day at 8 pounds per square inch (PSI), enough to support requirements for 10 tonnes of steam. Pounds per square inch (PSI) is a unit

used to measure pressure. It indicates how much force is applied over one square inch of area. For example, 8 PSI means eight pounds of force acting on each square inch. For the overall project, planned utility capacity includes 13 million gallons of water a day, 64MW of on-grid electricity and 750,000 pounds of industrial gas a day. Junaid Chaudhry said private-sector participation would be a key component of the project. Under the plan, a Pakistani textile and denim manufacturing company, Artistic Milliners, would establish a manufacturing unit with an investment of more than \$18 million, incorporating vertical integration and green technologies. The project would also have a one-window mechanism for exporters, including streamlined export processing, specialised customs desks and dedicated transport corridors. Projections presented at the meeting put first-phase employment at 138,125 jobs and annual exports at \$2.2bn. The project also aims to raise the average export value of garments to around \$8 per piece. The minister said the initiative was part of efforts to expand Pakistan's industrial base and export capacity, with port infrastructure, utilities, customs facilities and private investment integrated into the proposed apparel zone.—APP

Human trafficking suspect arrested

PESHAWAR: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested a key suspect wanted in two human trafficking cases in Mardan district. According to the FIA on Monday, the FIA Composite Circle Mardan arrested the suspect, identified as Amin Syed, who was wanted in two cases related to human trafficking. The agency said the suspect allegedly collected a total of Rs 4.8 million from innocent citizens by promising to send them to Libya through illegal routes.—APP

Sindh CM lauds deaf youth leader achievement

KARACHI :Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah, met Muhammad Ahmed Khan, Secretary of the Pakistan Association of the Deaf Youth Section (PADYS), who has achieved the distinction of becoming the first Pakistani recipient of the prestigious World Deaf Leadership (WDL) Scholarship awarded by Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C, USA, the world's leading institution for Deaf education. The meeting, held at CM House, was attended by Minister Local Government Nasir Shah, Minister Home Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, Secretary DEPD Tauha Farooqi and others. During the meeting, representatives of the Pakistan Association of the Deaf (PAD) informed the Chief Minister that Muhammad Ahmed Khan had been selected for a three-year Master of Arts programme in Deaf Studies commencing in Fall 2026. They highlighted that upon completion of his studies, he intended to return to Pakistan and would utilise his knowledge and international experience for the empowerment and advancement of the Deaf community. Congratulating Ahmed Khan on this remarkable achievement, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said that his selection for such a prestigious international scholarship was a matter of immense pride for Sindh and the whole country. He added that the accomplishment reflected the immense talent and potential of persons with disabilities when provided with equal opportunities and access to quality education. The Chief Minister stated, "Muhammad Ahmed Khan has become a source of inspiration for thousands of young people, particularly members of the Deaf community. His success demonstrates determination, hardwork, and access to education which can overcome barriers and create opportunities at the highest international level." Reaffirming the Sindh Government's commitment to inclusion, the Chief Minister said that the provincial government was implementing various initiatives under the Sindh Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018, to ensure equal rights, accessibility, and educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Chief Minister directed the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD) and the Education Department to explore avenues for recognising and supporting outstanding achievements of differently-abled individuals and to promote success stories that encourage youth across the province. He also instructed the relevant departments to maintain coordination with the Pakistan Association of the Deaf and develop proposals aimed at strengthening educational and leadership opportunities for the Deaf community in Sindh. Muhammad Ahmed Khan thanked the Chief Minister for his encouragement and support, and expressed his commitment to serving Pakistan's Deaf community upon completion of his studies. The meeting was attended by officials of the Pakistan Association of the Deaf and representatives of the Deaf community.—DNA

From O Levels to A Levels: Zaid's consistent excellence

DNA

LAHORE: Zaid Bin Shakir, a distinguished A Level (Business Stream) student at The City School, Ravi Campus, Johar Town, Lahore, has once again proven his academic excellence by securing straight As in all five subjects in the CAIE A1 final examinations. This achievement follows his remarkable performance last year, when he earned nine A*s and one A in the CAIE O Level examinations, placing him among the top achievers of his institution. Zaid Bin Shakir is the son of Mr. Abdul Rashid Shakir, an officer of the Information Group, who has been serving as Press Secretary to the Chief Minister of Punjab since March 2023.



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National Day

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Armed Forces Day

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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
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Independence Day

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ISSI-PAIDAR celebrating Morocco's Enthronement Day

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed highlighted the historic and enduring bonds between Pakistan and Morocco, recalling Pakistan's support for Morocco's independence struggle and Morocco's pivotal role in the establishment of the OIC

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), organized an event to commemorate Morocco's Enthronement Day. The Chief Guest on the occasion was Mohamed Karmoune, Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan, and the Guest of Honor was Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR; Syed Adil Gillani, Ambassador of Pakistan to Morocco; Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, BoG, ISSI; Ambassador Moin Ul Haque, Director General ISSI; and Dr. Amina Khan; Director, CAMEA also spoke on the occasion. In his welcoming remarks, Ambassador Moin ul Haque highlighted the rich history and longstanding friendship between Pakistan and Morocco. He also acknowledged Morocco's rich civilizational heritage and its remarkable transformation and modernization under the visionary leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. Ambassador Mohamed Karmoune highlighted Morocco's remarkable economic and social progress under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, particularly in industry, tourism, renewable energy, and investment. He also underscored the historic and brotherly Morocco-Pakistan relationship, built on more than seven decades of mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. He noted the growing political and institutional engagement between the two countries,



including high-level exchanges and coordination at international forums, and reaffirmed Morocco's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation and advancing shared development goals. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed highlighted the historic and enduring bonds between Pakistan and Morocco, recalling Pakistan's support for Morocco's independence struggle and Morocco's pivotal role in the establishment of the OIC. He also praised Morocco's rich history, cultural heritage and renowned hospitality, reaffirming the strong and lasting friendship between Pakistan and Morocco. Ambassador Syed Adil Gillani highlighted the historic and brotherly Pakistan-Morocco relationship, noting the growing momentum in bilateral ties through high-level

exchanges in 2026 and expanding cooperation in trade, agriculture, investment, education, security, and tourism. He emphasized Morocco's important regional and African role and its significance for Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy, while underscoring close coordination between the two countries at multilateral forums. Ambassador Hamid Asghar highlighted Morocco's successes in peace and security, tourism, FDI and infrastructure, especially highlighting the success of its tourism sector with 18 million tourist arrivals and \$14 billion tourism revenue last year. He also underscored opportunities for Pakistan-Morocco cooperation in agriculture, food security, education, water and waste management. Dr. Amina Khan in her opening remarks, highlighted Mo-

rocco's progress under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and its important role in Africa. She emphasized the historic and cordial Pakistan-Morocco relationship, noting Morocco's significance as a key partner for Pakistan's engagement with the African Continent. In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, emphasized Morocco's strategic position as a bridge between Sub-Saharan Africa and the wider world, highlighting opportunities for Pakistan in trade, investment, industry, and other sectors. He also reaffirmed the desire to further strengthen the bilateral partnership and commended the Embassy of Morocco's efforts in showcasing the country's rich culture and heritage and bringing the two countries closer.

SECP sets up corporate debt market desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has established a dedicated Corporate Debt Market Desk to promote the corporate debt market and facilitate capital raising through debt instruments. The desk will support issuers and market participants by making debt issuance simpler, faster and more cost-efficient, said a press release issued by the SECP on Monday. Federal Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has directed the development of a vibrant and efficient corporate debt market to diversify long-term financing options for businesses and reduce reliance on bank lending. A senior SECP official has been designated as focal person for the Desk, which will facilitate public offerings and private placements of corporate debt securities, PSX listings, Sukuk and other Shari'ah-compliant debt instruments. A dedicated Corporate Debt Market section has also been established on the SECP website, providing the relevant legal and regulatory framework, market data, guidance material, and contact details of the focal person. Chairman SECP Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu said a deeper corporate debt market would diversify long-term financing, mobilize institutional investment, and support infrastructure and industrial growth. The Desk forms part of SECP's broader corporate debt market reforms aimed at simplifying issuance processes, reducing costs and standardizing documentation to encourage greater participation by issuers and investors.—APP

1kg drugs seized

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Counter Narcotics Force (PCNF) Murree has arrested a suspected drug dealer and recovered more than one kilogramme of hashish and 50 grammes of ice (crystal methamphetamine) during a crackdown against drug trafficking in the hill resort. According to an official handout issued by the Department of Public Relations, Punjab, Rawalpindi Division, the PCNF's Narcotics Control Station (NCS) in Murree apprehended one suspect allegedly involved in drug smuggling. Official said 1,052 grammes of hashish and 50 grammes of ice were recovered from the suspect. A case has been initiated while further investigation is underway. Director of the PCNF Murree, Colonel (retired) Murad Ali Khan, said the authorities would not allow anyone to endanger the lives and health of citizens through drug trafficking. He said the force was pursuing a zero-tolerance policy against drug dealers and that a crackdown was being intensified against those involved in the illicit trade. "Our commitment is to a drug-free, healthy and safe Punjab," he said, urging citizens to cooperate with law-enforcement authorities and report individuals involved in drug trafficking. The public can report suspected drug-related activities to the authorities through the helpline 1012.—APP

Fahd greets Riyadh Air on inaugural flight to Pak

Fahd Haroon expressed confidence that Riyadh Air's presence in Pakistan would further enhance connectivity and contribute to the continued strengthening of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia partnership

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State / Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, Fahd Haroon has congratulated Riyadh Air on the commencement of its operations in Pakistan, with the airline's inaugural flight from Riyadh arriving in Islamabad on August 14. Fahd Haroon warmly welcomed Riyadh Air to Pakistan, describing the new air link as an important milestone in the enduring brotherly relationship between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "Riyadh Air's arrival in Pakistan is more than the launch of a new airline. It is another bridge connecting our two brotherly nations and a reflection of the ever-deepening ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia," he said. He said the new connectivity would create greater opportunities for people-to-people contact, business,

tourism, investment and cultural exchange, while further strengthening the links between the two countries. Fahd Haroon also conveyed his warm congratulations and appreciation to His Excellency Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki, Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Pakistan, for his support and efforts in facilitating this important milestone. He also acknowledged the teams in Islamabad and Riyadh, including the leadership and team of Riyadh Air, the relevant Pakistani and Saudi authorities, and the respective diplomatic missions, whose efforts and coordination contributed to the successful launch of the new service. "I particularly commend everyone in Islamabad and Riyadh whose dedication and close coordination helped turn this important initiative into reality. Such milestones are built through part-

nership, commitment and a shared vision for closer ties between our two countries," he said. Noting that the inaugural flight arrived on Pakistan's 79th Independence Day, Fahd Haroon said the occasion carried an added significance. "It gives me great personal pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Riyadh Air, its leadership and its entire team. I warmly welcome Riyadh Air to Pakistan and wish it every success as it begins this important journey between our two countries." Fahd Haroon expressed confidence that Riyadh Air's presence in Pakistan would further enhance connectivity and contribute to the continued strengthening of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia partnership. mRiyadh Air commenced direct services between Riyadh and Islamabad on August 14, with services to Lahore scheduled to commence on August 18.—APP

Rawalpindi. Speaking on the occasion, RPO Babar Sarfraz Alpa praised Nasir Ali Khan and Saad Arshad for efficiently discharging their responsibilities and making valuable contributions to police administration, departmental affairs and professional policing. He said the services and experience of both officers were valuable assets for the police force. He expressed confidence that the two officers would use their experience and expertise to further improve the quality of police training and contribute effectively to the professional development of the force. During the ceremony, the RPO and other officers extended their best wishes to Nasir Ali Khan and Saad Arshad for their future assignments.—APP

Farewell ceremony held in honour of outgoing cop

RAWALPINDI: A farewell ceremony was held at the Regional Police Office (RPO) Rawalpindi to honour Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Rawalpindi, Nasir Ali Khan and Superintendent of Police (SP) Headquarters Rawalpindi Saad Arshad following their transfers to

the Police College Sihala as SP Training-II and SP Training-I, respectively. Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Region Babar Sarfraz Alpa, along with other senior police officers, attended the ceremony and appreciated the services and professional performance of the two officers during their tenure in

Kayani reaffirms govt's commitment to cashless economy

Emphasizing the strategic importance of public-private partnership, the Minister highlighted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is personally overseeing the cashless economy process and has achieved significant progress over the year

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Railways and Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, reaffirmed the Government of Pakistan's commitment to advancing a cashless economy and accelerating digital financial inclusion across the country during a high-level engagement with leadership of JS Bank and Zindigi. The delegation, led by Mr. Basir Shamsie, President and CEO of JS Bank, alongside Mr. Noman Azhar, Chief Officer of ZINDIGI - JS Bank, and Mr. Atif Ishaque, Chief Business Officer of ZINDIGI - JS Bank, called on the Minister at the Finance Division to discuss key strategies for expanding digital financial services and supporting the national vision for a digitally empowered economy. During the meeting, the delegation com-

mended the government's ongoing policy efforts and initiatives aimed at promoting cashless business models and driving formal financial adoption across sectors. Emphasizing the strategic importance of public-private partnership, the Minister highlighted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is personally overseeing the cashless economy process and has achieved significant progress over the year. He said the Government is committed to ensuring transparency, enhancing public convenience, and accelerating the formal documentation of the economy through digital payments. Both sides expressed their commitment to continued collaboration in advancing digital financial services, strengthening digital infrastructure and supporting wider adoption of cashless solutions across the country.



Briefs

PMNYC
extends
application
deadline to
Aug 31

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) has extended the deadline for applications for the fourth batch of the Prime Minister's National Youth Council (PMNYC) to August 31, inviting talented and committed Pakistanis aged 15 to 29 from across the country and overseas to join the youth advisory platform and contribute to national policymaking. Approved by the Federal Cabinet, the PMNYC serves as an advisory council to the prime minister on youth affairs, providing young leaders an opportunity to participate in policy discussions and contribute to national development. The selected members will serve a two-year term on the Youth Advisory Board established under the PMYP and work with relevant government institutions on youth-focused policies and initiatives. The council will engage young people in key areas including education, employment and entrepreneurship, skills development, climate change, green economy, digital innovation, civic engagement, social welfare, community development, sports and culture. The PMYP said the selection process would be transparent, merit-based and inclusive, with representation of men, women, transgender persons, persons with disabilities, religious minorities and youth from diverse social and economic backgrounds. Young Pakistanis from Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Pakistani communities abroad, are eligible to apply. The council will also provide young people with an opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills, engage directly with government institutions and present practical policy recommendations for Pakistan's sustainable development. Applications can be submitted through the Digital Youth Hub (DYH) by accessing the PMYP portal or downloading the DYH mobile application. Applicants are required to log in and complete the online application form before the revised deadline of August 31. The PMYP has urged all eligible young Pakistanis to avail themselves of the extended deadline and play an active role in shaping policies.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Visitors taking interest in various pieces of art during an exhibition titled 'ALL ROADS LEAD TO HOME' by Sara Shakeel at the Tanzara Art Gallery. DNA

Lessons from China's governance experience

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Joint Symposium, "Thematic Briefing on Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building," was held, bringing together Chinese officials, senators, political leaders, senior ambassadors, members of academia, think-tanks and media representatives, focusing on the theory's main tenets and China's approach to political organization, governance, and institutional development. The Symposium was organized by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS). The Chairman of the Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong delivered special remarks. The Chinese delegation included Liu Daxiu, Head of the delegation, First-Class Inspector at the Party Building Research Institute of the Organization Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and Zheng Huan, Professor of Party Building at the Central Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

tee, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, also addressed the gathering. Chairman Gillani conveyed a message from President Asif Ali Zardari. China's transformation, he said, demonstrated what vision and steady implementation could achieve, and he called strategic planning, institutional continuity and good governance universal needs. He welcomed President Xi's four global initiatives and recalled his own family's long ties with China, calling the friendship "a living, breathing legacy" passed from one generation to the next. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong called the Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building a vivid lesson for political parties on building internal mechanisms of self-reform and discipline. The Ambassador stated that the common goal of all parties is to seek a better life for the people, by remaining true to the CPC's founding principle of serving the common people. He cited China's eradication of poverty as proof of development on scientific principles. He stressed that Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building is not limited to the CPC only; it envisions prosperity for the whole of humanity. That people-first outlook, he added, carries into a wider global vision. The theory reveals noble

values and provides an example for developing countries, he further added. The ambassador noted that the same spirit of prosperity drives the Pakistan-China relationship in the New Era and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Mr. Liu Daxiu described this theory as an integral part of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Under this guidance, the whole Party achieves ironclad solidarity, solving problems one by one and advancing step by step. The thought, he said, is rich in meaning, sound in logic and deep in insight, and its core is summed up in "Fourteen Upholds", which contain both ideological content and specific requirements. He highlighted that the fundamental logic of party politics is rooted in the "aspiration of the people", positioning the people-centered development philosophy as the most important idea in Xi Jinping Thought. He added that the theory underscores discipline, accountability, and Party conduct for national rejuvenation. Mr. Liu further accentuated the theory's promulgation as the new strategy and 'opening up' of the system for the New Era. Professor Zheng Huan set out five key ways in which Xi Jin-

ping Thought on Party Building matters for political parties globally, noting that it offers a fresh choice of development path, rebuilds public trust through a people-centered approach, strengthens party organization, combats corruption so officials "dare not, cannot, and will not" be corrupt, and encourages a new paradigm for interparty relations. Professor Huan argued that Xi Jinping Thought provides a clear solution to the global challenges of organizational weakness and inadequate leadership in modern political parties. He noted that in many countries, loosely structured party organizations, underdeveloped primary-level units, and internal factionalism impede political leadership from mobilizing social forces or driving national development. He cited data showing that by late 2025, total Party membership reached 101.29 million across 5.43 million grassroots organizations. This network enabled large-scale national execution, including the deployment of 255,000 village work teams and over three million first secretaries and cadres during China's poverty alleviation campaign.

Ahsan visits Gohar to condole mother's death

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday visited the residence of PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and expressed condolence over the death of his mother. Ahsan Iqbal conveyed his sympathies to Barrister Gohar and his family, saying the loss of a mother was a great tragedy. He prayed for forgiveness for the deceased, a high place in Jannat-ul-Firdous and patience for the bereaved family to bear the loss with equanimity. He said his sympathies and prayers were with Barrister Gohar and his family in this hour of grief.

No unjustified challans to be issued: Aleem

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday assured goods transporters that no unjustified challans would be issued by the Motorway Police, while stressing strict compliance with axle-load, speed and other prescribed traffic regulations. Addressing a reception hosted by the All Pakistan Goods Transporters Alliance in his honour following the successful conclusion of negotiations between the government and transporters, the Federal Minister said all commitments made to the transporters would be fulfilled at all costs, said a press release. The transporters accorded a warm welcome to Abdul Aleem Khan upon his arrival at the reception, showering flower petals and chanting slogans in his support. President of the Goods Transporters Alliance Malik Shehzad Awan presented him a traditional Sindhi Ajrak and thanked the government for accepting their demands. Addressing the reception, Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had assigned him the special task of chairing the Committee constituted to resolve the transporters' issues which had successfully completed its mandate. Abdul Aleem Khan appreciated the sincerity and sense of responsibility demonstrated by the leadership of the Goods Transporters Alliance. He said that negotiations continued for 9 days, with the two sides holding discussions for several hours each day

and ultimately reaching a successful agreement. He termed the successful negotiations a highly commendable development. Federal Minister for Communications said that transporters play a vital role in the national economy and that their cooperation is essential for the country's development. Abdul Aleem Khan assured the transporters that not a single unjustified challan would be allowed by the Motorway Police. He said that if a vehicle was not violating any traffic rules, there was no question of issuing a challan. He added that compliance with prescribed limits regarding vehicle weight, speed and other regulations would be ensured at all costs. He urged transporters to strictly comply with the axle-load policy, saying that adherence to the prescribed limits was in their own interest. Loading vehicles beyond the permissible weight not only damages the vehicles but also causes serious loss to roads. He said it was the Government's responsibility to take decisions in the best interest of the country and ensure their effective implementation. Abdul Aleem Khan said that, if necessary, he would personally stand on the roads and review the problems being faced by transporters. He added that the Secretary Communications, Chairman NHA and Inspector General of Motorways Police had already been directed to visit highways and assess transporters' problems on the spot so that appropriate solutions could be identified. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan further said that complaints regarding weigh stations on highways would be addressed immediately while arrangements were also being made for the issuance of driving licences to drivers through the Motorway Police. He said important policies had been formulated to transform the Motorway Police and the National Highway Authority into more public-friendly institutions. On the occasion, President of the Goods Transporters Alliance Malik Shehzad Awan thanked the Government, particularly Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan for taking a personal interest in resolving the transporters' problems.—DNA

I-Day marked with focus on unity

Speaking at the ceremony, Sabeen Khattak said Independence Day was a reminder of the sacrifices made for the creation of Pakistan and called on employees to contribute towards the country's progress through dedication and professional excellence. "Independence is not only a celebration; it is also a responsibility to serve Pakistan with honesty, unity and commitment," she said, at the event held here at the Information Service Academy. She said media organisations had an important role in countering misinformation and disinformation and urged APP employees to ensure accuracy, credibility and professional ethics in their work. "Our responsibility as a national news agency is to provide accurate and credible information and to play our part in countering misinformation and disinformation," she said. The Acting MD also highlighted measures taken for the welfare of APP employees, saying the Board of Directors had approved increases ranging from 60 to 65 per cent in the first phase, while the cumulative increase through the Board reached 112pc. She said approval had also been given to raise the disability allowance to Rs10,000. Efforts are under way in coordination with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Ministry of Finance to provide further financial relief to employees, she added. She called for greater unity and inclusivity among employees, urging them to set aside

differences and promote an environment based on mutual respect. "APP is a family, and we must learn to respect one another, support our colleagues and move forward together," she said. She also reiterated the organisation's commitment to providing equal opportunities to minority employees and said their religious occasions, including Christmas, were celebrated regularly at APP. The Independence Day video messages from Secretary Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Ashfaq Ahmed Khalil, Principal Information Officer Raisa Adil and the Acting MD were shown during the ceremony. National songs were performed by Nauman Adil, Naheed Taj and Abdul Rahman, while Qasim Malik presented a Naat. Messages in regional languages were delivered by Kashif Rizvi in Urdu, Samina Chaudhry in Punjabi, Shaikat Chandio in Sindhi, Farhatullah Khattak and Dr Wahidullah Ayub in Pashto, Rakhshanda Taj in Balochi and Dr Sadia Kamal in Saraiki. The ceremony was moderated by Shumaila Noreen and Sanam Junejo. Director News Shumaila Andleeb, Director Urdu News Abdul Jabbar Zekria, Director Video News Rabnawaz Bajwa, Information Officers including Adnan Bajwa and, Fareena Mughal and a large number of APP employees attended the event. The celebrations concluded with Acting MD Sabeen Khattak cutting the Independence Day cake, flanked by APP staffers from all sections.—APP

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SCAN TO VISIT WEBISTE

The dwindling shield and the regional security equation

ZAID M. BELBAGI

FROM late February, Iran launched a sustained ballistic missile and drone campaign against targets across the Gulf. Within hours, Patriot and THAAD batteries across the region were engaged. The UAE said its air defenses intercepted 537 ballistic missiles, 2,256 drones and 26 cruise missiles between Feb. 28 and early April. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, reported 894 intercepted aerial threats between March 3 and April 7, including 86 ballistic missiles and nine cruise missiles. The Kingdom expended about 2,400 PAC-3 interceptors in the conflict's first 38 days, equivalent to 86 percent of its pre-war inventory. The systems proved effective, but the scale of their use has raised questions about the sustainability of Gulf air-defense capabilities in a prolonged conflict. The answer offered by Washington has been unambiguous. Facing an estimated depletion of 65 percent of its Patriot interceptor stockpile and 38 percent of its THAAD reserves, the US redeployed batteries from South Korea to the Middle East over Seoul's objections, and awarded Lockheed Martin a \$58.6 billion contract to scale PAC-3 production from 600 to 2,000 units annually. Congress assessed the interception rate against Iranian ballistic missiles at about 90 percent. Adding to this, there are currently no effective alternatives to Patriot and THAAD for ballistic missile defense. This leaves Gulf states heavily reliant on US capabilities even as the conflict puts pressure on American interceptor stocks. This is the paradox at the center of the regional security equation. The American shield is thinner than it was but the alternatives are not yet equal. That commitment has a proven record which has a global reach beyond the Gulf. Since 2022, Patriot has been the cornerstone of Ukraine's strategic air defense against Russian ballistic missiles, and is described by Western officials as the crown jewel of Kyiv's defensive architecture: a system so critical that Ukraine placed its first direct purchase order in mid-2026 rather than risk relying entirely on allied donations. The Gulf campaign has validated the same lesson at greater scale and intensity, as no other system, Russian, Chinese or European, has been tested and proved against massed, simultaneous, multi-vector attacks of the kind Iran sustained over five months of conflict. The lesson for the Gulf is therefore not to abandon diversification. It is the opposite; diversification is becoming more necessary. But diversification works best when it strengthens the architecture rather than fragments it. Egypt is a useful

IslamabadPOST

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 361

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

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Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



case study. Cairo has spent years deliberately avoiding dependence on a single supplier. Its military inventory combines American aircraft and air-defense equipment with Russian, French, German, and Chinese systems. The approach is strategically understandable. Egypt has one of the region's largest militaries, controls the Suez Canal, borders Libya, Sudan, and Gaza, and operates in a security environment in which no government would want its entire defense establishment tied to the political decisions of one foreign capital. The US remains the strongest regional security guarantor with the depth of alliances, infrastructure, and military capacity to rebuild it. As such, Egypt's defense procurement choices carry strategic consequences that take into consideration the current context. Egypt receives \$1.3 billion per year in US Foreign Military Financing, the second-largest such program globally after Israel, a figure that accounts for an estimated 80 percent of its entire annual military procurement budget. Built over four decades since Camp David, the US-Egypt defense relationship encompasses 220 F-16 Fighting Falcons, Patriot air defense systems, Stinger short-range interceptors and a sustained program of joint exercises, the most recent of which, Bright Star 2025, brought 1,800 US military personnel and forces from 44 countries to Egyptian soil. Since October 2023 alone, the State Department has notified Congress of \$12 billion in Foreign Military Sales cases for Egypt. Egypt has nevertheless pursued a deliberately layered defense architecture, combining its American platforms with Russian S-300VM systems, Chinese HQ-9B surface-to-air missiles, French Rafales and German IRIST systems. Cairo has also been reported to be considering the Chinese J-10C fighter, a platform that flew in the two countries' first joint air exercise. The logic behind this is that no state with Egypt's strategic exposure wants to depend on a single supplier. But this logic has limits that the Iran war has made harder to ignore. Russia and China also face limitations as alternative suppliers. Their export systems generally leave buyers dependent on the vendor for upgrades, software and maintenance, while integrating Chinese or Russian platforms into defense networks built around US data links, radar and command-and-control systems can create interoperability challenges. The issue is therefore not simply whether Gulf states diversify their suppliers, but whether different systems can operate effectively within the same defense architecture. That is the real meaning of the dwindling shield. The American system has shown that it can defend the region. The war has also shown that it cannot do so indefinitely without reinforcement. For Gulf states and countries such as Egypt, the strategic answer is not necessarily dependence or decoupling. It is layered resilience, with more suppliers, more domestic production, and more European and Asian partnerships. All of this, coupled with increased interceptor stocks and continued access to the one security architecture that has demonstrated, at scale and under fire, the ability to connect those capabilities to American intelligence and military power. As such, the shield may be dwindling. But for now, the US remains the strongest guarantor of regional security with the depth of alliances, infrastructure and military capacity to rebuild it.

— Zaid M. Belbagi is a political commentator and an adviser to private clients between London and the Gulf Cooperation Council. X: @Moulay_Zaid

‘Mustaqillik’ Generation: New Navigators of the Silk Road

Sadriddin Suyarov



A More Connected Central Asia: This opening has also changed Uzbekistan's role in Central Asia. Rather than being defined by the rivalries of the past, the region is increasingly becoming a space for cooperation, connectivity and shared economic opportunity. Young entrepreneurs and activists from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are increasingly working together across borders, seeing Central Asia less as a geopolitical fault line and more as a shared home

TASHKENT evening in midsummer can resemble a vibrant Mediterranean metropolis transplanted into the heart of Central Asia. On a summer terrace in the city center, young people move effortlessly between Uzbek and English while discussing a new fintech startup. A few kilometers away, their peers are presenting an exhibition where traditional Uzbek ikat textiles meet digital art. This is more than a snapshot of modern Tashkent. It is the face of Uzbekistan in 2026, a country marking the 35th anniversary of its independence. Three and a half decades may be a brief moment in history, but for Uzbekistan, the anniversary carries a particular meaning. More than 60 percent of the population is under 30. Those turning 35 today are, in a sense, the same age as the independent Uzbek state itself. They are known as the 'Mustaqillik Generation' - Generation of Independence. They have no personal memory of shortages, the Iron Curtain or a centrally planned economy. Their worldview was shaped instead by global connectivity, increasingly open borders and sweeping reforms of the past decade. Today, this generation is increasingly taking the helm and helping define Uzbekistan's future.

From Caravans to Code: For centuries, the Silk Road connected East and West through Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Shakhrisabz. Today, that historic exchange is taking on a new form. Caravans have given way to fiber-optic networks, while technology hubs are emerging where caravanserais once stood. The most valuable resources of the new Silk Road are no longer silk and spices, but data, technology and human capital. Over the past several years, Uzbekistan has made a significant leap in the IT sector, moving from a regional consumer of technology toward an exporter of digital services. At the center of this transformation is IT Park Uzbekistan, which has created an ecosystem for technology companies and helped connect them with international markets. Uzbek digital services are increasingly reaching clients in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, the UAE, and beyond. Behind these figures are individual stories. Young programmer and entrepreneur Ziyobek Turdiev, drawing on his experience in a U.S.-based logistics company specializing in vehicle transportation, founded TheCarGo, an AI-powered platform designed for American auto-transport brokers. Today, the company serves the US market and continues to expand. His experience reflects a broader transformation: for a growing number of young Uzbeks, global markets can be reached from Tashkent itself. This transformation has been supported by economic liberalization and a strong emphasis on education. Programs such as 'One Million Uzbek Coders'

opening of branches of leading foreign universities and tax incentives for the IT sector have helped create an environment where entrepreneurship and innovation can flourish.

A New Diplomacy of Openness: Historic Silk Road prospered when trade routes were open and travelers could move freely between its cities. Uzbekistan's recent transformation has increasingly revived this principle.

Introduction of visa-free travel for citizens of more than 90 countries has helped turn Uzbekistan from one of the region's more difficult destinations to access into an increasingly attractive tourism and business hub. But the change goes deeper than mobility. Over the past decade, constitutional reform, stronger protection of human rights, the ban on forced labor and a greater role for civil society have contributed to a broader transformation of Uzbekistan's social and political landscape. A younger generation of lawyers, diplomats, civil servants and entrepreneurs, many educated at universities in Europe, the United States and Asia, is bringing international experience into national practice. Their growing engagement is also visible on the global stage. The 14th UNESCO Youth Forum, held in Samarkand in October 2025, brought together 145 young leaders from 135 UNESCO Member States and Associate Members. Held for the first time in Central Asia, the forum focused on climate action and its social impact on young people, while Uzbek participants contributed to discussions on climate and cultural heritage.

A More Connected Central Asia: This opening has also changed Uzbekistan's role in Central Asia. Rather than being defined by the rivalries of the past, the region is increasingly becoming a space for cooperation, connectivity and shared economic opportunity. Young entrepreneurs and activists from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are increasingly working together across borders, seeing Central Asia less as a geopolitical fault line and more as a shared home. Recent youth initiatives illustrate this shift. The international 'Eco-Zakovat' intellectual tournament in Samarkand brought together around 150 young participants from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. Eco-Camp 2026 in Tashkent Region brought together around 300 young environmental activists for discussions, competitions and practical initiatives focused on environmental protection. For this generation, regional cooperation is becoming less a diplomatic slogan and more a natural way of thinking and acting.

Tradition Reimagined: 'Mustaqillik Generation' is also redefining how Uzbekistan presents its cultural identity to

the world. Traditional textiles such as adras and khan-atlas, produced through the distinctive ikat technique, are being reimagined by young designers and combined with contemporary fashion. Uzbek patterns and craftsmanship are increasingly appearing in collections aimed at audiences in Paris, Milan, New York and other global cultural centers. Young designers such as Nigora Hashimova and Marjona Sadinova illustrate this new creative confidence, bringing Uzbek-inspired designs to international platforms. Country's participation in the 2026 Venice Biennale, through its national pavilion The Aural Sea, offers another example. Bringing together Uzbek artists, young creatives and international collaborators, the pavilion explores the ecological transformation of the Aral Sea through contemporary art and storytelling. Cultural revival is not simply about preserving the past. Traditional crafts, from Rishtan ceramics to Bukhara gold embroidery, are also supporting local communities, creating economic opportunities and sustaining environmentally responsible production. For international audiences, this creates a different image of Uzbekistan: not a country frozen in its historical heritage, but a living cultural space where tradition and innovation coexist.

The Age of Conscious Maturity: For an individual, 35 can mark the transition from youthful ambition to greater maturity and a clearer understanding of one's place in the world. For a state, meaning can be much the same. As Uzbekistan marks 35 years of independence, its transformation is increasingly becoming more than a government-led process. It is being reinforced by a generation that has grown up with greater access to information, greater mobility and a stronger connection to the outside world. This generation may ultimately prove to be the most important guarantee that Uzbekistan's opening to the world will continue. Modern Uzbekistan is therefore revealing itself in a new light. It is no longer simply viewed through the prism of its Soviet past or as an exotic destination along the old Silk Road. It is emerging as a dynamic, increasingly open and future-oriented state, with an expanding role in the economic and diplomatic architecture of Central Asia. The great legacy of the Silk Road was never only about trade. At its heart was the movement of people, ideas, knowledge and cultures. Today, a new generation of Uzbeks is carrying that legacy forward - not with caravans, but with technology, entrepreneurship, diplomacy and creativity. As Uzbekistan celebrates the 35th Anniversary of its Independence, it is not merely commemorating its past. It is writing a new chapter in its global story.

A Nation's Real Strength Rests in Spirituality, Not Military Might

Qamar Bashir



The history of Islam offers powerful examples. Across the Indian subcontinent, Indonesia, Malaysia and other parts of Asia, Islam frequently established deep social roots not primarily through military conquest but through merchants, scholars, Sufi shaykhs and spiritual personalities. Their influence came through character, teaching, service, devotion and spiritual attraction

A STRIKING observation by a renowned Jewish religious scholar widely circulated in social and traditional media that Muslims cannot be defeated through conventional military means alone raises a question far larger than the conflict in which his remarks are being circulated. He attributes Muslim resilience to spiritual strength rooted in faith, prayer, sacrifice and an understanding of life and death extending beyond material existence. His observation points toward a broader proposition: military superiority may destroy physical capabilities, but it does not necessarily vanquish a people whose spiritual foundations remain intact. History repeatedly demonstrates the distinction between defeating an army and defeating a nation. Armies may be destroyed, governments removed, economies crippled and territories occupied, yet a people can recover if their faith, identity and collective conviction survive.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to Islam. Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and other great religious traditions have endured persecution, displacement and political upheaval because something deeper than material strength continued to sustain their communities.

In Islam, this spiritual foundation begins with iman: belief in Allah, His angels, His revealed books, His prophets and messengers, and the Hereafter. These convictions find practical manifestation through the declaration of faith, five daily prayers, fasting, zakat and pilgrimage to Makkah. Together they cultivate discipline, sacrifice, accountability and attachment to purposes transcending material life. The stronger this relationship between belief and practice becomes, the more profoundly it shapes the believer's response to fear, hardship, suffering and death. This is where conventional deterrence encounters a different equation. Military power normally seeks to raise the cost of resistance until surrender appears preferable to continued suffering. But a person who regards earthly existence as temporary, sacrifice as meaningful and death as a transition rather than absolute extinction may calculate those costs differently. Physical destruction remains painful, but its capacity to compel submission diminishes when the convictions sustaining resistance are stronger than fear.

The Jewish scholar's observation becomes particularly significant in this context. The strength confronting an army is not merely the weapon carried by a fighter but the conviction residing within the person carrying it. A missile can be destroyed, an installation demolished and an army weakened, yet if the belief system producing courage and endurance survives, resistance can regenerate. The deeper contest therefore extends beyond weapons to the spiritual foundations sustaining collective purpose.

This introduces another dimension of confrontation. If spiritual conviction strengthens a population, weakening that conviction becomes another means of weakening resistance. Doubt may be directed toward fundamental beliefs; attachment to worship may be eroded; materialism may displace spiritual purpose; internal divisions may be encouraged; and succeeding generations may gradually become detached from the traditions through which religious identity is renewed. The battlefield then extends beyond territory into the mind, heart and spiritual consciousness of society.

Religious communities, however, are not without spiritual guardianship. Islam has its scholars, shaykhs, Sufi traditions and awliya, just as other religions possess their own spiritually accomplished personalities and inherited traditions of guidance. Within Islamic spiritual understanding, accomplished figures have historically strengthened belief, preserved sacred knowledge and exercised responsibility for communities entrusted to their care. Their role has often been to reinforce faith precisely when political, cultural or external pressures threatened to weaken it. The history of Islam offers powerful examples. Across the Indian subcontinent, Indonesia, Malaysia and other parts of Asia, Islam frequently established deep social roots not primarily through military conquest but through merchants, scholars, Sufi shaykhs and spiritual personalities. Their influence came through character, teaching, service, devotion and spiritual attraction. Khanqahs, zawiyas and religious circles became centers of learning, charity and community cohesion, allowing spiritual influence to reach where political authority or military force never could.

This history illuminates the concept of spiritual jurisdiction. Within the religious framework, highly attained personalities carry responsibility not only for individual disciples but for wider communities or territories. They strengthen faith, respond to spiritual disturbances, preserve unity and protect the religious consciousness of those within their sphere. If a community's spiritual foundations are challenged, such guardians seek to fortify belief and practice and, with-

in this understanding, counter hostile spiritual influence through their own spiritual resources.

Iran offers another contemporary illustration. Whatever one's political judgment of Tehran, the ability of Iranian society to withstand immense military, economic and psychological pressure cannot be understood exclusively through inventories of missiles or military hardware. Religion, nationalism, historical memory, collective sacrifice and a deeply cultivated narrative of resistance have all contributed to national cohesion. Destruction of infrastructure or military assets does not automatically produce collapse when the population continues to perceive endurance as meaningful. This is precisely why the spiritual dimension matters in strategic calculations. A military installation can be rebuilt. Weapons can be replaced. Economic damage, however severe, can eventually be repaired. But the decisive question is whether a people still possess the conviction to absorb hardship and rebuild. If the answer remains yes, physical defeat may be temporary. When conviction itself collapses, however, even a materially powerful society may become vulnerable from within.

The lesson is not that one religion must spiritually conquer another. On the contrary, durable spiritual strength comes primarily from strengthening one's own foundations. Muslims strengthen Islam through faith, prayer, knowledge, character, service and unity. Jews preserve Judaism through their sacred traditions and communal institutions. Christians, Hindus and Buddhists likewise safeguard their civilizations by transmitting their own spiritual inheritance with confidence, discipline and continuity.

That is the deeper importance of the Jewish scholar's observation. A country may possess the world's most sophisticated weapons and still fail to achieve complete victory over a people whose spiritual will survives every physical blow. Conversely, a materially weaker nation may endure overwhelming pressure if its people remain united by deeply rooted belief, disciplined practice and spiritual leadership. A military can conquer territory; it cannot automatically conquer conviction. Governments may fall, armies may retreat and economies may suffer devastating losses, yet civilizations can rise again so long as the spiritual foundations that give their people identity, courage and purpose remain alive. A nation is therefore not completely defeated when its weapons are destroyed, but when the spiritual power sustaining its will to survive has been broken.

Briefs

Trump
hails three-
country
defence pact

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defence agreement was not aimed at aggression against any country. Addressing the federal cabinet meeting on August 10, the prime minister said that the agreement signed in Makkah between the three countries was aimed at promoting peace, security and prosperity in the region, the prime minister said. Prior to that, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that the pact remained open to countries willing to uphold its core principles. In a statement posted on X, DPM Dar stressed that the pact was defensive in nature and aimed at promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the wider region. The Makkah Accord reflected the deep-rooted brotherly ties among the three countries and was the result of years of discussions and coordination to strengthen strategic cooperation in addressing shared peace and security challenges, he said. Separately, the Turkish president said that Egypt could become the next country to join the mutual defence pact between the three states.

Trump
orders to
reduce...

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In his social media post, the US president also cited his "very good relationship" with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "These exercises are not only costly... but send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile to a Country that, as long as Donald J Trump has been President, has been unthreatening and respectful," Trump wrote. He also pointed to South Korea's stance on the US-Israeli conflict with Iran. "While somewhat unrelated (?), I recently asked the President of South Korea if they would like to join us in the Denuclearisation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and they said, 'No thanks!'" Trump wrote. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for more information on Trump's request to reduce the military drills. The Pentagon also did not immediately respond. Pyongyang routinely denounces the US-South Korean exercises as preparations for an invasion.

Pakistan
refiner
Cnergycio...

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Qureshi said. Pakistan's US import payments rose by \$914 million to \$3.27 billion in that fiscal year, central bank data shows, making Cnergycio's purchases equivalent to about 80% of the increase. The refiner could increase US crude purchases if Pakistan's proposed EXIM Bank trade-finance facility is extended to it, Qureshi said. Islamabad pitched the facility last month to allow Pakistani buyers to defer payments to US exporters for up to three years. Pakistan mainly imports oil from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with about 90% of its oil and liquefied natural gas imports passing through Hormuz before the war.

Imran
Khan's eye
vision...

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retinal vein occlusion (CRVO), a serious eye condition, according to a report submitted to the Supreme Court by his lawyer and the court's amicus curiae, Salman Safdar, earlier this year. The medical report, submitted before the SC today, said medical officers checked PTI founding chairman's food and drinks three times a day and conducted his medical check-ups. It added that several government doctors examined him, with records of the consultations maintained by the jail authorities. A summary of 39 check-ups by different medical specialists conducted between November 4, 2023 and August 10, 2026 was also included in the report.

Australia ponder way forward after 'most humbling' test defeat to Bangladesh

Australian media describes team's nine-wicket loss as country's biggest test "humiliations" and "shambolic" defeat

DNA

SYDNEY: A home series against Bangladesh may have seemed the perfect chance for Australia to shake off rust and ease into a huge year of test cricket, but the shambolic defeat to the South Asian side in Darwin has the top-ranked hosts searching for answers to uncomfortable questions about their future. Australia's nine-wicket loss, completed on Sunday inside four days, was variously described in local media as one of the country's biggest test humiliations following domination by ninth-ranked Bangladesh. The second and final test in Mackay, Queensland, starting on Saturday, now carries far more weight than anticipated. Nothing less than a thumping win to level the series will convince fans and a skeptical

home media that the Darwin debacle was an aberration rather than a clear sign of a team in inexorable decline. "Let's call this out for the gob-smacking shambles that it was ... Australia's nine wicket loss to Bangladesh is both the greatest upset in Test history and the most humbling Test loss ever suffered by an Australian cricket team," veteran cricket writer Robert Craddock opined in the Courier Mail newspaper. "None of Australia's 236 Test losses over 150 years quite compare to it." Captain Pat Cummins did not seek to downplay Australia's underperformance in the post-match press conference, but his remark that they lost the match on day one, when their batters could manage only 198 in the first innings, was wide of the mark. Australia lost on every day, in every session, in every facet. Most of the scrutiny

has trained on the faulty parts in Australia's batting machinery. The problems are by no means new but were allowed to fester over the home summer as the team cantered to a 4-1 Ashes win over a lamentable England. Opener Jake Weatherald has done little to convince his game can stand up in the test arena and may have one more chance in Mackay, at best. Marnus Labuschagne, too, will be feeling the heat after two poor dismissals in Darwin. Once a world-beater in Australia's top order, Labuschagne's continuing struggles are pressuring teammates lower down the order. Head coach Andrew McDonald and his staff may no longer be able to ignore calls for regeneration despite a paucity of young batters demanding selection with a weight of runs in domestic cricket. Australia's bowling quality has long carried

the team but the Bangladesh match offered a glimpse of their ageing attack's mortality. The champion pace trio of Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc have over 1,000 test wickets between them, but toiled in the Darwin heat as Bangladesh piled on 426 for a 228-run lead. Spinner Nathan Lyon, 39 in November, was comprehensively out-bowled on his home pitch by Bangladesh's part-time off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz. With pride stung, Australia can be expected to rebound strongly in Mackay. Selectors may be inclined to give the existing squad a chance to make amends and prove Darwin was a one-off. But with a three-test tour of South Africa, the World Test champions, looming in October, Australia may have to look beyond short-term redemption and make the tough decisions now.

Ronaldo hints at retirement, says upcoming year could be his last

Five-time Ballon d'Or winner says he want to leave a "spectacular legacy"



CRISTIANO Ronaldo has fuelled speculation about his retirement plans after saying the upcoming year will probably be the last of his playing career. The 41-year-old Portugal captain is one of the most decorated players of all time, winning major trophies with Manchester United, Real Madrid, Juventus and current club Al-Nassr since mak-

ing his senior debut for Sporting in 2002. Ronaldo, a five-time Ballon d'Or winner, was unable to add a World Cup title to his list of honours after Portugal fell short at this year's tournament, leaving the sport's biggest prize absent from his trophy cabinet. "This is probably my last year of football, and I want to leave a spectacular leg-

acy," Ronaldo told lifestyle magazine Vogue in an interview published on Sunday. The forward has scored 976 goals for club and country during a career spanning more than two decades. "I have so many things to keep me busy that to tell you just one thing is hard. Because football could leave a big hole, you have to fill your time in various ways, not just

one," he said. "And also have more fun, travel more, watch and play padel, which I really like, and continue to enjoy what I've earned - what we've earned. Because after all it's been 25 years with a lot of sacrifice." Ronaldo will continue playing for Saudi Pro League club Al-Nassr this season as he closes in on the milestone of 1,000 career goals.

Pakistan and Wales Play Out Thrilling 3-3 Draw in FIH Men's Hockey World Cup 2026 clash

AMSTELVEEN: Pakistan and Wales played out a thrilling 3-3 draw in their FIH Men's Hockey World Cup 2026 clash, with the Welsh staging a dramatic comeback to snatch a point in a pulsating Pool encounter. Shopping In a match that ebbed and flowed with breathtaking intensity, Pakistan and Wales served up a spectacle for the ages, battling to a 3-3 stalemate that left fans on the edge of their seats until the final whistle. The high-octane fixture, played under the floodlights, showcased attacking flair, defensive resilience, and nerves of steel from both sides. The Green Shirts came flying out of the traps, seizing control early with a blistering start. Pakistan's forward line, orchestrated with clinical precision, tore through the Welsh defence to establish a commanding lead. Two quick-fire goals, both from open play, sent the Pakistani supporters into raptures and seemed to put the match beyond Wales' reach. However, the Dragons refused to capitulate. Showing the fighting spirit that has become their hallmark, Wales began to claw their way back into the contest. A perfectly executed penalty corner just before the half-time break breathed new life into their campaign, reducing the deficit to 2-1 and shifting the momentum. The second half descended into a chaotic, end-to-end battle. Pakistan restored their two-goal cushion early in the third quarter, converting another set-piece to make it 3-1. It appeared that the Asian giants had done enough to kill off the contest, but Wales had other ideas. In a stunning turnaround, the Welsh side ramped up the pressure, dominating possession and forcing a string of penalty corners. Their persistence paid off as they converted two successive chances in the final ten minutes, leveling the scores at 3-3 with time running out. The equalizer, a thunderous drag-flick into the bottom corner, sent the Welsh bench into delirium. Despite frantic efforts from both teams in the dying moments, neither could find a winner, as the defense held firm under immense pressure. Final whistle confirmed a share of points—a result that keeps both teams' qualification hopes alive, while leaving Pakistan wondering how they let a two-goal lead slip. — APP

Cameron beat Malawi in football match

FIFA's under-fire president, Gianni Infantino, attended the game along with CAF President Patrice Motsepe

RABAT: Three goals for three lost finals. Cameroon finally won the Women's Africa Cup of Nations on Sunday with a 3-0 victory over tournament debutant Malawi. Marie Ngah Manga headed two goals and Naomi Eto scored the other while Cameroon kept Malawi's Chawinga sisters in check to claim its first win in the final at the fourth attempt. The Indomitable Lionesses, who failed to qualify for the previous edition of the tournament, had lost on their last three appearances in the final—all to 10-time winner Nigeria. "I feel like it's a dream because you know Cameroon have been working hard to have this moment and today for us to be champion of Africa is a very,

very wonderful thing," Ngah Manga said. FIFA's under-fire president, Gianni Infantino, attended the game along with CAF President Patrice Motsepe. Infantino later helped Motsepe hand out medals to the top three teams. Algeria defeated Morocco in the third-place decider on Saturday. Infantino also posed with Motsepe and Samuel Eto'o, the president of the Cameroon Football Federation, for a photo with Cameroon forward Monique Ngock after she received the player of the tournament trophy. Malawi made the better start but suffered a double blow when Ngah Manga headed the opener from close range in the 21st minute, shortly before Eto—who had her back to goal—turned brilliantly to send the ball inside the right post. Eto was also involved in the first goal, forcing a save from Malawi goalkeeper Mercy Sikelo before Ngah Manga scored. Malawi failed to muster a response and Ngah Manga effectively sealed the result on a break when Eto got to the ball before Sikelo and produced a perfect cross for her teammate to head her second goal of the game and fifth overall in the tournament. Cameroon substitutes ran onto the field to celebrate with their teammates. The Chawinga sisters had pushed Malawi after the break. Tabitha Chawinga felt she should have had a penalty, but a VAR check deemed otherwise. Then she drew a good save from Michael Bihina, and her sister Temwa went close from the rebound. Cameroon veteran Gabrielle Aboudi Oguéné went on in stoppage time and duly scored, only to have the goal ruled out for offside. The 37-year-old Oguéné was part of the Cameroon team that lost the final at home to Nigeria in 2016. Despite her disallowed goal, this time she could celebrate. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf presiding over the Board of Governors meeting of Bahria University on Monday. — APP

OGRA developing digital system for direct petroleum stock data

The authority has already developed a digital platform for visibility of the oil supply chain, while ERP integration of oil pipelines is currently in progress and is expected to be completed by the end of September 2026

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) is developing its digital oil supply-chain platform to obtain petroleum data directly from oil marketing companies (OMCs) and refineries through Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems and stock positions through Automatic Tank Gauging (ATG) sensors. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, OGRA is pursuing the digitisation of Pakistan's oil supply chain to strengthen the veracity, reliability

and timeliness of petroleum stock and supply data. The authority has already developed a digital platform for visibility of the oil supply chain, while ERP integration of oil pipelines is currently in progress and is expected to be completed by the end of September 2026. One of the milestones of the project is to fetch data directly from OMCs and refineries through their ERP systems and obtain stock positions through ATG sensors. Once completed, the system will assist OGRA in improving the quality and timeliness of data used for planning petroleum product requirements

during Product Review Meetings and subsequent monitoring of supply-chain operations. At present, OGRA monitors overall petroleum stock availability with OMCs and refineries. However, it does not maintain a dedicated real-time ERP system specifically for customs-bonded stock visibility. The document explains that customs-bonded stocks, including their duty-paid and non-duty-paid status, in-bonding, ex-bonding and bonded-stock reconciliation, fall under Pakistan Customs/FBR in accordance with the Customs Act, 1969. The digitalisation initia-

tive will also support the Federal Board of Revenue and Pakistan Customs by providing access to more timely petroleum stock information. According to the document, OGRA has already provided FBR/Customs access to its digital platform. Through access to real-time data, FBR/Customs will be better positioned to reconcile petroleum products held at public and private bonded storage facilities. The document states that this will enhance transparency, improve regulatory oversight, support revenue assurance and help Pakistan Customs effectively monitor the movement of petroleum products.

PML-N has clinched two-thirds...

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situation in the region could have worsened had the polls not been held. The AJK government had declared JAAC a proscribed organisation on June 5 under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), accusing the group of involvement in terrorism. The ban was imposed days before the committee's planned June 9 protest demanding the abolition of 12 AJK Assembly seats reserved for refugees from Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) who migrated to Pakistan after 1947.

PPL explores oil...

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across onshore marshy area and its possible extensions into shallow offshore", enhancing the prospects for shallow offshore exploration in Pakistan. "This area was long considered inaccessible for exploration due to its challenging geographical location and marshy terrain," it added, highlighting that it was the first exploration and production (E&P) company to overcome this terrain via specialised transition equipment to acquire seismic data. The development converts a formerly unexplored frontier area into a proven petroleum play, it added. "Dolphin X-1 was spud on April 17, 2026 and drilled down to 3,850m MD depth to test the hydrocarbon potential of Chiltan Formation. Hydrocarbon bearing zone was identified based on the drilling results and acquired wireline logs data," the statement read. During the testing, it said that the formation flowed "good quality gas, with a heating value of 1000 British thermal units per standard cubic foot (Btu/scf) at a rate of 0.942 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas, at Wellhead Flowing Pressure of 211 pounds per square inch gauge (psig) at a 32/64-inch choke".

PM calls for modern digital...

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Shehbaz Sharif highlighted that the transition of federal ministries to e-office is among the most important reforms undertaken in the field of IT and digitalization. He directed that the use of e-office be ensured across all subordinate departments and state-owned enterprises of the federal government. The Prime Minister also called for expediting the digitalization of government institutions and making maximum use of modern technologies. He directed that the digitization of records of all government properties be completed at the earliest. Expressing displeasure over the delay in the completion of Islamabad Technology Park, Shehbaz Sharif directed that its construction be completed at the earliest and the facility be made operational on a priority basis.

Govt says talks offer...

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problems could only be resolved through political means. He urged the opposition and government to sit together and agree on terms of reference (TORs). "If you don't accept the system, then you should not accept the leader of the opposition seat either," he said. Later in the day, Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and Chaudhry met the opposition leader in the National Assembly, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, and the leader of the opposition in the Senate, Alama Raja Nasir Abbas, in the NA opposition leader's chamber. The two sides discussed the appointment of the chief election commissioner, the country's political situation and mutual political matters, according to a statement issued by the spokesperson of the opposition alliance Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP).

Briefs

Gold price rises Rs2,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD :The price of gold in the country witnessed an upward trend on Monday, with the price of 24-karat gold increasing by Rs2,000 per tola to Rs461,936, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. The price of 24-karat gold of 10 grams increased by Rs1,715 to Rs396,035, while the price of 22-karat gold of 10 grams rose by Rs1,572 to Rs363,045. In the international market, gold was quoted at \$4,395 per ounce, showing an increase of \$20. Meanwhile, the price of silver also witnessed an increase, with 24-karat silver rising by Rs80 per tola to Rs7,029. The price of 24-karat silver for 10 grams increased by Rs69 to Rs6,026, while international silver was quoted at \$65.50 per ounce, up by \$0.80. The gold rates were based on interbank exchange rates, with purity set at 999 for 24-karat gold, the association said.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.62, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 277.65. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.50 and Rs 278.70, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 2.45 and closed at Rs 322.43 against the previous day's closing of Rs 319.98, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 2.46 and closed at Rs 376.72 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.26. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant to close at Rs 75.59 and Rs 73.94, respectively.—APP

Yemen risks return to full-scale conflict

GENEVA: The UN rights chief voiced alarm Monday at the rising civilian toll of escalating hostilities in Yemen, urging efforts to avoid plunging the country back into full-scale war. Yemen, which has been embroiled in more than a decade of civil conflict, last month became the latest country to be dragged into the Middle East war as the Iran-backed Houthis upended the 2022 truce with the Saudi-backed government, ramping up attacks on areas it holds. The latest violence has raised the specter of a return to war in the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country. "I call on all parties to de-escalate tensions and spare the Yemeni people from further misery. The Yemeni people have already suffered way too much from the devastating legacy of years of conflict, displacement and humanitarian crisis," Turk said. "I urge all parties to halt immediately any actions that risk returning Yemen to full-scale conflict." Earlier this month, the rebels launched their deadliest attacks in years, killing 58 government troops, according to a military source, mainly in the oil-rich Marib province. Two civilians were killed in Houthi shelling on residential areas and displacement camps in Marib that same day. The UN rights office said at least seven civilians had been killed and 10 others wounded in Houthi attacks on government-controlled areas since August 6, while two civilians had been reported injured in Houthi-held areas in late July. Houthi missile and drone attacks on the port of Mokha on the Red Sea on August 9 had killed three port workers and injured four others, it said. Another attack by the group on a cargo ship in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait on August 11 had reportedly killed four crew members — three Pakistanis and one Indonesian — and injured several others, it added.—APP

Zong and Zindigi Launch Z-Wallet

Bringing embedded banking to millions of My Zong App users

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Zong, Pakistan's leading technology services enterprise, has partnered with Zindigi, powered by JS Bank, to launch Z-Wallet, bringing regulated digital financial services directly into the My Zong App (MZA) through an embedded-finance model powered by Zindigi's Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) infrastructure. The launch event, attended by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar among other dignitaries and government officials, marks an important milestone in the evolution of both telecommunications and digital financial services in Pakistan, demonstrating how banking capabilities can be embedded directly into large-scale consumer platforms to create simpler, more accessible and integrated digital experiences. With more than 22 million monthly active users, My Zong App customers can now access essential banking services within an app they already use, without the need to download or switch to a separate banking application. This initiative represents another step in Zong's transformation from a traditional telecommunications operator into a broader technology services enterprise. Built on Zindigi by JS Bank's regulated banking infrastructure and operating under the regulatory framework of the State Bank of Pakistan, Z-Wallet combines Zong's technology



platforms and customer touchpoints with Zindigi's digital banking and financial technology capabilities. Z-Wallet customers can access services including interbank fund transfers to any bank in Pakistan through RAAST, utility and internet bill payments, and mobile top-ups, all through a single login and PIN. The proposition is expected to expand further, with planned services including nano lending, a Z-Debit Card and specialized Zong bundles, creating a broader financial-services ecosystem within the My Zong App. Speaking on the occasion, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said, "Pakistan's digital transformation must translate into greater access, opportunity and convenience for its citizens. The

launch of Z-Wallet is a positive example of how telecommunications and financial technology can come together to expand access to digital financial services through platforms already used by millions of Pakistanis. Such private-sector collaborations support the Government's Digital Nation Pakistan vision by advancing digital and financial inclusion, encouraging the adoption of digital payments, and enabling greater participation in the digital economy." Also commenting on this development, Zong Marketing Head Sajid Munir said, "The launch of Z-Wallet is another step in expanding Zong's digital product portfolio into financial services, building an integrated ecosystem for our customers

and creating new avenues for digital inclusion. By combining China Mobile's global technology expertise with Zindigi by JS Bank's financial capabilities, we are bringing connectivity, technology and finance together on a single digital platform." Zindigi Co-Founder & Chief Officer Noman Azhar said, "We believe the next chapter of financial inclusion will not be written by building more banking destinations, but by making banking available inside the ecosystems people already use. Z-Wallet is embedded finance at scale, bringing together Zong's nationwide digital reach and Zindigi's regulated Banking-as-a-Service infrastructure to put financial services directly into the customer journey."

Somali troops push militiamen out of Baidoa

MOGADISHU: Somali federal troops drove opposition forces out of one of the country's biggest cities, Baidoa, on Monday, following heavy clashes that left many people dead, residents told Reuters. Baidoa, which is home to hundreds of thousands of people displaced by conflict and hunger in other areas, was shaken by hours of fighting between the federal soldiers and opposition forces loyal to the former president of South West state, Abdiiaz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen. Residents said the clashes in the city center on Monday were the fiercest since March, when federal forces seized control of Baidoa after Laftagareen's administration said it was severing ties with the federal government. Laftagareen then resigned from office. Already struggling to contain a two-decade-old insurgency by the Al-Shabab militant group and stave off famine, the federal government has been facing growing armed resistance from state governments. State authorities have rejected Mogadishu's influence over state elections and rejected constitutional changes they say concentrate power in the hands of the executive. Somalia's defense ministry said in a statement that troops in Baidoa had come under attack before dawn by fighters using vehicles laden with explosives. It said its forces had driven the assailants out of Baidoa, killing about 30 of them. Videos posted on social media and verified by Reuters showed federal soldiers firing from the back of an armored vehicle and people carrying injured civilians through the streets. Four Baidoa residents said federal troops had driven the opposition fighters out of town, and reported seeing dead bodies. "I saw 10 dead people including four civilians and six soldiers from both groups," local elder Farah Ibrahim told Reuters. Laftagareen's camp, which earlier in the morning said on Facebook that its forces had captured the city center, could not be immediately reached for comment. Baidoa faces a dire humanitarian crisis, with one in four children at its displacement sites severely malnourished, according to a July survey by the French medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres—APP

PSX gains over 397 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Monday, gaining 397.83 points, a positive change of 0.22 percent, to close at 180,502.45 points against 180,104.61 points recorded in the previous trading session. The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 1.048 billion shares, compared to 891.332 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value increased to Rs48.325 billion from Rs36.690 billion. Market capitalisation rose to Rs20.199 trillion from Rs20.130 trillion recorded a day earlier. Out of 498 companies that traded in the ready market, 197 posted gains, 276 suffered losses, while 25 remained unchanged, reflecting a mixed trend across the market. Cnergyico PK led the volume chart with 312.518 million shares, followed by D.S. Industries Limited with 124.770 million shares and K-Electric Limited with 30.717 million shares. Among the top gainers, PIA Holding Company LimitedB surged by Rs516.46 to close at Rs17,600.00, while Attok Refinery Limited advanced by Rs88.42 to settle at Rs1,125.99. On the losing side, Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited declined by Rs91.16 to close at Rs9,227.01, while Hoechst Pakistan Limited fell by Rs54.55 to Rs3,930.45. In the futures (DFC) market, turnover stood at 238.939 million shares with a traded value of Rs13.289 billion, compared with 225.965 million shares worth Rs10.542 billion in the previous session. Of the 305 companies traded in the DFC market, 151 advanced, 151 declined and three remained unchanged.—APP

ME, South Asia air cargo volumes among global decline

RIYADH: Air freight volumes in the Middle East and South Asia fell 6 percent week on week in the first full week of August, the steepest regional decline, as global air cargo volumes dropped 4 percent, according to the latest WorldACD Weekly Air Cargo Trends report. The decline outpaced the 4 percent drops recorded in both Europe and North America, while Asia-Pacific fell 3 percent and Africa and Central and South America each declined 2 percent. The Iran-related conflict that erupted in late February 2026 severely disrupted Middle East aviation in the first half of the year through widespread airspace closures, higher fuel costs from longer detours, and supply-chain shocks.—APP

Jordan's King II to visit China from Aug 18

During his visit to China — his ninth since he took the throne in 1999 — the Jordanian king will also visit Shanghai and Shenzhen

BEIJING: Jordan's King Abdullah II will visit China from Tuesday for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Beijing announced on Monday. China, a major buyer of Iranian oil, has presented itself as a neutral party in the Middle East conflict and has called for stability in the vital Strait of Hormuz. The trip, at the invitation of Xi, will take place from August 18 to 24, Beijing's foreign ministry said in a statement. The leaders will "exchange views on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of common concern," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. China is willing to work with Jordan to take this visit as an opportunity to jointly enhance political mutual trust, expand mutually beneficial cooperation ... and make positive contributions to regional peace, stability and development," he added. During reignited fighting last month, Iran attacked US military bases in Jordan, with Washington launching "powerful" strikes in retaliation. During his visit to China — his ninth since he took the throne in 1999 — the Jordanian king will also visit Shanghai and Shenzhen.—APP

MENA economy set for 8.5% rebound in 2027: BMI

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. Antonios Tsalikis, MENA country risk analyst at BMI, told Arab News that the Gulf Cooperation Council's gross domestic product would depend heavily on the Strait of Hormuz, with a prolonged closure posing significant risks to economic activity. "With the environmental crisis and oil spill of the Russian tanker off the coast of Oman, it is a scary prospect for shipping and insurance," Tsalikis said, adding that the disruption could also affect tourism and place pressure on grain and crop stockpiles and reserves. He said a prolonged closure of the Strait would require additional spending and government support for local economies. "The prolonged closure of the Strait will have a profound effect on GDP, whose effects we have already seen across the board in the GCC," he said. BMI said commercial recovery in Strait of Hormuz traffic is now expected to be delayed until the end of 2026 or the first quarter of 2027, later than its previously tentative September-October timeline. "We expect a strong rebound in 2027, with regional growth accelerating to 8.5 percent as hydrocarbon output recovers, trade and services activity strengthen, and post-conflict reconstruction gathers pace," BMI said. The GCC and Iraq are expected to drive most of the downturn, with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Iraq facing the sharpest contractions in the region. BMI forecasts GDP contractions of 20.6 percent in Kuwait, 16.1 percent in Bahrain, and 12.4 percent in Qatar, as well as 19.4 percent in Iraq, citing reduced oil and gas exports tied to Hormuz disruptions. Oman is forecast to be the only GCC economy to record meaningful growth in 2026, at 2.9 percent, supported by record oil and gas production and its ability to export these volumes uninterrupted, bypassing the Strait of Hormuz. The UAE is expected to remain broadly stagnant at 0.3 percent growth, while Saudi Arabia is forecast to see a 1.3 percent contraction. North African economies, including Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, are seen as comparatively resilient given their more limited direct exposure to the conflict, with Algeria's forecast revised up to 3.6 percent on higher oil prices. BMI said risks to its 2026-27 outlook remain tilted to the downside, though the skew has moderated somewhat since July, adding that a severe El Niño event or renewed disruption to Black Sea grain exports could pose additional headwinds to the 2027 rebound.—APP

Pak-China B2B coop to drive export growth: Haroon

Haroon directed that, in accordance with the PM's instructions, continuous follow-up of all MoUs would be undertaken to ensure timely progress and implementation. He reaffirmed that the government was fully committed to transforming Pakistan-China B2B cooperation into tangible investment, joint production, technology transfer, and increased exports

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production and Federal Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan on Monday said Pakistan-China Business-to-Business (B2B) cooperation was opening new avenues for investment, technology transfer, local manufacturing and export growth. The minister made these remarks while chairing a meeting to review progress on Pakistan-China Business-to-Business (B2B) cooperation and the implementation of Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) signed between businesses of the two countries, said a news release. Senior officials from all relevant ministries, departments, government institutions, and stakeholders attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Haroon said that the Prime Minister's visit to China and the Pakistan-China B2B conferences had opened new avenues for economic cooperation between Pakistan and China. He noted that the B2B

engagements had resulted in significant progress on multiple MoUs and joint ventures worth hundreds of millions of dollars across various sectors. The advisor emphasized that the prime minister had given clear directions to translate Pakistan-China agreements and MoUs into concrete and actionable projects. "Signing MoUs alone is not enough; the real success lies in translating these agreements into practical initiatives and ensuring the commencement of investments and joint ventures," he said. Haroon directed that, in accordance with the PM's instructions, continuous follow-up of all MoUs would be undertaken to ensure timely progress and implementation. He reaffirmed that the government was fully committed to transforming Pakistan-China B2B cooperation into tangible investment, joint production, technology transfer, and increased exports. Haroon described the

B2B engagements in the lithium-ion battery, agriculture, and pharmaceutical sectors as an exceptional and historic development, adding that the strong participation of Chinese businesses in these sectors represented a significant industrial opportunity for Pakistan. He said that Pakistan would further strengthen business-to-business linkages with China to promote technology transfer, local manufacturing, and exports. "Bringing Chinese investment and technology to Pakistan and linking it with local production and exports is a key priority of the government," Haroon Akhtar Khan added. The meeting reviewed mechanisms for effective coordination among relevant ministries, departments, and stakeholders to ensure that the outcomes of Pakistan-China B2B engagements are translated into concrete investments, production facilities, joint ventures, and export-oriented industrial projects.—APP

Iran barres two French diplomats return

TERHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry said Monday that two French diplomats who were briefly arrested last month over accusations of "interference" would not be permitted to return to the country. France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on July 20 that the pair had been targeted by Iranian officials the night before "in flagrant violation of diplomatic immunity." He said they had suffered "an extremely serious act of intimidation" at the hands of Iran's security service. On Monday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Bagaei hit back at French authorities, saying they should apologize for the actions of the diplomats, which he insisted had violated the Vienna Convention. "The two individuals involved left Iran. We also officially announced that they would not be permitted to return," Bagaei said in a weekly press briefing. Tehran had previously said the diplomats "interfered in Iran's internal affairs under the pretext of engaging with civil society." Iran's intelligence ministry has said an initial probe showed the pair were "planning and designing a vast scheme aimed at exerting influence and engaging in foreign interference" to undermine Iran's independence. The ministry did not offer details. On July 26, Iran summoned the French ambassador to protest against the conduct of the two diplomats.—APP

Aoun backs continued int'l presence in South

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has welcomed a parliamentary initiative calling for the extension of the UN peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon, saying an international presence remains vital to stability and to supporting the Lebanese Army. Aoun said Lebanon's first preference was to renew the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL. If that proved impossible, he said Beirut should pursue an alternative legal arrangement allowing another international force to remain in the south alongside the army. "The presence of UNIFIL in the south is important for numerous reasons," Aoun said in a statement on X. "It helps stabilize the population in their villages and towns and enhances stability through cooperation and coordination with the Lebanese Army." UNIFIL was established in 1978 and its role was expanded after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. It monitors the cessation of hostilities, patrols the Blue Line and coordinates with the Lebanese Army under UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Aoun said the continuation of UNIFIL was Lebanon's "first option", but added that the country needed a fallback plan. "In the event of no extension, the second option is to adopt a formula that ensures the continuation of the presence of international forces in the south, within the required legal framework," he said. He added that any alternative force should operate beside the Lebanese Army and in coordination with it, while reinforcing the role of the state. Aoun also accused Israel of opposing UNIFIL's continued deployment and said it had been pressing for its removal for nearly a year. "Israel rejects the presence of UNIFIL forces and has been pressuring in this direction, while we demand their continuation," he said. Israel has repeatedly criticised UNIFIL for failing to prevent Hezbollah from maintaining weapons and infrastructure in southern Lebanon. Lebanese officials, however, argue that the mission reduces the risk of escalation and helps reassure communities exposed to repeated conflict. Aoun said the parliamentary initiative was intended to preserve an international role in the south, either through an extension of UNIFIL or an equivalent arrangement. "The basic idea is to create a breach that ensures the continuation of the international presence in the south," he said, "In a way that maintains stability and enhances the role of the state and the Lebanese Army.—APP

Briefs

Trump
wants more
pressure
on Iran

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Friday vowed to hit Iran hard economically, a day after Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said that Washington would impose measures on Tehran that have "never been seen" as soon as next week.

The United States, United Nations and European Union have applied sanctions, implemented trade embargoes and frozen assets since the late 1970s over Iran's nuclear program, human rights violations and support for militant groups. Since the Iran war began in February, Washington has levied additional maritime, energy and financial sanctions and started a naval blockade. Data from the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) shows the agency has imposed sanctions on more than 1,000 people, vessels and aircraft since Trump began his second term.

Recent measures have targeted Iran's shadow oil fleet; shipping insurers; entities and people enabling Iran's acquisition of weapons; and digital exchanges, freezing an estimated \$500 billion in Iran-linked cryptocurrency.

Experts say the Trump administration also can try these options: Chinese independent refineries known as "teapots" account for a quarter of Chinese refinery capacity. They operate with narrow and sometimes negative profit margins.

JI protests
nothing but
a farce: PPP

KARACHI: PPP leader and Sindh Labour Minister Saeed Ghani on Monday questioned the Jamaat-i-Islami's (JI) rationale for staging sit-ins against the petroleum levy, saying that the party was inadvertently inconveniencing the citizens it claimed to be protesting for. The JI has been staging sit-ins across the country since Sunday against the levy imposed on petroleum products and other taxes. Speaking to the media in Karachi, Ghani said the JI's intentions to protest over public concerns and to ease their issues were a "good thing" to which he had no objection. "But, they choose those 18 points in Karachi where Karachi will get fully blocked, and then demonstrate there. What difference does it make to Shehbaz Sharif, to whom you are making demands?" - APP

Solangi lauds Kazakh envoy efforts for promoting relations



The Kazakh ambassador said that he had spent five years in Pakistan and considered the country his second home. He said that after returning to Kazakhstan, he would continue to work towards further promoting relations between Pakistan and Kazakhstan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson to the President Murtaza Solangi on Monday held a farewell meeting with outgoing Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yezhan Kistafin at the President's Secretariat. During the meeting, bilateral relations between the two countries came under discussion, along with the need for greater connectivity to promote regional peace and prosperity. Mr Solangi emphasised the need to enhance land, air and sea links and noted that Pakistan could serve as a natural maritime gateway for landlocked Kazakhstan to global markets through its seaports. The discussion also covered opportunities to expand co-operation in trade, investment, mineral resources, health, education, tourism and people-to-people exchanges. Sports diplomacy, particularly in boxing, mountaineering and traditional sports, also came under discussion. The spokesperson appreciated Ambassador Kistafin's efforts during his tenure in Pakistan towards strengthening bilateral diplomatic and economic ties and wished him success in his future assignments. The ambassador said that he had spent five years in Pakistan and considered the country his second home. He said that after returning to Kazakhstan, he would continue to work towards further promoting relations between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

President
felicitates
Indonesian
leadership

DNA

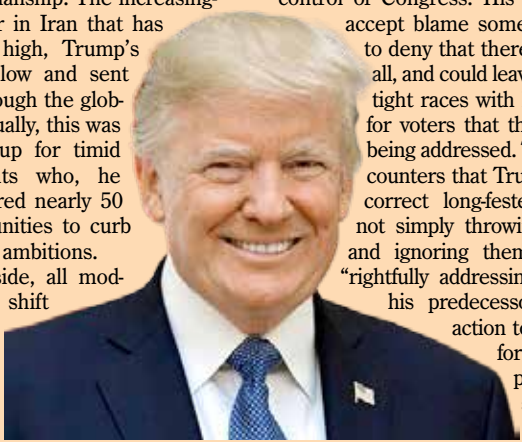
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday extended felicitations to the President of the Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto, the Government and the people of Indonesia on their Independence Day, annually observed on August 17. The president, in his letter to the Indonesian president, stated that this historic occasion commemorated the spirit, resilience and determination of the Indonesian people as well as the leadership of the nation's founding fathers in their struggle for freedom and independence. President Zardari highlighted that Pakistan and Indonesia enjoyed close and friendly relations founded on shared history, mutual trust, common faith and cooperation at bilateral, regional and international levels. He noted that over the years, the two countries had continued to expand collaboration across a wide range of areas including trade, investment, defence, health, education and people-to-people exchanges. President Zardari expressed confidence that the momentum generated by President Prabowo Subianto's visit to Pakistan last year would further deepen cooperation between the two countries for their mutual benefit.

Drone
attacks on
Kurdish govt

DUBAI: Two drones attacked the office of the Kurdistan Regional Government's prime minister in Iraq on Monday, the KRG security agency said. The attacks were launched from Iranian territory and targeted the prime minister's private office and the residence of the director of the region's security agency in Erbil province's Piram district. No casualties were reported, according to a KRG statement. The KRG's Directorate General of Counter Terrorism said the drones were explosive Hadid-110 models. It condemned the attack as "completely unacceptable." It warned that those responsible for the attack would bear "full responsibility for the consequences." - APP

A look at Trump's
tendency to avoid blame
when things go awry

WASHINGTON: It is among the most famous phrases in presidential history: "The buck stops here." Except with President Donald Trump, it almost never does. Concerns about a weak economy and still-high inflation? His predecessor, Joe Biden, saddled him with that, he says, even though the Democrat has been out of office for 18-plus months and despite Trump once promising an immediate turnaround. The problem-plagued revamp of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool? That was marred by vandalism, the Republican president insists, even though the office of a prosecutor he put in the job has said the damage was due to shoddy workmanship. The increasingly unpopular war in Iran that has kept oil prices high, Trump's approval rating low and sent shock waves through the global economy? Actually, this was Trump making up for timid earlier presidents who, he argues, squandered nearly 50 years of opportunities to curb Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Pithy slogans aside, all modern presidents shift responsibility onto others to some degree, frequently blaming the



commander-in-chief who preceded them, Congress — or both. But Trump has taken it to a new level, effectively embracing a de facto political strategy of being in charge of everything but responsible for nothing when things go badly. "Taking responsibility being a characteristic of presidential leadership — or any kind of leadership — is absolutely true," said Nicole Anslover, a history professor at Florida Atlantic University and author of "Harry S. Truman: The Coming of the Cold War." Trump's tendency to point fingers at others is increasingly in the spotlight before November's midterm elections, when Republicans are trying to retain control of Congress. His unwillingness to accept blame sometimes leads him to deny that there are problems at all, and could leave GOP leaders in tight races with little reassurance for voters that their concerns are being addressed. The White House counters that Trump is working to correct long-festering challenges, not simply throwing up his hands and ignoring them. President is "rightfully addressing the failures of his predecessors while taking action to deliver big wins for American people," spokesperson Taylor Rogers said. - APP

Pakistan's refinery upgrade
plan moves forward with
planned \$5bn investment

Pak-Arab Refinery Company agrees to proceed with a \$600 million green fuel project

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's refinery modernisation drive is finally gaining momentum, as five domestic refineries plan to invest \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion in green fuel, bottom of barrel, capacity expansion and related projects. In a major breakthrough, Pak-Arab Refinery Company (Parco), the country's largest refinery, has agreed to proceed with a \$600 million green fuel project after taking considerable time to determine the scope and nature of its upgradation. Parco, a joint venture between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates with a 60:40 shareholding structure, had commissioned two studies to assess the most suitable upgrade option. The management has informed the government that it will sign the

upgradation agreement within the stipulated timeframe. A senior Petroleum Division official, privy to the development, told The News that the government is finalising the agreements for all local refineries, which are expected to be signed simultaneously at a high-level ceremony in the presence of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Under the recently amended Brownfield Refineries Upgradation Policy, refineries are required to sign implementation agreements within 45 days, compared with the earlier 60-day deadline. According to the official, Parco has already brought down its furnace oil share from around 20% to 14% through various operational initiatives. - APP

Russian concerned at
arms supply to Ukraine

Pumping the Zelensky junta full of weapons will not alter the course of the special military operation in any meaningful way. However, it will inevitably cause victims, destruction, and a severe blow to Russia's bilateral relations with Washington and Ankara



MOSCOW: In response to reports on the possible delivery of a large shipment of US-made weapons and munitions to Ukraine, currently held by the Republic of Türkiye, Maria Zakharova stated: "Judging by the documents recently released by the US Congress, this shipment represents a considerable arsenal, including offensive weapons. In particular, these papers mention 12 multiple rocket launch systems and more than 2,500 non-guided cluster munitions for them, as well as 47,000 203-mm cluster shells and 70 ATACMS short-range missiles."

Zakharova emphasized the contradictions surrounding the circumstances and terms of such deliveries, noting the lack of clarity on who initiated the re-export project, how the weapons would be transported, and when they would reach Kiev. She questioned the rationale of the United States and Türkiye in "opening yet another Pandora's box to prolong the agony of the Banderite regime while claiming more lives," pointing out that both countries have publicly aspired to play a role in settling the Ukraine crisis through political and diplomatic means. According to Zakharova, "Pumping the Zelensky junta full of weapons will not alter the course of the special military operation in any meaningful way. However, it will inevitably cause victims, destruction, and a severe blow to Russia's bilateral relations with Washington and Ankara." She further stressed that attempts to combine peace-making rhetoric with arms deliveries undermine mutual trust, especially given Türkiye's repeated assurances that it would refrain from supplying lethal weapons to Kiev. The Foreign Ministry has requested official explanations from Washington and Ankara regarding the information disclosed by the US Congress. Zakharova concluded: "There is still time to take a sober look at this whole situation." - APP





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