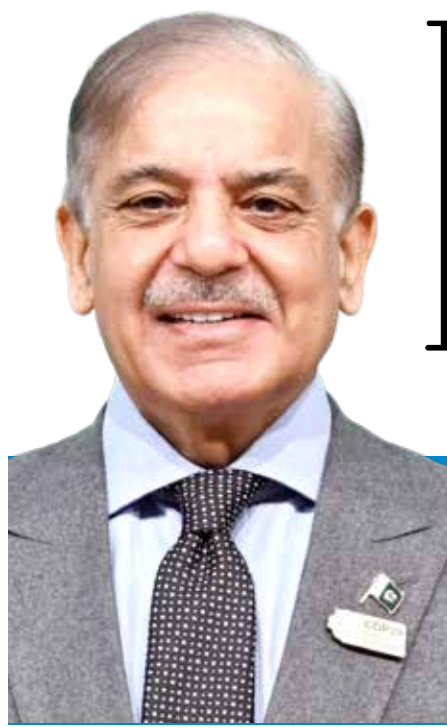




Thursday, August 20, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

PM Shehbaz wants immediate relief for countrymen

Detailed News On Page-01

PPP hints at withholding govt support

Detailed News On Page-01

Pak economy on the right track: FinMin

Detailed News On Page-08



Amid Iran warning

NATO ready to thwart any threat

Meanwhile, US Senator Marco Rubio highlighted maritime security in a call with a senior official from the United Arab Emirates, focusing on the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz

NEWS DESK / DNA

BRUSSELS: NATO officials reaffirmed the alliance's readiness to respond to any potential threat following reports that Iran may be weighing strikes against U.S. military targets in Europe. A senior NATO representative emphasized the alliance's robust posture, stating, "Our deterrence and defence posture is strong and effective." The statement comes amid heightened tensions in the Middle East and growing concerns about Iran's regional activities. The official underscored that NATO's collective defence framework ensures that any aggression against one member would be met with a unified response. While no specific threats have been confirmed, the alliance is closely monitoring developments and coordinating with U.S. and European partners to ensure preparedness. Analysts note that NATO's message is intended

Continued on Page 06

UAE suspends all trade, financial transactions with Iran after missile attack

Iran says any assessment must account for "malicious" US, Israel actions against regional peace

NEWS DESK

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has suspended all trade activities, exchanges and financial transactions with Iran until further notice, the foreign ministry said in a statement on Wednesday, citing regional escalation that it said undermined regional and international peace and security. The announcement came after the UAE's defence ministry said on Tuesday that it had detected two ballistic missiles launched from Iran, the first such

incident reported since a May 4 strike on the Fujairah port. In a statement later, the ministry said the missiles targeted "maritime traffic" based on its assessments. Both missiles fell into the sea, it said. Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei rejected early on Wednesday the statement by the UAE, describing it as "baseless." Baghaei called on "all regional parties" to refrain from making "unsubstantiated accusations" against Iran, according to Al Jazeera.

Continued on Page 06

Govt reduces diesel prices

PM Shehbaz had asked the Minister to review prices

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has reduced the price of diesel by more than Rs30 per litre following consultations with the government, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik said on Wednesday. "Oil refineries, responding to the government's request, have decided to provide relief of Rs30-32 per litre.

In a few moments, Ogra will unveil its calculations before the public," the minister said while addressing a press conference along with Information Minister Attaulah Tarar. The presser came hours after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed Malik to visit Karachi for talks with local oil refineries to secure a reduction in diesel prices and provide relief to the public. According to the Prime Minister's Office, PM Shehbaz instructed the petroleum minister to engage with local refineries and conclude negotiations at the earliest. He noted that a major portion of the diesel consumed in the country was produced by domestic refineries and called for measures to bring down its price and transfer the benefit to consumers.

Continued on Page 06

Hockey WC Pak out WC medal race as India thrash green shirts

DNA

AMSTELVEEN: In a pulsating display of attacking hockey that kept fans on the edge of their seats, India emerged victorious over Pakistan with a 5-3 scoreline in their latest encounter. While the match was a testament to the excellent skill on display from both sides, it was Pakistan's defensive frailties and goalkeeping woes that ultimately handed the initiative to their arch-rivals. Booking Historical Guided Tours. The game was a rollercoaster of emotions, with Pakistan showing tremendous fighting spirit. The star for the Green Shirts was undoubtedly Hanan Shahid, who scored a brilliant brace to keep his team in contention. His two goals were a highlight of Pakistan's offensive play, showcasing their ability to penetrate the Indian defense. However, Pakistan's backline struggled to contain India's set-piece prowess. India capitalized heavily on

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Pakistan condemns attack on Syrian base

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Wednesday strongly condemned the "unprovoked" attack carried out by Israel on an air base in Syria, saying such acts had the potential to "further undermine regional peace and stability". Syria's state-run Ekhbariya television, citing a military source, said on Tuesday that Israel carried out eight airstrikes on the runway and storage facilities at the Abu al-Duhur base near Aleppo in northwest Syria. A separate military source and a civilian who lived near the base said there were no casualties. "Such provocative actions constitute a flagrant violation of international law and have the potential to further undermine regional peace and stability," the FO said on Wednesday.

PPP hints at withholding govt support

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday said the party would withhold its support for the PML-N-led government until its concerns, including over the upcoming Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections, were addressed. Speaking to journalists at Parliament House, Bilawal questioned whether such treatment was appropriate for an ally, whether in the context of the AJK elections or the political agreements the PPP had reached with the PML-N before electing the prime minister. He said the PPP raised issues with the government in every budget for the sake of Pakistan and the provinces, asking whether the PML-N was addressing any of those concerns.

Continued on Page 06

Imran Khan shifting Govt files review plea against SC ruling

Elaborating on Rule 197, the plea stated that it explained that government orders for the transfer of a prisoner would be obtained through the police inspector general (IG) in cases wherein a convicted or under-trial prisoner was to be admitted to the hospital for treatment

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday filed a petition in the Supreme Court, seeking a review and recall of the SC order to shift incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan to Islamabad's Shifa International Hospital for medical examination and treatment. The government's review petition, filed by Islamabad Advocate General Naveed Hayat Malik on behalf of the federal capital's chief commissioner a day after the SC's ruling, termed the interim order "discriminatory". The petition, a copy of which is available with Dawn, stated that the order was "in excess of jurisdiction" and, therefore, "liable to be reviewed". The plea further stated that the order "suffers from errors of law

Continued on Page 06

No ambiguity about PTI leader treatment, says Tarar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar has said there is no ambiguity regarding the medical treatment of PTI founding chairman but the government will file a review petition regarding treatment at a private hospital. In a media talk along with Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry in Islamabad today, he said the review petition would seek clarity on whether the right to treatment

Continued on Page 06

Mass arrest in Islamabad: Over 100 foreigners detained in I-8

The latest arrests raise pressing questions about how such networks were able to establish themselves in Pakistan. Concerns have been voiced about the role of local law enforcement agencies, which seemingly allowed these operations to continue unchecked

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Law enforcement agencies in Islamabad carried out another major operation on Wednesday, arresting more than 100 foreign nationals allegedly involved in running an illegal call center in Sector I-8. Officials confirmed the arrests but have not disclosed the identities or nationalities of those detained. The crackdown comes just days after authorities dismantled a large network of foreigners accused of operating a pornographic website from a private housing society in the capital. In that earlier case, four floors of the building were declared a "sub-jail," and reports suggest the government is preparing to repatriate over 370 foreigners, including more than 200 from Vietnam. The latest arrests raise pressing questions about how such networks were able to establish themselves in Pakistan. Concerns have been voiced about the role of local law enforcement agencies, which seemingly allowed these operations to continue unchecked.

Continued on Page 06

Network facilitating illegal immigration busted

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has claimed to have uncovered a major network facilitating illegal immigration clearance and movement of foreign nationals in Islamabad. According to FIR No. 41/2026 registered at the FIA Anti-Corruption Circle Islamabad, a Chinese citizen, an immigration official, and an Islamabad Police constable have been named in the case, with more government officials and private individuals expected to be implicated as the investigation progresses. The FIR states that during an investigation by the FIA Anti-Human Trafficking Cell Islamabad, foreign nationals reportedly identified an organized network involving certain individuals associated

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Diplomatic Glitch

Pakistan summons US envoy Natalie to protest over US Amb. visit to IIOJK

Pakistan strongly condemned and categorically rejected the characterisation of Jammu and Kashmir as a "part of India"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Charge d' Affaires in Islamabad was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today and a strong demarche was lodged over the factually incorrect remarks of U.S. Ambassador to India, regarding the status of Jammu and Kashmir, during his visit to Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan strongly condemned and categorically rejected the characterisation of Jammu and Kashmir as a "part of India". It was underscored that Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognised disputed territory, awaiting final disposition in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. It was highlighted that the irresponsible statement by the U.S. Ambassador negated the long-standing and well-documented position of the United States on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute, and also ran contrary to the United States' commitment to supremacy of international law and the UN Charter.

Continued on Page 06

Turkiye's top diplomat invites DPM

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Wednesday invited Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar to the upcoming meeting of the top diplomats from Pakistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. FM Fidan extended the invitation to DPM Dar during a phone call, in which they exchanged views on recent regional developments and discussed efforts to promote regional peace and stability, the Foreign Office said in a statement. DPM Dar accepted the Turkish foreign minister's invitation and confirmed his participation in the upcoming R-4

Continued on Page 06

Ishaq Dar, UN Secy General discussed regional security

DPM/FM reaffirmed Pakistan's strong support for multilateralism and the central role of the UN, and commended Secretary-General Guterres for his leadership and efforts over the years

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: DPM/FM Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephone call with UN Secretary-General H.E. António Guterres Wednesday evening. Both leaders exchanged views on matters of mutual

interest. DPM/FM reaffirmed Pakistan's strong support for multilateralism and the central role of the UN, and commended Secretary-General Guterres for his leadership and efforts over the years. Both sides agreed to remain in close contact. Both side also discussed regional security and the Middle East situation.

Cementing Relations Through Media Collaboration.

Daily Islamabad Post / DNA News Agency and Uzbekistan's Dunyo Information Agency have joined hands to promote accurate journalism, strengthen media cooperation, and foster greater understanding between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

This partnership reflects our shared commitment to professionalism, credibility, and the power of media in building bridges across nations.

Ambassador of Uzbekistan H.E. Alisher Tukhtaev and Chief Editor Daily Islamabad POST/DNA, Ansar Mahmood Bhatti exchanged documents.

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Pakistan values Portugal's GSP Plus support: Gilani

The Chairman Senate also highlighted the role Inter-parliamentary speaker's conference. He said that ISC is an important platform to promote peace, security and development in the region



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani meeting with Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez, on Wednesday.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez, called on Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at his residence in Ministers' Enclave, Islamabad, today. The meeting discussed bilateral relations, trade and investment, parliamentary cooperation and people-to-people contacts. Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its longstanding and friendly relations with Portugal and desires to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, agriculture, IT, education, culture and the blue economy. He highlighted the growing bilateral trade and said there was considerable potential to further expand economic relations by exploring new op-

portunities. He invited Portuguese companies and investors to explore Pakistan's emerging economic and business potential and forge mutually beneficial partnerships. The Chairman Senate also highlighted the role Inter-parliamentary speaker's conference. He said that ISC is an important platform to promote peace, security and development in the region. The Chairman Senate also appreciated the contribution of the Pakistani community in Portugal, noting that around 50,000 Pakistanis are living and working there. He said the community serves as an important bridge between the two countries and emphasized the need to enhance cooperation in labour and human resource development. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani expressed hope for the early conclusion of the Agreement on Labour Mobility Partnership, saying it would provide a

framework for greater cooperation in this important area. He also stressed the importance of enhanced cooperation between Pakistani and Portuguese universities through student and faculty exchanges and joint research programmes. He appreciated Portugal's continued support for Pakistan's GSP Plus status and expressed the hope that high-level exchanges and regular bilateral consultations would further deepen relations between the two countries. Ambassador Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez thanked the Chairman Senate for the warm welcome and expressed Portugal's keen interest in strengthening bilateral relations with Pakistan, particularly in trade, investment and economic cooperation. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to closer engagement and mutually beneficial cooperation to further strengthen Pakistan-Portugal relations.

Workplace harassment complaints President stresses prompt resolution

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has stressed the need to strengthen internal processes and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that complaints of workplace harassment are resolved promptly and efficiently. The President made these remarks while receiving the Annual Report 2025 of the Federal Ombudsperson Secretariat for Protection against Harassment (FOSPAH) from Ombudsperson Ms. Fauzia Vigar at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The President appreciated the role of FOSPAH in safeguarding individuals against workplace harassment and called for increased awareness initiatives about the services provided by the institution. The President was informed that

FOSPAH received 1,119 harassment complaints during 2024-25 and decided 1,047, while 352 complaints relating to property deprivation were received and 238 were decided. The report presented to the President stated that complaint registration had increased by 375 per cent compared to the previous year. The President emphasised that complaints should be examined fairly and on merit, with due process ensuring that genuine cases of harassment are addressed promptly while allegations are assessed carefully in accordance with the law. Senator Saleem Mandviwalla was also present during the meeting.—DNA

Federal funds misuse aggravates merged districts problems

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday said that federal funds allocated for the province had been spent on selected areas instead of deserving regions, resulting in worsening problems for residents of the merged districts rather than providing relief. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of the Mazloom Awami Tehreek from Tirah, led by its leader Ummat Gul, who called on here at Governor House. The delegation apprised the Governor of the difficulties being faced by

the people of Khyber district, particularly the residents of Tirah. The Governor said the Pakistan Red Crescent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had always extended maximum humanitarian assistance despite its limited resources. He said restoration of lasting peace remained the foremost priority, adding that the security forces and the people of the province had rendered exemplary sacrifices for peace. He said the nation was proud of its armed forces, police and FC for their services and sacrifices. Kundi said the provincial government could not effectively resolve public issues without coordination with the federal government. He assured the delegation that issues relating to both federal and provincial departments would be taken up with the relevant authorities and that every possible effort would be made to facilitate their resolution.

RCCI urges establishment of German Trade Desk to boost bilateral trade

President RCCI, Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, members of the executive committee, and representatives of various business sectors were also present during the ambassador's meeting

RAWALPIND: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has called for establishing a dedicated German Trade Desk in Pakistan along with a Pakistan-Germany Joint Chamber of Commerce to facilitate local businesses in exploring European markets, developing strategic commercial linkages, and strengthening trade cooperation. RCCI President Usman Shaukat made the proposal during a visit by German Ambassador Ina Lepel, to the chamber, where the two sides discussed key economic drivers. During the meeting it was highlighted that bilateral trade currently stands above USD 2.5 billion. With Pakistani exports to Germany at nearly USD1.7 billion against imports of around USD880 million. Usman Shaukat emphasized expanding joint ventures in high-potential sectors including IT, agriculture and agri-tech, fintech, energy-efficient construction, pharmaceuticals, mining and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development. RCCI President commended Ger-

many's continued backing for Pakistan's GSP+ status. Addressing the business community, Ambassador Ina Lepel reaffirmed Germany's commitment to furthering bilateral economic ties with Pakistan, focusing on private sector growth, climate mitigation, health, and vocational education.

The visiting envoy also appreciated the resilience of Pakistan's business community and noted that continued engagement would be important on GSP+ related matters. Both sides agreed to accelerate joint efforts to expand trade, investment, technolo-

gy transfer and business-to-business linkages for sustainable economic growth. Senior Vice President RCCI, Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, members of the executive committee, and representatives of various business sectors were also present during the ambassador's meeting.—DNA



MILITARY LANDS & CANTONMENTS DEPT RAWALPINDI CANTONMENT BOARD The Mall, Rawalpindi Cantt

Tel: 051-9274401-04

Fax No: 051-9274407

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING SINGLE STAGE TWO ENVELOPE THROUGH E-PADS V2.0

Rawalpindi Cantonment Board, being the Procuring Agency, invites electronic bids from eligible and reputable manufacturers, authorized distributors, dealers, suppliers, pharmaceutical firms and medical supply firms for the procurement of medicines, medical supplies, laboratory reagents and allied items for Cantt General Hospital, Rawalpindi Cantt.

The procurement shall be conducted through Open Competitive Bidding under the Single Stage-Two Envelope Procedure, in accordance with Rule 36(b) of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004, as amended from time to time, through E-PADS V2.0.

The category-wise estimated costs are as follows:

S No.	Description	Estimated Cost in million	02% Earnest Money in Rs.	EPADS v2.0
1	Procurement of Life-Saving Medicines	8.519	170380	P56360
2	Procurement of CSSD/Laundry Items	2.189	43780	P89338
3	Procurement of Laboratory Items	10.087	201740	P89974
4	Procurement of Dental Items	4.737	94740	P89986
5	Procurement of Physiotherapy Items	0.727	14540	P89992
6	Procurement of Radiology Items	7.906	158120	P89995
7	Procurement of Routine Chemistry Laboratory Items	10.453	209060	P90004
8	Procurement of Special Chemistry and PCR Laboratory Items	10.137	202740	P90028
9	Procurement of Surgical/Disposable Items	15.304	306080	P90070

TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Availability of Bidding Documents

Bidding documents shall be available exclusively on the PPRA and EPADS V2.0 portals. No hard copies shall be issued. Only vendors registered on EPADS V2.0 shall be eligible to participate.

2. Submission and Opening of Bids

E-bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions contained in the bidding documents, must be submitted electronically through EPADS V2.0 on or before:

Submission Deadline: 07-09-2026 at 11:00 AM

Technical bids shall be opened electronically on the same day at:

Opening Time: 07-09-2026 at 11:30 AM

3. EPADS Registration

Manual submission of bids shall not be entertained. Vendors not registered on EPADS V2.0 may register through Vendor Registration Portal: <https://vendors.epads.gov.pk>

EPADS Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNW6T38v7tc>

4. Grievance Redressal

In accordance with Rule 48 of PPRA Rules, 2004, a Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) has been constituted. The relevant notification is available on the Procuring Agency's website and EPADS portal.

5. Procurement Method:

- The procurement shall be carried out through Open Competitive Bidding under the Single Stage-Two Envelope Procedure, in accordance with Rule 36(b) of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004.
- Each bidder shall submit separate Technical and Financial Proposals electronically through the E-PADS V2.0 portal in the prescribed format. The Technical Proposals shall be opened and evaluated first in accordance with the eligibility requirements, technical specifications, qualification criteria and evaluation criteria contained in the bidding documents. The Financial Proposals of only those bidders who are declared technically responsive shall subsequently be opened and evaluated through E-PADS V2.0.
- The Financial Proposals of technically non-responsive bidders shall remain unopened. The contract shall be awarded to the most advantageous responsive bidder, subject to fulfilment of all eligibility, technical, financial and contractual requirements and approval of the Competent Authority.
- A separate bid may be submitted for one or more procurement categories, subject to the provisions of the bidding documents. Each category or lot shall be evaluated independently, unless otherwise specified in the bidding documents.
- The contract for each category shall be awarded to the most advantageous responsive bidder, subject to fulfilment of all eligibility, technical, financial and contractual requirements and approval of the Competent Authority.

6. Earnest Money

- Each bidder shall furnish Bid Security/Earnest Money equivalent to two per cent (2%) of the estimated cost of the category or lot for which the bid is submitted, unless otherwise specified in the bidding documents.
- The Bid Security shall be furnished in the form of a Call Deposit Receipt issued by a scheduled bank in favour of the Cantonment Executive Officer, Rawalpindi Cantonment Board.
 - A scanned copy of the valid Call Deposit Receipt shall be uploaded with the electronic bid.
 - The original Call Deposit Receipt shall be submitted to the office of the Procuring Agency before the opening of the Technical Proposals, in accordance with the instructions contained in the bidding documents.
 - A bid submitted without the prescribed Bid Security, or with Bid Security that is deficient, invalid or not verifiable, shall be treated as non-responsive.

7. Mandatory Eligibility Criteria

The participating firms shall:

- Possess a valid Drug Sale Licence / Drug Distribution Licence (Category-A) issued by the competent authority on required product.
 - Be registered with FBR and appear on the Active Taxpayers List (ATL) for Income Tax and Sales Tax.
 - Have at least three (03) years' experience in the supply of medicines to Government, Semi-Government, Armed Forces, Autonomous Bodies, Hospitals, or other reputable organizations.
 - Submit an affidavit on judicial stamp paper confirming that the firm has never been blacklisted, suspended, or debarred by any Government, Semi-Government, Autonomous Body, or Regulatory Authority.
 - Maintain adequate stock availability and ensure timely supply of medicines prescribed by authorized medical practitioners throughout the contract period.
 - Provide medicines with valid manufacturing and expiry dates and comply with all applicable DRAP regulations and quality standards.
 - All medicines supplied under the contract shall have a remaining shelf life of not less than twelve (12) months from the date of delivery.
- ##### 8. Product Quality and Regulatory Compliance
- All medicines, reagents, chemicals, consumables and medical supplies shall conform to the specifications, standards and quality requirements prescribed in the bidding documents.
 - Medicines and regulated products shall be duly registered with the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan, wherever such registration is required.
 - The bidder shall provide valid batch numbers, manufacturing dates, expiry dates, manufacturer details and product-registration information at the time of delivery.
 - All supplied items shall be genuine, fresh, unused, properly packed and obtained through lawful and traceable supply channels.
 - Counterfeit, spurious, substandard, adulterated, misbranded, damaged, expired or near-expiry items shall not be accepted.
 - The Procuring Agency may obtain samples or arrange laboratory testing of the supplied items from an authorized laboratory. The testing cost shall be borne by the supplier where the supplied items are found to be non-compliant.
 - Items requiring cold-chain storage or controlled temperature shall be transported and delivered under the prescribed temperature conditions. Documentary evidence of maintenance of the cold chain may be required.
 - Medicines, reagents and other items having an expiry date shall ordinarily have a remaining shelf life of not less than 12 months from the date of delivery or such higher shelf life as may be specified in the bidding documents.
 - In case of failure to supply any item within the stipulated period, the Procuring Agency may procure the item from an alternative source at the risk and cost of the defaulting supplier, in addition to any other action permissible under the contract and applicable rules.
 - All supplies shall be subject to inspection, verification and acceptance by the duly constituted Inspection or Purchase Committee of Cantt General Hospital.
 - Rejected items shall be removed and replaced by the supplier at its own cost within the period specified by the hospital administration.

- The quoted rates shall be inclusive of all applicable taxes, duties, levies, transportation, loading, unloading and incidental charges, unless otherwise expressly provided in the bidding documents.
- Prices shall remain firm and fixed during the validity of the bid and contract period.

9. Award of Contract

- The contract for each category or lot shall be awarded to the most advantageous responsive bidder in accordance with the Public Procurement Rules, 2004.
- The Procuring Agency may increase or decrease the quantities at the time of award or during the contract period, subject to the applicable rules, availability of funds

10. Disqualification

- Any firm found to have submitted false information, forged documents, or misleading statements shall be disqualified and may be proceeded against under applicable laws and PPRA Rules.
- Any firm that has been blacklisted, suspended, or debarred by any Government Department, Semi-Government Organization, Autonomous Body, Regulatory Authority, or Public Sector Entity shall not be eligible to participate in the bidding process. If such status is discovered at any stage of the procurement process or during the contract period, the bid/contract shall be liable to rejection or termination without any liability on the part of the procuring agency.

11. Additional Information

Detailed terms and conditions, specifications and evaluation criteria may be obtained from the PPRA and EPADS portals or inspected at the office of Rawalpindi Cantonment Board during working hours on any working day.

12. Right of Acceptance or Rejection

The Procuring Agency reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to acceptance of a bid in accordance with Rule 33(1) of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004, without assigning any reason.

Cantonment Executive Officer
Rawalpindi Cantt

PID(I)1595/26

National Days and Armed Forces Days

AUGUST

Aug 01/China Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzerland National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon Armed Forces Day

Aug 01 /Syria Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Bukino Faso National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea Independence Day

Aug 15/India Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland Armed Forces Day

Aug 17 /Indonesia Independence Day

Aug 24/Ukraine Independence Day

Aug 25/Uruguay Independence Day

Aug 30 /Turkey Armed Forces Day

Aug 31/Kyrgyz Republic Independence Day

Aug 31/Malaysia National Day

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Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.1122

& Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

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PIA Flight Info.....114

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Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi...5555489

CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Tunisia looking for PTA with Pakistan, says envoy

She expressed these views while addressing a farewell reception hosted in her honour at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). The event was attended by Rwanda’s High Commissioner H.E. Harerimana Fatu, Zimbabwe’s High Commissioner H.E. Titus M.J. Abu Basutu, Acting Ambassador of South Africa H.E. Rudolph Pierre Jordan, ICCI Executive Members and business leaders

SAIFULLAH ANSAR/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Tunisia’s Chargé d’Affaires, Ms. Dorsaf Maaroufi, has said that the Preferential Trade Agreement between Pakistan and Tunisia will create new opportunities for expanding trade and commercial activities between the two countries. She said Pakistan’s principled foreign policy and support for oppressed nations had earned deep appreciation and respect in Tunisia. She expressed these views while addressing a farewell reception hosted in her honour at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). The event was attended by Rwanda’s High Commissioner H.E. Harerimana Fatu, Zimbabwe’s High Commissioner H.E. Titus M.J. Abu Basutu, Acting Ambassador of South Africa H.E. Rudolph Pierre Jordan, ICCI Executive Members and business leaders. Ms. Maaroufi said that Pakistan and Tunisia need to further strengthen their economic and trade relations, adding that efforts were underway to increase bilateral trade. She appreciated Pakistan’s support for Tunisia’s position at the United Nations. She also recalled the visit of a large ICCI business delegation to Tunisia in 2025, which participated in the International Coffee Festival and signed agreements with various Chambers of Commerce. She termed the visit an important milestone in promoting bilateral trade relations and expressed hope that cooperation would continue during the tenure of her successor. Ms. Maaroufi said Pakistan had become an important part of her professional and personal life during her first diplomatic assignment. Although she was leaving Pakistan phys-



ically, the country would always remain in her heart and memories. She said she would continue playing her role in promoting friendship between Pakistan and Tunisia after returning to Tunisia. Secretary General United Business Group (UBG) Zafar Bakhtawari said Pakistan and Tunisia enjoy deep-rooted, brotherly and longstanding relations; however, their economic and trade ties must be brought at par with the strength of their political and diplomatic relations. He said that Pakistan-Tunisia relations are deep-rooted, historic and brotherly, with their foundations laid even before Tunisia achieved independence. He recalled that in 1951, during Tunisia’s struggle for freedom from French colonial rule, Habib Bourguiba—who later became the first President of independent Tunisia—visited Karachi as part of his international campaign to mobilize support for the Tunisian independence movement. Pakistan extended moral and political support to Tunisia’s struggle for self-determination, creating a bond of friendship that predates Tunisia’s independence in 1956 and the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.

He said this historic legacy should now be translated into stronger trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people cooperation between the two brotherly countries. Paying tribute to Ms. Maaroufi for her five years of diplomatic services in Islamabad, he said she had made valuable contributions to strengthening Pakistan-Tunisia relations and played an important role in establishing warm and strong relations between the Tunisian Embassy and ICCI. Zafar Bakhtawari said Ms. Maaroufi’s presence had added warmth to Islamabad’s diplomatic community and her services would always be remembered with great respect. He stressed the need to promote direct trade, tourism, investment and business-to-business linkages, saying that stronger connectivity could open up significant opportunities for economic cooperation between the two countries. He expressed hope that after returning to Tunisia, Ms. Maaroufi would continue to serve as a goodwill ambassador for Pakistan-Tunisia friendship and contribute to strengthening economic and people-to-people relations between the two brotherly countries. Acting President ICCI Irfan

Chaudhry said Pakistan must transform its longstanding friendly relations with African countries into strong trade, investment and business partnerships. He said closer economic engagement with Africa could create new opportunities for the Pakistani business community and contribute significantly to the country’s economic growth. He appreciated Ms. Maaroufi’s valuable services for promoting Pakistan-Tunisia relations and said she had played an important role in enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation between the two countries. Director Foreign Affairs, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Asif Luqman Qazi highlighted Tunisia’s significant contributions to Islamic civilization, education, culture and intellectual development. He said Tunisia had historically been a centre of knowledge and learning and was also the birthplace of the Arab Spring. He expressed pride in the close friendship between Pakistan and Tunisia and said Ms. Maaroufi’s services for promoting Pakistan-Tunisia friendship would always be remembered.

90pc govt electricity soon on AMI meters

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Power Division, Dr. Fakhare-Alam Irfan, to review progress on the installation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters by Distribution Companies (DISCOs) on all provincial and federal government-owned connections. The meeting was informed that all DISCOs across the country have commenced replacement of existing meters on government premises, in compliance with the Prime Minister’s directives, said a press release issued on Wednesday. The primary objective of this initiative is to ensure billing transparency and to resolve longstanding reconciliation issues regarding government payables. It was decided that 90% of such connections shall be upgraded with AMIs by the end of September 2026 (within one month). Furthermore, the Secretary Power Division directed all DISCO CEOs to take all necessary measures to achieve 100% replacement of government electricity meters with AMI within the stipulated timeline.—APP

Sindh, KP rainwater projects benefit 67,000 people

ISLAMABAD: The government has expanded rainwater harvesting initiatives in water-stressed areas of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with projects in Thar and Kohat-Hangu providing water access to around 67,000 people and 98,000 livestock. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the initiatives aim to improve water availability for communities and livestock in drought-prone and water-scarce areas through rainwater storage, groundwater recharge and solar-powered water supply systems. In Thar Desert, Sindh, a network of 10 rainwater harvesting ponds has been established with a combined storage capacity of 35.21 million gallons. The project is serving approximately 46,000 people and 70,000 livestock. The stored rainwater is being used for domestic and livestock needs, providing communities with an alternative source of water in the arid region. The initiative also includes a solar-powered tube well system, which is supplying water to around 3,000 livestock through 48 tanks daily.— In Kohat and Hangu, rainwater harvesting ponds have been developed at seven sites with support from UNICEF. The projects have a combined storage capacity of 16 million gallons and are benefiting 21,000 people and 28,000 livestock. The KP initiative goes beyond rainwater storage, with gabion structures and rainwater harvesting ponds being used to enhance groundwater recharge. The document also highlights support for the Public Health Engineering Department’s tube wells and local community dug wells, helping strengthen existing water sources and improve their sustainability. The combined interventions reflect an increasing focus on decentralised and community-based water management.—APP

FGP, RLKU partner to empower youth

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) and Rashid Latif Khan University (RLKU), Lahore, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at empowering young people and women through education, research, skills development, entrepreneurship and community engagement. Muhammad Anwar, Chief Executive Officer of FGP, and Prof. Dr. Saeed-ul-Hassan Chishti, Pro Vice Chancellor of RLKU, signed the MoU. Dr. Shahbaz Tariq, Head of Economy and Research at FGP; Dr. Ayaz Qaisar, Registrar of RLKU; Capt. M. Faisal

Khalid (R), Chief Human Resources Officer of RLKU; and Dr. Ansar Abbas, Associate Dean, Faculty of Management Sciences, Hamdard University, were also present, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. The agreement provides a framework for joint academic, research and community-based initiatives designed to strengthen cooperation between academia and the development sector. Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Anwar said sustainable development required strong collaboration among educa-

tional institutions, civil society, policymakers and the private sector. “Pakistan’s young population is a tremendous national asset. By creating meaningful opportunities for skills development, entrepreneurship, research and civic engagement, we can enable young people to contribute more effectively to inclusive economic growth and national development,” he said. Prof. Dr. Saeed-ul-Hassan Chishti highlighted the importance of connecting university education with practical experience and contemporary development challenges.—APP

Tourism, key sectors’ uplift in GB imperative: Aleem

ISLAMABAD: President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), Abdul Aleem Khan, on Wednesday stressed the need for effective policies and sustained efforts to promote tourism and other key sectors in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), saying the region had vast potential to become economically self-reliant. He expressed these views during a meeting with IPP leaders and members of the assemblies from Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), said a press release. Those who called on the IPP President included former Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon, Imam Malik, Haji Gulbar Khan, Shams Lone and Sardar Tabarak Ali. IPP Secretary General

Mian Khalid Mahmood and IPP Punjab President Rana Nazeer Ahmed Khan were also present on the occasion. The meeting held a detailed discussion on the recent Government formation in Gilgit-Baltistan, political affairs, and other matters. The political situation that emerged following the elections in Azad Kashmir was also reviewed. The party’s future political strategy, various proposals, and matters related to the development of the region were also discussed. It was briefed during the meeting that the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party had been allocated key portfolios in Gilgit-Baltistan, including Education, Food, Industries, Water and Power, Prisons, Agriculture and Home Affairs. Talking

in the meeting, IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan said that Gilgit-Baltistan and the Northern Areas were blessed with natural beauty and abundant resources. He said the development of these regions requires only the right direction, effective policies and sustained efforts. He said there were vast opportunities for development in key sectors, particularly tourism, adding that with sound policies and better governance, Gilgit-Baltistan can become economically self-reliant. Aleem Khan directed IPP Ministers to work day and night to ensure that the people receive the tangible benefits of Government initiatives. He said resolving public grievances, providing basic facilities and bringing visible improvement to the development process should remain the top priorities. IPP President said efforts must be made to discourage the spread of despair and convey a message of hope and a brighter future to the people. He stressed that government responsibilities should be used as a means of public service, and that the people’s trust should be earned through practical measures.—APP

Court decision proves rule of law: Talal

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhary on Wednesday said that the recent court decision regarding a jailed political leader demonstrated that institutions were functioning within their constitutional limits. He maintained that the government respected the legal process from the beginning and believed that matters related to prison management and meetings with inmates should be handled according to the jail manual and court orders. Speaking on the issue, Talal Chaudhary said the government’s position had remained unchanged. He stated that no institution should be pressured through protests, road blockades, rallies, threats, or attacks. According to him, decisions should be made through legal and administrative channels, and the recent ruling reflected that principle. He noted that the same courts and judges who were now being praised by some political groups were previously criticized by them. Talal Chaudhary said that access to medical treatment and proper facilities was a right available to every prisoner. He added that the court’s decision should be viewed in that context rather than being turned into a political issue. Referring to past political debates over the health of leaders, he said his party had avoided discussing the medical conditions of political opponents. He accused rival political figures and spokespersons of previously using medical reports for political purposes and holding public discussions on personal health matters. He also recalled past controversies involving medical examinations of political leaders and said that doctors who treated former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had faced scrutiny and investigations. According to him, health issues should not be used as a political tool. Talal Chaudhary highlighted a section of the court’s observations in which political activity was discouraged in connection with the relief granted. He argued that the court included those remarks because of concerns that the matter could be used for political campaigning. He rejected claims that the decision was linked to any political deal or future arrangement. He said speculation about transfers, special treatment, constitutional amendments, or so-called political agreements was unfounded. According to him, the court exercised its authority and granted relief within the legal framework. The minister also criticized overseas commentators and social media figures who, he claimed, spread unverified reports regarding the prisoner’s condition. He said such narratives were designed to attract attention rather than present facts.—APP

CNS for operational readiness to counter maritime threats

Chairing the Command and Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy here at Naval Headquarters, he also stressed that asymmetric capabilities and advanced technologies are essential to retain a tactical edge against emerging threats, said a news release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Navy)

ISLAMABAD :Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Naveed Ashraf while commending Pakistan Navy’s operational readiness and enhanced capacity to undertake all challenging missions on Wednesday stressed the need for effective training, tactical discipline, and joint coordination to ensure robust maritime defence. Chairing the Command and Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy here at Naval Headquarters, he also stressed that asymmetric capabilities and advanced technologies are essential to retain a tactical edge against emerging threats, said a news release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Navy). The forum deliberated extensively on the evolving maritime security landscape – from traditional and non-traditional threats to volatility at strategic choke points and risks to freedom of navigation and vital SLOCs. Admiral Naveed Ashraf further underscored Pakistan Navy’s pivotal role in ensuring peace, stability and regional maritime security. The forum undertook a comprehensive review of the operational preparedness, ongoing initiatives and upcoming events, the news release further said. The Conference was attended by Principal

Staff Officers and Field Commanders. The Command and Staff Conference is the apex decision-making forum of Pakistan Navy

where Chief of the Naval Staff, Principal Staff Officers and Field Commanders deliberate on strategic priorities and policies.—APP



Briefs

**13,260
intending
Hajj pilgrims
submit first
installment**

ISLAMABAD: The process of submitting the first installment of Hajj 2027 fees has commenced, with 13,260 intending pilgrims having submitted Rs 8.703 billion so far. According to the spokesperson for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the fee submission process was underway through PSID OneLink, bank cards, and manual banking challans. A total of 2,006 intending pilgrims submitted the first installment through online transactions, while 4,615 intending pilgrims paid their fees through PSID OneLink. Similarly, 6,761 intending pilgrims submitted the first installment through digital challans at private banks. A total of 7,000 intending pilgrims under the short Hajj scheme have also completed the fee submission process.—APP

**FIA nabs
human
smuggler**

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Human Trafficking Circle (AHTC) Islamabad has arrested an alleged human smuggler accused of swindling Rs 6 million from a complainant on the promise of sending him to Canada. An FIA official told APP on Wednesday that the accused, identified as Nadeem Masih son of Nazir Masih, was arrested during an operation conducted by the AHTC Islamabad. The investigation revealed that the accused allegedly lured the complainant with the promise of facilitating his travel to Canada and received Rs6 million from him. The FIA said a case, FIR No. 592/26, had been registered against the accused under Sections 18 and 22 of the Emigration Ordinance, 1979, and Sections 419, 420, 468 and 471 of the Pakistan Penal Code. The operation was carried out by Inspector Muhammad Azeem and ASI Mazhar Shah. Further investigation is underway.—APP

**Makkah
agreement way
for broader
regional
security**

ISLAMABAD: The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement could serve as an important first step towards developing a broader regional security architecture, with its potential expansion to other countries offering prospects for greater peace and stability in the region, experts said on Wednesday. They were speaking at a roundtable discussion on “The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and the Emerging Regional Security Architecture”, organized by the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), said a press release. Former diplomats, leading academics, security analysts and prominent practitioners joined the discussion, which focused on the significance of the recently concluded Makkah Joint Defence Pact, its potential impact on the regional security landscape, and the evolving role of Pakistan in the emerging regional security architecture.—APP

“DIGNITY IS NOT NEGOTIABLE”

On World Humanitarian Day, Inspire Pakistan Renews Its Call to Protect the Rights of the Most Vulnerable

DNA

ISLAMABAD — As the world marks World Humanitarian Day on 19 August, Inspire Pakistan — a non-profit, non-governmental, and non-political development organisation registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan under the Companies Act, 2017 — is renewing its call for the protection of human rights, dignity, and access to essential services for marginalised and underserved communities across the country. The occasion arrives amid mounting global concern over the erosion of humanitarian protection. According to United Nations figures, more than 320 humanitarian workers were killed in 2025 alone — the majority of them local personnel serving their own communities — underscoring a broader global pattern in which the people working hardest to protect human dignity are often the least protected themselves. Inspire Pakistan believes this moment demands more than observance — it demands accountability. Since its founding, Inspire Pakistan has worked at the intersection of protection, education, and community empowerment — building

practical, field-tested programming across Islamabad, Punjab, and Sindh. Its work spans three core thematic pillars: Education for Skill, improving access to quality education and easing the financial burden on families; the Urban Cohesion Hub, delivering health awareness, first-aid training, and assistive support to underserved communities; and Community Based Protection, strengthening local protection systems and mental health and psychosocial support services. This work is grounded in Pakistan’s own legal and regulatory framework — operating as a formally registered development organisation in full compliance with national law — while aligning its programming with internationally recognised humanitarian and human-rights standards. Inspire Pakistan maintains a strict, zero-tolerance approach to misconduct across all its operations, underpinned by clear codes of conduct, confidential complaint mechanisms, and survivor-centred response procedures. “We are not interested in symbolic gestures,” the CEO added. “Our mission is to empower a culture of human rights for sustainable development — and that means showing up in classrooms, in shelters, and in the quietest corners of crisis, long after the headlines move on.”

Housing minister concerns over delays in projects

Taking note of media reports regarding protests by the allottees of Green Enclave-I and their approach to the Federal Ombudsman, the Minister emphasized that the concerns of the allottees could not be ignored and that the Authority must demonstrate transparency, accountability and efficiency in resolving the issues and all possible measures were taken for the completion of these projects

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, while chairing the 50th Executive Board Meeting of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) expressed grave concern over the prolonged delays in the completion of the Green Enclave-I and Lifestyle Residency projects and directed the Authority to take immediate and effective measures to address the issues. At the outset of the meeting, the Federal Minister strongly questioned the FGEHA authorities over the inordinate delays in the projects and sought detailed explanations regarding the lack of progress. The Minister stated that he had repeatedly been required to respond before Parliamentary and Senate committees, as well as various oversight forums, regarding the progress of these projects. He expressed concern that, despite the passage of nearly three years, the projects had not achieved the desired progress. Taking note of media reports regarding protests by the allottees of Green En-



clav-I and their approach to the Federal Ombudsman, the Minister emphasized

that the concerns of the allottees could not be ignored and that the Authority must demonstrate transparency, accountability and efficiency in resolving the issues and all possible measures were taken for the completion of these projects. The Federal Minister directed that all pending inquiry reports be submitted within the stipulated timelines and called for immediate action on their findings. He observed that unnecessary delays in the completion of inquiries were further aggravating the situation and creating uncertainty for senior bureaucrats as well as lower-grade officers and officials who have invested their hard-earned money in the hope of securing their own homes, but continue to wait unjustly for the completion of the projects. He further directed the FGEHA Board to take appropriate action in accordance with the findings and recommendations of the inquiry reports, ensuring that the process remained fair, transparent, justified and timely. During the meeting, the FGEHA Executive Board also considered and approved the Authority’s annual budget for the financial year 2026–27.—APP

Pak’s Nexa Robots eyes deeper China ties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s Nexa Robots is strengthening its collaboration with Chinese technology and manufacturing partners as it develops local capabilities in software, artificial intelligence and systems integration for service robots, its founder said, according to a China Economic Net’s report on Wednesday. The company’s most immediate needs are deeper technology cooperation, access to key components and support for developing and localising solutions for the Pakistani market, Hafeez, founder and CEO of Nexa Robots, told CEN in a written interview. He also called for joint product development with Chinese technology partners. Access to investment or strategic financing could help the company expand and allow customers to lease robots or pay for them as a service. The comments come as the World Robot Conference 2026 opens in Beijing on Aug. 19. The accompanying expo is expected to feature more than 300 exhibitors and over 2,000 exhibits, including robot applications in catering, retail, healthcare and logistics. According to Hafeez, the company distributes products in Pakistan from Shenzhen-based Pudu Robotics. One of its early installations is at Minhaj University Lahore (MUL), which said in September 2023 it had introduced service robots in its admissions office and library, supplied and technically supported by Nexa. MUL continued to promote the facility publicly in 2025, posting photographs of the robotic library and sharing videos about it. Hafeez said Smart Service robots at MUL are used daily in both the admissions office and library, supporting reception, visitor guidance and information services.— Nexa has also moved beyond demonstrations and pilot projects to paid deployments with selected customers in hospitality, education and other service settings, according to Hafeez, who did not provide installation numbers or name other clients. The market remains at an early stage. Hafeez cited low labour costs, economic uncertainty and reluctance to commit capital as reasons businesses remain wary of automation. Robots also need trained staff, maintenance, software integration and reliable local support. “A robot has to work reliably in the customer’s actual environment, not just during a demonstration,” he said. A restaurant or hotel making intensive use of a robot might target a one-to-two-year payback, Hafeez estimated. Less intensive use could mean a longer payback period. Hafeez said Nexa had begun early-stage localisation work, initially focusing on software, AI and systems integration in Pakistan while sourcing key hardware and components from China. Once a prototype is developed and validated locally, the company expects initial production to take place in China.—DNA

IRSA releases 344,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 344,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 368,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in

the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1550.00 feet, which was 148.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 234,400 cusecs and 233,800 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1213.15 feet, which was 163.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 29,800 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 338,400, 315,900, 268,900, and 168,900 cusecs, respectively.—APP

13-year-old boy’s kidnapping case SC acquits man serving life sentence

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has acquitted Abdul Razzaq, who was serving a life sentence for kidnapping a 13-year-old boy for ransom, giving him the benefit of doubt and holding that the prosecution case was not safe for sustaining the conviction due to material contradictions, weaknesses and suspicious circumstances. A three-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, in a judgment issued after hearing the case on August 11, accepted Abdul Razzaq’s jail petition and set aside the judgments and sentences passed by the subordinate courts. The court observed that the prosecution primarily relied on the allegation that Abdul Razzaq had contacted the boy’s father by telephone and demanded Rs 10 million as ransom, which was subsequently settled at Rs 500,000 after negotiations. The Supreme Court noted that the money allegedly handed over to Abdul Razzaq was neither identifiable nor marked. Therefore, recovery of unmarked currency could not by itself constitute conclusive proof that

it was ransom money, particularly when a land dispute also existed between the complainant and the accused. The court held that although telephone contact between the accused and the boy’s father had been established, mere contact did not prove that ransom had been demanded. No voice recording of the alleged ransom conversation was produced before the court, leaving the actual content and nature of the calls unestablished. The court also rejected the prosecution’s claim that the boy’s schoolbag, uniform and shoes were recovered on the accused’s pointation, observing that these were ordinary items and no identification parade was conducted by the boy or his father to establish their identity. The Supreme Court further noted that prosecution witnesses had attributed the kidnapping to Abdul Razzaq along with other accused persons, who had already been acquitted due to weaknesses in the evidence. In such circumstances, the same oral testimony could not safely be relied upon against Abdul Razzaq without independent and credible corroboration.—APP

Call for nationwide Friday sermons on ‘Message of Rahmatul-lil-Alameen

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Ulama Council and Coordinator of the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, has appealed to Ulema, Mashaikh, Imams, Khateeb, Zakireen and preachers across Pakistan to dedicate Friday sermons on August 21 to the theme “Message of Rahmatul-lil-Alameen and Rights of Non-Muslims in Islam.” He said the initiative was in line with the objectives of the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee to promote peace, interfaith and intra-faith harmony, religious tolerance, respect for human dignity and a peaceful, inclusive society. Ashrafi said the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was a mercy for all humanity, while his Seerah provided enduring guidance on peace, justice, tolerance, compassion and protection of human dignity and rights without discrimination. He urged Ulema and Khateeb to highlight, in the light of the Quran, Sunnah, Charter of Madinah and Seerah, Islam’s teachings on protecting the lives, property, honour, places of worship and religious freedom of non-Muslim citizens. The chairman said Pakistan belonged to all its citizens and that the Constitution guaranteed fundamental rights and religious freedom, adding that protecting non-Muslim Pakistanis and their places of worship was a shared responsibility of the state and society. Ashrafi said the growing challenges of hatred, extremism and religious prejudice made the message of Rahmatul-lil-Alameen (Peace Be Upon Him), peace, moderation and respect for humanity more relevant than ever. He called upon religious leaders to convey this message from the Mimbar and Mehrab, particularly to the younger generation, and urged Pakistan Ulama Council and its allied organizations to coordinate with religious scholars and prayer leaders nationwide to highlight the theme in Friday sermons. He said observing Rabi-ul-Awwal in the true spirit of the Prophet’s (Peace Be Upon Him) message required translating his teachings of mercy, justice, peace, brotherhood, tolerance and respect for humanity into practical conduct, thereby strengthening social harmony and peaceful coexistence among all communities in Pakistan.—APP

MicroCerts, PCI launch Chinese Language Certifications

ISLAMABAD: MicroCerts, Pakistan’s national digital skills certification platform and a subsidiary of AXI Systems (SOE), inked a MoU with the Pakistan-China Institute (PCI), with a focus on youth, women, education, diplomacy, defense, energy, economy, and environment. Under the partnership, PCI will provide expert academic review of four HSK-aligned Chinese language certification modules developed by MicroCerts, ahead of their nationwide rollout through the platform, according to a Gwadar Pro’s report. MicroCerts has developed four Chinese language certification modules aligned with the HSK proficiency framework: HSK 1 (Foundation Mandarin), HSK 2 (Elementary Mandarin), HSK 3 (Intermediate Mandarin), and HSK 4 (Upper-Intermediate Mandarin). The modules are designed to provide Pakistani learners with structured, standards-aligned Mandarin language credentials and support their academic and professional aspirations. The certifications are particularly aimed at students and scholarship aspirants preparing to study in China, as well as professionals seeking opportunities on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and in other China-related sectors.—APP

4 key reports presented in NA

ISLAMABAD: Four key reports relating to elections, the economy, fiscal affairs and child rights were presented in the National Assembly on Wednesday. The Annual Report of the Election Commission of Pakistan for 2025 was presented under sub-section (2) of Section 16 of the Election Act, 2017. The Half-Year Report of the State Bank of Pakistan’s Board of Directors on the state of Pakistan’s economy for 2025-26 was also presented under sub-section (2) of Section 39 of the State Bank of Pakistan Act, 1956. The first biannual report on monitoring the implementation of the 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) Award for July-December 2024 was also presented under clause (3B) of Article 160 of the Constitution.—APP

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AUGUST
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Emigrating Israelis another stain on Netanyahu's record

YOSSI MEKELBERG

SOCIETIES invest significant resources in building resilience so that they can withstand external enemies, survive and achieve sustainable prosperity. The most important resource for that is the human one, which is paramount for creating a sense of unity around shared values and an ethos that galvanizes society, especially in times of crisis, whether domestic or international. This is another major test that the current Israeli government has failed colossally.

To put it plainly, in the midst of a multifront war, a considerable proportion of Israeli society has simply become so fed up with its own government that swathes of people are deciding to leave the country in search of greener pastures and a better and more peaceful future. On the watch of the most extreme and damaging right-wing coalition government in the country's history, which was formed in 2023, emigration has become a phenomenon that can no longer be ignored. A new study by Tel Aviv University, based on data collected by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, reveals a steep increase in the number of Israeli citizens leaving the country for at least three consecutive months since 2023.

In 2025, 90,922 Israeli citizens left Israel for at least three consecutive months, following 91,499 in 2024 and 86,509 in 2023, and there are indications that the trend has continued during the first six months of this year. In total, 268,300 Israelis left the country for at least three consecutive months during these three years, compared with 183,219 during the corresponding three-year period a decade earlier. On average, this represents an increase of nearly one-third per year. These are all years in which Benjamin Netanyahu has been in power, which should make him accountable and answerable, particularly during an election campaign. Considering that Israel has a population of just over 10 million, this is gradually becoming a strategic threat, not only because of the numbers involved but also because of the characteristics of those choosing either to take an extended break from the country or to leave with the intention of emigrating permanently. Netanyahu should be held accountable and answerable, particularly during an election campaign.

Prof. Itai Ater, who led the research, observed that, for now, these figures do not pose a risk to Israel's resilience. "However, looking ahead – and unless there is a change – there are growing concerns that rising emigration from Israel might jeopardize the country's future security and economy," he wrote. There are already indications of who is leaving. Research by the Israel Tax Authority's Planning and Economics Division, which examined the incomes of Israeli emigrants over the past decade, found that the more affluent are leaving at

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a much higher rate, with the increase becoming particularly sharp since 2023, almost double the rate recorded up to 2019. The authors of the report, as quoted by The Times of Israel, concluded: "From all the indicators regarding Israelis recently leaving the country, a consistent picture emerges: the pace of emigration among the strong and affluent strata of society increased, whereas among the weaker strata, the departure rate is almost unchanged."

Whereas in the past the average income of those leaving Israel was broadly in line with the population as a whole, today their income is approximately 50 per cent higher. A disproportionate number come from the medical and high-tech sectors. This is hardly surprising: their professions are more internationally mobile, they enjoy strong reputations abroad and they have the financial means and language skills required to relocate without the difficulties faced by many others. A high proportion of those choosing to spend an extended period abroad are also more secular and liberal-leaning. Many have served in the military and their children would likely have been expected to do so in the future. Under the current government, they feel increasingly ideologically disenfranchised and believe that they no longer share the values represented by those in power.

For them, the combination of a rising cost of living, heavy taxation and decades of military service – first as conscripts and then as reservists, while others are exempt from these obligations – has become increasingly intolerable. A government that in their view is ferociously attacking the democratic system, exempting tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox young men from military service and offering no credible political horizon for ending the wars and conflicts that they themselves are required to fight and pay for is unlikely to instill either trust or hope that this is the right place for them or their children.

Opposition parties should be outlining how they intend to address the challenge. Instead, it is hardly discussed. Part of the reason may be the stigma historically attached to leaving Israel. There is even a specific Hebrew term for those who leave: "yordim" (descenders), which, at least in the past, carried a strongly negative connotation – a kind of badge of shame. This stood in contrast to those who made "aliyah," which literally means "ascending" and refers to immigration to Israel, a concept deeply embedded in the country's ethos since its establishment. Opposition parties should be outlining how they intend to address the challenge. Instead, it is hardly discussed.

For much of its existence, Israel has revered those who arrive from the diaspora, while treating those who leave the country almost as deserters. But among younger Israelis, and increasingly among those who are not so young, that attitude has been changing. Over recent years, as fears have grown that the country is being taken over by antidemocratic forces, that religious laws and ways of life are spreading and in some cases being imposed, and that extended wars are becoming the norm rather than the exception, hundreds of thousands are simply looking for the exit door. They no longer see leaving as something for which they should be ashamed. As uncomfortable as this conversation may be, particularly at a time when the country is still, to a greater or lesser extent, engaged on several active war fronts, it may be tempting to regard such discussion as demoralizing and potentially beneficial to Israel's enemies.

– Yossi Mekelberg is a professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the MENA Program at Chatham House. X: @YMekelberg

China's Fusion Breakthrough: Death Knell for the Oil Age

Qamar Bashir



China is also not alone in the global fusion race. The United States has pursued laser-driven inertial confinement at the National Ignition Facility while American laboratories and private companies simultaneously pursue magnetic-confinement systems. Europe, Japan, South Korea, India and Russia remain deeply involved in fusion research, while ITER represents a vast multinational effort. Fusion is consequently becoming a technological competition involving several different scientific pathways

FOR more than a century, global economic and geopolitical power has revolved around energy. Coal powered industrialization; oil transformed transportation, warfare and international commerce; natural gas became another artery of modern civilization. Control of these resources—and the routes carrying them—created fortunes, alliances, dependencies and conflicts. China's rapidly advancing nuclear-fusion program now raises an extraordinary possibility: technology may eventually loosen the relationship between energy, geography and geopolitical power. Its celebrated "artificial sun" refers to experimental fusion machines designed to reproduce the fundamental process that powers stars. But China's recent achievements are remarkable enough without exaggeration. They demonstrate that fusion is moving progressively from theoretical physics toward an immensely difficult engineering challenge—and potentially, one day, toward electricity generation.

The scale of that challenge is illustrated by China's enormous new superconducting fusion magnet. The toroidal-field magnet weighs approximately 582 tonnes and measures about 21 metres by 12 metres. Its function is extraordinary: creating the magnetic environment necessary for controlling plasma at temperatures no ordinary physical container could withstand. Chinese scientific authorities say its magnetic-energy storage capability substantially exceeds that of the comparable ITER system.

The apparent contradiction at the heart of fusion engineering is astonishing. Plasma must reach temperatures of tens or even hundreds of millions of degrees, while superconducting magnetic systems operate at extremely low cryogenic temperatures. Scientists must therefore maintain one of the hottest environments humanity can create extraordinarily close to some of its coldest engineered equipment, while preventing either environment from destroying the other. The magnets create what can be imagined as an invisible cage. Fusion plasma consists of electrically charged particles, which respond to powerful magnetic fields. Instead of attempting to build a material wall capable of directly containing such temperatures—something impossible with existing materials—the tokamak uses magnetic confinement to keep most of the plasma separated from the reactor walls.

China's EAST—Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak—has already demonstrated the importance of long-duration confinement. In January 2025, EAST maintained high-confinement plasma for 1,066 seconds, or 17 minutes and 46 seconds, breaking its previous 403-second record. The achievement did not produce commercial electricity, but it demonstrated progress toward one of fusion's essential requirements: sustaining controlled, high-performance plasma for increasingly long periods. China followed this with another significant development in August 2026. EAST researchers experimentally accessed a theorized "density-free regime," maintaining stable plasma at densities beyond conventional limits. Density matters enormously because useful fusion requires enough fuel

particles to interact, yet increasing plasma density has historically created instability problems. Overcoming that constraint could provide another pathway toward the conditions required for fusion ignition. citetur0search1 China is now attempting to connect these scientific achievements with engineering. Its next-generation Burning Plasma Experimental Superconducting Tokamak, BEST, is scheduled for completion by the end of 2027.

According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences, BEST is intended to conduct deuterium-tritium burning-plasma experiments targeting 20–200 megawatts of fusion power and net energy gain. China is therefore moving beyond merely producing extremely hot plasma toward attempting to demonstrate whether fusion can become an energy-producing system. This progression is no longer isolated from national economic planning. China's 15th Five-Year Plan, covering 2026–2030, identifies nuclear fusion among the future industries Beijing intends to cultivate alongside quantum technology, hydrogen, biomanufacturing, artificial intelligence-related technologies and 6G. Fusion is therefore increasingly being approached not merely as laboratory research but as a potential future industrial sector. citetur0search10

China did not begin this journey alone. Its early superconducting tokamak experience benefited from Soviet technology, including the T-7 machine transferred and reconstructed as HT-7 during the 1990s. But China used that foundation to develop domestic expertise in superconducting magnets, plasma physics, cryogenics, materials, diagnostics and precision engineering. What began partly through technology acquisition has evolved into an increasingly indigenous scientific and manufacturing ecosystem. China is also not alone in the global fusion race. The United States has pursued laser-driven inertial confinement at the National Ignition Facility while American laboratories and private companies simultaneously pursue magnetic-confinement systems. Europe, Japan, South Korea, India and Russia remain deeply involved in fusion research, while ITER represents a vast multinational effort. Fusion is consequently becoming a technological competition involving several different scientific pathways. This competition could ultimately prove more consequential than competition for another oilfield. Modern strategic geography rests heavily upon fossil fuels. The Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, pipelines crossing Eurasia, LNG terminals and maritime transportation routes possess enormous importance because interruption of energy supplies can cripple economies. Major powers therefore devote military, diplomatic and financial resources to protecting access to energy and the routes through which it moves.

Commercial fusion could gradually change this equation. If countries eventually become capable of manufacturing enormous quantities of reliable electricity domestically from fusion, their dependence upon distant oilfields and vulnerable transportation corridors would decline. Hormuz and other chokepoints would remain important to world trade, but their capacity to threaten the entire global

energy system could diminish.

The greatest economic shock would fall upon countries heavily dependent upon hydrocarbons. Governments whose budgets, exports and foreign-exchange earnings rely substantially upon oil and gas would confront declining demand and potentially lower prices. Those that convert today's petroleum wealth into education, technology, manufacturing and diversified investment could survive and prosper. Those that remain overwhelmingly dependent upon extracting hydrocarbons could face profound structural adjustment. If fusion eventually becomes reliable and economical, inexpensive electricity could power massive desalination plants, produce hydrogen and synthetic fuels, electrify transportation and industrial processes, support cleaner steel production, operate enormous AI data centers and potentially enable large-scale carbon removal. Instead of humanity simply dividing today's energy market differently, the total amount of useful energy available to civilization could expand dramatically.

For developing countries, that could be transformational. Energy poverty restricts industry, agriculture, healthcare, education, water availability and technological progress. Abundant electricity could remove one of the most persistent constraints upon economic development and provide poorer societies opportunities that historically required access to coal, oil or gas. In a fusion age, strategic advantage could increasingly belong to countries possessing scientific talent, superconducting technology, advanced materials, artificial intelligence, plasma-control expertise, precision manufacturing and intellectual property.

Economic power could gradually migrate from nations fortunate enough to possess hydrocarbons beneath their soil toward nations capable of manufacturing sophisticated energy systems above it. The Chinese direction is unmistakable. EAST's long-duration confinement, the 2026 density breakthrough, the enormous superconducting magnet, BEST's scheduled 2027 completion and China's decision to elevate fusion within its national industrial strategy collectively demonstrate a progression from understanding fusion toward engineering fusion. That progression should command the attention of every hydrocarbon-dependent economy. The oil age will not end tomorrow, nor will fusion automatically replace every existing energy source. But technological revolutions rarely announce precisely when an established economic order has reached its peak. They advance experiment by experiment until the economics suddenly begin changing. China has not yet sounded the death knell for the oil age. But its laboratories are demonstrating that an alternative energy order is becoming scientifically imaginable and increasingly technologically tangible. The bell has not yet tolled for oil—but China may already be forging it.

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We should learn from History

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



EVERY cycle of violence in Balochistan revives an old and uncomfortable question in Pakistan's political discourse: could the province become another East Pakistan? The comparison has gained renewed attention following the sharp escalation in militant attacks during the past two years. Coordinated assaults on security installations, expanding insurgent activity, and the persistence of political discontent have encouraged many observers to revisit the lessons of 1971. While the comparison is understandable, it is also incomplete. History seldom repeats itself in identical form. Yet it often offers warnings that states ignore at their own peril. The insurgency in Balochistan is not a recent development. It has accompanied Pakistan's political journey almost since independence. From the first rebellion in 1948 to successive waves of unrest, the province has remained trapped in a cycle of confrontation between the state and sections of Baloch nationalist groups.

The latest resurgence, however, appears more organised, technologically adept, and geographically dispersed than many earlier phases. Militant organisations have demonstrated an ability to strike military convoys, infrastructure projects, and even strategic coastal areas, presenting fresh challenges to Pakistan's internal security. It is this deteriorating security environment that has prompted renewed references to East Pakistan. At first glance, the similarities

appear striking. In both cases, many citizens believed that their province contributed significantly to the national economy while receiving comparatively little in return. Before 1971, East Pakistan generated most of Pakistan's export earnings through jute, yet many Bengalis argued that development spending and political power remained concentrated in West Pakistan. In Balochistan, similar arguments revolve around natural gas, mineral wealth, Gwadar Port, and the strategic projects associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Despite possessing enormous natural resources, Balochistan continues to record poor indicators in education, healthcare, employment, and infrastructure. Such disparities have strengthened the perception that resource extraction has not translated into proportional local development. Whether every element of this perception is statistically accurate is open to debate, but perceptions themselves often shape political realities. Throughout history, feelings of exclusion have proved just as influential as measurable economic indicators. Identity politics has further deepened these grievances. East Pakistan's language movement became the defining symbol of Bengali political consciousness after the refusal to grant Bengali equal national status alongside Urdu.

In Balochistan, the issues differ in form but not entirely in substance. Questions surrounding cultural recognition, provincial autonomy, missing persons, political representation, and the space available for nationalist politics continue to dominate public debate. Over decades, distrust has accumulated, making compromise increasingly difficult. Security has consequently become the principal instrument of state policy. Pakistan's armed forces have undertaken repeated counter-insurgency campaigns aimed at dismantling militant organisations and restoring order. Many attacks have been successfully prevented, while numerous militant commanders have been eliminated. Yet military success has not translated into lasting political stability. Insurgencies rarely disappear through force alone when underlying political disputes remain unresolved. This lesson has emerged repeatedly across different regions of the world. It is here that memories of 1971 naturally arise. Pakistan's

tragic experience in East Pakistan demonstrated that military operations, when detached from meaningful political engagement, may suppress violence temporarily without resolving the grievances that sustain it. That historical lesson deserves careful reflection not because Balochistan is destined to follow the same path, but because unresolved political conflicts tend to grow more complex over time. However, the similarities should not obscure the profound differences between the two cases.

At the same time, China's substantial investments in Gwadar and CPEC create powerful incentives for regional stability rather than fragmentation. Beijing's strategic interests rest on a secure and economically integrated Balochistan. International politics itself has also changed dramatically. The Cold War environment, which shaped global alignments during 1971, has disappeared. Contemporary international diplomacy places considerably greater emphasis on territorial integrity and state sovereignty. Secessionist movements now face far higher diplomatic barriers to achieving international recognition than they did during the era of decolonisation. Another major distinction concerns political organisation. Bangladesh's independence movement possessed an elected political leadership, administrative structures, international diplomatic outreach, and broad popular mobilisation under a unified command. The Baloch insurgency, despite its persistence, remains divided among multiple organisations with differing strategies and objectives. Fragmentation has limited its political coherence and prevented the emergence of a unified alternative governing authority. These differences make one conclusion unavoidable: Balochistan is not another East Pakistan, and predictions of an inevitable repetition of 1971 oversimplify Pakistan's contemporary realities. Yet rejecting the analogy should not become an excuse for complacency. A province need not secede to become a long-term strategic liability. Persistent insurgency can gradually weaken economic confidence, discourage foreign investment, delay infrastructure projects, and impose heavy financial and human costs on the state. CPEC, Gwadar Port, and the devel-

opment of Pakistan's western regions all depend upon durable security combined with local political confidence. Neither objective can be achieved in isolation. This requires moving beyond a policy framework dominated exclusively by security considerations. Effective governance in conflict-affected regions demands credible political dialogue, accountable provincial institutions, transparent resource-sharing mechanisms, and visible improvements in public services. Development projects cannot succeed if local communities perceive themselves merely as spectators rather than beneficiaries. Equally important is rebuilding trust between the federation and the province. Trust cannot be restored through announcements alone. It grows through consistent implementation of constitutional commitments, meaningful participation in decision-making, fair economic opportunities, and confidence that grievances will receive institutional rather than coercive responses. Pakistan's federal structure already provides mechanisms for greater provincial participation.

The challenge lies less in constitutional design than in political execution. Genuine implementation of existing commitments may achieve far more than the repeated introduction of ambitious packages that fail to reach the communities they are intended to serve. The lesson of 1971 is therefore neither prophecy nor prediction. It is a reminder that national cohesion ultimately rests upon political legitimacy as much as military capability. States remain strongest when citizens believe they possess an equal stake in their collective future. Balochistan's future will not be determined solely by insurgent violence or security operations. It will be shaped by whether Pakistan succeeds in narrowing the distance between the federation and its largest province—politically, economically, and psychologically. The country possesses the opportunity to prevent history from becoming a recurring warning. Whether that opportunity is seized will influence not only the future of Balochistan but also the long-term stability of the Pakistani federation itself.

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Briefs

NATO ready to thwart any threat

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both as reassurance to member states and as a warning to potential adversaries. Meanwhile, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio highlighted maritime security in a call with a senior official from the United Arab Emirates, focusing on the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz. The narrow waterway, through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes, has long been a flashpoint for tensions involving Iran. Rubio stressed the need for continued cooperation to safeguard shipping lanes and prevent disruptions to global energy markets. The dual messages from NATO and U.S. officials reflect a broader effort to project strength and unity in the face of possible escalation. With Iran's intentions unclear, Western leaders are seeking to deter hostile actions while reinforcing alliances in both Europe and the Gulf region. The situation underscores the interconnected nature of global security, where developments in the Middle East can have direct implications for Europe and beyond.

UAE suspends all trade...

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The spokesperson said that any assessment of the situation must account for what he called the continued "malicious actions" of the US and Israel against regional peace and security, pointing to what he described as a history of false-flag operations in the region. The missile launch comes as a 60-day window for US-Iranian peace talks expired on Monday without a breakthrough, raising fears of a new escalation in the conflict that has disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz since February. "The defence ministry affirms its full readiness to deal with any threats and firmly confront anything that aims to destabilise the state's security," it said in a statement.

Mass Arrest in Islamabad...

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Equally troubling are questions about the issuance of visas by Pakistani missions abroad, which enabled hundreds of foreign nationals to enter the country and engage in illicit activities. Authorities have yet to clarify who facilitated the arrival of these individuals and how they managed to set up businesses that allegedly violated both local laws and social norms. The government's plan to repatriate the detained foreigners underscores the seriousness of the issue, but critics argue that without accountability for those who enabled their entry and operations, similar incidents may recur.

Turkiye's top diplomat invites DPM

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meeting, scheduled to be held in Istanbul later this month, the FO added. The development comes as regional powers move to strengthen security ties amid the US-Israel war on Iran, which started on February 28. The war in the Middle East has had a major impact on the region — drawing in several Gulf countries and paralysing maritime traffic through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. The foreign ministers from the four states are scheduled to meet weeks after Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement. Signed on August 7, the agreement stipulates that an armed attack against any one of the three countries would be regarded as an attack against them all. Turkiye later said that the defence pact was open to expansion — with Egypt as a potential candidate — and did not seek to replace any existing alliances.

Mohsen Gillani, Saudi Envoy Discuss Pakistan Football Development

Mohsen Gillani briefed Ambassador Ahmad Farooq on the PFF's ongoing initiatives and future plans for the promotion of football at both national and grassroots levels. He highlighted the federation's efforts to expand opportunities for players and strengthen the overall football structure in Pakistan

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), Mohsen Gillani, called on Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ahmad Farooq, in Riyadh, where they discussed ways to further promote and develop football in Pakistan and strengthen sports cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The meeting focused on exploring new avenues of collaboration with relevant Saudi institutions and sports stakeholders to strengthen Pakistan's football ecosystem and create greater opportunities for Pakistani players, coaches and sporting institutions. Mohsen Gillani briefed Ambassador Ahmad Farooq on the PFF's ongoing



ing initiatives and future plans for the promotion of football at both national and grassroots levels. He highlighted the federation's efforts to expand opportunities for players and strengthen the overall football structure in Pakistan.

Ambassador Ahmad Farooq appreciated the PFF's efforts for the development of football in Pakistan and assured his full support in exploring avenues for enhanced cooperation and engagement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the field of sports. The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment to using football as an effective platform to strengthen people-to-people ties, create new sporting opportunities and further deepen the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

How Saudi footballer Anan Al-Mahanna refused to let a defeat end dream

ALKHOBAR: For Anan Al-Mahanna, the distance between years of hard work and a place in Saudi Arabia's Women's Premier League once came down to a single match. The Saudi footballer had founded Al-Taqadom's women's team in the summer of 2023 and only months later had taken the club to the semifinals of the inaugural season of the Saudi Women's First Division. The Al-Qassim province club was within one victory of promotion to Premier League. They lost 1-0 to Al-Taraji. "We were a team with spirit and love for each other, and there were a lot of emotions that brought us together," Al-Mahanna, 31, told Arab News. "We reached the semifinal together through our team spirit, even though we faced many psychological and financial difficulties. We didn't give up. We were one step away from the dream of reaching the Premier League, but unfortunately we weren't successful." The defeat affected her deeply. After everything the players had invested in the season, watching another team earn promotion was difficult to accept. "It was a hard feeling after

we had worked and fought, only to lose in the end," she said. "It affected me so much that I traveled outside Saudi Arabia for four months to get over it." But the defeat did not stall her career. She eventually tasted Premier League action with Eastern Flames, the club she now plays for. "All the players, myself included, continued. We didn't give up, and we all went on to play in the Premier League." Al-Mahanna's relationship with football began long before a professional women's league existed in Saudi Arabia. She spent 16 years of her childhood in Egypt, where her father worked at the Saudi Embassy in Cairo. It was there that she began playing, encouraged by her older brother, Salman. "My older brother, Salman, played a big role," she said. "He was the one who taught me and gave me the ambition and passion to take football professionally, compete and challenge myself." When she returned to Saudi Arabia, opportunities for female footballers were limited. Over the years that followed, Al-Mahanna became involved not only as a player, but also in building teams herself. In 2022, she founded Team

SENS — the official women's football team of the Saudi Environment Association — in Jeddah and competed with them in the Global Goals World Cup. The side finished first and was also named Crowd Champion. The result qualified SENS for the competition's finals in the Eastern Province. Al-Mahanna later founded Al-Taqadom's women's team and another team, Footy. She also spent three years with White Lion, where she served as captain, before the team's later association with NEOM. Her football career initially developed alongside a full-time job. Before becoming a professional player, Al-Mahanna spent seven years working for car dealership Changan Al-Majdouie while continuing to play football in the evenings. "I would work in the morning and play football at night as an amateur," she said. "I was also participating in the First Division." Professional football eventually forced her to choose between the two. "When I became a professional, I resigned from my job because professionalism required me to be completely dedicated so I could focus on my training and rest." That decision later took

her away from her family in Jeddah. Al-Mahanna moved to the Eastern Province, where she has spent two years playing professionally for Shulat Al-Sharqiya, or Eastern Flames, in the Women's Premier League. She describes that period as the most difficult of her career. "The distance from my family was a little difficult, and I faced many situations where I felt I was treated unfairly in football, administratively, financially and psychologically," she said. "I was alone through all of these stages." One teammate, Fidaa Ashour, became particularly important during that period. "God blessed me with a friend on the team who stood beside me through all of these stages," Al-Mahanna said. She also credits her family, close friends and several coaches in Jeddah as the main sources of support throughout her career. Al-Mahanna's years in football have coincided with a rapid expansion of opportunities for Saudi women in sport, a difference she sees particularly clearly for younger players. "Opportunities are now available to everyone, and there are many good opportunities," she said. — APP

Australian tennis star Kyrgios admits 'huge mistake' after failing test for cocaine

LONDON: Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios said on Wednesday that he had made "a huge mistake" after testing positive for cocaine. The 31-year-old, who reached the final at Wimbledon in 2022, failed a doping test during an ATP event in Mallorca, Spain, on June 22. "On 17 July 2026, a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accredited laboratory confirmed the presence of benzoylgonine, a metabolite of cocaine," the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said. Kyrgios, whose undoubted talent has been overshadowed by a suspect temperament and injuries, wrote on Instagram that he took "full responsibility." "I made a huge mistake," he wrote. "I'm sorry to my fans, my family, my sponsors and everyone close to me. 'Above all, I'm sorry to the kids who follow me. 'I know the example this sets and I'm deeply disappointed in myself.'"

Boasting a big serve and booming ground strokes, Kyrgios has won seven singles titles on the ATP Tour and rose to a high of 13 in the world in 2016. His finest performance was on the grass at Wimbledon in 2022, when he reached the championship match, losing in four sets to Novak Djokovic. Despite his natural talents that is as good as it got, with a series of injuries taking their toll. He is now ranked 919 and has barely played in singles tennis in recent years. In January, he admitted he would never be the player that he once was. Kyrgios is one of the few players to have recorded four-level wins over the "Big Four" of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray. But the success on court came with huge problems off it, including severe injuries to his right elbow, left wrist, hip, knees, shoulders and collarbone. He has had numerous surgeries, the most serious a complete reconstruction of his right wrist in 2024. On Wednesday, he said that the injuries had taken "a huge toll on me both physically and mentally." "None of that excuses what I did," he said of his failed test. "However the good news is that this has given me a wake-up call." He added: "I'm sorry, I'll do the work and come back better." The ITIA said that the suspension had been in place since August 4. It said: "While suspended Kyrgios is not allowed to play in, coach at, or attend any events organized or sanctioned by World Tennis, WTA, ATP, the Grand Slams, or any national association." — APP

Pakistan summons US envoy Natalie...

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While appreciating President Donald Trump's offer to mediate between India and Pakistan to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in the aftermath of Marka-e-Haq, the U.S. side was urged to ensure that its public statements remain consistent with the disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir.

No ambiguity about PTI...

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at private hospitals is available to all the prisoners. Attallah Tarar said the PTI-N has never politicised the issue of health. However, he regretted that history bears witness to the fact that PTI members politicised the health of the PML-N leadership. He said every prisoner has the right to receive healthcare facilities in accordance with the Constitution and the law. The Information Minister said the PTI founding chairman had previously been provided healthcare facilities and would continue to have access to medical treatment. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said the Supreme Court has given relief to the PTI founding chairman and the government has no objection to it.

Govt reduces diesel prices

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Petroleum prices have skyrocketed due to the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran, with diesel currently standing at nearly Rs400 per litre. A significant portion of the transport sector relies on high-speed diesel. Its price is considered inflationary since it is predominantly used in heavy goods transport vehicles, trucks, buses, trains, and agricultural machinery such as tractors, tube wells, and threshers. The consumption of high-speed diesel particularly contributes to the increased prices of vegetables and other food items. During the presser, Malik said the new diesel price would show a significant reduction today, adding that the government would ensure the benefit of the lower refinery price was passed on to consumers.

Network facilitating illegal...

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with Immigration, IMPASS, and the Special Protection Unit (SPU), who allegedly facilitated immigration clearance and movement of foreign nationals within Pakistan. The FIR further states that WhatsApp messages, payment receipts, and other communication material were recovered from Junaid Mughal's mobile phone, which investigative authorities have described as critical evidence supporting the alleged transactions. The most significant development recorded in the FIR is that an FIA special team raided Junaid Mughal's residence in Ghouri Town, Islamabad. During interrogation, based on information obtained from Mughal and data from his mobile phone, further questioning was conducted.

Pak out WC medal race as India...

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penalty corners, converting them with clinical precision to swing the momentum in their favor. The situation was compounded by two unfortunate deflections off Pakistani sticks that wrong-footed the goalkeeper and ended up in the back of their own net, gifting India crucial goals. The final nail in the coffin came via a penalty stroke awarded against Pakistan following a reckless tackle inside the striking circle. The Indian forward made no mistake from the spot, extending the lead to an insurmountable margin.

Govt files review plea against SC ruling

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floating on the surface of the record". It argued that Rule 197 of the Pakistan Prison Rules, 1978, which governs the manner and mode of the transfer of a prisoner to the hospital, had escaped SC's attention in its ruling on Imran's hospitalisation. "Had the court taken note of the above-noted provision of law, the order under review could not have been passed," the plea said. Elaborating on Rule 197, the plea stated that it explained that government orders for the transfer of a prisoner would be obtained through the police inspector general (IG) in cases wherein a convicted or under-trial prisoner was to be admitted to the hospital for treatment. However, in emergency cases, the jail superintendent was authorised to act as if the government sanction had been given, and if he did so, he should immediately inform the IG, the plea added, citing the rule. Under the rule, in cases where a prisoner was to be moved to a hospital for an operation, the shifting should take place as close as possible to the time fixed for the operation, and the prisoner should be brought back to the prison hospital "as soon as this can conveniently be done", the plea said. Moreover, it contended that issuing directives for the treatment of a convict at a private hospital, and that too on the basis of a report that did not disclose any condition requiring immediate medical treatment, "will severely disturb the entire criminal justice system".

IIRIS and Embassy of Indonesia celebrate Independence Day

ISLAMABAD: The International Institute for Regional and International Studies (IIRIS), in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Islamabad, organized a special ceremony in Islamabad to commemorate the Independence Days of Pakistan and Indonesia and celebrate the longstanding friendship between the two countries. The event brought together diplomats, academics, students, media representatives, and members of civil society to highlight the shared bonds, diplomatic journey, cultural connections, and future opportunities between Pakistan and Indonesia. In his welcome remarks, Shafiqat Rasool, President of IIRIS, highlighted the importance of Pakistan-Indonesia relations and the broader partnership between Pakistan and ASEAN. He emphasized the strong people-to-people connections, cultural understanding, educational cooperation, youth engagement, and opportunities for enhanced diplomatic and regional cooperation. Rahmat Hindiarta, Minister Counselor/Coordinator for Information, Social and Cultural Affairs, Embassy of Indonesia, highlighted the historic journey of Pakistan-Indonesia friendship and the close relationship between the two nations. He reflected on the longstanding bonds between the peoples of Pakistan and Indonesia and emphasized the importance of

exploring new opportunities for cooperation, particularly in areas of culture, education, tourism, trade, diplomacy, and people-to-people engagement. Donney Ardiwidha, First Secretary (Political Affairs), Embassy of Indonesia, also addressed the gathering and highlighted the significance of Indonesia-Pakistan relations and continued diplomatic engagement. He underscored the importance of strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation between the two countries. H.E. Zohreh Shahbeik, Counselor, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamabad, extended her remarks on the occasion and congratulated the people of Pakistan and Indonesia on their Independence Days. She emphasized the importance of friendship, solidarity, and cooperation among regional countries and expressed her best wishes for stronger relations between Pakistan and Indonesia. Hanan Durrani, Executive Producer, Pakistan Television (PTV), also shared his remarks, highlighting the significance of the Independence Days of Pakistan and Indonesia and the importance of strengthening cultural and people-to-people connections between the two countries. The ceremony was attended by students and participants from Pakistan and Indonesia, reflecting the strong interest of the younger generation in bilateral relations, cultural exchange, diplomacy, and international cooperation. — APP

Grooming for Good

"We just wanted to help in some way. I think it's important to do things you care about, says Aaleen as she deftly clips the nails of a young Pomeranian

MUSTAFA YAZDANI

IN a back garden in Lahore, two high school students are doing their part to fight for animal welfare in Pakistan. Through their start-up business "Paws for Purpose" Aaleen and Shahnoor groom pets to raise money for Lahore's animal shelters. Their growing social media presence is not only a way to find clients. They also routinely appeal for donations, share volunteer opportunities and direct their followers towards organizations working with animals across the city. "We just wanted to help in some way. I think it's important to do things you care about, says Aaleen as she deftly clips the nails of a young Pomeranian. The scene is cheerful. The two girls laugh and bicker as they tend to their barking clients. But grooming animals in Lahore's summer heat is not easy work. The pair spends hours outdoors, averaging several pets a day, carefully washing, brushing and trimming each animal that comes through their doors. It is a clean, professional but entirely unpretentious operation, run entirely through their own initiative. The girls are admirable in their



clarity of purpose. They have identified something they care about and, rather than waiting for someone else to act, have begun doing the work themselves. That so few people share this way of thinking is not lost on them. "We meet so many people through this job

and they all love their own pets. But so few ever stop to think about strays," says Shahnoor. It is a contradiction the girls encounter regularly, people can be deeply affectionate towards the animals living inside their homes, while remaining largely indifferent

to those living on the streets. For Aaleen and Shahnoor, the distinction is difficult to reconcile. Paws for Purpose comes at a time of increasing public outcry over Pakistan's treatment of stray animals. The country has long struggled with how to manage large populations of stray dogs and cats, with concerns around public safety often clashing with calls for more humane treatment. The Islamabad High Court has imposed a permanent ban on the culling of stray dogs and called for investment in more humane methods of population control. Courts in Lahore have expressed similar concerns, even as reports of culling continue to emerge. Aaleen and Shahnoor are under no illusion that a small grooming business can solve a problem of this scale. They are representative, however, of a larger trend within the country, where passionate young people create the change they wish to see. Their message to any curious observers, on social media or at their salon, is simple. "We hope more people would adopt, but if they can't, they should at least support the organizations." The two girls are clearly on a mission, balancing school work with a desire to create a kinder world for the animals they love.

Briefs

Gold price
falls Rs3,700
per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of gold in the country declined on Wednesday, with the price of 24-karat gold falling by Rs3,700 to Rs458,236 per tola, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

The price of 24-karat gold for 10 grams decreased by Rs3,172 to Rs392,863, while the price of 22-karat gold for 10 grams fell by Rs2,908 to Rs360,137. In the international market, gold was quoted at \$4,358 per ounce, down by \$37 from the previous session. Meanwhile, the price of silver also witnessed a decline, with 24-karat silver falling by Rs186 per tola to Rs6,800. The price of 24-karat silver for 10 grams decreased by Rs160 to Rs5,829, while international silver was quoted at \$63.21 per ounce, down by \$1.86. The gold rates were based on interbank exchange rates, with purity set at 999 for 24-karat gold, the association said. **_APP**

Rupee gains
01 paisa
against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.60, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 277.61. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.10 and Rs 278.75, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.78 and closed at Rs 321.99 against the previous day's closing of Rs 321.21, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 0.80 and closed at Rs 376.25 compared to the previous day's Rs 375.45. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 75.58 and Rs 73.93, respectively. **_APP**

Lebanon mulls
removing
restrictions
against Syrians

BEIRUT'S: Lebanese authorities began reviewing security restrictions against some 600,000 Syrians in the latest move that reflects Beirut's desire to open a new chapter in relations with Damascus based on clear security and legal foundations. The restrictions are among the thorniest issues in Lebanon and that emerged during the wave of Syrian displacement sparked by the civil war. The restrictions led to hundreds of thousands of Syrians being barred entry to Lebanon. Addressing the issue would pave the way for Lebanese-Syrian relations that are based on security coordination and respect for the law. Ashraq Al-Awsat learned that Lebanon's General Directorate of the General Security has kicked off the legal procedures to lift security restrictions against over 600,000 Syrians that barred their entry to Lebanon for years. A prominent security source revealed that General Security chief Hassan Choucair has formed a committee that will study the file of Syrians who have security warrants against them that have prevented them from entering Lebanon. The warrants are tied to residency or entry violations. The source told Ashraq Al-Awsat that authorities are now examining the file of every Syrian who has been barred entry to Lebanon over residency violations, such as entering Lebanon illegally or violating residency rules or exceeding the duration of their stay. The source said the committee has already completed tens of thousands of files. The General Security will issue a statement upon completion of the procedures. It will inform the Syrian authorities of its results. The move is not limited to building trust between Beirut and Damascus, but it also aims to crack down on people smuggling across the Lebanese-Syrian border. The latest procedures will allow Syrians to enter Lebanon with their identification papers or through travel agencies as long as they meet the necessary requirements. **_APP**

Pakistan must shift to
skilled workforce export

The provincial finance minister said, Pakistan must equip its youth with modern education, technical and vocational training, market-oriented skills and access to international labour markets through safe and legal channels. At the same time, the government must continue creating quality employment, entrepreneurship and investment opportunities within Pakistan so that young people have meaningful choices

LAHORE: Punjab Finance Minister Mian Muftaba Shuja-ur-Rehman said on Wednesday that Pakistan needs to move from the export of manpower to the export of a skilled workforce to effectively integrate its young human capital into the global economy. He was addressing a special seminar titled "From Pakistan to the World... How? Development, Opportunities and Prosperity", organised by the Mir Khalil-ur-Rehman Memorial Society, Jang Group of Newspapers and AS Foreign Education Consultants Group of Companies. He added, "The objective of our policy should not be greater migration but a better, safer and more productive migration. Overseas Pakistanis should not be viewed merely as a source of remittances; they are economic partners, investors and ambassadors of Pakistan. Their presence abroad can serve as a strong economic bridge between Pakistan and the global economy." The provincial finance minister said, Pakistan must equip its youth with modern education, technical and vocational training, market-oriented skills and access to international labour markets through safe and legal channels. At the same time, the government must continue creating quality employment, entrepreneurship and investment opportunities within Pakistan so that young people have meaningful choices. He said, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is providing young people with opportunities in education, technical training, employment

and entrepreneurship. Reforms are being introduced in the education sector, while technical and vocational training institutions are being restructured to make them more responsive to the requirements of the modern labour market. Interest-free loans are also being provided to promote employment and entrepreneurship. Farmers are being supported with essential agricultural resources to increase domestic production and strengthen the country's export potential. Mian Muftaba Shuja-ur-Rehman said, international mobility today is not simply about migration from one country to another; it is also the movement of knowledge, skills, experience, capital and business networks. Pakistan is a young country, and its youthful population is one of its greatest strengths. Global markets have a growing demand for skilled professionals in healthcare, engineering, construction, information technology, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, agriculture and other emerging sectors. "We should not focus merely on how many Pakistanis go abroad. Our focus should be on how many Pakistanis reach international markets with the right skills, secure and dignified employment, and through safe and legal channels," he said. He emphasized the need to provide prospective migrants with appropriate training, reliable information, career guidance and legal pathways. The Finance Minister said the contribution of overseas Pakistanis should extend beyond

remittances. They possess valuable capital, international market experience, technological knowledge and business networks. Pakistan needs to move towards a model in which overseas Pakistanis are encouraged to invest in businesses, transfer technology, build commercial linkages and mentor young people in Pakistan. He said Pakistan should transform brain drain into brain circulation and brain gain. Pakistanis working abroad can contribute to the country by transferring knowledge, expertise, technology and business connections. An IT professional can mentor young people, an engineer can share international experience and a successful entrepreneur can invest in Pakistan. Geographical distance should not become economic distance. Finance Minister said the digital economy offers unprecedented opportunities for Pakistani youth. Skills in IT, freelancing, artificial intelligence, software development and cybersecurity can connect young Pakistanis directly with global markets. A Pakistani professional can now provide services to international companies without leaving the country. "Our goal should not only be to find jobs in the world; we must also equip our youth to provide services, technology and innovative solutions to the world," he said. Mian Muftaba Shuja-ur-Rehman said Pakistan's economic and diplomatic progress must increasingly be translated into economic opportunities. Pakistan has demonstrated resilience and capability

in the fields of defence and diplomacy despite challenging circumstances. He said the country should now leverage its young population, human capital, technology and international linkages to strengthen its economic position and create new opportunities for its people. The Finance Minister said the Punjab Government has focused on increasing revenue without imposing the burden of new taxes. Collections by the Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) have increased by more than 38 percent during the current fiscal year, while significant growth has also been recorded in Excise and Taxation collections. He said additional resources generated through improved revenue collection are being utilized for education, healthcare, employment, public welfare and development initiatives. The seminar was attended by political, social, educational and business personalities, educationists and students. Shahid Hafeez, Chairman AS Group of Companies, formally inaugurated the programme, while Thomas Dawes gave participants a detailed briefing on the NAOERO Passport Policy under AS Group of Companies and highlighted opportunities for individuals interested in education, employment and investment abroad. Additional Federal Secretary and CSS Officer Sajjad Ahmed Bhutta presented AI-generated national anthems at the seminar as part of Independence Day celebrations, adding to the participants' sense of patriotism. **—DNA**



ISLAMABAD: UN's resident coordinator Mr. Muhammad Yahya called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Islamophobic incidents
in London surged

LONDON: Islamophobic incidents in London during the first six months of the year exceeded figures for all of 2023, a monitoring group has warned. The "alarming" statistics reveal a sixfold growth in annual cases from 2021 to 2025, Tell Mama said, warning that it reflects a "sustained escalation of anti-Muslim hate." Behind every incident reported to Tell Mama is a "Londoner who was made to feel unsafe simply because of their faith." In 2021, the number of reported incidents stood at 313. It more than doubled to 818 in 2022, before rising annually to a record 1,909 last year. This year to the end of June, Tell Mama received 1,031 reports, exceeding the 1,028 logged for all of 2023. It comes amid a series of controversial high-profile anti-Islam rallies in London. The most prominent was Unite the Kingdom, organized by anti-Islam campaigner Tommy Robinson. His supporters gathered outside Parliament and called for the "removal of Islam," while Robinson shared a video warning that "it's time for many Muslims to leave this country." Tell Mama's director, Iman Atta, said: "What is most alarming is the trajectory: from just over 300 reports in 2021 to nearly 1,100 in the first half of this year alone. "A worrying rise in repeat victimisation and heightened levels of targeted anger are leaving victims with a fractured sense of personal safety, highlighting the urgent need for robust counter-extremism strategies rather than political platitudes. "This is not a temporary blip, it is a sustained escalation of anti-Muslim hate, and it demands a sustained and uncompromising no-nonsense response from our public institutions." Separately, the British Muslim Trust recorded 70 attacks at Muslim places of worship across the UK in the year to July. The Independent reported. The figures included accounts of vandalism and intimidation. A spokesperson for London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement: "We will not tolerate attacks on the Muslim community. Hate crime in all its forms – including ongoing efforts to tackle racism, anti-Muslim hate crime, and other forms of hatred in the capital – remains a core policing priority. "Our focus on tackling these hateful offenders is starting to work, and in the last 12 months the Met has increased positive outcomes – including arrests and charges – for anti-Muslim hate crime by 57%." **—DNA**

ASEAN reaffirms partnership with Pak for trade, digital ties

Under the Philippines' Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2026, the group is operating under the theme "Navigating Our Future, Together." The statement outlines three core priorities anchored on this theme: (1) Peace and Security Anchors, (2) People Empowerment, and (3) Prosperity Corridors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI), representing the diplomatic missions of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, issued a Joint Statement today to commemorate the 59th Anniversary of the Founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In the statement, the ACI celebrated the region's journey from the signing of the ASEAN Declaration in Bangkok on August 8, 1967, to its current status as a dynamic and influential regional community. The committee underscored the organization's foundational principles of mutual respect, peaceful settlement of disputes, and non-interference, which continue to underpin ASEAN's contributions to regional stability. The statement notes that 2026 is a landmark year for the bloc. It marks the first year of implementing the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, a long-term roadmap aimed at building a resilient, innovative, and people-centered community. Coincidentally, 2026 also marks the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), a cornerstone of peaceful coexistence in the region. Furthermore, the ACI formally welcomed Timor-Leste as the 11th Member State of ASEAN, describing it as a historic development that strengthens the association's community-building efforts. Under the Philippines' Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2026, the group is operating under the theme "Navigating Our Future, Together." The statement outlines three core priorities anchored on this theme: (1) Peace and Security Anchors, (2) People Empowerment, and (3) Prosperity Corridors. To achieve these goals, the ACI stated that the bloc will strengthen peace and stability through dialogue, empower communities through inclu-

sion and innovation, and advance digital transformation and sustainable development. The committee also reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN Centrality, emphasizing that regional cooperation draws strength from diversity and mutual trust, rather than uniformity. The Joint Statement placed significant emphasis on ASEAN's ongoing partnership with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The ACI acknowledged Pakistan's evolving engagement since being accorded Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status in 1993, and its accession to the TAC in 2004. The committee noted Pakistan's active participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum as a key avenue for cooperation. Looking forward, the ACI encouraged the expansion of ASEAN-Pakistan cooperation into critical areas, including, acknowledging the increasingly complex global landscape marked by geopolitical uncertainty and

climate change, the ACI reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a strong collective presence in Pakistan. The Committee pledged to work closely with the Government of Pakistan, diplomatic partners, academic institutions, and civil society to foster deeper understanding and practical cooperation. "ASEAN's greatest strength lies not only in its economic dynamism or strategic importance, but in the enduring bonds among its peoples and in its shared determination to build a peaceful, inclusive, resilient and prosperous region," the statement read. The ACI concluded its message by reaffirming the ASEAN spirit of "Navigating Our Future, Together," looking forward to working with Pakistan and global partners to achieve a future defined by peace, prosperity, resilience, and inclusivity, under the organization's official motto: ASEAN: One Vision, One Identity, One Community.

Ebola cases in
Congo exceed
5,000

NAIROBI: The number of confirmed Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo now exceeds 5,000, government data showed late on Tuesday, as health officials warn that response efforts are failing to contain the deadly disease. Congo's 17th Ebola epidemic turned into the biggest in the country's history in terms of number of cases in late July and over the weekend the death toll hit 2,378, the public health institute said, surpassing the previous worst outbreak in 2018-2020. The institute has so far logged 5,021 cases, according to its latest situation report, making it the second-worst outbreak globally, behind only the 2014 to 2016 epidemic in West Africa in both infections and deaths. The ongoing outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo species of Ebola, which has no approved vaccines or treatments. It has gained momentum since it was declared on May 15, as weak health infrastructure, community resistance, instability and protests by response workers hinder efforts to identify and respond to cases. **—APP**

KSA'S US
treasury
holdings
rise 1.6% to
\$142.5b

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's holdings of US Treasury securities rose 1.56 percent in June to \$142.5 billion, as the Kingdom bucked the global trend. The holdings by Saudi Arabia increased from \$140.3 billion in May, although the latest figure is below the 2026 high of \$160.4 billion seen in February, according to US Treasury Department data. On a year-on-year basis, Saudi Arabia's holdings increased 9.19 percent in June, reflecting continued demand for US government debt despite changing market conditions. The Kingdom's increase is in contrast to the global foreign holdings total, which was down 0.78 percent month on month to stand at \$9.3 trillion, reflecting changes in how major investors and reserve managers are positioning their portfolios amid shifting market conditions. Commenting on the global drop, Tony Hallside, CEO of STP Partners told Arab News: "The month-on-month decline in foreign holdings of US Treasuries should be viewed in the context of how global investors, including official reserve managers, balance liquidity, yield and diversification rather than as a simple indication of declining confidence in US government debt."

He added that Treasuries remain one of the deepest and most liquid markets globally and continue to play an important role in institutional and sovereign portfolios. Countries including Saudi Arabia invest in US Treasuries for their perceived safety, liquidity, diversification benefits, and alignment with economic ties to the US. **—APP**

Egypt holds
Africa's \$7b
sukuk market

RIYADH: Egypt accounts for 48 percent of Africa's outstanding sukuk, making it the continent's largest market, as regulatory reforms and closer economic ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council support growth, according to Fitch Ratings. In its latest report, the credit rating agency said African sukuk crossed \$7 billion outstanding in August, up 16 percent year on year. Fitch said sukuk is emerging as an alternative source of funding for some sovereigns on the continent, allowing them to diversify their funding sources and attract demand from GCC and African Islamic banks, Shariah-compliant investment funds and multilateral institutions. The market remains underdeveloped, however, with enabling regulation lacking in most African countries and domestic Islamic financial institutions small or absent in many markets. "Egypt issued its debut US dollar sovereign sukuk in 2023, and is subsequently emerging as a regular and substantial issuer of US dollar sukuk following regulatory reforms and deepening ties with the GCC. It also issued its first local-currency sukuk in 2025, and continued issuance into the first half of 2026," said Fitch. It added: "This helped attract demand from Egyptian Islamic banks, which hold about a 5 percent share of banking system assets and had faced a lack of Shariah-compliant investment options." **—APP**

Briefs

Islamophobic incident in London surge

LONDON: Islamophobic incidents in London during the first six months of the year exceeded figures for all of 2023, a monitoring group has warned. The "alarming" statistics reveal a sixfold growth in annual cases from 2021 to 2025, Tell Mama said, warning that it reflects a "sustained escalation of anti-Muslim hate." Behind every incident reported to Tell Mama is a "Londoner who was made to feel unsafe simply because of their faith." In 2021, the number of reported incidents stood at 313. It more than doubled to 818 in 2022, before rising annually to a record 1,909 last year. This year to the end of June, Tell Mama received 1,031 reports, exceeding the 1,028 logged for all of 2023. It comes amid a series of controversial high-profile anti-Islam rallies in London. The most prominent was Unite the Kingdom, organized by anti-Islam campaigner Tommy Robinson. His supporters gathered outside Parliament and called for the "removal of Islam," while Robinson shared a video warning that "it's time for many Muslims to leave this country." Tell Mama's director, Iman Atta, said: "What is most alarming is the trajectory: from just over 300 reports in 2021 to nearly 1,100 in the first half of this year alone. - APP

Digital platforms need to take Pakistan's 'specific circumstances'

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry on Wednesday told a delegation from Google that digital platforms would have to take the country's "specific circumstances" into account. According to the interior ministry, Chaudhry met a delegation from the tech giant led by Senior Director David Weller. Google Pakistan's representative Kyle Gardner was also part of the delegation. It said the meeting covered digital security, the effective use of social media against terrorism, the timely regulation of online content and mutual cooperation. "Pakistan wishes to further enhance cooperation and coordination with Google for a safe and peaceful digital environment," Chaudhry was quoted as saying. He said that Pakistan's geographical location was "different from other countries". "Digital platforms will have to take into account the specific circumstances of Pakistan," he said, adding that terrorists used social media to spread fear and promote terrorism.

Nawaz, Maryam laud services of outgoing Saudi ambassador

As he departs, Ambassador Al-Maliki leaves behind a legacy of trust, cooperation, and goodwill. His efforts have not only reinforced the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia but also set the stage for future collaboration in an increasingly complex regional environment

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif held a farewell meeting with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki, marking the conclusion of his distinguished diplomatic service in Pakistan. Upon arrival at the Chief Minister's Office, Ambassador Al-Maliki was warmly received. Both President Nawaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz praised his contributions to strengthening Pakistan-Saudi relations, describing him as a dedicated envoy who worked tirelessly to deepen bilateral ties. Ambassador Al-Maliki first served in Pakistan as the Saudi Defence Attaché, where he played a pivotal role in enhancing military cooperation between the two countries. His promotion to Ambassador further solidified his influence, allowing him to expand cooperation beyond defense into political, economic, and cultural spheres. During his tenure, he cultivated strong ties with Pakistan's leadership and became a popular figure among the public, admired for his approachable style and commitment to friendship between the two nations. The farewell meeting highlighted several milestones achieved under his tenure. Among them was the landmark Pakistan-Saudi-Turkey Defence Pact, which



strengthened trilateral security cooperation. Another significant achievement was the US-Iran Islamabad Declaration, a diplomatic initiative that underscored Pakistan's role as a bridge in regional peace efforts. These milestones reflected the ambassador's ability to foster dialogue and cooperation across sensitive geopolitical divides. Ambassador Al-Maliki expressed heartfelt gratitude for the hospitality and affection he received during his stay in Pakistan. He described his time in the country as

"memorable," noting the sincerity and warmth shown by the Pakistani leadership and people. His remarks underscored the depth of the relationship he helped nurture, one that extends beyond official diplomacy into genuine friendship. The farewell ceremony reaffirmed the historic and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Both sides emphasized their commitment to further enhancing cooperation in political, economic, and cultural domains. Analysts

note that Ambassador Al-Maliki's tenure will be remembered as a period of significant progress, where bilateral relations reached new heights and Pakistan's role in regional diplomacy was strengthened. As he departs, Ambassador Al-Maliki leaves behind a legacy of trust, cooperation, and goodwill. His efforts have not only reinforced the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia but also set the stage for future collaboration in an increasingly complex regional environment.

Pakistan extends airspace ban on Indian aircraft until Sept 24

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has issued a new Notice to Airmen (Notam), extending the closure of Pakistani airspace to Indian flights. According to the Notam, the ban, effective from Aug 18, applies to all aircraft registered in India, Indian airlines, aircraft leased by India and commercial and military aircraft owned or operated by Indian nationals. The restriction will remain in force until 4:59am Pakistan Standard Time (PST) on Sept 24. The airspace closure was initially imposed on April 23, 2025, and the latest notification marks the 16th Notam issued to extend the restriction. Pakistan barred Indian airlines from using its airspace in April last year after New Delhi suspended the Indus Waters Treaty following the deadly Pahalgam attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). India accused Pakistan of involvement in

the attack, an allegation Islamabad has firmly denied while calling for an independent and transparent investigation. In response to Pakistan's decision, India closed its airspace to Pakistani airlines on April 30 last year. Tensions escalated further when India launched strikes on several Pakistani cities on May 6 and 7, 2025. Pakistan responded with Operation Bunyanum Marsoos, targeting multiple Indian military installations in a large-scale retaliatory operation. During the confrontation, Pakistan shot down eight Indian fighter aircraft, including three Rafale jets, along with dozens of drones. The hostilities lasted nearly 87 hours before both nuclear-armed neighbours agreed to a US-brokered ceasefire on May 10. The airspace restrictions have had a far greater financial impact on India's aviation sector, while Pakistan's aviation industry has experienced comparatively limited disruption. - APP

Finance minister launches retailer scheme app

Aurangzeb assured shopkeepers that they would face no issues or harassment under the scheme

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani launched the Retailer Scheme app at the FBR in Islamabad to register small shopkeepers and retailers under the Fixed Tax Scheme. Speaking on the occasion, the Finance Minister said a simplified tax scheme had been a longstanding demand of traders and small shopkeepers. He said the Fixed Tax Scheme and the app have

been developed in consultation with stakeholders. Muhammad Aurangzeb assured shopkeepers that they would face no issues or harassment under the scheme. He expressed confidence that retailers would take full advantage of the facility. The Finance Minister said steps would be taken to bring every segment of society into the tax net. Sharing the main features of the app, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani said it facilitates easy registration and tax return filing for retailers with an annual turnover of up to two hundred million rupees.

Nullah Lai faces flood risk amid heavy rains in Rawalpindi, Islamabad

Intermittent rain continues as Met Office forecasts further showers through August 21

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Wednesday issued a flood alert for Rawalpindi's Nullah Lai after three days of continuous rainfall in the twin cities since Monday. The Rawalpindi administration earlier sounded flood-warning sirens as heavy rain intensified, with the water level at Kattarian crossing 22 feet and reaching 16 feet near Gawalmandi Bridge, up from earlier readings of 19 feet and 15 feet, respectively. Rainfall later eased in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, allowing water levels in Nullah Lai to fall after the channel reached its day's peak. According to the flood control room, the water level at Kattarian fell to 17 feet from 21 feet, while the level at Gawalmandi stood at 17 feet. However, intermittent rain continued in parts of the twin cities, while the Met Office forecast more rain, wind and thundershowers in several upper and central parts of the country through August 21, with occasional gaps. Heavy rainfall is also expected during the

period. Rawalpindi received 67mm of rain at Pirwadhai, 59mm at New Kattarian, 55mm at Shamsabad and 47mm at Katcheri, according to the PMD. Islamabad also recorded heavy rainfall, with 90mm reported at Saidpur, 81mm at Golra, 78mm at Zero Point and 70mm at Bokra. The weather department said monsoon currents were penetrating the upper parts of the country, while a westerly wave was also affecting the region. Hot and humid weather will prevail elsewhere in the country. Flooding has affected several parts of Rawalpindi amid continued rainfall, creating an emergency situation around Nullah Lai and surrounding areas. Floodwater has inundated homes in Dhok Khaba, Pirwadhai and Amarpura, while water accumulation on Murree Road and adjoining areas has disrupted traffic. Roads in Kohati Bazaar and Dhok Khaba have been inundated, leaving several vehicles submerged in floodwater. Water has also entered a madrasah (seminary) in the city's Saddar area, where around 550 students are present, while 150 children have been shifted to a safer location. Earlier, Rescue 1122 made announcements in areas surrounding Nullah Lai, urging residents to avoid unnecessary travel and exercise caution amid rising water levels. - DNA

Ishaq Dar lauds services of UN Pak chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Mohamed Yahya, paid a farewell call on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in Islamabad today. During the meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister appreciated the UN Resident Coordinator's contributions to strengthening Pakistan-UN cooperation and acknowledged the work of the UN Country Team under his leadership. He also congratulated Mohamed Yahya on his appointment as Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In his remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator thanked the Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support during his tenure in Pakistan and expressed his desire to continue working closely with Pakistan in his new role.

Indian hotel fire kills nine

KOLKATA: A fire ripped through a hotel in the Indian city of Kolkata on Wednesday, killing nine people, including five Bangladeshi nationals who were seeking medical care, officials said. "Nine people were killed, including a child, in the fire that broke out early on Wednesday," Anuj Sharma, the fire services director of West Bengal state, told AFP. "Thick smoke enveloped the hotel. Some victims were found in the bathrooms." Building fires are common in India due to a lack of firefighting equipment and routine disregard for safety regulations. The Kolkata blaze came only two days after eight people were killed in another hotel fire in West Bengal's holy town of Tarapith, where Hindu devotees had gathered for the sacred month of Shravan. Sharma said preliminary information suggested an air conditioner at the budget Shika Inn hotel in Kolkata, the West Bengal capital, may have exploded and caused the blaze, Sharma said. Bangladesh's deputy high commission in Kolkata said Indian authorities told them that five of those killed were Bangladeshi nationals. - APP

Ethiopia, Pakistan agree to boost agri cooperation

The Ambassador also briefed the Federal Minister on Ethiopia's preparations to host COP32, which will take place in Addis Ababa in 2027



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday agreed to further strengthen their bilateral cooperation in the agriculture sector to enhance trade and investment and promote technology transfer, food security and livestock development. The discussion to this end was held

at the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Islamabad between H.E. Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador of Ethiopia, and the Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, H.E. Rana Tanveer Hussain. The meeting explored various avenues for increasing agricultural cooperation, including an agro-pact to institutionalize collaboration and enable the exchange of knowledge and expertise between the two countries' agricultural institutions.

The Ambassador highlighted the potential of agricultural cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan, detailing the agrarian character of Ethiopia's economy and the priority attached to the sector by the Government of Ethiopia. He presented Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative as a holistic programme to promote sustainable development through agricultural growth, food security, climate resilience and a green economy. Ethiopia can share its expertise in the Green Legacy Initiative with Pakistan, he said, while inviting Pakistani agricultural entrepreneurs to explore investment opportunities in Ethiopia's agricultural sector. The Ambassador also briefed the Federal Minister on Ethiopia's preparations to host COP32, which will take place in Addis Ababa in 2027. The Federal Minister highlighted Pakistan's expertise in agricultural research, modern farming technologies, agricultural machinery, irrigation, livestock development and agro-processing, and expressed Pakistan's readiness to share its experience and technical know-how with Ethiopia. He noted that the two countries could significantly expand cooperation in crop productivity, seed development, climate-resilient agriculture and mechanization.