



Islamabad POST

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Field Marshal says relations with Syria to grow stronger

Detailed News On Page-08

ASEAN values relations with Pakistan: envoy

Detailed News On Page-04

Aisha Wahab makes history in America

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SC decision based on clear legal errors, says review plea

Islamabad chief commissioner challenges legality of private hospital transfer for prisoner

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad chief commissioner has challenged the Supreme Court's decision allowing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's transfer to a private hospital, saying it was based on clear legal errors. The top court on Tuesday ordered the transfer of the former prime minister to Shifa International Hospital from Adiala jail, meeting a longstanding demand of his party and family, who had raised concerns about his health. Imran, the cricketer-turned-politician, aged 73, has been in jail in Rawalpindi since August 2023, convicted in a string of cases that he and his party maintain were "politically driven" following his ouster in 2022. However, citing security concerns, authorities took the deposed premier to the government-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) under tight security on Thursday night, just moments before the 48-hour deadline set by the top court expired. The review petition, filed against the Supreme Court's August 18 order, argues that transferring Imran to a private hospital violates the Pakistan Prison Rules 1978. The plea states that prison laws contain no provision for admitting a prisoner to a private hospital, adding that prisoners can only be

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Imran taken back to jail after doctors declare him 'fully fit'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan was taken to hospital for a medical examination in the early hours of August 21 in line with the Supreme Court's order before being shifted back to Adiala jail. In a statement on X, Tarar said Imran was taken to the hospital between the night of August 20 and 21 under "appropriate security arrangements". He said a team of qualified doctors, including an ophthalmologist, cardiologist and physician, conducted a detailed medical examination and declared Imran "medically fit". Tarar said that Imran's sister Uzma Khan remained present throughout the medical examination and treatment process.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnessed the signing of the Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons between Pakistan and Malaysia, signed by the Home Minister of Malaysia H.E. Dato' Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail and Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi. Islamabad, 21 August 2026. – DNA

Pakistan reiterates resolve to combat terrorism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday reiterated its unwavering resolve to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, saying the country had rendered unprecedented sacrifices in blood and treasure in the fight against the global menace. In a statement issued by the Foreign Office on the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, Pakistan said more than 90,000 Pakistanis had lost their lives while the country had suffered economic losses exceeding US\$150 billion in the ongoing fight against terrorism. "Pakistan joins nations across the world in observing the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism," the statement said, adding that the day provided an opportunity not only to commemorate the victims but also to reflect on the sacrifices of their families and renew the resolve for continued vigilance against terrorism.

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Reconciliation stressed

PM Shehbaz Sharif for 'grand dialogue' to heal Balochistan issues

Premier says those willing to abandon violence and return to right path should be welcomed

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday emphasised the need for a grand dialogue to address the issues being faced by Balochistan, saying that the government is ready to listen to and resolve genuine grievances. Addressing participants of the Balochistan National Workshop in Islamabad, PM Shehbaz said all genuine grievances should be discussed and resolved through peaceful and civilised means. He said those willing to abandon violence and return to the right path should be welcomed. He also highlighted the importance of Gwadar Port, saying Balochistan's development is essential for Pakistan's overall progress. The premier said the federal government contributed Rs40 billion to a 70-billion-rupee project for the solarisation of agricultural tube wells in Balochistan under which over 20,000 Balochistan tube wells have so far been converted to solar power. Recalling the 2010 National Finance Commission discussions, the PM said all four provinces had agreed to enhance funding for Balochistan. He said Punjab contributed Rs11 billion annually, reflecting the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity among the provinces.

Continued on Page 06

Students to get free access to Google's AI tools for a year

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Google on Friday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote the country's digital transformation, with students in the country getting free access to the tech giant's advanced artificial intelligence (AI) tools for a year. The MoU was signed during a reception hosted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in honour of the Google team at the PM House, according to an official press release issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). "Pakistan and Google signed an MoU to promote national digital transformation and innovation," it said. Under the agreement, the two sides will expand cooperation in digital skills, information technology exports and innovation, the PMO said. It said Pakistan and Google had

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Briefs

It is time to end war, says Iranian President

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Friday it was time to end the months-long Middle East war with the United States because Tehran appeared to be in a stronger position than Washington. Talks between the decades-old foes remain on hold, with both sides in the war started by the US and Israel in February locked in a stalemate. Tehran is keeping the key Strait of Hormuz partially shut and Washington is persisting with a naval counter-blockade of Iran.

May file contempt plea

PTI decries 'violation' of Supreme Court order on medical checkup

Barrister Gohar says PTI will continue to find political solutions to political issues

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Friday accused the federal government of violating the Supreme Court's order regarding the transfer of party founder and former prime minister Imran Khan to Shifa International Hospital, describing the development as "unfortunate". Speaking to reporters, Barrister Gohar said that the top court's directions contained no ambiguity regarding the former premier's transfer to the medical facility. He said that there had been no expectation that the PTI founder would be shifted to another hospital or that details of his transfer would not be provided.

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Khawaja Asif says PTI founder in good health

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Friday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder was in good health and urged the PTI not to politicise his health issues for political gains. Responding to a point raised by the PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan in the National Assembly,

Continued on Page 06

Forces neutralize nearly 50 terrorists

ISPR says 37 Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists killed in 10 Balochistan IBOs; 12 Fitna al-Khawarij militants eliminated in KP

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Security forces and police killed 49 terrorists belonging to Indian proxy Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan in a series of "high-tempo joint intelligence-driven operations" conducted in the last few days, the military's media wing said on Friday. In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that in KP, the military's media wing said that 12 India-backed militants were killed during multiple intelligence-based operations in Bannu, North Waziristan, Orakzai and Khyber districts. It said that security forces recovered and destroyed a large quantity of explosives, IED detonating remotes, weapons, ammunition and motorcycles during the operations. In Balochistan, the ISPR said 37 militants belonging to India-sponsored Fitna al-Hindustan were neutralised in 10 intelligence-based operations carried out in Mastung, Mach, Khuzdar and Panjgur districts. The military's media wing said that security forces also seized and destroyed a significant quantity of weapons, explosive drums and remote detonation equipment. The operations were part of an ongoing counterterrorism campaign," the ISPR added. The development follows separate IBOs in Balochistan's Ziarat, Harnai and Surab districts under Operation Rad-ul-Fitna-3 earlier this week that resulted in the killing of at least nine terrorists. According to the security sources, ammunition, magazines, hand grenades, walkie-talkies, a motorcycle and other equipment were recovered from the killed terrorists. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terror activities, particularly in its KP and Balochistan provinces, since 2021, when the Afghan Taliban came into power. According to a report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the two provinces remained the country's main hotspots for violence during the second quarter of 2026, with KP emerging as the worst-affected region. The report stated that KP and Balochistan together accounted for nearly 96% of all violence-related fatalities recorded during the quarter. Of the total deaths, more than 61% (475) were reported in KP, while Balochistan accounted for 34% (265).

PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN, MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF PRESENTS

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Pensioners residing abroad can also submit their Proof of Life via the Pak ID mobile app instead of visiting the embassy.

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

URAAN PAKISTAN

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Karachi-Hyderabad motorway project to be completed by 2028: NA told

DNA

ISLAMABAD :Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Communications Gul Asghar Khan on Friday informed the National Assembly that the government had accorded top priority to the Karachi-Hyderabad motorway project and expected it to be completed by 2028. Responding to questions during Question Hour, he said the government had reviewed the reasons behind the delay in the project, which had remained stalled for nearly three decades. The project had been divided into five sections of around 50 kilometres each to facilitate investment. The parliamentary secretary said the project required an investment of more than \$400 million. However, no investor had previously been willing to finance it, while the government also lacked sufficient funds for the purpose. He said all five sections were floated internationally to attract investment. Three sections had attracted investment through different financing arrangements, including the Islamic Development Bank, while the procurement process for some sections was nearing completion. Gul Asghar said the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) had shown interest in two sections. He added that all five sections were expected to be completed by 2028. He said the existing M-9 would continue to serve as an expressway, while the government was

working on a new motorway, M-10, to provide a direct Karachi-Hyderabad connection.

The feasibility work for the M-10 had been completed, he said, adding that the government was working to bypass the existing route and establish a direct motorway link between Karachi and Hyderabad. Gul Asghar said the National Highway Authority (NHA) was also maintaining the N-145 route from Chitral City to Dora Pass. He said the 82.5-kilometre route started from Chitral City at km 0+000, passed through Garam Chashma and terminated at Dora Pass at km 82+500. He said the route had been federalised a few years ago after being transferred from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Communication and Works Department. The parliamentary secretary said the N-145 was an extremely narrow road. Much of it comprised an earthen track and was highly prone to landslides during rainfall. He said the road section from km 0+000 to 82+000 would be maintained through eight routine maintenance contracts at an estimated cost of Rs44.145 million. He added that improvement work on the existing road section from km 15+000 to 45+000 was in progress under a contract worth Rs219 million. Gul Asghar said the 153-kilometre Chitral-Booni-Mastuj-Shandur Road (N-140) had been approved for construction under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). The project was divided into four contract packages

and was being implemented by the NHA after the road was transferred from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. He said the project was approved in 2020, while its revised PC-I cost stood at Rs17.783 billion. Against the approved cost, Rs8.2 billion had so far been released.

The PSDP allocation for FY2025-26 was Rs1.5 billion, while overall physical progress of the project stood at around 37.7 per cent. Package-I from Chitral to Prait had achieved 45.35 per cent progress, Package-II from Prait to Booni 34.40 per cent, Package-III from Booni to Shaidas 38.16 per cent and Package-IV from Shaidas to Shandur 29.78 per cent. Gul Asghar said the project had faced delays due to extraordinary floods in 2022, difficult mountainous terrain, funding constraints and delays in obtaining Mines and Minerals approvals and other statutory clearances. He said contractual issues with contractors had been amicably resolved. Extension of Time had been approved by the competent authority and contractors had been fully remobilised. Construction activities were now in progress, he said, adding that the project was targeted for completion by December 2026, subject to timely availability of PSDP funds and resolution of remaining land acquisition issues. Gul Asghar said NHA's toll revenue increased from Rs64.430 billion in FY2024-25 to Rs85.550 billion in FY2025-26.



ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General Banza Mwilambwe Jules, Chief of Defence of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf. DNA

Ahsan Iqbal stresses teacher training

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday stressed the need for comprehensive reforms in curriculum and teacher training to prepare students for the demands of the modern world, saying teachers must move beyond traditional lecture-based teaching. Addressing at a the Mission Control Center of the National Institute of Excellence in Teacher Education (NIETE), the minister said curriculum reform could only deliver the desired results if teachers possessed the skills and capacity to teach according to the requirements of the new era. He said that the creativity was driven by the ability to ask questions, stressing that students should be encouraged to develop curiosity, inquiry and critical thinking. He said the human mind drew its ability to answer questions primarily from the depth of its knowledge base and observation, adding that the more a person studied and observed, the greater his capacity to process and understand complex issues. The minister said the Quran repeatedly encouraged observation, reflection and the use of intellect, describing these as essential elements of a knowledge-based society. He said the Muslim civilization had historically made significant contributions to knowledge because of its tradition of inquiry, research, observation and intellectual curiosity. He called for an education system that produced "book owners" rather than "book worms", saying young people needed to develop a thirst for learning and the ability to create knowledge.—APP

UNICEF representative visits Peshawar

DNA

PESHAWAR: UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Pernille Ironside visited Badeezai village here to review community-based child protection measures being implemented under the Child-Friendly Communities (CFC) initiative. The visit focused on efforts to establish safer and more supportive environments for children by linking communities with schools, health and education services and formal child protection institutions, said an official release. The delegation, which includ-

ed UNICEF Chief of Field Office Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Radoslaw Rzehak and UNICEF CFC Ambassador Naila Kiani, was briefed by Chief of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission Ijaz Muhammad Khan on the commission's efforts to strengthen child protection mechanisms at the grassroots level. Ijaz Muhammad Khan said the commission was working with UNICEF and other partners to promote child-friendly and corporal-punishment-free schools in Badeezai and Regi Lalma and improve coordination between schools, communities and child protection

institutions. The delegation was also briefed on the role of Community-Based Child Protection Committees in identifying cases of child abuse, violence and neglect and facilitating their referral to relevant protection services. During the visit, Pernille Ironside interacted with children, adolescents, mothers and community members and heard their views and experiences regarding child protection. She appreciated community participation in the initiative and stressed the importance of involving children, parents and local communities in developing effective protection systems.—APP

Weekly inflation increases by 0.49pc

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI)-based weekly inflation increased by 0.49 percent during the week ended on August 20, 2026, for the combined consumption group, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to PBS data, the SPI for the week under review rose to 360.90 points from 359.15 points recorded in the previous week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 9.66 percent. The weekly SPI, with base year 2015-16=100, covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) increased by 0.38 percent to 350.03 points from 348.71 points. Likewise, the SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 increased by 0.41 percent, 0.40 percent, 0.45 percent and 0.55 percent, respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 23 items (45.10 percent) increased, 10 items (19.61 percent) decreased, while 18 items (35.29 percent) remained unchanged. On a week-on-week basis, the items that witnessed an increase in prices included onions which rose by 14.17 percent, followed by petrol 3.77 percent.—APP

Google's Opening of Office in Pakistan Reflects Global Confidence

DNA

KARACHI: President of the United Business Group (UBG), Zubair Tufail, has said that the opening of Google's office in Pakistan is a significant development for the country's digital economy and a clear reflection of growing confidence among global investors and technology companies in Pakistan. He said the government's initiatives to promote digitalization, artificial intelligence, cloud computing and modern technologies are giving a new direction to Pakistan's economy, which is expected to have a positive impact on business activities, investment and employment opportunities in the future. According to UBG Central Spokesperson Gulzar Feroz, UBG President Zubair Tufail said that the establishment of

a permanent office by a global technology company like Google demonstrates that international organizations recognize the potential of Pakistan's large young population, IT capabilities and expanding digital market. Pakistani youth are already establishing their capabilities in global markets through freelancing, software development, e-commerce and digital services. He added that Google's announcement to provide Pakistani students with free access to Gemini for one year would help expose the younger generation to advanced artificial intelligence technologies. Zubair Tufail said that the launch of 5G technology in Pakistan, the new spectrum policy, investment in telecommunications infrastructure and the growing presence of global technology companies should be advanced as part of an integrated

digital economic strategy. He urged the government to work closely with telecom operators, global technology companies and the private sector to create an environment that encourages greater local and foreign investment in digital businesses, IT exports, startups and artificial intelligence projects. The UBG President said Pakistan must now move beyond viewing the digital economy merely in terms of internet and mobile services and make it an important driver of exports, industrial productivity, employment and economic growth. If policy continuity is maintained, the business environment is improved and young people are equipped with modern digital skills, Pakistan can emerge as an important regional hub for technology and digital services.

NAB retrieves 435 acres of govt land

DNA

KARACHI: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Karachi, has retrieved 435 acres of precious government land worth Rs2.61 billion in an inquiry against

Sajid Haroon and Fawad Anwar, owners of M/s Dhabeji Salt Works (Pvt.) Ltd. (DSW) and M/s Aqua Food (Pvt.) Ltd. (DAFPL), Dhabeji, Thatta district, and others. According to a NAB Karachi spokesman, the inquiry pertains to the alleged illegal extension of the lease of 435 acres of government land on the basis of fake documents. Following intervention by NAB Karachi and correspondence with the concerned revenue authorities, the Secretary, Land Utilization Department, Government of Sindh, cancelled the illegal lease of the 435-acre land through an order issued on August 20, 2026. Consequently, the land has been retrieved by the Government of Sindh and is now free from encumbrances. NAB Karachi reiterated its commitment to safeguarding public assets and ensuring accountability in accordance with the law.

Finance Minister meets Silk Road fund delegation

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, today held a meeting with a high-level delegation of the Silk Road Fund (SRF), a major Chinese investment fund, led by its Chairperson, Ms. Zhu Jun, to discuss investment opportunities and avenues for greater economic and investment cooperation with Pakistan. The Finance Minister welcomed the delegation and briefed the participants on Pakistan's recent economic progress, including improvements in fiscal discipline, external account stability, foreign ex-

change reserves and the overall macroeconomic outlook. He highlighted the Government's focus on maintaining economic stability while pursuing structural reforms and sustainable growth. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb outlined the Government's efforts to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, broaden the tax base, improve tax administration through digitalization and address structural challenges in the energy sector. He also highlighted the Government's focus on export-led growth and strengthening the business environment to facilitate greater private sector investment. The Finance Minister highlighted the Government's efforts to create a more conducive environment for long-term

investment by improving policy predictability, strengthening institutional frameworks and advancing reforms across key sectors of the economy. He noted that greater collaboration with leading international investment institutions such as SRF can support capital formation, infrastructure development and the expansion of productive economic activity. The discussion also covered Pakistan's privatization programme and opportunities for investment in infrastructure, energy, manufacturing and other sectors. The Finance Minister emphasized the importance of greater participation by both domestic and international investors in the country's investment and privatization initiatives.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

AUGUST

Aug 01/China Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzerland National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon Armed Forces Day

Aug 01 /Syria Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Bukino Faso National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea Independence Day

Aug 15/India Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland Armed Forces Day

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Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Al-Shifa Trust treats 1.26mn patients

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Al-Shifa Trust's network of seven eye hospitals provided healthcare services to more than 1.26 million people during FY2025-26 as it announced plans to expand outpatient services at its Rawalpindi hospital to me rising demand. According to the Trust's latest performance report, 1,267,657 patients benefited from its services. Community outreach remained a key component of operations, with 664,668 people examined through eye screening and medical camps. In addition 37,739 individuals were screened for diabetes and hypertension to support the early detection of conditions that can lead to vision loss. Services provided to patients also included outpatient consultations, refraction, dispensing of spectacles, follow-up visits, diagnostic investigations, laser procedures, general surgeries and other specialized ophthalmic care. Talking to media, Trust President Major General (Retired) Rehmat Khan said the growing patient load had prompted Al-Shifa Trust to expand its outpatient department. A tower originally built for income-generating purposes will be converted into a state-of-the-art OPD-3. The new facility will cater to 800 additional patients daily, increasing the hospital's outpatient capacity to 5,000 patients a day. "OPD-3 will ease the burden on OPD-1 and OPD-2, as the policy of free for all with respect and dignity is providing a unique opportunity to people who cannot afford quality care," Rehmat Khan said. He said the Trust's hospitals performed 55,314 cataract surgeries during the year, while 784 corneal transplants were carried out. Specialists also managed 1,548 cases of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), helping prevent avoidable blindness among premature infants. The Trust spent nearly Rs5 billion during FY2025-26 and expects to require around Rs6 billion in the next financial year to maintain services, strengthen facilities, expand outreach programmes and meet rising demand. Rehmat Khan said the completion of Al-Shifa Lahore Eye Hospital would help share the patient burden, while the Trust was also planning to establish a major eye hospital in Quetta to meet future needs. He said the Trust's work was made possible by the generous support of Pakistanis, particularly overseas donors. "As the challenge of blindness is immense, society, philanthropists and individual donors are requested to support the cause," he said.

Training workshop held

RAWALPINDI: A special training workshop was held at Police Lines Headquarters to promote positive behavioural changes among police officers and personnel and improve the delivery of services to citizens. DSP Legal Rashid Bilal and other officers delivered lectures on ethical conduct, courteous behaviour towards citizens and professional attitudes during the workshop. Police officers and personnel from across the district, including the Elite Force, Traffic Police, Dolphin Force, Punjab Highway Patrol and women police, participated in the training session. Officials said the workshop aimed to further strengthen public trust in the police, ensure protection of citizens' dignity, selfrespect and fundamental rights, and improve police service delivery. Participants were directed to treat citizens visiting police stations, checkpoints, police offices and facilitation centres with respect, courtesy and dignity. Officers were also instructed to give priority to resolving the issues of women, elderly people and children. APP

ICG F 6/2 celebrate two leading educators

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad College for Girls (ICG) F6/2 hosted a special ceremony to celebrate two distinguished educators, Prof. Sabah Faisal and Prof. Rafiq Malik, following their recognition with the prestigious Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. Conferred by the Government of Pakistan, the national award highlights their decades of outstanding service and lasting contributions to the field of education. Under the supervision of the Principal, Prof. Shazia Rizvi, the event, brought together prominent leadership from the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), including Director General Mr. Javed Iqbal Mirza, Director Colleges Mr. Shahid Mehmood Abbasi. CMC members, ICG alumni association representatives, and heads of various Islamabad Model Colleges were also present to join the college community in honouring the awardees. Prof. Shazia Rizvi extended a warm reception to the gathering and congratulated the honorees, expressing immense pride on behalf of the institution for hosting such a memorable occasion. In his key address, DG FDE Mr. Javed Iqbal Mirza commended the lifelong dedication of both educationists. He appreciated Prof. Shazia Rizvi and the ICG community for taking the initiative to organize the ceremony, highlighting that celebrating such individual excellence reflects a shared sense of pride across the entire educational network. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of bouquets and tokens of appreciation to national award holders.

Strong interest received for GEPCO privatisation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Privatisation Commission (PC) has received an overwhelming response from domestic and international investors for the privatisation of Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO). Today on the closing date for submission of Expressions of Interest (EOIs), the Commission has received EOIs from eleven (11) prospective investors seeking to acquire 51% to 100% shareholding in GEPCO together with management control. The names of interested parties are as follows: Elektrik Enerji Yat r mlar San. ve Tic. A.Ş. - Türkiye Genvera Enerji A.Ş. - Türkiye Cengiz Enerji Sanayii ve Ticaret A.Ş. - Türkiye Al Sharif Contracting and Commercial Development Company - Saudi Arabia Engro Energy Limited - Pakistan Sapphire Fibers Limited - Pakistan Hub Power Holdings and Lucky Cement - Pakistan Shirazi Investments (Pvt) Limited - Pakistan Artistic Milliners (Private) Limited and Fatima Group - Pakistan K-Electric Limited - Pakistan AKD Securities, Fast Cable and Mughal Steel Group - Pakistan The interest parties include investors from Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and several of Pakistan's leading business groups. The Privatisation Commission appreciates the investor community's extensive engagement during the domestic and international roadshows in the past six months and welcomes their confidence in Pakistan's power-sector reform agenda. "Today marks another important achievement in the privatisation of DISCOs. The strong response for GEPCO is indicative of investor confidence in the potential of Pakistan's electricity distribution sector and in the Government's commitment to a transparent, competitive and professionally managed process," said Muhammad Ali, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation and Chairman, Privatisation Commission. "We at Privatisation Commission look forward to engaging constructively with the prequalified investors during the due-diligence phase and discussing the contours of the post-privatisation regime. This privatisation aims to improve operational efficiency, modernise distribution infrastructure, strengthen customer service, reduce losses and support a more financially sustainable power sector."

Malaysian Interior Minister meets Speaker National Assembly

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Malaysian Interior Minister Saifuddin Nasution bin Ismail on Friday visited the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Headquarters in Islamabad along with Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhary, where he was briefed on Pakistan's digital identity system, technology-driven public services, and ongoing modernization efforts. During the visit, NADRA Chairman Lieutenant General Munir Afsar gave a detailed presentation on the authority's digital infrastructure, identity management framework, and initiatives aimed at improving service delivery for citizens. The briefing highlighted how technology is being used to streamline registration processes, strengthen data management, and expand access to public services. The Malaysian interior minister was informed about NADRA's role in maintaining Pakistan's national identity database and the measures taken to provide faster and more efficient services across the country. Officials also shared details of digital platforms developed to facilitate citizens and improve service accessibility. Speaking on the occasion, Saifuddin Nasution bin Ismail described the visit as a productive experience and appreciated the progress made by NADRA in digital transformation. He said the organization's use of technology for citizen services reflects a clear commitment to improving public service delivery. The Malaysian minister noted that NADRA's efforts to digitize processes and simplify access to services demonstrate an effective approach to governance.

Aurganzeb, ICCD discuss expanding cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development (ICCD) on Friday discussed ways to expand economic cooperation, promote halal markets and strengthen Islamic finance and privatesector collaboration. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting with Secretary General, Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development (ICCD), Shaikh Yousef Hassan Khalawi to discuss the opportunities for cooperation. The ICCD Secretary General was accompanied by CEO, Al Baraka Bank Pakistan, Muhammad Atif Hanif and Director, International Relations of ICCD, Ms. Aalia Jaffar, according to press release issued by finance ministry. On the occasion, the finance minister underscored the importance of strengthening linkages between Pakistan's business community and international business networks. He highlighted the potential for greater engagement and collaboration through the Chamber's global outreach and platforms. Khalawi briefed the finance minister on the expanding international outreach of the Islamic Chamber and its engagement with business communities, including those in non-OIC countries. He highlighted the Chamber's efforts to connect Muslim business communities globally with private-sector and institutional partners and promote greater halal economic cooperation.—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 ONE ENVELOP

THROUGH E-PADSV2.0

The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board, being the procuring agency, hereby invites electronic bids (E-Bids) from reputable and eligible firms for the execution of annual repair and maintenance works during the Financial Year 2026-2027 on the basis of MES Schedule of rates 2025. Interested firms must be registered with the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in the relevant category and codes and must also be registered with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as active taxpayers for both income tax and sales tax purposes. The detailed eligibility criteria, technical requirements, terms and conditions and scope of work are specified in the bidding documents for the following works:

Ser	Description	Estimated Cost Rs. In Millions	02% Earnest Money in Rs.	EPADS v2.0
Cantt Fund Buildings				
01	Repair / Maintenance works of Cantt Fund Buildings	50.00 M	Rs.1,000,000/-	P92224
Cantt Fund Roads				
02	Repair / maintenance of Cantt Fund Roads / Streets in Cantt area (separate rates for Plant Carpet (JMF), Manual Carpet and PCC in Ward no.01 and 02.	40.00 M	Rs.800,000/-	P92224
03	Repair / maintenance of Cantt Fund Roads / Streets in Cantt area (separate rates for Plant Carpet (JMF), Manual Carpet and PCC in Ward no.03 and 04.	40.00 M	Rs.800,000/-	
04	Repair / maintenance of Cantt Fund Roads / Streets in Cantt area (separate rates for Plant Carpet (JMF), Manual Carpet and PCC in Ward no.05 and 06.	40.00 M	Rs.800,000/-	
05	Repair / maintenance of Cantt Fund Roads / Streets in Cantt area (separate rates for Plant Carpet (JMF), Manual Carpet and PCC in Ward no.07 and 08.	40.00 M	Rs.800,000/-	
06	Repair / maintenance of Cantt Fund Roads / Streets in Cantt area (separate rates for Plant Carpet (JMF), Manual Carpet and PCC in Ward no.09 and 10.	40.00 M	Rs.800,000/-	
Drainage and Sewerage works in Cantt area				
07	Repair / maintenance of Drainage and Sewerage works in Cantt area in Ward no.01 and 05	65.00 M	Rs.1,300,000/-	P92224
08	Repair / maintenance of Drainage and Sewerage works in Cantt area in Ward no.06 and 10	65.00 M	Rs.1,300,000/-	
Water Supply Lines / works in Cantt Area				
09	Repair / maintenance of Water Supply Lines / works in Cantt Area (Separate Rates For G.I. Pe and Upvc Pipes) in Ward no.01 and 05	60.00 M	Rs.1,200,000/-	P92224
10	Repair / maintenance of Water Supply Lines / works in Cantt Area (Separate Rates For G.I. Pe and Upvc Pipes) in Ward no.06 and 10	60.00 M	Rs.1,200,000/-	
Misc. Public Improvement works				
11	Misc. Public Improvement works (i.e. Parks, Streetlights, Footpaths, Rubbish Bins Etc.) In Cantt Area in Ward no.01 and 05	42.50 M	Rs.850,000/-	P92224
12	Misc. Public Improvement works (i.e. Parks, Streetlights, Footpaths, Rubbish Bins Etc.) In Cantt Area in Ward no.06 and 10	42.50 M	Rs.850,000/-	

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

i. Availability of Documents:

The bidding documents shall be available exclusively on the PPRA and E-PADS V2.0 portals, and no hard copies shall be issued. Only firms duly registered as vendors on E-PADS V2.0 shall be eligible to participate in the bidding process. Prospective bidders shall quote their rates as a percentage above or below the applicable rates prescribed in the MES Schedule of Rates, 2025.

ii. Submission & 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:10-09-2026 at 1:00 PM
The bids will be opened on the same day on 10-09-2026 at 1:30 PM

iii. Manual submission of bids shall not be entertained. Vendors not registered on EPADS V2.0 may register at: <https://vendors.epads.gov.pk/>
Tutorial link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNW6T38v7tc>

iv. Grievance Redressal:

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

v. Procurement Method:

Procurement shall be carried out through Open Competitive Bidding under Single Stage - One Envelope Procedure PPRA rule 36(a), adopting the Least Cost Based Selection (LCBS) technique in line with PPRA Rules, 2004.

vi. Earnest Money:

Bidders shall submit 2% of the estimated cost in the shape of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) issued by any scheduled bank in favour of the Cantonment Executive Officer, Rawalpindi Cantonment Board.
i. A scanned copy shall be uploaded with the e-bid.
ii. The original CDR must be submitted prior to opening of bids.

vii. Award of Contract:

Issuance of work order shall be subject to the approval of the Competent Authority.

viii. Eligibility:

Firms/contractors blacklisted by any Government/Semi-Government organization shall not be eligible to participate.

ix. Additional Terms:

All quality-assurance tests required for the works shall be conducted through reputed laboratories and the entire cost of such testing shall be borne by the successful bidder. Detailed terms and conditions may be obtained from the office of the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board during office hours on any working day.

x. Right of Rejection:

The Procuring Agency reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids prior to acceptance in accordance with Rule 33(1) of PPRA Rules, 2004, without assigning any reason.

Cantonment Executive Officer

Rawalpindi Cantt

PID(I)1698/26

Briefs

Rs. 800 million for Botanical Garden; Senate told

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change and Environment Coordination, Dr Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal on Friday said that Rs. 800 million has been allocated under the Up-scaling Green Pakistan Programme for development of the National Botanical Garden. In a written reply, she said that a consultant has prepared the master plan, detailed designs, drawings, management plan, business plan and PCI for Phase-I, which is under process for endorsement by the Planning Division. She added tender documents have also been finalized. Upon approval of the PCI and creation of the requisite posts, dedicated watch and ward staff will be hired for effective surveillance and security of the boundary wall of National Zoo-cum-Botanical Garden (ZCBG). She said that the area of Botanical Garden Islamabad is 725 acre while the construction of the boundary wall, pillars and grills were started in January 2018 and completed in June 2019. She added the total expenditure was incurred 103.494 million rupees.

Sweden Embassy opens doors

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Sweden in Islamabad on Friday opened its doors for pre-voting in the 2026 Swedish parliamentary election, giving Swedish citizens in Pakistan an opportunity to exercise their democratic right early. Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan, Alexandra Berg von Linde cast her vote at the Embassy on the first day of pre-voting. In a message, the Ambassador said the occasion was "a reminder that every vote matters and that democratic participation is at the heart of a free and fair election." The Embassy encouraged all eligible Swedish voters residing in Pakistan to take part in the pre-voting process ahead of the general elections. Pre-voting allows citizens abroad to cast their ballots in advance, ensuring wider participation in Sweden's democratic process.—APP

ASEAN committee in Islamabad celebrates 59th ASEAN Day



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI), comprising the diplomatic missions of Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, celebrated the 59th Anniversary of the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with an evening reception at the Islamabad Marriott Hotel, bringing together members of the Government of Pakistan, the diplomatic corps, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, and friends of ASEAN in Pakistan.

The celebration marked nearly six decades of ASEAN's journey since its establishment on 8 August 1967, and highlighted the Association's enduring commitment to cooperation, friendship, peace and shared prosperity among its Member States and with partners around the world. The reception was hosted under the ASEAN 2026 Chairship theme

"Navigating Our Future, Together." The theme reflects ASEAN's continuing spirit of working collectively in addressing shared challenges and pursuing new opportunities in a rapidly changing and interconnected world. In his welcome remarks, H.E. Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines and Chair of the ACI, highlighted ASEAN's enduring strengths as a community that has built a strong tradition of peace, dialogue and cooperation despite its rich diversity of cultures, languages, religions and political systems. He also underscored the region's growing economic dynamism and openness to partnerships, as well as the considerable potential of its young, educated, creative and digitally connected population. Together, these strengths continue to define ASEAN's distinctive character and provide a strong foundation for deeper regional engagement, cooperation and partnership. The evening's celebration was honored by the presence of Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, H.E. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, who conveyed the warm felicitations of the Government and people of Pakistan to the governments and peoples of ASEAN Member

States. In his remarks, Minister Khichi recognized ASEAN's remarkable transformation over nearly six decades into a dynamic and increasingly integrated regional community of more than 700 million people, with a combined economy approaching US\$4 trillion. He also highlighted the longstanding engagement between Pakistan and ASEAN and the opportunities for further interaction and cooperation in areas of mutual interest. A particularly vibrant feature of the evening was the ASEAN cultural showcase, which transformed the reception into a colorful celebration of Southeast Asian heritage and everyday life. All ASEAN Missions based in Islamabad presented beautifully curated country booths, each designed to offer guests a glimpse into the distinctive traditions, crafts, products and cultural expressions of their respective countries. The displays brought together traditional objects, visual elements, national motifs and other cultural features, creating a lively showcase of the diversity that makes ASEAN unique. The ASEAN Food Station likewise became a mini food festival, featuring an array of traditional and specialty dishes contributed by the ASEAN Missions in Islamabad. Guests were

invited to discover the flavors of Southeast Asia—from familiar favorites to distinctive national delicacies—while learning more about the culinary traditions that form an important part of the region's cultural identity. The cultural program further enlivened the celebration with performances representing different traditions from across Southeast Asia. The ASEAN Missions presented a diverse selection of cultural performances, ranging from traditional dance and martial arts to contemporary and creative presentations. Together, the performances, country booths and food showcase demonstrated that ASEAN's diversity is not merely a defining characteristic of the region, but also a source of connection among its peoples and a bridge for greater understanding with friends and partners beyond Southeast Asia. The celebration also provided an opportunity to recognize the importance of people-to-people ties in strengthening relations between ASEAN and Pakistan. Through culture, cuisine, business, education, tourism and sustained engagement, ASEAN and Pakistan continue to discover new avenues for greater familiarity and friendship.

Meat exports rise 16.20pc in July

ISLAMABAD: Meat and meat preparations exports from the country increased by 16.20 percent in value during the first month of the current financial year, reaching \$47.001 million in July 2026 compared with \$40.449 million in the corresponding month of last year. The country exported 8,983 metric tons of meat and meat preparations during July 2026, compared with 9,141 metric tons in the same month of the previous year, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, fish and fish preparations exports also recorded a marginal increase in value. The country earned \$22.544 million from the export of 11,568 metric tons during July 2026, compared with \$22.447 million from 11,738 metric tons in the corresponding month of the previous year. Rice exports registered a significant increase of 19.15 percent during the month. The country exported 346,024 metric tons of rice worth \$199.950 million, compared with 293,166 metric tons valued at \$167.183 million in July 2025.—DNA

Mohsin Naqvi pays tribute to terrorism victims

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday paid tribute to victims of terrorism and the families of those who lost their lives, marking the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism. He said Pakistan stands with all those affected by terrorism and stressed the need for collective international action to eliminate the threat. In his message, Mohsin Naqvi saluted the sacrifices of all victims and martyrs of terrorism. He said terrorism has no religion, nationality, or borders and must be recognized as a crime against humanity. The minister said the sacrifices made by victims of terrorism will always be remembered and remain an important part of the global struggle against violence. He added that those who laid down their lives in the fight against terrorism hold a place of honor in the nation's memory. Mohsin Naqvi said the government stands with the families of terrorism victims and will continue to support them. He emphasized that the international community must work together and take effective measures to eliminate terrorism and prevent future attacks. Referring to Pakistan's role in countering terrorism, the minister said the country has made significant sacrifices in the fight against militant violence. He noted that the services rendered by martyrs and victims can never be fully repaid and deserve lasting recognition. He said the sacrifices of those affected by terrorism continue to strengthen Pakistan's determination to combat the threat. According to the minister, the fight against terrorism is not limited to a few countries but is a shared responsibility of the entire world. Mohsin Naqvi reaffirmed that Pakistan remains committed to efforts aimed at building a peaceful and secure world. He said the country's resolve against terrorism remains firm and unchanged. The minister also expressed solidarity with terrorism victims across the world and said Pakistan joins the international community in honoring their memory and supporting their families.—DNA

ICT Police put minds to the test

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have continued psychological testing of officers and personnel to strengthen their mental capabilities, professional performance and overall efficiency under the directives of IGP Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi. An official told media on Friday that the initiative is aimed at assessing and further improving the psychological preparedness and professional capabilities of police personnel.—DNA

DC Astore, AC Shounter review compensation process

ASTORE: Deputy Commissioner Astore Madam Neelam Ali and Assistant Commissioner Shounter Taufeeq Ahmed visited the Goreekot-Shaghurthang Road project site and reviewed in detail the ongoing work being carried out by the revenue team tasked with preparing compensation for land and properties affected by the project. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner received a detailed briefing from the concerned revenue officials regarding the survey being conducted for compensation, identification of affected land and properties, completion and verification of records, and other legal and administrative matters. She directed the relevant authorities to expedite the compensation process on an emergency basis and complete it at the earliest. The Deputy Commissioner further directed that all records, survey reports and necessary documents related to compensation be submitted to the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Astore, without delay, so that the process of payment of compensation to the affected people could be completed in a timely manner without any unnecessary delays. She said that the Goreekot-Shaghurthang Road is an important public-interest project, the completion of

which would significantly improve transportation, connectivity and public facilities in the area. She emphasized that transparency, merit and strict compliance with rules and regulations would be ensured in all matters relating to land and properties affected by development projects, while the legitimate rights of the affected people would be fully protected. On the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Shounter Taufeeq Ahmed directed the revenue team to complete all surveys, verification of records and compensation-related proceedings at the earliest in accordance with the prescribed rules and regulations. He instructed the field staff to perform their duties diligently and ensure the timely provision of all required information and documents to the concerned office. The Deputy Commissioner also directed the concerned officers to monitor the compensation process continuously and regularly keep the district administration informed about progress. She stressed that timely payment of legitimate compensation to the affected people, alongside the continued implementation of the Goreekot-Shaghurthang Road project, should be ensured so that development activities proceed according to schedule.—DNA

Commerce Minister pushes sovereign cloud

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held separate meetings with representatives of the Pakistan Digital Authority (PDA) and the management of Sky47 to explore the development of a secure, integrated and AI-enabled digital ecosystem for the Ministry of Commerce and its attached organizations. The meetings focused on treating government data as a national asset, strengthening Pakistan's sovereign cloud and data-centre infrastructure, enabling secure data exchange, and utilizing artificial intelligence for evidence-based trade and export policymaking, said a press release issued here on Friday. Jam Kamal Khan said the Ministry of Commerce maintains extensive information relating to thousands of tariff and product lines, exporters, international markets, trade bodies, chambers of commerce, business associations and overseas trade missions. He stressed that this dispersed information must be standardized, integrated and made readily available to authorized users in secure and decision-friendly formats. "Pakistan's trade data is a valuable national asset. It must be protected, properly classified and transformed into actionable intelligence for exporters, businesses and policymakers," the Minister said. He emphasized the need to connect the Ministry's wings, attached departments, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, chambers and trade associations, as well as Pakistan's trade officers serv-

ing in more than 55 countries. He also called for greater integration of the Ministry's digital portals to provide a unified view of trade-related activities and market intelligence. The Pakistan Digital Authority briefed the Minister on the emerging national framework for data governance, data exchange, enterprise architecture and cloud adoption. The meeting discussed the classification of government data into categories such as open, shared, restricted and personally identifiable information, while preserving the ownership and control of data with the respective ministries and public bodies. It was emphasized that government departments should share only the information required for a particular purpose instead of transferring complete datasets. The proposed data-exchange mechanism would facilitate secure, standardized and traceable inter-departmental access while preventing misuse of confidential and personal information. The participants also discussed the establishment of a national digital master plan, under which sector-specific digitalization roadmaps could be developed in coordination with federal and provincial governments, public institutions and the private sector. Jam Kamal Khan highlighted the potential of artificial intelligence to analyze trade trends, identify export opportunities and assist in preparing market-specific policy recommendations. He said an indigenous AI platform trained on authorized government and sectoral datasets could become a powerful tool for economic planning and public service delivery.

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Three ways AI will change the course of humanity

DAMBISA MOYO

OVER the long sweep of history, three forces have driven humanity's greatest transformations, for good and ill: disease, war and economic growth. By reducing costs and increasing the availability and productivity of a vast array of goods and services, artificial intelligence will have a profound impact on all three. History is littered with plagues and pandemics that altered the trajectory of human population growth. The Black Death, for example, killed between 75 million and 200 million people across Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa between 1346 and 1353. Thanks to technological advances and medical innovations that helped prolong life expectancy and reduce infant mortality, the global population has grown from 1 billion in 1804 to 2 billion in 1927 to more than 8 billion today. At the same time, however, the advent of effective contraceptives has helped contain population growth. AI promises to accelerate this progress, improving both the quality and quantity of human life through preventive diagnostics, faster drug discovery and more personalized medical care. In doing so, it could reduce the human and economic costs of noncommunicable diseases like cancer and neurodegenerative brain disorders, including Alzheimer's. It could also enable faster responses to outbreaks of communicable diseases by predicting where viruses are likely to spread and how mutations might unfold. In fact, AI is already being used to combat antimicrobial resistance. Perhaps most notably, AI could drastically reduce healthcare costs, which have been largely immune to past technological advances. As a 2022 American Enterprise Institute chart showed, US hospital service costs rose more than those of all other goods and services over the previous quarter-century. Wars represent the second force that has repeatedly changed the course of human history. An estimated 70 million to 85 million people died during the Second World War, nearly 30 million of them in the Soviet Union. These losses had far-reaching demographic and economic consequences for the USSR, especially since so many of those killed were working-age men. More generally, armed conflicts destroy productive capacity, disrupt everyday life and deter the investments needed to stimulate economic growth.



Technological advances have of course made war far more destructive. The First World War was the first large-scale mechanized conflict involving mass-produced guns, tanks and aircraft. The Second World War, in turn, catalyzed a massive military-industrial buildup, pulling the US economy out of the Great Depression and fueling decades of postwar growth. AI is now ushering in a new era of technology-driven conflict as countries increasingly rely on drones and autonomous weapons. In Ukraine, drones account for between 70 percent and 80 percent of battlefield casualties. AI-powered systems are also playing a growing role in the Iran war, from accelerating mine clearing in the Strait of Hormuz to tracking submarines and gathering intelligence. AI could drastically reduce healthcare costs, which have been largely immune to past technological advances. The third major driver of historical change is economic upheaval. In the aftermath of the First World War, hyperinflation devastated the German economy, setting the stage for the rise of Nazism. Similarly, the 1929 stock market crash — together with 1930s banking panics and the Dust Bowl — plunged millions of Americans into poverty, with encampments of displaced people ("Hoovervilles") springing up across the US. But economic transformations can also bring enormous gains, even as they create disruption and despair. The Industrial Revolution unleashed rapid productivity growth, raised living standards, reconfigured societies and propelled human development to new heights. Much of this was the result of rapid industrialization and mechanization, which continued to redefine the relationship between capital and labor well into the 20th century, as workers moved from agriculture to manufacturing and then into the services sector. In the US, agriculture's share of employment fell from more than 40 percent at the turn of the 20th century to less than 2 percent today. Early studies suggest that AI will supercharge productivity, particularly in knowledge-based industries, though evidence of its direct contribution to economic growth remains inconclusive. A 2018 McKinsey Global Institute report estimated that AI could add about \$13 trillion to global gross domestic product by 2030, while a 2023 McKinsey report projected that generative AI could deliver \$2.6 trillion to \$4.4 trillion in economic value annually. Yet AI's destructive potential is just as great. Warnings of an AI-driven "jobocalypse" have become increasingly common in recent years, with Silicon Valley venture capitalist Vinod Khosla predicting that AI will be capable of performing 80 percent of existing jobs by the early 2030s, rendering traditional employment obsolete. Whether or not these grim predictions prove accurate, widespread job displacement could upend the structure of economies and societies. It could also greatly expand the role of the state, as governments face growing pressure to provide income support. To be sure, the AI super-cycle is in its early stages. But even now, it seems inevitable that the technology will radically change how we combat disease, fight wars, foster economic growth and, ultimately, understand what sets humanity apart.

After Military Failure, Trump's Economic War on Iran

Qamar Bashir



Today, Iran has not only recovered but has adapted. Current estimates place Iranian oil exports at over 1.6 million bpd, with the vast majority flowing to China. The threat now is to extend “secondary sanctions” to any nation buying Iranian oil. However, the efficacy of this threat is undermined by the very structure of the global economy that the United States helped create: the petrodollar system. The U.S. Treasury’s ability to sanction hinges on the centrality of Dollar and SWIFT messaging system

THE geopolitical landscape has witnessed few spectacles as paradoxical as the recent confrontation between the coalition of the United States and Israel against the Islamic Republic of Iran. What was predicted by Western military analysts and policymakers to be a swift, decisive campaign—a “shock and awe” reminiscent of the opening salvos of the 2003 Iraq War—has instead morphed into a historical anomaly. It is a conflict defined not by the victor's triumph, but by the hubris of the aggressor being dashed upon the rocks of asymmetric resilience. The United States, the sole superpower possessing a military budget exceeding 1.5 Trillion annually—larger than the next 20 countries combined—has been forced into a humiliating strategic retreat. After failing to achieve a single operational objective, the rhetoric has shifted from “military obliteration” to “economic annihilation.” This pivot from Tomahawks to Treasury sanctions is not a sign of strength; it is the death rattle of a failing hegemonic strategy, a threat as hollow as the bombs that failed to subdue Tehran. In the lead-up to the conflict, the rhetoric emanating from Washington and Tel Aviv was characterized by a certainty that bordered on the biblical. Officials promised the “degradation of Iran's military infrastructure to the Stone Age,” invoking imagery of an assault more severe and more comprehensive than the firebombing of Dresden or the atomic strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After having failed to achieve even a single declared objective of waging war against Iran, the United States found itself in a position unique in its modern history: it had not lost a war tactically, but it had failed to win strategically. Iranian uranium enrichment, far from being halted, reportedly accelerated in response to the strikes, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirming that stockpiles of 60% enriched uranium had risen by over 15% during the conflict window. The “daunting military machine” was halted not by Iranian nuclear parity, but by the cost of persistence. This military failure has profound implications. For three decades, the United States has relied on the specter of its military supremacy to police the global order. The failure to bend Iran—a nation whose military budget is approximately \$24.6 billion, a mere fraction of America's—breaks the spell of invincibility. It demonstrates that a nation-state can withstand the full kinetic might of the U.S. military if it possesses dispersed infrastructure, a decentralized command structure, and a popular willingness to absorb punishment. Iran's successful enforcement of maritime control over

the Strait of Hormuz serves as a case study in asymmetric deterrence. Despite the presence of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, which includes aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines, Iran's swarm tactics of fast-attack craft and shore-based anti-ship ballistic missiles effectively checked U.S. freedom of navigation. The sight of Chinese oil tankers transiting the Strait under Iranian escort, unchallenged by the U.S. blockade, was a symbolic dagger in the heart of American naval supremacy. Having failed on the kinetic battlefield, the United States has pivoted to the economic battlefield. The new executive order announced by the President promises “excruciating economic pain never seen before in the history of humankind.” This is a bold claim. It is, however, a rhetorical escalation of a campaign that has been running since 1979. Iran has lived under some form of U.S. sanction for over four decades. The “Maximum Pressure” campaign initiated by the first Trump administration in 2018 aimed to drive Iranian oil exports to zero. While it succeeded in plunging exports to around 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) at its peak, it did not collapse the government. Today, Iran has not only recovered but has adapted. Current estimates place Iranian oil exports at over 1.6 million bpd, with the vast majority flowing to China. The threat now is to extend “secondary sanctions” to any nation buying Iranian oil. However, the efficacy of this threat is undermined by the very structure of the global economy that the United States helped create: the petrodollar system. The U.S. Treasury's ability to sanction hinges on the centrality of the Dollar and the SWIFT messaging system. Yet, the infrastructure of evasion is now mature. Iran has spent 30 years perfecting the “black market” of oil. The system described by intelligence analysts—where proceeds never touch a direct Iranian account but are routed through third-party shell companies in Asia, often utilizing Chinese Yuan—has rendered the U.S. financial radar partially blind. Furthermore, Iran's strategic integration into the BRICS bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and new members like the UAE and Egypt) provides a lifeline. The BRICS New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement are actively working on a unified payment system—the “BRICS Pay”—designed to bypass SWIFT. China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) has seen a 30% year-on-year increase in daily processing volume. When Iran sells oil to China and receives payment in Yuan via CIPS, the transaction bypasses the New York banking system entirely. The “weaponization” of the dollar has simply accelerated the global de-dollarization trend;

central banks worldwide currently hold 58% of their reserves in USD, down from 71% two decades ago. The domestic economic situation in the United States further undermines the credibility of this new sanctions regime. The President's assertion of a “flourishing economy” rings hollow against the data. The U.S. national debt has surpassed \$40 trillion—a staggering figure that is five times the federal government's annual receipts of approximately \$8 trillion. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that interest payments on this debt will soon consume 20% of all federal spending, rivaling the defense budget. This fiscal fragility manifests in tangible economic pain: recent data revealed a loss of 27,000 jobs in a single month, and inflation, while moderating, remains above the Federal Reserve's 2% target, exacerbated by supply chain disruptions caused by the war. The collapse of Walmart's stock—an 8% single-day drop that erased nearly \$45 billion in market capitalization—is a bellwether. Walmart represents the American consumer base; its decline signals a shift from spending to saving, a precursor to recession. A nation drowning in debt and teetering on a consumer downturn lacks the economic oxygen to sustain a protracted global trade war against nations trading with Iran. Finally, the geopolitical map renders this new sanction regime diplomatically unsustainable. The nations refusing to align with U.S. economic dictates represent over half of the world's population. China and India continue to buy Russian and Iranian energy because it is economically rational. Brazil, led by a leftist government, has no interest in enforcing American secondary sanctions against its own agricultural or industrial sectors. The global South, observing the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the reckless military gambit in Iran, views the U.S. not as a moral leader but as a destabilizing force. The threat to sanction any nation trading with Iran is an ultimatum the world is no longer willing to accept. The era of the “American Century” ended not with a bang in the deserts of Iran, but with the realization that economic coercive power, like military power, is finite. The United States has failed to win the war; it is equally likely to fail in winning the peace. The pivot to “economic excruciation” is not a strategy for victory, but a coping mechanism for a superpower struggling to accept the limits of its own waning influence.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

Three priorities for COP17 land degradation talks

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel are among the most severely affected zones. Africa accounts for hundreds of millions of hectares of degraded land, with wind and water erosion particularly pronounced. If current trajectories persist, models project that up to 95 percent of the world's land could be degraded by 2050. In the Sahel, recurrent droughts have undermined systems that support tens of millions of people. Eastern and Southern Africa have seen acute food insecurity affecting more than 90 million individuals in recent drought cycles

THE 17th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification convened in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on Monday and runs through to Aug. 28 under the theme “Restoring Land. Restoring Hope.” The conference is being hosted by a nation in which about 77 percent of land is degraded. The event brings together representatives of the COP's 197 members, alongside scientists, civil society, indigenous peoples and private sector actors. COP17 confronts the interconnected crises of desertification, land degradation and drought. These processes threaten the fundamental pillars of human security: food production, water availability, rural livelihoods and geopolitical stability. Land degradation currently affects up to 40 percent of the Earth's surface. About 100 million hectares of productive land become unproductive each year — an area comparable to the size of Egypt. In addition, water-scarce drylands, which already encompass more than 40 percent of the planet's land excluding Antarctica, expanded by about 4.3 million sq. km in the three decades up to 2020. Some 77.6 percent of the world's land surface experienced drier conditions over the same timeframe relative to the preceding 30 years. An estimated 2.3 billion people — nearly a third of the global population — reside in drylands, a figure that has roughly doubled since 1990 and could approach 5 billion under high-emissions scenarios by 2100. The main drivers are both climatic and anthropogenic. On the one hand, rising temperatures intensify aridity. On the other hand, unsustainable agricultural practices, overgrazing, deforestation and soil mismanagement are accelerating erosion and salinization. In Mongolia, average annual temperatures have risen by almost 2.5 degrees Celsius since the mid-20th century, while uncontrolled livestock grazing is compounding deficits in climate-driven moisture. Similar patterns prevail across the regions of greatest concern.

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel are among the most severely affected zones. Africa accounts for hundreds of millions of hectares of degraded land, with wind and water erosion particularly pronounced. If current trajectories persist, models project that up to 95 percent of the world's land could be degraded by 2050. In the Sahel, recurrent droughts have undermined systems that support tens of millions of people. Eastern and Southern Africa have seen acute food insecurity affecting more than 90 million individuals in recent drought cycles. In Somalia, tens of thousands of drought-related deaths have been recorded in single episodes, while Zambia's hydropower capacity has collapsed to single-digit percentages of normal, triggering widespread blackouts. The densest overlaps of land degradation, poverty and childhood stunting are concentrated in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. The Middle East and North Africa region faces acute water scarcity. Large portions of the region's agricultural land suffer from salinization and declining productivity, while sand and dust storms are intensifying. Parts of South Asia, notably areas of India and Pakistan, combine high population density with declining land productivity and groundwater stress, placing hundreds of millions of people at risk of water insecurity. The consequences are far-reaching. Food security is directly compromised: every 10 percent increase in land degradation is associated with a circa 2 percent increase in crop yield gaps. Annual global losses have been estimated at 20 million tonnes of crop production, which would be enough to feed tens of millions of people and be worth billions of dollars in agricultural revenue. Furthermore, water supplies diminish as degraded soil retains less moisture. If current trajectories persist, models project that up to 95 percent of the world's land could be degraded by 2050 under worst-case assumptions, with drought af-

fecting more than three-quarters of the global population. This could trigger cascading failures in food systems and social stability. One of the problems to address is financing. According to a 2024 estimate, at least \$2.6 trillion in cumulative investment is required by 2030 to restore more than 1 billion hectares of degraded land. That means \$355 billion per year is required, but the projected investments for the same period amount to only \$77 billion per year, leaving a \$278 billion annual shortfall. The Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, launched at COP16, mobilized pledges of about \$12 billion over seven years for 74 vulnerable countries — a meaningful and important step. To address this crisis, three interlocking priorities should be looked at. First, the accelerated implementation of land degradation neutrality targets is essential. More than 130 countries have set voluntary targets, aiming collectively to restore hundreds of millions of hectares. About 100 million hectares of productive land become unproductive each year — an area comparable to the size of Egypt. Second, our actions must shift from reactive crisis response to proactive risk management. Third, financing must expand beyond traditional official development assistance. Multilateral institutions, including the Global Environment Facility and regional initiatives such as the Great Green Wall and the Middle East Green Initiative, offer proven vehicles for scaled investment. In summary, sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel, the MENA region, Central Asia and parts of South Asia cannot restore degraded landscapes or build drought resilience in isolation. Mongolia's hosting of COP17 underscores that the ongoing negotiations in Ulaanbaatar offer an opportunity to move from declarations to actions.

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Briefs

SC decision based on clear legal errors...

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treated in a jail, civil or district headquarters hospital under the law. It further argues that transferring a prisoner to a private hospital would increase security risks and the possibility of external influence. The petition also states a prisoner's insistence on receiving treatment from a private doctor of their choice is inconsistent with prison rules. It maintains that government doctors are highly experienced professors and internationally recognised experts in their respective fields. The chief commissioner contended that the Supreme Court issued its decision without making him a party to the case or issuing him a notice. According to the plea, deciding the matter without hearing the other party was contrary to Article 10-A of the Constitution. The review petition further states that the medical board's report did not mention that Imran's condition was critical. It argues that the court should not have made a direct decision based on the medical report without obtaining the opinion of technical experts.

Imran taken back to jail after doctors...

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"Imran was taken back to Adiala jail at around 5am on August 21 after the medical examination process was completed," he added. In a follow-up X post, Tarar said the medical examination was conducted at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), with doctors from Shifa International Hospital also present. He said Imran was taken to Pims due to the security situation "created by PTI workers" on the route to and outside Shifa International Hospital. Tarar said medical facilities had been provided to Imran in the past and would continue to be provided whenever he required them. The minister's statement came hours after media reports said that Imran underwent a medical examination at Islamabad's Shifa International Hospital in the early hours of Friday.

PTI decries 'violation' of Supreme Court...

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"The Supreme Court's order has been violated," he claimed. The PTI chief's remarks follow Information Minister Attaullah Tarar's confirmation that Khan was taken back to Adiala jail earlier in the morning after a medical examination at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), with doctors from Shifa International Hospital also present. In a post on X, Tarar said the former premier was taken to the hospital between the night of August 20 and 21 under "appropriate security arrangements". A team of qualified doctors, including an ophthalmologist, cardiologist and physician, conducted a detailed medical examination and declared Imran "medically fit", he added. According to Tarar, Khan's sister Uzma Khan remained present throughout the medical examination and treatment process. The Supreme Court on August 18 ordered the jailed ex-premier's transfer to a medical facility within two days after considering his health condition. The government subsequently filed a review petition against the decision. However, the Supreme Court's Registrar Office returned the review petition on Thursday morning after raising certain objections. Khan, 73, has remained in prison since August 2023 following convictions in several cases that he and his party describe as politically motivated. He has faced multiple legal proceedings since his ouster as prime minister in April 2022 following a no-confidence vote. Meanwhile, Barrister Gohar questioned how democracy could function if complying with a court order was difficult.

Pak minister holds meeting with Canadian development minister

Minister Hussain highlighted agro-food, agri-tech, value addition and supply chain management in dairy, livestock, poultry, energy, and Himalayan pink salt sectors as low lying fruits for deepening Punjab-Ontario economic engagement. The two sides also discussed technology transfer and promoting business to business linkages between the two provinces

DNA

OTTAWA: Mr. Shafay Hussain, Minister of Industries, Commerce and Investment, Government of Punjab, along with an official delegation, held a meeting with Mr. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Government of Ontario, in Toronto today. Appreciating the growing economic engagement between Pakistan and Canada in recent years, the two Ministers exchanged views on the potential for enhancing trade, investment and commercial exchanges between Punjab and Ontario provinces. Minister Hussain highlighted agro-food, agri-tech, value addition and supply chain management in dairy, livestock, poultry, energy, and Himalayan pink salt sectors as low lying fruits for deepening Punjab-Ontario economic engagement. The two sides also discussed technology transfer and promoting business to business linkages between the two provinces. Minister Hussain extended the invitation to Minister Fedeli to visit Lahore. Minister Fedeli accepted the invitation.



Swiatek into Cincinnati semis after Rybakina injury

"This is an important tournament, but the US Open is the US Open. I hope she is ready for that," she said, referring to the major which begins in New York on Aug 30

CINCINNATI: Iga Swiatek moved into the semifinals of the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Masters as Elena Rybakina was forced to retire with a heel injury less than half an hour into their clash Thursday. Rybakina's withdrawal raised concerns over the fitness of the world number two Kazakh just 10 days before the start of the US Open. Trailing 4-1 in the opening set of Thursday's Cincinnati quarter-final, Rybakina suddenly pulled up short at 40-all, heading to her bench

and consulting with the trainer. She went back out and played one more point before quitting. "I was feeling anxious watching the whole situation," said her opponent Swiatek. "I hope she will be fine. Health is always the priority." "This is an important tournament, but the US Open is the US Open. I hope she is ready for that," she said, referring to the major which begins in New York on August 30. "It was a shame she was injured, we were having a good match." Had two-time Grand Slam winner Rybakina reached the Cincinnati final she would have risen to number one in the world for the first time in her career, following incumbent Aryna Sabalenka's shock exit to 20-year-old Sara Bejlek. Defending Cincinnati champion Swiatek said she had "gained a lot of confidence in the last weeks," which have also included her victory over Rybakina in the final of this month's Toronto event. "I feel great, ready to play my game... I'm happy to be playing the tennis that I am." 'Good record' Poland's Swiatek now plays

a semifinal against Jessica Pegula, who is reportedly carrying a hip niggle after defeating Amanda Anisimova 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4). Sixth-seeded Anisimova converted all five of her break points against Pegula, breaking her three times in the second set, before the world number three rebounded to win. Pegula is setting WTA records at age 32. She is the fourth player since 2009 to reach five or more Masters 1000 quarter-finals after turning 30, along with Li Na, Serena Williams and Svetlana Kuznetsova. Pegula needed just 34 minutes to pocket the opening break in the deciding set. They would each be broken twice as they went to the tiebreaker, where Pegula sealed the win on her first match point. Pegula's win was her sixth without a loss to Anisimova. "I know I have a good record against her, but literally every single match is like it was today," she said. - APP

Body of US climber found

GILGIT: The body of US climber Sarah Mallory Geis, who was part of a 10-member expedition team that died in an avalanche on Broad Peak on July 30, was recovered on Friday. The avalanche struck on July 30, cutting off contact with the 10-member international expedition led by world-renowned British-Nepali mountaineer Nirmal Purja on Broad Peak, one of the world's highest mountains. Purja's company later confirmed there were no survivors. The bodies of eight members of the expedition, including Pakistan's Sohail Sakhi, were found in subsequent missions, but those of Geis and Nepal's Nawang Thindhu Sherpa had remained missing. Officials had earlier said that a leg believed to be Geis had been found. On Friday, Alpine Club of Pakistan President (retired) Major General Irfan Arshad Khan said in a statement that the US climber's body was found on the slopes of Broad Peak by local rescue volunteers. He said that the body was in the process of being shifted to base camp. - APP

President, PM call for global action against terrorism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari called for unified global action against terrorism and stressed that no territory was used for terrorism against another country. The two leaders made these assertions in their separate messages on the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, which is observed annually on August 21 to honour and support the victims of terrorism. In his message, shared by the Prime Minister's Office on X, PM Shehbaz said Pakistan was joining the international community in observing this day dedicated to remembering the victims of terrorism and extended its "heartfelt solidarity and tribute to all those who had suffered from this scourge". He noted that terrorism remained one of the most serious challenges confronting humanity. "Only those devoid of humanity can inflict suffering and play with the lives of innocent people to pursue their nefarious objectives. The families of those who have lost their lives to terrorism, as well as those who have sustained lifelong injuries, equally deserve our compassion and solidarity," he added. The premier said Pakistan was among the countries that had suffered immensely from terrorism. "Not only have our valiant armed forces made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight against this scourge, but the brave officers and personnel of our law enforcement agencies, as well as our countless innocent citizens, have also laid down their lives. "We salute the courage and sacrifice of all those civilians and security personnel who have lost their lives in acts of terrorism," he said. He highlighted that Pakistan had also paid a "heavy economic and social price" in the fight against terrorism. "Terrorism has adversely affected the economic well-being of our people and hindered Pakistan's journey towards development, progress and prosperity.

Pakistan reiterates resolve to combat terrorism

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The statement added that terrorism had become increasingly multi-faceted, with terrorists using emerging technologies and cyberspace to expand their outreach and facilitate increasingly sophisticated and lethal attacks. It said Pakistan was also a victim of disinformation and misinformation campaigns, hydro-terrorism and extraterritorial assassination campaigns. "2025 has been among the deadliest Pakistan has faced over a decade," the statement said, adding that the rising toll reflected a pattern of violence planned, financed and directed from sanctuaries across the border, often with the alleged support of hostile elements from neighboring countries. It said the attacks targeted worshippers, children, women and security personnel without distinction. Despite these challenges, Pakistan remained unflinching in its resolve, and unwavering in its commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, the statement added.

PM Shehbaz Sharif for 'grand...

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The premier reaffirmed that Balochistan must receive greater participation in development and welfare initiatives and said the province's share in various schemes has been kept above its population-based share. The PM highlighted that Balochistan is endowed with vast mineral and natural resources. He stressed that these resources primarily belong to the people of the province and must be developed through co-operation between the federal and provincial governments. He emphasised that the people of Balochistan should be the primary beneficiaries of the province's natural wealth, followed by the people of Pakistan.

Students to get free access to...

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agreed to expand the Google Career Certificates programme to promote digital skills, with Google targeting 150,000 certificates in Pakistan for 2026. The two sides also agreed to enhance access for Pakistani students to Google's advanced artificial intelligence (AI) tools. "Pakistani students will have free access for one year to advanced AI tools, including Google AI Plus and Gemini," the PMO said. "Pakistan and Google agreed to cooperate on establishing an AI centre of excellence in Islamabad," it said, adding that the centre would train Pakistani youth and human resources according to the requirements of the global market. The PMO said the two sides would also cooperate to enhance the global competitiveness of Pakistan's mobile applications and gaming industry, promote digital payments and expand the scope of digital commerce.

Khawaja Asif says PTI founder in good...

FROM PAGE 01

the minister said PTI founder's sister had recently met him in jail and could testify about his health condition. He said the former prime minister's personal physician had also been given access to information regarding his health. Khawaja Asif said PTI founder had some minor blood-pressure and other age-related health issues, but there was no indication of any serious health threat. He said the former prime minister had also been examined by doctors and was recovering. He said reports regarding PTI founder's health would also become public and there was no need for unnecessary concern. The minister said health issues should not be used as a political tool, recalling that political leaders across parties had faced imprisonment and health-related difficulties in the past.

Bangladesh Premier League will not take place this season, says BCB president

"I don't want to hurry. I want to do it right. If that takes six or 12 months, I'll take that time," says Tamim Iqbal

DHAKA: The Bangladesh Premier League will not take place this season, the country's cricket board (BCB) president Tamim Iqbal told reporters on Thursday, citing various issues that plagued the previous seasons including allegations of match fixing and corruption. The BPL, launched in 2012, is the most popular domestic competition in Bangladesh, but has struggled to replicate the financial success of other franchise-based Twenty20 leagues in countries like India and Australia. "I don't think so. The BPL will not happen this year," Tamim told reporters at an event in Mirpur. National newspaper "Prothom Alo" said the BCB has faced a loss of nearly 400 million Bangladeshi taka (\$3.27 million) during the last two BPL seasons. "If I was a player, I'd be disheartened too," Tamim added. "But they also know that this tournament should be staged in a way that the BCB can be proud of. Are we proud of what has happened over the last few years? Perhaps not." The BCB suspended a player and multiple team officials over betting violations in May, after an anti-corruption probe into the BPL. - DNA

Cancelo joins Barcelona from Al-Hilal on 3-year-deal

DUBAI: Portuguese defender Joao Cancelo has left Al-Hilal to join FC Barcelona on three-year-deal, the La Liga giants' official social media accounts reported on Thursday evening. The Riyadh club terminated the 32-year-old's contract, allowing him to join the Catalan club on a free transfer. Al-Hilal loaned Cancelo to Barcelona in January, with the player going on to make 23 appearances and score two goals with three assists. He helped Barcelona win their 29th La Liga title and reach the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals. In the summer, he played five matches for Portugal at the 2026 World Cup before the team was eliminated by Spain in the Round of 16. - APP

US Ambassador's statement on Kashmir is contrary to facts

BRUSSELS: Chairman of the Kashmir Council Europe -KCEU, Ali Raza Syed, has expressed deep concern over a statement by Sergio Gor, the U.S. Ambassador to India, in which he described Jammu and Kashmir as "an important part of India." In a statement, Ali Raza Syed said that by making this statement, the US Ambassador had overlooked the real disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that Jammu and Kashmir is not merely an internal administrative matter of a country but a long-standing international dispute that has been mentioned in resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. So, the final settlement of the dispute should be in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and the principles of international law. He said that a unilateral political statement by any foreign diplomat or government cannot alter the legal and historical status of Jammu and Kashmir. The future of Kashmir cannot be determined through a politician or diplomat's statements alone; it must be addressed through a fair, peaceful and credible political process that respects the right

of the Kashmiri people to self-determination. Ali Raza Syed said that the United States is a major global power and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Therefore, the American representatives are expected to take into consideration the UN Charter, international law and relevant Security Council resolutions when addressing sensitive international disputes. He said that the U.S. Ambassador's statement, which appears to have been made to appease India, which occupies a large part of Jammu and Kashmir, is by no means conducive to lasting peace in South Asia. Chairman Kashmir Council-EU Ali Raza Syed called upon the U.S. Ambassador not to overlook the facts concerning the Kashmir dispute, but support the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination and work towards a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute. He said that the path to genuine and lasting peace in South Asia runs through a just resolution of the Kashmir dispute, and this objective cannot be achieved without giving the people of Jammu and Kashmir the right to determine their own political future. - DNA

Pak, Turkmenistan Join Hands to Promote Chess

The meeting marked a significant step towards building stronger Pakistan-Turkmenistan chess ties, while promoting chess as a platform for youth development, talent identification and greater sporting interaction between the two countries

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Turkmenistan have agreed to further strengthen cooperation in chess, with a particular focus on promoting the sport among youth, nurturing emerging talent and creating greater international opportunities for the next generation of players. The understanding was reached during a meeting between President of the Chess Federation of Pakistan (CFP) Syed Zeeshan Naqvi and President of the Chess Federation of Turkmenistan Vepa Myalikgulyev in Ashgabat, held on the sidelines of the Kids Chess Festival. The two presidents discussed a range of initiatives aimed at providing young chess players with greater exposure and oppor-

tunities, including bilateral chess series, training tours, player exchanges and joint coaching programmes. Syed Zeeshan Naqvi highlighted the importance of taking chess to a wider youth audience and developing a strong pathway through which talented youngsters can receive quality training, competitive exposure and opportunities to represent their countries at international events. Both sides expressed their commitment to further institutionalising cooperation between the two federations and exploring regular exchange programmes for players, coaches and officials. The meeting marked a significant step towards building stronger Pakistan-Turkmenistan chess ties, while promoting chess as a platform for youth development, talent identification and greater sporting interaction between the two countries.



Briefs

**SBP injects
Rs 2.85
trillion in the
market**

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Friday, injected Rs 2,850.55 billion through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) to maintain liquidity in the market. The central bank conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7 and 14-day tenors on August 21, 2026, and injected Rs 2,410.55 billion against 14 bids while other Rs 440 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO. The central bank, for the Reverse Repo Purchase of 14-day tenor, received 11 bids cumulatively offering Rs 2,322.65 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.51 to 11.55%. The SBP accepted the entire amount against 11 quotes at 11.51% rate of return. Moreover, the SBP also received 3 bids for the 7-day tenor, cumulatively offering Rs 87.9 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.54% to 11.56%. The SBP accepted all the 3 quotes with the entire amount at 11.54% rate of return. Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for the 7 and 14-day tenors. The central bank received no bid for the 7-day tenor while for the 14-day tenor, it received 8 quotes offering Rs 597.5 billion at rate of return ranging between 11.52% to 11.56%. SBP accepted Rs 440 billion against the 8 bids at 11.52% rate of return. The total amount offered at 11.52% was Rs 246 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 88.5 billion on a pro-rata basis. SBP injects Rs 2.85 trillion in the market.—APP

**DR Congo
Ebola
outbreak
growing**

GENEVA: The Ebola outbreak raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo is growing "exponentially," with more than 2,500 deaths now recorded, with half in the last 20 days, the United Nations' senior Ebola coordinator said Friday. The Ebola outbreak is already the biggest in the country's history and is spreading faster than any outbreak on record. According to the latest figures, the virus eruption is "growing exponentially," Julien Harneis told reporters in Geneva, speaking from Bunia, at the epicenter of the outbreak. He said that in the last three months, "more than 2,500 people" had died, "and half of those in the last 20 days." "The epidemic is spreading widely. It's now covering an area that is bigger than France ... It is growing faster and wider than the Ebola response." Declared on May 15, the DRC's 17th Ebola outbreak is thought to have already been spreading for several weeks by that point. It has hit regions in the north and east where the presence of the state is weak, health infrastructure is largely lacking and myriad armed groups have roamed for decades. Harneis stressed the need to ramp up the response, insisting that "if we provide more staffing, if we get more resources into remote areas across ... the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, within months we can slow the transmission and move to stopping it.—APP

Bejaan Resorts, South Air sign agreement

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Bejaan Resorts and South Air (Private) Limited will formally enter into a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening air connectivity to Chitral and supporting the long-term growth of tourism in one of Pakistan's most remarkable mountain destinations. The strategic partnership will be formally signed in Islamabad by Anwar Aman, Founder of Bejaan Resorts, and Nishat Fatima, Chief Executive Officer of South Air, in the presence of the Chairman of South

Air, senior representatives of both organizations, invited guests and members of the media. Connecting Islamabad and Chitral At the heart of the partnership is a shared commitment to support regular air connectivity between Islamabad and Chitral five days a week, giving travelers greater accessibility, convenience and confidence when planning visits to the region. The partnership is intended to go beyond a conventional commercial arrangement. Bejaan Resorts and South Air share a broader objective of helping position Chitral as a premier year-round tourism destination while improving the

connectivity needed for sustainable tourism and regional economic development. As the partnership develops, the two organizations intend to explore opportunities for future Chitral connectivity from Peshawar and Lahore, subject to operational, regulatory and market requirements. A Shared Vision for Chitral Chitral offers an extraordinary combination of natural beauty, cultural heritage, mountain landscapes and warm hospitality. Improved and more consistent air access can help unlock its tourism potential and create wider economic opportunities for local communities. By bringing together

South Air's regional aviation ambitions and Bejaan Resorts' investment in luxury, culturally rooted and eco-conscious hospitality, the partnership seeks to contribute to a stronger tourism ecosystem for Chitral. Anwar Aman, Founder of Bejaan Resorts, said: "Our vision has never been limited to building a resort. We want to help build Chitral as a destination. Reliable air connectivity is one of the most important foundations for achieving that vision. This partnership with South Air represents a meaningful step toward making Chitral more accessible to travelers from Pakistan and, ultimately, from around the world."

Can Ivonne A-Baki restore trust in a UN where 'nobody trusts anybody'?

NEW YORK: Ivonne A-Baki has a simple diagnosis for what is wrong with the UN. It is not the Charter. It is not simply the Security Council veto. And it is not a problem that can be solved by creating more bureaucracy. "The problem with the UN is that there is no trust," the Ecuadorian-Lebanese diplomat told Arab News. "Nobody trusts anybody." A-Baki, one of the candidates seeking to become the UN's 10th secretary-general and the first woman to take on the role, has built her campaign around the proposition that the organization can recover its relevance only if it returns to its most basic purpose: bringing adversaries together before crises spiral beyond control. Her prescription draws heavily on her own experience helping broker an end to the last interstate war fought in South America. In 1998, Ecuador and Peru signed the Brasilia Presidential Act, resolving a border dispute that had generated repeated conflict for generations. For A-Baki, who played a central role in that process, its success offers a model for confronting some of today's most intractable crises — from Iran and Gaza to southern Lebanon. The key, she argues, was a small group of trusted guarantor states that accompanied the negotiations from their earliest stages through implementation on the ground. That model, she believes, could work again. And among the countries she sees as capable of playing such a role today is Saudi Arabia. "I think MBS is doing an amazing job," she said, referring to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. "I think he wants that. He's modern-thinking. He's young. I think Saudi Arabia would be a very important guarantor country, very important." She added: "I will meet with him first if I was secretary-general." The guarantor model A-Baki's career has spanned four continents and included posts as Ecuador's ambassador to the US and France, as well as service as a cabinet minister in Quito. But it is the Ecuador-Peru peace process that forms the backbone of her candidacy. The arrangement paired the two disputing governments with Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the US as guarantors. Those states did not simply appear at the end to endorse an agreement. They accompanied the parties through negotiations, helped build confidence and remained involved as the settlement was implemented.—DNA

War-devastated Gaza's 94 percent households 'in need of shelter aid'

UNITED NATIONS: Ninety-four cent of Gaza's 2.1 million residents need shelter as Israeli gunfire and strikes continue inside the enclave, UN agencies and peacekeepers warned on Thursday. More than four out of five families currently face critical or catastrophic living conditions, which lack fuel, energy and essential household items, according to UN agencies and partners. "These constraints affect people's ability to sleep, their ability to cook, their ability to wash, their ability to store food and water, maintain adequate lighting, and cope with heat and cold," UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters at the regular noon briefing in New York. Nearly two-thirds of families live in tents or makeshift shelters that rapidly deteriorate in harsh weather, as they are designed only for short-term use, according to the UN aid coordination office (OHCA). "We continue to face obstacles in bringing the level of more structured shelter into Gaza," Dujarric said, noting that last winter, more than 70 per cent of families experienced flooding. "Ahead of

the cold and rainy season, our humanitarian partners are working to ensure adequate shelter for families." Obstacles to aid delivery include funding shortfalls and Israeli restrictions on the entry of materials and equipment, with UN partners estimating that \$562 million is needed to improve living conditions. OCHA continued to receive reports of Palestinian civilians in Gaza being killed, injured or otherwise being impacted by Israeli air strikes, shelling and gunfire, including children. "Civilians should never be targeted or used for military purposes," he said. On Thursday, the bodies of 50 people, including 19 children, who were killed over two years ago, were laid to rest after being recovered from under the rubble in Gaza over the past days. "Efforts to remove rubble and retrieve bodies in Gaza remain limited by restrictions on the entry of heavy machinery, spare parts, lubricants and other critical supplies as well as by restrictions on access to vast areas within the Gaza Strip," Dujarric said.—APP

China remains Pakistan's top FDI source in July

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan attracted net foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$178.6 million in July 2026, the first month of fiscal year 2026-27, with China remaining the country's largest source of investment at \$63.2 million, accounting for about 35.4% of total net FDI, according to the latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). According to a Gwadar Pro's report on Friday, the country recorded gross FDI inflows of \$304.0 million and outflows of \$125.4 million in July 2026, resulting in net FDI of

\$178.6 million. A year earlier, net FDI stood at \$223.5 million, with inflows of \$333.5 million and outflows of \$110.1 million. China recorded gross inflows of \$104.0 million and outflows of \$40.8 million, leaving net investment of \$63.2 million. Canada ranked second with \$35.8 million in net FDI, followed by Hong Kong at \$20.2 million, Switzerland at \$16.8 million, the United Kingdom at \$15.9 million, the United Arab Emirates at \$10.2 million, Kuwait at \$8.5 million, South Korea at \$8.0 million, Bahrain at \$4.8 million, France at \$3.7 million and Singapore at \$3.4 million. The Netherlands, Japan,

Sweden and South Africa recorded negative net investment during the month. Countries other than China together contributed \$115.4 million, or about 64.6% of Pakistan's total net FDI in July. Sector-wise, financial and insurance activities were the largest recipient of net FDI at \$63.3 million, followed by electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply at \$60.8 million and wholesale and retail trade at \$41.5 million. Manufacturing attracted \$13.2 million, while construction received \$11.6 million. Mining and quarrying recorded a net outflow of \$22.8 million, while information and communication posted a net outflow of \$9.4 million.

**CI-UAF opens
Confucius
Institute
branch
at Minhaj
University
Lahore**

LAHORE: The Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (CI-UAF) has inaugurated a branch, formally called a Confucius Institute subset, at Minhaj University Lahore (MUL), expanding Chinese language and academic programmes in the city as Pakistan and China mark 75 years of diplomatic relations. Chinese Consul General in Lahore Sun Yan attended the ceremony as chief guest, while CI-UAF Dean Dr Saddam Hussain was the guest of honour. Senior officials from MUL, Punjab Tianjin University of Technology and other institutions also attended. Speaking at the event, Hussain said the new centre would promote Chinese language education, academic exchanges, joint research, scholarships, technology transfer and collaboration with industry, creating new opportunities for students and faculty. The new centre is expected to support Chinese language teaching, academic research, cultural exchange and student and faculty mobility between Pakistan and China.—APP

**Israeli forces
shoot dead a
Palestinian
man**

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian man on Friday in the city of Jenin, in the north of the occupied West Bank, with the military saying he had attempted to stab a soldier. Fathi Zidan Hazem, 58, "died from injuries sustained after being shot by Israeli forces early Friday in the city of Jenin," the Palestinian health ministry said in a statement, adding that his body was being withheld by Israel. The Israeli military said a "terrorist armed with a knife attempted to stab an IDF soldier" while troops were operating in the area of Jenin. "The soldiers responded by firing toward the terrorist and eliminating him," it said, adding no injuries were reported among troops. Hazem was a retired colonel in the Palestinian National Security Forces. In April 2022, after his son, Raad Hazem, carried out a shooting spree in Tel Aviv in which he killed three Israelis and wounded several others, Israeli authorities demanded that Fathi Hazem hand himself in. His son was shot dead by Israeli forces after a massive manhunt.—Agencies

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Briefs

Turkiye
issues
'genocide'
warrant for
Netanyahu

DNA

ANKARA: Turkiye has sought an international arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, accusing him of "genocide" linked to Israel's interception of an aid flotilla for Gaza, the justice minister announced on Friday. Turkiye has become a virulent critic of Israel's war in Gaza, sparked by the Hamas October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has frequently accused Netanyahu of "genocide". Israel's interception of a flotilla carrying some 430 activists in May sparked an international outcry. France, Italy and Australia have also launched judicial proceedings. Turkey's Justice Minister Akin Gurlek said on X that his ministry had asked the interior ministry to issue Interpol red notice alerts for Netanyahu and another Israeli, named as Afek Moskovitch. "As part of the judicial proceedings concerning the attack in international waters on the Flotilla activists (...) and in accordance with the arrest warrants issued on July 14, 2026, against Benjamin Netanyahu and Afek Moskovitch for 'genocide,' the ministry of justice has requested that the ministry of the interior issue red notices for their international arrest," the minister stated.

Indonesia,
China step up
defence ties

DNA

JAKARTA: Indonesia will develop its defense industry with Chinese support, as the two countries agreed to expand joint drills and deepen military technology cooperation on Friday after talks between their defense and foreign ministers in Jakarta. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Defense Minister Dong Ju and their Indonesian counterparts Sugiono and Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin discussed bilateral ties across several meetings, including their second 2+2 meeting and the inaugural China-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Dialogue. Their military cooperation will now include more joint exercises and personnel exchanges, as well as stronger military education, Sjamsoeddin said. "Indonesia's relationship with China is very close, and we are committed to enhancing this cooperation," he told a joint press briefing after meeting with Dong. "So, we will step up joint exercises, enhance (joint) training programs, and increase personnel exchanges ... We will also continue to increase cooperation in the defense industry sector between Indonesia and China. - APP

Field Marshal highlights fraternal ties with Syria

The visiting dignitary appreciated professional role played by the Armed Forces of Pakistan in promoting regional peace and stability. Both sides reiterated their resolve to further strengthen bilateral ties and expand engagements in the fields of defence and security



DNA

RAWALPINDI: H.E. Mr. Asaad Hassan Al-Shaibani, Foreign Minister of Syria, along with the delegation called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces, at General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi. During the meeting, matters

of mutual interest, regional security environment and avenues for enhanced bilateral defence and security cooperation were discussed. The COAS & CDF highlighted Pakistan's longstanding fraternal ties with Syria and shared Pakistan's perspective on global peace and regional stability, underscoring the importance of cooperation and collaborative efforts to address common security challenges.

The visiting dignitary appreciated professional role played by the Armed Forces of Pakistan in promoting regional peace and stability. Both sides reiterated their resolve to further strengthen bilateral ties and expand engagements in the fields of defence and security. Meanwhile, Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has pledged to defeat the hostile elements'

"inimical designs" aimed at obstructing the development of Balochistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Friday. The army chief made the remarks during an interaction with notables and political leadership of the province, underscoring that the present and future of Balochistan and Pakistan were one and forever, the military's media said in a statement. CDF Munir highlighted that Balochistan was blessed with talented, resilient, patriotic and proud people. He emphasised that a clear national narrative and enduring peace and stability were fundamental to unlocking the province's true economic potential, attracting investment and translating its abundant human and natural resources into tangible prosperity for its people. Field Marshal Munir stressed that there was no dearth of talent or opportunities amongst the youth of Balochistan, who remain the most vibrant and promising segment of society. He emphasised that empowering the youth and providing them opportunities to contribute to national progress remained central to sustainable development. CDF Munir said that Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan were foreign-sponsored proxies being employed by hostile elements to destabilise Balochistan, obstruct its development and create a wedge between the state and its people.

Trump has a warm reunion with Michael Cohen

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump had a warm public reunion on with Michael Cohen, his former fixer turned foe whose court testimony contributed to Trump's 2024 conviction in the Stormy Daniels hush-money trial. Cohen, who is seeking a pardon, interviewed Trump on his New York radio program. He called Trump "boss" and gave a six-minute monologue on friendship and forgiveness. In 2018, Cohen was sentenced to three years in prison - and served more than a year - for a \$130,000 hush payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels before the 2016 election - as well as for other crimes, including cheating on his personal taxes and lying under oath to Congress. Trump was convicted in 2024 on 34 counts of falsification of business records to conceal the Daniels payment, in part due to Cohen's testimony. He has denied the encounter with Daniels, whose given name

is Stephanie Clifford, and is appealing the ruling. Trump was represented in the hush-money trial by Todd Blanche, now the US attorney general. In court, Blanche called Cohen the "GLOAT," meaning the "greatest liar of all time." "How do two men who spent years in an all-out public war hurling verbal and legal missiles across a massive canyon ever come back to the same room?" Cohen said. "We forgave," Trump, who is seeking political allies ahead of the November midterm elections, then greeted his former fixer of 15 years with a convivial: "Hello Michael. How are you, Michael?" "I respect the fact that you recanted everything you said," said Trump, who spoke to Cohen from the White House. Cohen aired excerpts from a pre-recorded interview that focused on Trump's favorite themes, including his campaign against immigrants and his disdain for unfavorable polls. - APP

Aisha Wahab makes history



WASHINGTON: Aisha Wahab, a California state senator, has won a special election, becoming the first Afghan American elected to Congress. Wahab, a Democrat and prominent member of the party's progressive wing, defeated fellow Democrat Melissa Hernandez in a closely fought election in California's 14th

Congressional District, overcoming millions of dollars in outside spending directed against her campaign. The result was formally announced on Thursday. Her victory gives Afghan Americans and Muslims a new presence on Capitol Hill while highlighting the growing influence of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. Wahab had been widely expected to win. She finished more than 25 percentage points ahead of Hernandez in the June primary, but the final contest proved much closer. With most of the votes counted, Wahab led by roughly six percentage points. The race took an unexpected turn after outside groups poured millions of dollars into the contest. Groups associated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) spent an estimated \$6.3 million to \$6.4m on advertising supporting Hernandez and attacking Wahab, according to campaign finance reports. The scale of the spending helped turn what had appeared to be a comfortable Wahab advantage into a surprisingly close contest. - APP

Key European leaders demand Israel halt West Bank settlement project

PARIS: France, Italy, Britain and Germany on Thursday piled on mounting international condemnation of a major settlement project in the occupied West Bank, after Israeli authorities opened bidding for more than 1,200 homes in the area. The E1 plan was green-lit by Israel last year and would further separate east Jerusalem, occupied and annexed by Israel and predominantly inhabited by Palestinians, from the West Bank. "At a time of grave instability in the West Bank with unprecedented levels of violence by settlers against civilians, and serious restrictions on the Palestinian economy, this decision is even more concerning," the joint statement from Paris, Rome, Berlin and London said. "We urge the Government of Israel to retract these plans immediately and end its expansion of settlements in the West Bank," it added, warning businesses against bidding for the construction tenders at risk of "involving themselves in serious breaches of international law." The UN secretary general has said the E1 plan posed an "existential threat" to a contiguous Palestinian state. Belgian Foreign Minister Maxime Prevot called the tenders "unacceptable" on Thursday, saying the project "would seriously undermine the viability of the two-State solution." His condemnation echoed a statement by Britain's top diplomat Ed Miliband on Wednesday demanding an end to the project and settlement expansion in the West Bank, with London summoning Israel's charge d'affaires. 'Israel will defend its rights' Miliband said he delivered the message directly to his Israeli counterpart Gideon Saar. Saar on Thursday said he rejected "outright" Miliband's statement and "the patronizing tone of his words."

"The Jewish people have the right to live throughout the Land of Israel, just as the British have the right to live in London and throughout the United Kingdom," he wrote on X. Saar went on to accuse the UK of "blaming only Israel while ignoring Palestinian extremism" which he said was fueling antisemitic attacks against the British Jewish community. "The UK Government's decision to damage the relationship between our countries is deeply unfortunate," he added, vowing that "Israel will defend its rights, its interests and its people." The British government on Wednesday also pledged to unveil "a comprehensive set of measures" in the coming weeks, including sanctions targeting people involved in the "illegal settlement expansion." Israel approved the plans for the roughly 12-square-kilometer (five-square-mile) parcel of land known as E1 just east of Jerusalem, in August last year. The plan seeks to build around 3,400 homes on the ultra-sensitive tract of land, which lies between Jerusalem and the Israeli settlement of Maale Adumim. The latest tender covers more than 1,200 housing units, according to Israeli NGO Peace Now. Peace Now said Israel's housing ministry published the tender on August 18 and immediately opened it for bids. Submissions are due by October 19, one week before Israeli elections scheduled for October 27. The group said the homes accounted for about one-third of the planned E1 development and accused the government of trying to advance construction commitments before the vote. Israel heavily restricts the movement of West Bank Palestinians, who must obtain permits from authorities to travel through checkpoints to cross into east Jerusalem or Israel. - APP

US army will shutdown a unit in Europe

DNA

WASHINGTON: A US Army unit based in Europe that was specializing in drone warfare has been directed to end its efforts to learn and use the battlefield technology and return to being a traditional infantry battalion, officials said Thursday. For more nearly a year, soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade have been experimenting and building their own drones, as well as participating in drills on waging unmanned warfare after Ukraine pioneered such tactics in its yearslong conflict with Russia. Last November, 600 soldiers formed a battalion that specialized in drone warfare and was set up to be used as a dedicated unit that could deploy anywhere drones were required. The Gen. Christopher LaNeve, the US Army's acting chief of staff, has ordered the brigade to refocus on its core mission of being an airborne infantry unit, accord-

ing to two US officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal Army deliberations. The Wall Street Journal earlier reported the change. The move comes amid a broader reshuffling of the army under LaNeve, who has been its top uniformed leader since Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth suddenly ousted Gen. Randy George in April. The decision also comes despite the Iran war showing the need for the US to learn lessons about drone warfare from Ukraine. Iran has deployed its low-cost Shahed drones against ships and bases, killing US troops, downing an army helicopter and forcing the military to expend precious supplies of advanced interceptors. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in March that Ukrainian officials were helping five countries in the Middle East and Gulf region counter Iranian drone attacks, while the United States and European countries were among others that had requested support.

'Tehran must overcome sanctions'

DUBAI: Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Iran must plan to overcome the "unjust sanctions," after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced what he described as the toughest sanctions ever imposed on Iran, according to Qalibaf's channel on Telegram. The US will impose "the toughest sanctions in history" on Iran, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday, a focus on economic measures he suggested would lessen the need for new major military operations against Tehran. His statement followed President Donald Trump's threat a day earlier of "Economic Warfare" and warning of economic consequences against any country that provided "any type of lifeline to Iran." - APP

Canadian leader says Trump is a bad person

TORONTO: The premier of a Canadian province launched a blistering attack on US President Donald Trump on Thursday, calling him a "bad person" and "not to be trusted" and urging Canada to keep fighting rather than rush to make concessions in trade talks with Washington. Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew said Canada has leverage in the talks even as his province weighs restoring US alcohol sales at Prime Minister Mark Carney's urging to help secure a deal that would avert threatened 50 percent US tariffs. "Everybody knows the American president by now, he's erratic, he's irresponsible, and he's not to be trusted. And this is the person that we were supposed to make a deal with, and we're going to make additional concessions for it. That's why I say you can't make a good deal with a bad person, because who's to say it's not going to be undone?" Kinew said. Dominic LeBlanc, the federal minister responsible for Canada-US trade, said Thursday the two countries were close to finalizing an agreement after he returned to Washington to meet again with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. "We're very close. We continue to make progress," he said, adding that Canadian officials would remain in Washington to keep working on the deal. - APP