LAHORE - KARACHI - ISLAMABAD
A sister publication of CENTRELINE & DNA News Agency
WWW.ISLAMABADPOST.COM.PK

Daily Islamabad POST

Tuesday, August 25, 2026
Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper
Price Rs. 30

Mauritius envoy says enhanced ties with Pakistan priority
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Punjab uplift top priority, says Maryam

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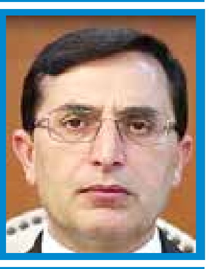
Days of this Govt numbered, says PTI chief

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Peace efforts

Field Marshal, Mohsin Naqvi meet Iranian officials

CDF Munir vows continued efforts to stabilise region in meeting with Iran's Ghalibaf

News Desk

TEHRAN: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir met Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni and Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf in Tehran on Monday after arriving in the Iranian capital for talks on regional peace and stability. According to the Iranian broadcaster, Ghalibaf reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to upholding the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, while slamming the US for failing to honour its commitments, noting that this attitude "hindered regional stability and further eroded trust in Washington".

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement issued earlier today said that the field marshal's visit is part of Pakistan's efforts to promote regional peace and stability. During the visit, the ISPR said that CDF Munir will focus on promoting efforts towards a peaceful, lasting and comprehensive resolution of the conflict in the Middle East. Field Marshal Munir was accompanied by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, the press release said. Islamabad has taken on a mediator role in negotiations between Tehran and Washington aimed at ending the war which began with US and Israeli strikes on Iran in February.

The Shehbaz Sharif-led government brokered a two-week ceasefire between the two sides on April 8 that ended six weeks of fighting and continues to relay messages between Washington and Tehran. The visit comes amid heightened tensions as Iran threatens a military response to US plans for sanctions that could further put a strain on the Islamic Republic's ailing economy. Thousands of people have died, most of them in Iran and Lebanon, since the US and Israel began strikes on February 28, degrading much of Iran's conventional military capacity and inflicting economic pain

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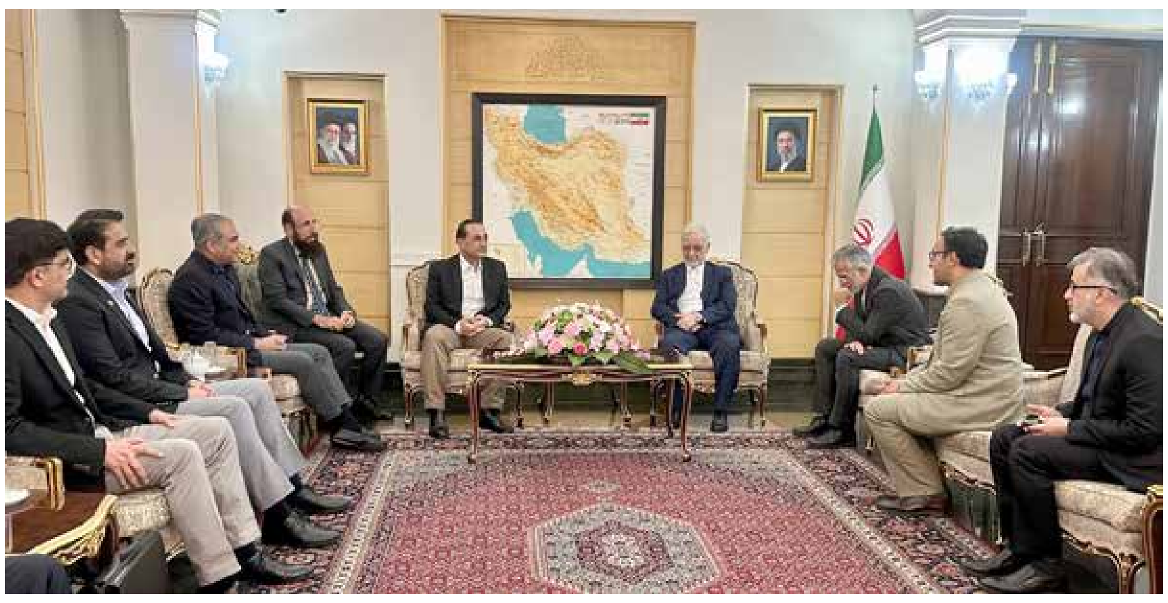
Iran vows to fight back sanctions

News Desk

TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmaeil Baghaei on Monday warned countries against cooperating with the United States in its economic pressure campaign on Tehran, vowing to counter sanctions through multilateral capabilities. US Treasury Secretary, Scott Bessent, has promised to reveal severe measures on Iran, which has endured near-continuous economic sanctions since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, when he gives a press conference at 1 p.m. EDT (1700 GMT) on Monday. Without detailing specific measures, Bessent signalled the US would target "fearful nations" that practice "appeasement" by engaging with Iran's economy and financial system.

Iran has been bracing for the sanctions for days, issuing a series of strongly worded statements hinting at a major military response.

Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir, who has built a personal rapport with US President Donald Trump, arrived in Iran for talks, Iranian media said. Pakistan said the visit was part of its efforts "to promote regional peace and stability," and a Pakistani source said Munir was expected to meet people close to Iran's supreme leader.



TEHRAN: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir met Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni in Tehran on Monday. – DNA

AJK Assembly members take oath

Staff Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Newly elected members of the AJK Legislative Assembly were administered the oath of office by outgoing Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar on Monday. Assembly Secretary Amjed Latif Abbasi read out the notifications of the 38 members elected from the territorial and refugee constituencies in the phased elections, as well as those of the eight members elected by them on reserved seats. Shortly after the announcement of the results, all newly elected members took the oath at the hands of the outgoing speaker, who failed to retain his seat in the elections. The members then signed the oath register in the order of their constituencies.PML-N's Ahmed Raza Qadri moved a motion seeking the suspension of the rules that prescribed a bar on certain times for elections to the offices of speaker,

Continued on Page 06

Italian envoy also speaks

PM Shehbaz launches Pak National Olive value chain policy

Shehbaz Sharif said the Government of Pakistan, at its own expense, can send 100 young agricultural graduates to Italy for acquiring knowledge in various aspects of olive cultivation, production, processing and marketing

Saifullah Ansar / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has launched the Pakistan National Olive Value Chain Policy, aimed at turning the country's olive potential into prosperity. Addressing the launching ceremony, he said Pakistan imports edible oil worth four billion dollars annually. He said it will be a great achievement if the country can save four hundred million dollars in a single year by enhancing domestic edible oil production. The Prime Minister expressed confidence that Pakistan can become self-sufficient in edible oil within a few years.

He also thanked the Italian Government for its cooperation in promoting olive cultivation and production in Pakistan. He said the country now needs to focus more on oil production, processing and value addition.

Shehbaz Sharif said the Government of Pakistan, at its own expense, can send 100 young agricultural graduates to Italy for acquiring knowledge in various aspects of olive cultivation, production, processing and marketing. Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Ugo Ciarlatani said Italy and Pakistan enjoy a longstanding partnership spanning more than seven decades, with cooperation now covering agriculture, science, education, trade and security. He said the National Olive Value Chain Policy reflects years of cooperation, including the 100-million-dollar Pakistan-Italy Debt Swap Programme, which helped establish olive orchards across the country.

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Briefs

'Govt giving undue margin to petrol dealers'

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman on Monday said the government was giving oil companies undue margins on petrol prices as protests against the petroleum levy continued. Addressing participants of the sit-in at Faisal Chowk on Lahore's Mall Road, Naeem said if the government wants to hold negotiations with his party, it should hold them over the abolition of the petroleum levy. "The government is giving companies an undue margin on petrol prices," Naeem said, adding that people were already facing difficulties while bureaucrats' privileges were being increased. The JI's sit-ins in Lahore, Peshawar, and Karachi have entered their ninth day, with Naeem saying participation in the party's protests was increasing, including among women.

Oil prices fall

DNA

LONDON: Oil prices slipped more than $1 a barrel on Monday as investors took profits after recent gains and awaited details of expected new US sanctions on Iran, which could further disrupt supplies from the Middle East. Brent crude futures were down $1.55, or 1.64%, to $92.84 at 0911 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was at $85.02 a barrel, down $2.04, or 2.34%. Both contracts posted a second consecutive weekly gain last week, rising more than 5%, as peace negotiations between the US and Iran stalled, constraining oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, a route that once carried a fifth of global supplies. "Oil slipped after a two-week rally as traders awaited the US plan to economically isolate Iran due later Monday," said Saxo Bank analysts in a note.

Chairman PTI says

It was so easy for Imran to make a deal but he did not

"I asked to meet the chief justice. He was busy so it could not happen. Myself and Khosa sahib met the SC registrar and requested that a number be allotted to this case and it be fixed for hearing,"

Faisal Sheikh

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Monday brushed aside speculation regarding a deal with the government, saying party founder Imran Khan would not have spent three years in jail if he wanted to make a deal. He made the remarks while speaking outside the Supreme Court (SC) alongside PTI leader Sardar Latif Khosa after the two met with the court's registrar. "Khan sahib does not make deals. He will not stay in the hospital a minute more than is necessary for his tests and treatment. If he had to make a deal, he would not have spent three years in jail," Gohar said. "All we have to say is that there should be no politics on his health," he said.

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Jemima urges UK PM to intervene

DNA

LONDON: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's former wife, Jemima Goldsmith, has urged the UK government to step in and not remain silent over the alleged treatment being meted out to her ex-husband. "Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary: how much longer will Britain remain silent?" Jemima, the former wife who shares two sons with the ex-prime minister, wrote in a post on X.

Continued on Page 06

Protest at Capital Varsity turns ugly

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: A security official is in custody and facing disciplinary action under military law following reports of a scuffle at Islamabad's Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology (SUSIT), sources involved in the investigation said late Monday. The individual allegedly discharged a weapon during a scuffle with protestors at the university's Chattha Bakhtawar campus, where students had been agitating against the dismissal of a senior official and other varsity-related issues. A video shared widely on social media of the incident shows a uniformed individual approaching a group of young men,

Continued on Page 06

Trump govt to impose $100,000 fee for the H-1B worker visas

The rule that imposes a fee on highly skilled workers could be finalised by end of the year

DNA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's administration on Monday released a proposed regulation to codify an unprecedented more than $100,000 fee on new H-1B visas for highly skilled foreign workers that Trump first imposed last year but has been blocked by the courts. The fee first imposed by Trump in a temporary proclamation last year vastly raises the cost of the visas that are heavily relied on in the tech, education and research sectors. A federal judge in June ruled that the fee was illegal and blocked the Trump administration from collecting it. A Boston-based appeals court is reviewing that decision while a different court considers whether a judge in Washington, DC, properly rejected a challenge to the fee by a major business group. Trump's 2025 proclamation imposing the fee expired in September, one year after it was issued, but it directed the US Department of Homeland Security to adopt regulations making it permanent.

The proposed $103,265 fee by DHS, posted online in the Federal Register on Monday to be formally published on Tuesday, kicks off a 30-day public comment period. The rule could be finalised by the end of the year. The H-1B programme allows US employers to hire foreign workers with training in speciality fields and offers 65,000 visas annually, with another 20,000 for workers with advanced degrees, approved for three to six years. The order Trump issued last year sharply increased the cost of obtaining some H-1B visas, which had typically come with about $2,000 to $5,000 in fees, depending on various factors.

Trump, a Republican, and other critics of the H-1B programme say it is abused by many companies that replace American workers with cheaper foreign labour. But business groups and many individual companies have said the visa programme is needed to address a lack of qualified American workers for some jobs and to allow US businesses to recruit top talent. About 70 employers had paid the $100,000 fee on a total of 85 visa applications as of late February, according to court filings. In imposing the fee, Trump invoked the president's power under federal immigration law to restrict the entry of certain foreign nationals who would be detrimental to US interests. The fee is being challenged by the US Chamber of Commerce, the largest US business lobbying group, Democratic-led states and a coalition of unions and employers. Those lawsuits could be amended to challenge the rule proposed this week once it is finalised. The lawsuits claim that Trump's power to restrict entry does not allow him to override the law that created the H-1B visa programme.

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UK helps over 200,000 kids improve reading

More than 35,000 out-of-school children returned to education thanks to a UK partnership with the Governments of KP and Punjab

DNA

PESHAWAR: UK collaboration with provincial governments has helped more than 200,000 children in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa improve their access to schooling, basic reading, numeracy, and life skills. Urdu reading levels rose from 15 percent to 78 percent, English reading from 15 percent to 45 percent, and subtraction skills from 37 percent to 67 percent.

Support through the UK-Pakistan partnership used learning-level assessments, targeted instruction, teacher coaching, and regular progress tracking to help children catch up. The programme reached over 500 public schools, enabling over 35,000 out-of-school children to return to education. Beyond helping children return to school, the programme supported 48,000 learners through remedial education, strengthened teaching capacity through the training of more than 5,500 educators and 250 Master Trainers, and improved facilities in 400 schools. British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, CMG OBE, said,"Teachers are at the heart of improving learning outcomes for children, and the most important measure of success is whether they find these approaches valuable enough to continue using them. The feedback so far has been extremely encouraging. By bringing together governments, schools and communities, children who previously could not read a simple sentence are now reading independently." Muhammad Musa Ali Bokhari, CEO of Punjab Education Curriculum Training and Assessment Authority (PECTAA) said,"Every child in Punjab deserves the chance to read, write and count with confidence before they move beyond primary school. UK support has helped move the conversation on foundational learning from theory to demonstrated practice, here in Punjab."Masood Ahmed, Special Secretary, Elementary and Secondary Education, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said,"The achievements of this UK-supported programme show that focused investments in foundational learning can produce meaningful results for children and communities. We remain committed to building on this progress and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to develop the literacy and numeracy skills that are essential for lifelong learning.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani calligrapher Wasil Shahid brief to ambassadors about his work during an exhibition of his work titled "Prophet of Peace" in connection with Eid Milad un Nabi (SAW) celebrations at Parliament House.

EU delegation reviews agri policy for GB

GILGIT: A delegation of the European Union (EU) visited the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (ALF) Gilgit-Baltistan on Monday and held detailed discussions with senior officials on the proposed Agriculture Policy and Action Plan, as well as priorities for the development of the agriculture sector in Gilgit-Baltistan. The EU delegation was led by Ms. Barbara Rixon, Counsellor, EU Delegation Office Islamabad and Head of Economy, Cooperation, Investment and Rural Development. The delegation included Mr. Alejandro Matos, First Secretary and Programme Manager for Energy and Climate Change; Mr. Ashab Baig, Team Leader, EU Policy Support Project; Dr. Zafar Khan, Mountain Agriculture Expert; Mr. Sajid Ali Khan, Irrigation Expert; and Ms. Zahra Khanum, Disaster Risk Management Expert. The meeting was chaired on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries by Mr. Usman Ahmed, Secretary Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan. The Director Agriculture Research, Directors Agriculture of Gilgit, Baltistan and Diamer divisions, and other senior, technical and field officers of the department also attended the meeting. The participants held detailed deliberations on the proposed Agriculture Policy of Gilgit-Baltistan, its Action Plan and measures required to ensure sustainable development and modernization of the agriculture sector. –APP

827 accountability cases

KP takes action against 589 employees

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has taken disciplinary action against 589 government officers and employees after concluding 629 of the 827 accountability cases registered since October 2025. A briefing at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister, Sohail Afridi revealed that 198 cases were still under process, while 40 employees were exonerated in the decided cases, said a press release. The action taken includes removal of 128 employees from service, dismissal of 18, compulsory retirement of six, demotion of two and recovery from the salaries of 89 employees. One employee was arrested, and promotions of 39 others were withheld. In addition, 16 employees were charge-sheeted, 14 faced salary cuts, and 10 were suspended. Warnings were issued to 155 employees, while 52 were reprimanded. Unauthorized absence emerged as the most common offence, accounting for 447 cases, or around 54 percent of the total. Other cases included negligence of duty in 120 cases, corruption and financial irregularities in 75, incompetence in 75, misconduct in 14, poor supervision in 13 and violation of rules in 11 cases. The meeting was informed that the accountability drive also included 221 show-cause notices, 279 explanation cases, 184 inquiries, 102 suspensions, 23 expressions of displeasure, and nine cases of officers being placed on the OSD list.–APP

BSCA pivotal in maintain law,order situation: CM

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Monday said that the Balochistan Safe City Authority is playing an effective role in establishing law and order situation, preventing crimes and protecting the lives and property of citizens He said that the effective use of modern technology could make the police response mechanism more effective by identifying crimes and suspicious activities in a timely manner. He expressed these views while presiding over a high-level meeting of the Balochistan Safe City Authority (BSCA). The meeting reviewed in detail the performance of the Balochistan Safe City Authority, the surveillance system, crime prevention and issues related to increasing the capacity of the institution. IG Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir Khan gave a detailed briefing to the meeting on the performance of the Balochistan Safe City Authority and various measures. The briefing was informed that through the effective surveillance system of Safe City, 138 stolen vehicles were identified from across the country, while timely detection of 9 suspicious activities helped in thwarting major terrorist acts. The meeting was informed that the Balochistan Safe City Authority provided 631 important evidences to the police related to various crime scenes, with the help of which the process of investigating crimes and reaching out to the accused was facilitated. The briefing was further informed that 15 auxiliary emergency response services have been assigned to the CTD, which would help in making the response and communication between the relevant institutions more effective in emergency situations. While appreciating the performance of the Safe City Authority, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the process of crime prevention should be further accelerated through modern technology and the surveillance system should be made compatible with modern requirements.–APP

Research-based overhaul of civil-service training ordered

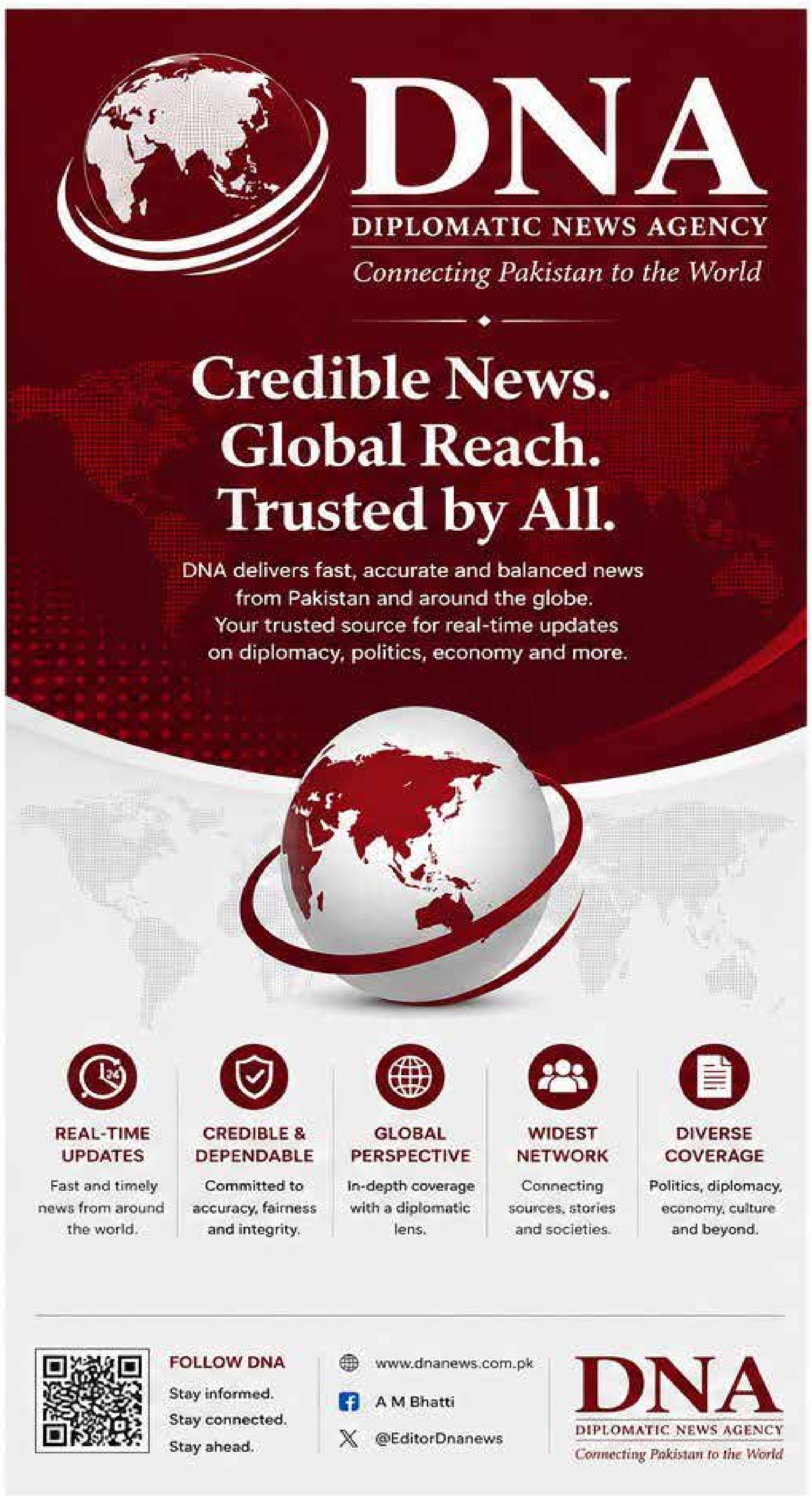
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Establishment Division, Senator Ahad Cheema, chaired a meeting on the Training Needs Analysis of the National School of Public Policy (NSPP), directing a research-based overhaul of its management courses to build a skilled, technologically capable and results-oriented civil service The Secretary, Establishment Division, and senior officials of NSPP and the Establishment Division attended the meeting, said a release issued here on Monday. "The Government will reform the structure and curricula of NSPP's management courses on the basis of credible research. We want a capable, competency-driven civil service that delivers measurable results and better services to citizens," Senator Ahad Cheema said. Senior officials and the consultant briefed the Federal Minister on the proposed evidence-based assessment, which will identify critical competency gaps and determine whether existing training translates into improved workplace performance, stronger institutions and better public-service outcomes. Following the briefing, Senator Ahad Cheema directed that the scope of the exercise be revamped to provide a firm foundation for comprehensive curriculum reforms and a modern, outcome-oriented civil-service training system. The Federal Minister emphasized that the analysis must identify the actual training requirements of civil servants at different stages of their careers, define the requisite skill sets for each programme, establish an appropriate competency framework, and determine the digital, data and technological capabilities required for effective public administration. He directed that the review should assess whether training programmes are aligned with officers' job responsibilities and national priorities. It should also examine policy and reform execution, leadership, ethics, accountability, institutional coordination, cohort composition and peer learning, as well as the need for pre-training evaluations, skill-based segmentation and tailored learning pathways. Senator Ahad Cheema stressed that capacity building should not remain confined to existing mandatory programmes. He called for additional specialized and short-duration courses in digital governance, artificial intelligence, data-driven decision-making, public-policy formulation, project and financial management, regulatory governance, crisis management and effective public communication. He further directed that modern learning methods–including case studies, simulations, problem-solving exercises, field assignments and technology-enabled learning–be incorporated into the training framework. Training effectiveness, he said, must be measured through visible improvements in job performance, policy execution, institutional coordination and service delivery, rather than merely through attendance or course completion. The meeting was informed that the assessment has been developed through credible research and recognized national and international frameworks. Its methodology draws upon NSPP's course outlines and Leadership Skills Framework, consultations with NSPP management, international leadership literature, and established training-needs and evaluation models. The exercise will include more than 385 structured surveys of course participants, faculty members and stakeholders.–APP

CDA,ICCI discuss Business community's issues

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), led by President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, held a meeting with Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA)/Chief Commissioner Islamabad Lt. (Retd.) Sohail Ashraf here on Monday and discussed a range of long-standing issues confronting the business community, particularly those affecting construction, real estate, investment and ease of doing business in the federal capital During the meeting, the Chairman CDA assured the ICCI delegation that the long-standing issue of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) charges would be placed before the CDA Board meeting scheduled for Tuesday, with a view to providing maximum possible relief to the business community, said a press release. He said the concerns raised by ICCI would be considered on priority and appropriate decisions would be taken to facilitate investors, builders and property owners. A major development discussed during the meeting was the requirement of parking space. The Chairman CDA agreed in principle to increase the permissible parking area from 750 square feet to 1,000 square feet. He further clarified that although the revised provision had already received approval, it had not been given retrospective effect for plots allotted earlier. The matter will also be placed before the CDA Board for consideration so that the facility can benefit eligible projects whose drawings are submitted under the applicable regulations. The meeting also produced significant progress on the issue of inheritance transfers. The Chairman CDA assured the delegation that the existing 0.25 percent fee calculated on the FBR value of property for legal inheritance transfer within the family would be abolished, subject to approval by the CDA Board. The move would provide considerable relief to families and property owners and simplify the transfer of inherited properties to legal heirs, particularly children. Similarly, the Chairman agreed to consider the abolition of the 0.25 percent fee on General Power of Attorney (GPA) transactions within blood relations. The proposal is aimed at reducing unnecessary financial burdens on families and simplifying property-related procedures.–DNA

Pindi dengue prevention, cases reduced by 91pc

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi has recorded a dramatic reduction in dengue fever transmission during the 2026 epidemic season, achieving a 91.2 percent decrease in confirmed cases compared to the corresponding period last year. According to official data, six confirmed dengue cases have been reported so far since January, down from 68 during the same timeframe in 2025. Zero confirmed cases were registered in August 2026, compared to 89 in August 2025. Out of 3,171 individuals screened this year, only two remain admitted, with zero fatalities. Field containment operations covered over 4.13 million house visits, eliminating 107,661 larvae clusters across 100 percent of registered hotspots. Briefing on vector control measures, District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Jawad Zahid told APP that over 1,400 active surveillance teams maintained complete weekly coverage across 17,859 registered hotspots. Targeted early-season vector suppression destroyed 44,543 larvae in August alone, while a 14-day sweeping drive across 20 high-risk Union Councils (UCs) utilized 261 specialized teams to inspect 101,325 homes and 33,670 high-risk spots. In an exclusive interaction regarding risk stratification and statutory enforcement, Dr. Jawad said that out of 190 evaluated UCs, 35 fell into the critical risk band. Highest larval densities were identified in Morgah, Khana Dak and Chaklala "SOP enforcement resulted in 1,670 First Information Reports (FIRs) lodged, 440 premises sealed, 1,565 challans issued and PKR 1,998,000 in fines", he said. Dr. Zahid highlighted community mobilization initiatives, including 2,692 student volunteers designated as "Dengue Warriors" across public schools for weekly self-surveillance. The administration verified 33,108 household inspection checklists signed by parents. World Dengue Day campaigns involved distributing over 20,000 pamphlets, 700 banners, and 3,000 streamers alongside awareness walks. The District Health Officer confirmed that a synchronized 'One City – One Fight' framework was established with Islamabad along shared corridors (Islamabad Expressway, IJP Road, GT Road) for joint larviciding and data sharing. Moreover, 817 General Practitioners were given relevant training to emhamce capacity buildi. A five-tier epidemic plan allowed hospitals to increase dedicated bed capacity from 300 to over 1,000 beds across allied hospitals while maintaining stocks of IV fluids, testing kits and larvicides (anti larva compound)._APP



Dr Javed announces ambulance for PIMS retired employees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Punjab Health Minister and former Vice Chancellor of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University Islamabad, Professor Dr. Javed Akram, has announced donating an ambulance to the PIMS Retired Employees Welfare Association to support the medical and welfare needs of retired employees Speaking as chief guest at a ceremony organized by the association, Dr. Javed Akram said PIMS employees had spent a major part of their professional lives serving humanity and their valuable contributions could never be forgotten. He said doctors, nurses, paramedics, administrative staff and other employees had played a significant role in the development of PIMS and in providing healthcare to patients. He added that retired employees remained a valuable asset of both the institution and society. The announcement came after Patron-in-Chief of the association, Dr. Mansoor Ahmed, highlighted the urgent need for an ambulance for retired employees and appealed to the administration and philanthropists to extend support. Dr. Javed Akram assured the association of his

continued cooperation and said he would visit Islamabad every six months to review its welfare activities and provide assistance according to his capacity. He also stressed the need for improved medical facilities and other welfare initiatives for retired employees. He said those who had devoted their lives to the construction, development and service of PIMS deserved care, respect and support after retirement. Association President Dr. Ashok and General Secretary Dr. Hanif said the organization aimed to resolve the problems of retired employees and provide them with medical and welfare facilities.

National Days and Armed Forces Days

AUGUST

Aug 01/China Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzerland National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon Armed Forces Day

Aug 01 /Syria Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Bukino Faso National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea Independence Day

Aug 15/India Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland Armed Forces Day

Aug 17 /Indonesia Independence Day

Aug 24/Ukraine

Independence Day

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Aug 31/Kyrgyz Republic Independence Day

Aug 31/Malaysia National Day

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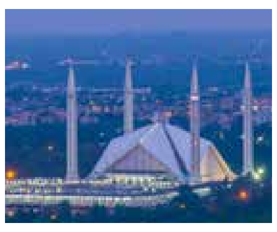

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation...........9209224
Potohar Town.........9209224
Rawal Town............5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad......0321-5744480

Mauritius envoy for stronger trade, cultural ties with Pakistan

The High Commissioner revealed that he has already held meetings with Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce officials to explore possibilities of free trade agreements. He expressed his priority to promote business-to-business linkages, student exchanges, tourism, and educational cooperation

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Mauritius High Commissioner to Pakistan, Munsoo Kurrimbaccus, has emphasized the need to strengthen trade and cultural ties between Pakistan and Mauritius. Speaking at the National Press Club's "Meet the Press" program, he highlighted the vast potential for cooperation in business, education, tourism, and cultural exchange. Ambassador Munsoo noted that Mauritius, an island nation with a population of about 1.2 million, gained independence in 1968 and became a republic in 1992. He explained that education in Mauritius is free, and since the 1980s, tourism has become a major pillar of its economy alongside IT and manufacturing. He stressed that Pakistan and Mauritius can benefit greatly from enhanced trade and investment opportunities. The envoy, who has been posted in Pakistan since 2024, praised the Pakistani people as "extremely hospitable, loving, and friendly," adding that he never felt like a stranger in the country. He also shared his academic background in social work and business administration, noting that diplomacy is a relatively new field for him but one he approaches with thorough research. The High Commissioner revealed that he has already held meetings with Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce officials to explore possibilities of free trade agreements. He expressed his priority to promote business-to-business linkages, student exchanges, tourism, and educational cooperation. A youth-focused seminar is planned for September, with coordination underway with the Higher Education Commission and other institutions. He further mentioned that Mauritius hosts students from various African countries and is keen to welcome Pakistani students for higher education opportunities. He underscored his long-standing interest in Pakistan, including learning Urdu, and said that Pakistan is viewed with respect and affection in Mauritius. Responding to questions, the ambassador also discussed cooperation in drug prevention, awareness, and experience-sharing between the two countries. Quoting Allama Iqbal's vision, he remarked: "Cultural exchange is my dream," reaffirming his commitment to strengthening cultural, educational, trade, and people-to-people ties. National Press Club President Abdul Razzaq Sial and Secretary Dr. Furqan Rao welcomed the ambassador and stressed the role of media in promoting Pakistan-Mauritius relations. They called for easier visa policies to facilitate exchanges between students, tourists, and business communities. The program concluded with the presentation of a commemorative shield to High Commissioner by the National Press Club.

CCoP okays restructuring plan for batch-i discos

ISLAMABAD: The Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP), chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, approved the Restructuring Plan for the first batch of electricity distribution companies - Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO) and Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) The decision is an important step in the Government of Pakistan's wider power-sector reform agenda: to build distribution companies that are financially sustainable, professionally managed, digitally enabled and better equipped to serve households, businesses and industry.

Under the approved plan, selected assets, including all land parcels and selected liabilities including post-retirement benefits of already retired employees along with the material amount of fund, will be carved out to a Government of Pakistan-owned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), while the retirement benefits of current employees will remain with DISCOs. Inter-governmental receivables and payables will also be net-off to settle GOP reveivables. The Restructuring Plan is fiscally neutral, prepared with the objective to enhance the value for Government of Pakistan (GoP), ensuring that the transaction is viable. The Government recognises that consumers, employees, industry and local communities have a direct stake in these reforms. Service continuity will remain paramount throughout the process. Employee interests will be addressed in accordance with applicable law and transaction arrangements, while stakeholders will be kept appropriately informed as the next stages of the process proceed.Muhammad Ali Advisor to the Prime Minister on Privatisation, stated, "Consumers will remain protected under Pakistan's regulatory framework. Electricity tariffs will continue to be determined through the applicable NEPRA process and notified by the Government, while the reform process will seek measurable improvements in reliability, efficiency and customer service." FESCO, GEPCO and IESCO collectively serve more than 14 million consumers in major industrial, commercial and urban centres. Strengthening their performance is therefore central to reducing power tariffs and supporting more competitive electricity service for Pakistan's economy. The approval of the restructuring plan marks a decisive move from managing legacy constraints to building modern, accountable and consumer-oriented electricity distribution companies for the future.

Saidpur Village lion alert

Rescue team finds no evidence during field inspection

ISLAMABAD: Reports of a lion being spotted in Saidpur Village prompted a visit by the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) rescue team. After surveying the area, officials said they found no evidence of a lion, including footprints or any other signs indicating the presence of the animal. The team has, however, remained on alert and continues to monitor the situation. According to the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board, the rescue team conducted a detailed inspection of the area following information received about a possible lion sighting in Saidpur Village. During the search, wildlife officials examined locations where the animal was reportedly seen and looked for physical evidence that could confirm its presence. The IWMB stated that no footprints, tracks, or other indicators of a lion were found during the operation. Officials also reported that the carcass of a pet dog, which had allegedly been killed by the animal, was not recovered despite efforts to locate it. The board said that, based on the findings so far, there is no confirmation that a lion was present in the area. However, rescue personnel are continuing to observe the situation and are prepared to respond if any new information emerges. The IWMB reminded residents that Margalla Hills National Park is the natural habitat of the common leopard, a species that is known to inhabit the region. Wildlife officials stressed the importance of reporting sightings of wild animals promptly so that trained teams can assess the situation and take appropriate action. Residents have been advised not to approach or attempt to capture any wild animal if spotted. Instead, they should immediately inform the relevant authorities. The IWMB urged citizens to contact its helpline at 0309-5302425 if they observe any wild animal or encounter a situation that requires wildlife rescue assistance. Officials said timely reporting helps ensure public safety and allows wildlife teams to respond effectively.—**APP**

PEC first GET Cohort graduates at NDU

ISLAMABAD:The Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) marked a landmark achievement with the passing-out ceremony of the first cohort of its Graduate Engineer Trainee (GET) House Job Programme, held at the National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad. The ceremony marked the transition of around 510 young engineering graduates from university education to professional practice after completing a structured six-month training programme. Chairman PEC Engr. Waseem Nazir and Deputy President NDU Rear Admiral Shafaqat Hussain Akhtar, HI(M) were the chief figures at the ceremony. The GET Programme has introduced, for the first time in Pakistan, a structured "House Job" model for fresh engineering graduates, addressing the critical gap between academic education and professional practice. Under the six-month programme, trainees undertake five months of field and industrial exposure, followed by one month of professional and soft-skills development. The first cohort was placed across around 60 leading public and private sector organizations, while PEC provided a monthly stipend of Rs50,000 per trainee. Around 510 GETs subsequently participated in the first-ever nationwide one-month professional and soft-skills training through eight centers across Pakistan. The NDU component included the Young Engineers Personality Development Programme, focusing on leadership, communication, teamwork, conflict management, professional ethics, critical thinking and professional development. A defining feature of the programme has been its commitment to equal opportunity and transparency. Approximately 10% of eligible engineering graduates were selected for the first cohort through a transparent random digital balloting process, ensuring that every eligible graduate had an equal opportunity to participate rather than relying on discretionary selection. This approach established a transparent and replicable model for scaling the programme nationally. As a special case and in line with the objective of promoting regional inclusion and equal opportunity, PEC accommodated 100% of eligible engineering graduates from Balochistan in the GET initiative. The experience demonstrates that the programme can be adapted to address specific regional needs while maintaining a transparent, structured and digitally managed framework. Speaking at the ceremony, Chairman PEC Engr. Waseem Nazir said the GET Programme was envisioned to fundamentally transform the transition from university to professional practice. He said the first cohort had demonstrated that a structured House Job model for engineers was both necessary and achievable. He emphasised that the programme represented a major investment in Pakistan's engineering human capital, providing young engineers with practical exposure, professional discipline, leadership capabilities and the essential skills required to succeed in professional life. The programme is now gaining momentum, with the regulatory, operational and digital frameworks established by PEC and the implementation model put in place for future cohorts. At the heart of the initiative is the PEC GET Portal, which has transformed the process into a transparent, digital and largely automated system. Registration, eligibility, balloting, placement, monitoring, performance evaluation and certification are integrated into the digital ecosystem, significantly reducing human dependency and ensuring transparency, efficiency and traceability. With the system now largely automated and operational, the GET Programme has moved beyond a pilot initiative and is ready for sustainable national expansion. With approximately 1930 engineers already inducted into the GET Programme-around 510 completing the first cohort and 1420 inducted in the second batch- the initiative has demonstrated its demand, feasibility and scalability. The next logical step is for the Government of Pakistan and Provincial Governments to own and institutionalize the programme. PEC has established the regulatory framework, developed the digital platform and tested the complete implementation mechanism. The foundation is therefore already in place.—**APP**

MoU inked to strengthen research collaboration

ISLAMABAD: The University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (UAJK), Muzaffarabad, and Hazara University (HU), Mansehra, have signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen academic, scientific, technological, and cultural cooperation between the two institutions. The MoU was signed by Vice Chancellor UAJK Prof. Dr Nasir Jamal Khattak and Vice Chancellor Hazara University Prof. Dr Ikramullah Khan at a ceremony attended by senior university officials, including the Registrar, Deans, Heads of academic departments and administrative officers, according to a press release here on Monday. The agreement provides a framework for collaboration in research and development, faculty and student exchanges, joint research projects, joint publications and academic supervision. It also provides for the exchange of visiting scholars and postdoctoral fellows, subject to relevant institutional requirements. Under the MoU, UAJK and Hazara University will also explore opportunities for joint research funding through the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and other donor organisations. The two institutions will facilitate academic and technical cooperation in seminars, workshops, internships and participation in international conferences. Particular emphasis has been placed on strengthening academic and research activities between the Departments of Geology of the two universities, with the aim of expanding collaboration in teaching, research and knowledge exchange. Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor UAJK Dr Nasir Jamal Khattak said that the MoU would provide a valuable framework for strengthening institutional linkages and creating new opportunities for collaborative research and academic development. He emphasised the importance of inter-university cooperation in promoting knowledge, innovation and research capacity. –**APP**

Eight private members' bills introduced in Senate

ISLAMABAD: Eight private members' bills were introduced in the Senate and referred to the concerned committees for further consideration As per details, Senator Shahadat Awan introduced the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, seeking further amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898. Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir introduced the Fatima Institute of Science and Technology Multan Bill, 2026, providing for the establishment of the Fatima Institute of Science and Technology. He also introduced another Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, seeking further amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri introduced the Muslim Family Laws (Maintenance of Parents) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, seeking further amendments to the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961.–**APP**

Briefs

PBM Chief opens exhibition

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) Managing Director Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt inaugurated a two-day exhibition at Aiwan-e-Quaid, F-9 Park, showcasing products made by women trainees from PBM's Women Empowerment Centres across Pakistan, in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and An-Nisa Dastkari School, as part of efforts to connect vocational skills with entrepreneurship, digital markets and sustainable livelihoods. The exhibition being held on August 23 and 24, brought together women trainees, government representatives, diplomats, NGOs and other stakeholders to showcase a wide range of products prepared by women trained at PBM centres across the country.

Ambassador of Rwanda to Pakistan Harerimana Fatou, MNA and Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Farah Naz Akbar, representatives of various NGOs and trainees from PBM's Women Empowerment Centres attended the event. Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt, along with the distinguished guests, visited the stalls and reviewed the products displayed by the trainees.

NPO to organize webinar on sustainable buildings

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) will organize a webinar on "Sustainable Buildings" on August 27, to raise awareness about environmentally responsible construction practices and promote energy-efficient and resource-conscious building design. The session will focus on sustainable building principles, the environmental impacts of conventional construction, smart growth, energy-efficient systems, renewable energy integration, water conservation and material selection, according to an NPO document. The session will provide information on the foundations and principles of sustainable buildings, energy and building systems, materials and resources, and applicable standards. –APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajiha Qamar visits the National Book Foundation.

PIDE for collaboration to make Pak's housing climate-resilient

Participants stressed that successful housing reforms require stronger local government capacity, clearly defined institutional responsibilities and rigorous evaluation of pilot projects before expanding them nationwide

DNA

ISLAMABAD:"Climate-responsive housing cannot be achieved through policies alone; it requires collaboration among communities, experts, institutions and markets to create practical solutions that reflect Pakistan's realities," said Dr. Nasir Iqbal, Registrar, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), while emphasizing the need for sustainable and inclusive approaches to address Pakistan's growing housing challenges. The remarks came during a roundtable dialogue on "Housing Matters: Climate-Responsive Housing", organised by PIDE in collaboration with Shehersaaz under the global Urban Thinkers Campus series. The event brought together architects, urban planners, policymakers, academics and local government representatives to explore how Pakistan can develop affordable, sustainable and climate-resilient housing solutions. Experts highlighted that Pakistan's housing challenge is not only about building more homes, but about creating housing that is affordable, environmentally responsible and adapted to changing climate realities. Discussions focused on the National Housing Policy, climate resilience, biophilic urbanism, urban infrastructure and the urgent need to transform policy commitments into practical action. Participants stressed that successful housing reforms require stronger local government capacity, clearly defined institutional responsibilities and rigorous evaluation of pilot projects before expanding them nationwide. Ms. Almas Shakoor, Executive Director of Shehersaaz, opened the dialogue by sharing her organisation's work with UN-Habitat and the Adaptation Fund on water facilities and progressive housing programmes in Rawalpindi and Nowshera, highlighting the importance of community-centred approaches. Dr. Shafaat Nawaz, PhD Graduate in Urban Planning and Manager RASTA, PIDE, presented research on biophilic urbanism and explained how climate-sensitive design approaches, including natural ventilation, appropriate building materials, shading techniques and green spaces, can improve thermal comfort while reducing energy consumption. A recurring theme of the discussion was the need to reconnect modern housing with Pakistan's own architectural heritage. Experts highlighted traditional design elements such as courtyards, shaded verandas, thick walls and locally available materials that historically helped communities adapt to local climates. They noted that this indigenous knowledge can provide valuable solutions for contemporary climate-responsive housing. Ms. Huma Baig of Earthwise highlighted the importance of passive solar design, permaculture and sustainable materials such as rammed earth, while participants also discussed straw-bale construction as a potential affordable and context-appropriate housing solution. Addressing implementation challenges, Mr. Waseem Bajwa highlighted the Shehersaaz pilot project as an example of translating policy ideas into practical interventions and called for faster progress in climate-responsive urban development, waste management, rainwater harvesting and rooftop gardening. Dr. Inayat Ullah, Director of PIDE's Centre for Agriculture, Climate Change and Rural Economy (CACCRE), stressed that pilot projects should not be scaled up without proper impact assessment. He emphasised the importance of evidence-based evaluation and proposed collaborative research initiatives to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of housing interventions. Experts also discussed the role of infrastructure, energy efficiency and inclusive planning. Ms. Farah Naz, Member CACCRE, PIDE, highlighted the impact of poor drainage systems and waste management challenges, while Engr. Abdul Waheed of NUST's School of Civil and Environmental Engineering called for stronger institutional support and gender-responsive housing policies. Dr. Anjeela Khurram, Member CACCRE, PIDE, and Dr. Nayyar Hussain from the CPEC Centre of Excellence emphasised the need for improved building energy performance and alignment with the Energy Conservation Building Code. Dr. Muhammad Faisal Ali, Member CACCRE, PIDE, stressed that future climate planning must consider evolving climate patterns rather than relying only on historical data. The discussion also examined barriers to affordable housing, including rising land prices, construction costs, taxation, land acquisition challenges and the limited participation of communities in housing decisions. Participants noted that climate resilience must extend beyond individual buildings and include neighbourhood-level solutions addressing flooding, drainage, public spaces and urban infrastructure.

Digital wallets secure BISP payments

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Senator Rubina Khalid Monday said digital wallets has been introduced to make financial assistance payments to women beneficiaries transparent, convenient and secure, with digital wallet accounts already opened for 90 percent of beneficiaries. Addressing media representatives during her visit to the BISP Central Zonal Office in Lahore, Rubina Khalid said the digital payment system has been introduced on the special directives of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. She said the interoperability system would enable beneficiaries to withdraw their payments from any authorized agent of BISP's partner banks anywhere in Pakistan. After funds transfer to their digital wallets, beneficiaries would receive an SMS notification with details of the payment and could withdraw the amount by presenting their CNIC and registered mobile number, said a news release. Senator Rubina Khalid said BISP staff would activate digital wallets on SIMs provided to beneficiaries and clarified that both the SIM and wallet activation were free of charge. A service charge of Rs. 280 had, however, been fixed for cash withdrawal. She advised beneficiaries not to hand over their mobile phones or SIMs to any agent and protect their personal information. She said funds transferred to digital wallets would remain secure and beneficiaries would not be required to withdraw the entire amount immediately. They could withdraw the money at their convenience from authorized retailers of the partner banks. The BISP Chairperson said the programme is a continuation of the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and has been translated into a practical reality under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari. She rejected the perception that BISP promoted dependency, saying the programme aimed to provide deserving families with support and opportunities to overcome poverty and move towards self-reliance. "Calling deserving women beggars undermines their dignity and self-respect," she said, stressing that BISP is an internationally recognized social protection programme providing financial assistance to vulnerable families within available resources.–APP

Pak, China seek robotic solutions to automotive production

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, China discussed applying robotic solutions to automotive production. The Chinese company said it would share relevant cases and applications, including welding, spot welding, painting and palletizing, before further business talks. A Pakistani company is exploring Chinese robotics solutions for automotive production as demand for industrial automation grows in the country, according to M. Irfan Dhedhi, a representative of a trading company affiliated with Pakistan's Atlas Group. Speaking at the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing, Dhedhi from Shirazi Trading Company said the company was looking for automation solutions, particularly robotic arms, for assembly lines, welding and other industrial applications. "Previously it was a very costly solution," he said. "Now we find some cost-effective solutions, " according to a report carried by China Economic Net (CEN). The company has already ordered several robots from a Chinese supplier, which are expected to arrive in Pakistan soon, he said. Dhedhi said his company is involved in automotive business in Pakistan, where Atlas Group is a joint-venture partner of Honda. During the conference, he also discussed potential cooperation with a China-Japan joint-venture robotics company that has about 30 years of experience in China's automotive sector. The discussions highlight a particular challenge for automation in Pakistan. While labor costs remain relatively low, automotive manufacturing has a strong demand for robots because of the need for consistent, stable and safe production. Robots are widely used for repetitive processes such as welding, regardless of whether factories produce internal-combustion or electric vehicles. For Chinese robotics suppliers, Pakistan could therefore represent a different type of market from China, where rising labor costs have been an important driver of automation. In Pakistan, affordability remains critical, but some manufacturing processes may require automation even where manual labor is relatively inexpensive. Pakistan has also been seeking to develop its robotics and automation ecosystem. The government held the Indus Robotics and Autonomous Systems Expo in July, bringing together industry, academia, startups and investors to promote applications of robotics and autonomous systems across sectors including manufacturing. The emerging contacts between Pakistani manufacturers and Chinese robotics companies suggest that cooperation could extend beyond technology demonstrations to equipment purchases, industrial applications and potential longer-term partnerships.–DNA

easypaisa digital bank reports PKR 8.26b profit in HY 2026

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of easypaisa digital bank has approved the financial statements for the half-year ended 30 June 2026. The Bank reported a robust financial performance, posting a Profit Before Tax (PBT) of PKR 8.26 billion and a Profit After Tax (PAT) of PKR 5.78 billion, representing a 2.27x increase in PBT compared to the corresponding period last year. Earnings per share stood at PKR 9.61. The Bank's performance was driven by sustained growth across its core business streams, supported by an expanding customer base, increasing transaction volumes, and continued investments in talent, technology, and digital innovation. Total revenue increased by 30.50% year-on-year, reflecting strong momentum across both lending and fee-based income streams. Net markup income grew by 32.46%, supported by the expansion of the lending portfolio and treasury investments, underpinned by strong growth in customer deposits. Fee-based income increased by 28.34%, driven by higher contributions from payment services, collections, disbursements, and insurance products. Operating expenses increased to PKR 21.08 billion as the Bank continued to invest in strategic growth initiatives, including customer acquisition campaigns, merchant ecosystem expansion, and support costs associated with the growth in digital lending volumes. As of 30 June 2026, total assets stood at PKR 232.58 billion. Customer deposits grew by 67.37% year-on-year to PKR 158.58 billion, while maintaining a strong deposit mix with a CASA ratio of 97.46% and a current account ratio of 79.95%. Gross advances reached PKR 31.11 billion, resulting in an advances-to-deposit ratio of 18.63%. Asset quality remained healthy, with non-performing loans (over 90 DPDs) at 3.16% and a coverage ratio of 159.63%. The Bank maintained a strong capital position, reporting a Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 23.75%, well above the regulatory requirement. In recognition of its strengthened financial profile, sound asset quality, and robust capitalisation, the Pakistan Credit Rating Agency Limited (PACRA) upgraded the Bank's long-term entity rating to "AA-" while reaffirming its short-term rating at "A1" on 1st July 2026. Jahanzeb Khan, President & CEO, easypaisa digital bank, stated, "Our strong profitability during the first half of 2026 reflects the resilience of our business model, the trust placed in us by millions of customers, and our commitment to advancing financial inclusion in Pakistan. As the country's leading digital bank, easypaisa remains focused on delivering innovative, customer-centric financial solutions that simplify lives and empower individuals and businesses alike. We are grateful to our customers, partners, the State Bank of Pakistan, and the Government of Pakistan for their guidance and continued support as we accelerate Pakistan's transition towards a more inclusive and digital financial ecosystem."–DNA

Daily Islamabad POST

Tuesday, August 25, 2026

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 07 Issue: 02

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Challenges to Iraq's Sovereignty

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

IRAQ has once again found itself in an uncomfortable middle ground. It is neither fully at peace nor directly at war. Caught between the competing interests of the United States and Iran, Baghdad is struggling to protect its political independence, economic interests and fragile internal balance. The latest conflict between Washington and Tehran has exposed how little room Iraq has to determine its own course. The irony is that Iraq has already paid a heavy price for becoming the arena of other countries' rivalries. The American invasion of 2003 destroyed the political order that had held the country together, while the years that followed allowed armed groups, sectarian organisations and foreign powers to acquire influence. The rise of the Islamic State further deepened these divisions. Although the militant group was eventually defeated, the political consequences of that war remain.

Today, Iraq's principal political contest is no longer simply between Shias, Sunnis and Kurds. The most consequential struggle is increasingly within the Shia political camp itself. This is an important change. The Kurdish parties, particularly the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, remain influential in their areas, but their ability to act independently of Baghdad has diminished. Sunni political forces, meanwhile, remain divided and possess considerably less influence than they once hoped to exercise. The result is a political system in which the Shia parties dominate the state, while competing among themselves for influence, resources and control over institutions. The old sectarian map of Iraq still matters, but it does not tell the whole story. The more important question now is which Shia political group will shape the direction of the Iraqi state. Iraq's political system has also developed a peculiar feature: the prime minister may occupy the most visible position in government, but real influence is distributed among a network of political leaders, judicial figures, militia commanders and party organisations. This has made Iraqi politics less a contest over public policy and more a struggle among powerful individuals and competing centres of authority. The danger is that institutions become secondary to personalities. Parliament loses importance, governments become bargaining arrangements, and state policy is shaped through negotiations conducted outside formal constitutional structures.

The problem is particularly serious because Iraq remains dependent on foreign support. Washington continues to possess considerable influence through security cooperation, arms supplies and economic relations. Tehran, meanwhile, has cultivated deep political, economic and military links with Iraqi groups over many years. Iraq therefore cannot simply choose one side and abandon the other. Its leaders know that dependence on Iran can undermine relations with the United States and other Arab states. At the same time, an abrupt attempt to distance Iraq from Tehran could provoke resistance from powerful political and armed groups inside the country. Baghdad's challenge is consequently not to choose between Washington and Tehran, but to prevent either from determining Iraq's political future. Oil remains the foundation of the Iraqi economy. Government finances depend overwhelmingly on petroleum revenues, while a large section of the population depends directly or indirectly on public-sector employment. This makes any disruption to oil exports a threat not merely to the treasury but to the wider social order. Iraq's dependence on the Gulf export routes makes the situation even more difficult. Any prolonged disruption in the movement of oil through the Strait of Hormuz would place Baghdad under severe financial pressure. Unlike the wealthier Gulf monarchies, Iraq does not possess the same level of sovereign financial reserves. Its population is considerably larger, its reconstruction needs are enormous and corruption has weakened the capacity of the state to accumulate savings. A prolonged decline in oil revenues could therefore force the government to borrow, cut expenditure or delay payments. Each option carries political costs. This is why the Iran conflict, even when Iraq is not directly involved in the fighting, can have consequences far beyond its borders.

There is a tendency in American policy circles to describe Iraq as having fallen entirely into Iran's orbit. That assessment is too simplistic. Iran undoubtedly possesses extensive influence. But Iraq's leaders also recognise the importance of American military and economic power. The two relationships are not mutually exclusive, even if Washington and Tehran would prefer Baghdad to choose sides. Washington can encourage Iraqi political forces to strengthen state institutions, protect minority communities and reduce the influence of armed groups. It can support economic assistance and international lending while pressing for reforms in return. But American policy will have to be more careful than it was after 2003. Iraqis have little appetite for another period in which their country becomes an arena for foreign strategic calculations.

The country has experienced invasion, dictatorship, civil conflict, terrorism and foreign intervention. Yet its greatest challenge may now be more ordinary and more difficult: building a functioning state in which political competition does not threaten national stability. The United States cannot determine the outcome. Iran cannot determine it either. Both can influence events, but neither can permanently substitute for legitimate Iraqi institutions. The lesson of the past two decades is clear. Every time Iraq becomes dependent on an external power, its internal political weaknesses deepen. Every time its political leaders treat the state as a prize rather than an institution, foreign influence finds another opening. Iraq therefore needs something more fundamental than another change of government. It needs a political settlement in which the state, rather than parties, militias or foreign patrons, becomes the principal source of authority. Until that happens, Iraq will remain suspended between Washington and Tehran not quite a battlefield, not quite a sovereign actor, but a country whose future can still be shaped by decisions made far beyond Baghdad.

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Trump: Destroying the Alliances America Built

Qamar Bashir

The same transformation is now occurring economically. The United States and Canada spent generations constructing one of the deepest economic relationships anywhere in the world. Yet following the collapse of their latest negotiations, Washington has imposed 50 percent tariffs on roughly $20 billion of Canadian goods. Canada has announced retaliatory tariffs, while Prime Minister Mark Carney says Washington's final demands were economically unacceptable and included restrictions affecting Canada's freedom to pursue trade agreements elsewhere

TWO World Wars and centuries of conflict taught Europe one of history's bitterest lessons: divided nations repeatedly went to war, while interconnected nations had much more to lose by fighting each other. From the ruins of World War II therefore emerged an extraordinary experiment—not merely to prevent another war through military deterrence, but to make war economically irrational. France and Germany, once bitter rivals, placed coal and steel—the very industries essential for warfare—within a common institutional framework. Economic cooperation gradually expanded into a common market and ultimately the European Union. Today that Single Market connects about 450 million people and 26 million businesses in an economy worth roughly 18 trillion. The European Commission estimates that the Single Market itself has increased EU GDP by 3–4 percent and created about 3.6 million jobs. citeturn1search0turn1search7

That is the measurable dividend of interdependence. Europe did not eliminate national interests; it created a system in which pursuing those interests through cooperation became more profitable than pursuing them through confrontation. Around 60 percent of EU exports still go to other EU members, demonstrating how deeply these economies have become intertwined. citeturn1search16. North America developed its own version of this philosophy. When NAFTA began in 1994, trade among the United States, Canada and Mexico stood at roughly $300 billion annually. Within less than two decades it had exceeded $1 trillion. Today, under its successor USMCA, U.S. goods and services trade with Canada alone was about $872 billion in 2025, while trade with Mexico approached $964 billion. Together, the North American relationship supports nearly $2 trillion in annual U.S. trade. citeturn1search6turn0search10turn0search12 These are not merely numbers. They represent factories designed around continental supply chains, Canadian energy powering American businesses, Mexican manufacturing feeding American assembly lines, American services flowing north and south, and millions of consumers benefiting from specialization and economies of scale.

Security followed much the same logic.

NATO created collective deterrence through Article 5: an armed attack against one member would be treated as an attack against all. The alliance helped create a security umbrella under which Western Europe could rebuild and prosper. Today European NATO members and Canada alone spend more than $570 billion annually on defense in constant 2021 dollars, demonstrating that NATO has evolved into far more than an American security subsidy. In 2025 alone, their defense expenditure increased by nearly 20 percent in real terms. citeturn0search11

Yet NATO was created for collective defense—not to compel every member to participate automatically whenever another member independently enters a war. This distinction became critical during America's confrontation with Iran. President Donald Trump criticized NATO allies for refusing to provide the military assistance Washington expected. He complained that NATO "just wasn't there" and suggested that if European allies were absent when America needed them, Washington might reconsider being there when they needed America. That interpretation fundamentally changes NATO's logic. If American protection becomes conditional upon whether allies participate in unrelated U.S.-initiated wars, collective security becomes transactional security. The immediate casualty is not necessarily NATO's military capability; it is confidence in the guarantee underpinning that capability.

The same transformation is now occurring economically. The United States and Canada spent generations constructing one of the deepest economic relationships anywhere in the world. Yet following the collapse of their latest negotiations, Washington has imposed 50 percent tariffs on roughly $20 billion of Canadian goods. Canada has announced retaliatory tariffs, while Prime Minister Mark Carney says Washington's final demands were economically unacceptable and included restrictions affecting Canada's freedom to pursue trade agreements elsewhere. citeturn0news46turn0news49 That is where trade policy begins crossing into sovereignty. America has every right to negotiate aggressively, protect strategic industries and demand reciprocal market access. But attempting to influence whom another sovereign country may trade with transforms economic interdependence from a source of shared prosperity into an instrument of political leverage. Canada refused, with Carney reducing the disagreement to a memorable conclusion: Washington asked too much and offered too little. The economic consequences will travel in both directions. The latest tariffs directly cover only around 5 percent of Canadian exports to the United States, so they alone are unlikely to dismantle the continental economy. But their significance lies in the precedent and in their interaction with existing disputes involving steel, aluminum, automobiles and lumber. citeturn0news49

The greater cost, however, may emerge over years rather than months. If Canada concludes that dependence upon the American market has become a strategic vulnerability, it will logically accelerate diversification toward Europe, Asia and other markets. Companies will redesign supply chains. Governments will seek alternative suppliers. Investment decisions will increasingly incorporate political risk once largely absent from U.S.-Canada commerce.

Europe faces a similar calculation on security. If American military guarantees appear conditional, European governments have greater reason to develop strategic autonomy. Ironically, NATO allies are already moving dramatically in that direction: European allies and Canada added more than $90 billion in real defense spending in 2025 alone. citeturn0search11

Here lies the paradox of Trump's strategy.

American power after World War II did not rest solely upon military superiority, nuclear weapons, the dollar or the enormous American market. Its greatest multiplier was an international network of countries that voluntarily tied their prosperity and security to the United States. Trump increasingly treats those dependencies as bargaining chips: military protection can leverage greater defense commitments; market access can leverage trade concessions; and alliance solidarity can become a test of support for American military campaigns. There is legitimate logic behind demanding fair burden-sharing. Allies should contribute adequately to their defense, and trade agreements should provide reciprocal benefits. But demanding fairness within an alliance is fundamentally different from weaponizing the alliance itself.

The first can strengthen partnerships. The second teaches partners to reduce their dependence.

That is why the present confrontation extends far beyond tariffs or NATO spending. Europe spent generations discovering that interdependence could transform former enemies into partners. North America spent three decades building production and trade networks worth trillions of dollars. NATO spent nearly eight decades constructing something even harder to quantify: confidence that allies would stand together when genuinely attacked. These systems took decades to build because trust accumulates slowly. It can disappear remarkably quickly. Trump may secure individual concessions by exploiting America's extraordinary economic and military weight. But if the longer-term result is a Canada searching for alternative markets, a Europe preparing to defend itself without assured American support and allies designing supply chains specifically to reduce exposure to Washington, tactical victories could produce strategic losses. America helped build the postwar system because its leaders understood that prosperous allies, integrated economies and collective security multiplied American power. The danger today is that by weaponizing those very interdependencies, Washington may achieve the opposite: turning countries that once considered dependence upon America an advantage into countries determined never again to depend upon it.

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The Prophet of Mercy (PBUH)

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

The Prophet's noble character became the living Qur'an, his words and deeds the finest model for humanity: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often" (Al-Ahzab 33:21). His humility was unmatched, his justice unbending, his kindness unending

ALLAH Almighty, the Exalted, in His boundless mercy and wisdom, sent down our forefather Hazrat Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) and Mother Eve (Haw'wa) to this earthly realm so that humanity might be established and the story of civilization unfold. But man was never abandoned to wander without direction. At every age, Allah revealed His heavenly guidance through His sacred books and sent His chosen Messengers to guide mankind towards the straight path. From Hazrat Nuh to Hazrat Ibrahim, from Hazrat Musa to Hazrat Isa (Peace Be Upon Them All), each Prophet bore witness to the eternal truth of One Almighty Allah. Yet, with the arrival of Khatam-ul-Nabi'een, Hazrat Muhammad (Peace and Blessings Be Upon Him), the Divine mission found its seal and perfection. To him was revealed the Holy Qur'an, the last heavenly book, a guide for all people and all ages. As Allah declares: "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah" (Al-Baqarah 2:2). And again, "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Al-Anbiya 21:107). This mercy was not confined to Muslims alone; it flowed like an eternal ocean, embracing all creation—man and beast, believer and non-believer, the heavens and the earth.

The Prophet's noble character became the living Qur'an, his words and deeds the finest model for humanity: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often" (Al-Ahzab 33:21). His humility was unmatched, his justice unbending, his kindness unending. He himself said: "I was sent only to perfect good character" (Musnad Ahmad). From the deserts of Arabia, his message radiated across continents, reshaping the course of history. Poets, scholars, and sages—Muslim and non-Muslim alike—found themselves compelled to write about this personality who changed the destiny of nations.

In every language and in every age, countless volumes have been written in his praise, yet his grandeur remains beyond the grasp of pen and tongue. Alphonse de Lamartine, the French poet and statesman, confessed: "Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas... the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?" The Scottish scholar William Montgomery Watt testified to the Prophet's integrity: "His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement—all argue his fundamental integrity."

George Bernard Shaw, with his keen wit, proclaimed: "He must be called the Savior of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems and bring peace and happiness." Thomas Carlyle, awed by his statesmanship, wrote: "How one man single handedly, could weld warring tribes and Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades... A silent great soul, one of that who cannot but be earnest. He was to kindle the world." Leo Tolstoy, the Russian sage, affirmed: "There is no doubt that Prophet Muhammad is one of the greatest reformers who served the social framework profoundly. He led a whole nation to the enlightenment of truth and widely opened to it the gate to development and civilization." Mahatma Gandhi, though belonging to another faith, admitted: "It was not the sword that won a place for Islam ... It was the simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his devotion, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his mission." Annie Besant too bowed her head in reverence: "It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet..."

Edward Gibbon, the English historian, acknowledged: "The greatest success of Mohammad's life was effected by sheer moral force without the stroke of a sword." Reverend Bosworth Smith called him "Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the German genius, hailed him as the "Hero of Humanity," whose life flowed like an "eternal mighty stream." Annemarie Schimmel declared: "The Prophet is the one who forever remains the 'beautiful model'... Love of the Prophet runs like blood in the veins of his community." Michael H. Hart ranked him first among history's most influential figures: "He was the only man who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level."

Washington Irving saw in him a man of sobriety and simplicity, beloved by the common people. Sir Thomas Arnold praised his message as a creed "so precise, so stripped of all complexities" that it wins its way into the hearts of men. Thus, whether through revelation or history, through the testimonies of saints or scholars, all affirm one truth: the Messenger of Allah was the Light that illuminated darkness. The Qur'an itself proclaims: "O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner, and one who invites to Allah by His permission, and an illuminating lamp" (Al-Ahzab 33:45–46). The seal of Prophethood rests with him, yet his light remains undimmed, his example eternal. His footsteps echo in the prayers of the faithful, in the call to prayer that resounds from minarets, in the very pulse of the Muslim heart. He was, and remains, the mercy for the worlds. No pen has fully captured him, and no voice can fully praise him. Indeed, as Lamartine asked and as history answers: is there any man greater than he?

Islamabad POST
Tuesday, August 25, 2026

SAOC Inspects Pakistan's Venues for SAF Games 2027

The delegation inspected major venues including Jinnah Stadium, Amir Khan Hall, Hamidi Hall, Rodham Hall, Liaquat Gymnasium, the Shooting Range and Rawal Lake, along with other facilities earmarked for the South Asian Games

Afzal Javed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has stepped up preparations to host the South Asian Games 2027 as a delegation of the South Asia Olympic Council (SAOC) conducted a detailed inspection of key sports venues in Islamabad, reviewing facilities and readiness for the region's biggest multi-sport event. The SAOC delegation visited the Pakistan Sports Complex, where Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Yawar Hussain, along with Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) President Arif Saeed and Secretary General Khalid Mehmood, briefed the delegates on venue preparations, infrastructure development, technical facilities and other arrangements for the Games.

The delegation inspected major venues including Jinnah Stadium, Amir Khan Hall, Hamidi Hall, Rodham Hall, Liaquat Gymnasium, the Shooting Range and Rawal Lake, along with other facilities earmarked for the South Asian Games. Officials highlighted the extensive preparations being undertaken to ensure that Pakistan provides world-class facilities and a professionally organised sporting spectacle for athletes from across South Asia.

The delegation also visited the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) Tennis Complex in Islamabad to assess the venue and facilities proposed for the tennis events.

PTF Secretary General Col. Zia-ud-Din Tufail briefed the delegation on the complex's infrastructure, player facilities and ongoing development initiatives. He also highlighted Pakistan's experience in successfully hosting international, regional and national tennis events, including ATP and other international competitions. The SAOC officials inspected the tennis courts, seating areas, player facilities and other key infrastructure at the complex. The venue inspections came a day after the SAOC meeting in Islamabad formally endorsed Pakistan's preparations and schedule for the 14th South Asian Games, further underlining the country's readiness to host the regional sporting extravaganza. Pakistan will host the South Asian Games from April 3 to 11, 2027, with competitions scheduled across Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar. Islamabad will host 15 sports, Lahore 10 and Peshawar three sports.

Briefs

New Zealand beat Pak in hockey world cup match

DNA

AMSTERDAM: New Zealand defeated Pakistan 4–2 in a spirited encounter. The Kiwis stunned Pakistan by scoring the opening goal within the first 12 seconds of play, setting the tone early. Pakistan regrouped after halftime and showed resilience, narrowing the gap with improved attacking play, but New Zealand maintained control to secure victory. With this result, Pakistan will now face South Africa in the playoff for 11th and 12th positions, while New Zealand will contest the 9th–10th place match. Currently, New Zealand holds the world ranking of 9th, while Pakistan stands at 12th, highlighting the competitive nature of their clash.

Field Marshal, Mohsin...

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while killing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But Iran has preserved enough missile and drone capability to attack its Gulf neighbours and threaten oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, bringing shipping in the key waterway to a near standstill and pressuring world fuel prices. The exact state of Iran's nuclear programme, which the Americans and Israelis aim to wipe out, remains unknown. The CDF Munir's visit will coincide with a Monday announcement on details related to the planned sanctions, which US officials have said would be "the toughest sanctions in history" on Iran. Trump had warned of economic consequences against any country that provided "any type of lifeline to Iran" as he seeks to isolate the Islamic Republic. Oil shipments are at a virtual standstill in the Strait of Hormuz, with Tehran threatening to strike any unauthorised oil tankers that try to transit the vital waterway, and Iran's economy is already under immense pressure from sanctions. Iran entered the war with high inflation, a weakening currency, energy shortages, sanctions and deep structural weaknesses, and must now contend with damaged infrastructure, disrupted trade, lost production and the cost of rebuilding. Pakistan's earlier mediation efforts between the US and Iran resulted in an interim peace agreement signed in June. But the Islamabad Memorandum quickly faltered, amid new fighting between Iran and the US that has threatened to spiral into a wider regional conflict in recent weeks.

Trump govt to impose $100,000 fee for...

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The states and groups that sued also say that the Homeland Security Department cannot impose fees, taxes, or other means to generate revenue for the United States without permission from Congress. The Trump administration has maintained that the fee is not a traditional tax and that courts have little power to question the president's authority to restrict entry into the country. Amid Trump's broader immigration crackdown, employers last year registered for about 344,000 H-1B visas, down more than 25% from 2024 and fewer than half of the 794,000 visas sought in 2023, according to data from US Citizenship and Immigration Services. The Trump administration has also ordered enhanced vetting of H-1B applicants and proposed a new visa selection process that would favor higher-skilled and better-paid workers. Earlier in August, the Department of Homeland Security, in a separate rule, added fees of up to $4,500 to applications to extend the stay of H-1B workers or to transfer employees based in other countries to the United States.

Cricket legends renew appeal to PM Shehbaz for Imran Khan's medical treatment

Former international cricket captains urge PM Shehbaz to allow an independent medical assessment of Khan

TWENTY-ONE former international cricket captains on Sunday renewed their appeal to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for the medical treatment of incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, in line with the Supreme Court's directives, ESPN Cricinfo reported.

A three-member SC bench on August 18 ordered Adiala jail authorities to transfer Khan, 73, who has remained in prison since August 2023 following convictions in several cases, to Shifa Hospital for medical assessment and treatment within two days. However, he was taken to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), where doctors from Shifa International Hospital were also present, according to Information Minister Attaullah Tarar. He said Imran's medical examination was conducted in the presence of his sister and his doctors. Tarar said a team of qualified doctors, including an ophthalmologist, cardiologist and physician, conducted a detailed medical examination and declared Imran "medically fit".

Following the government's move, the party filed a contempt petition in the Supreme Court over the alleged violation of its order concerning the party founder's hospital transfer.

Meanwhile, 21 former international cricket captains wrote a letter to PM Shehbaz that stated: "Pakistan's Supreme Court ordered that Imran Khan be transferred to hospital for examination by a medical board that was to include his own personal physicians and his sister, Dr Uzma Khan."

However, the cricket legends said Imran's hospital stay lasted only a few hours. "He was examined by a state-appointed team rather than the board the Court had directed, declared 'medically fit', and returned to Adiala Jail before that board could complete its work. His family and legal team say this falls short of what the Court ordered," they claimed in the letter, cited by Cricinfo. The former captains made three requests in their latest appeal: That the medical board directed by the Supreme Court, including Mr Khan's own doctors, be permitted to complete a full and independent assessment of his health, particularly the reported loss of vision in his right eye. – APP

Pakistan explores partnerships with Chinese robotic enterprises at Beijing's conference

BEIJING: The 2026 World Robot Conference (WRC 2026), held here at the Beiren Etrong International Exhibition and Convention Center E-Town, concluded with record-breaking international participation, solidifying China's role as a global epicenter for embodied AI and smart manufacturing. Pakistan in the conference, explored partnerships with leading Chinese robotic enterprises at the conference. Held from Aug. 19 to 23 under the theme "Human-Robot Symbiosis, Production-Demand Convergence," the conference brought together more than 300 exhibiting companies and showcased over 3,000 innovative products, with 311 new products unveiled, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. The event also received support from nearly 30 international organizations, while international guests accounted for about 30 percent of the main forum's participants. Alexender from Spain told China Economic Net that China's increasingly convenient access for international travelers is another factor. Expanded visa-free arrangements and streamlined entry policies have contributed to a broader influx of foreign visitors to China in 2026, making it easier for international technology enthusiasts and businesspeople to attend major events. Fatimah Noor from Malaysia said that one reason event has seen stronger foreign interest this year is rapid evolution of China's robotics sector from laboratory demonstrations toward practical commercial applications. – DNA

AJK Assembly members take oath

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deputy speaker and leader of the house. On a point of order, PPP's Abdul Majid Khan noted that although the PML-N had a majority and could suspend the rules, it should avoid holding the session on the 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal – Eid-i-Miladun Nabi, widely commemorated as the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) – out of respect for the sanctity of the day. The chair, however, said there was no harm in holding the session and conducting the election process on that day. "The transition of power should take place as early as possible, and it is good that on 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal, members will pay tributes to the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) from the floor of the house," he said, amid desk-thumping by PML-N legislators. PML-N wins 5, PPP wins 2 reserved seats

The PML-N bagged five while the PPP won two of the seven reserved seats that were up for grabs in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly on Monday. Under Article 22(1) of the AJK Constitution, the Legislative Assembly consists of 53 members, including 45 members elected directly through adult franchise and eight members chosen by directly elected representatives. The reserved seats include five seats for women and one each for Ulema-i-Din or Mashaikh well-versed in the teachings of Islam, Jammu and Kashmir State subjects residing abroad, and technocrats and other professionals. PML-N's Chaudhry Abdul Rehman Arain was the only candidate to have submitted his nomination papers for the seat reserved for state subjects residing abroad.

Clark fends off McIlroy to win BMW Championship

LOS ANGELES: A nervy Wyndham Clark birdied the final three holes to dramatically win the BMW Championship on Sunday, having earlier surrendered his five-stroke lead to Rory McIlroy. Clark had claimed his second US Open title earlier this summer by barely clinging on to a huge final-day advantage, and history repeated itself at the penultimate event of the PGA Tour's FedEx Cup playoffs. Having struggled all day, Clark finally made his first birdie on 16, followed it with another on 17, and watched on with relief as his final pair partner McIlroy bogeyed after finding two separate bunkers.

Clark sealed the memorable win with a 17-foot putt for a third straight birdie, and a round of 70 to finish at 17-under par. "It was weird. I wasn't really nervous. I was kind of like out of it, and I just was making just dumb bogeys," Clark said. "As much as I would have loved to run away with this, it was fun getting the juices going, and (to) really feel the angst coming down at the end," he added.

Clark's five-shot overnight advantage had immediately dropped to three on the first hole at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis, Missouri, as he three-putted for bogey while McIlroy opened with a birdie. Gary Woodland then cut the gap to two, with birdies on two, four and five.

A jittery Clark wobbled as the pressure mounted. He saved par on five after totally mis-hitting a simple fairway approach, then bogeyed the next hole after a heavy chip.

The double Major winner then escaped with par again after hitting the lip of a fairway bunker on eight, before bogeying 10. McIlroy briefly appeared to falter, with bogeys on four and seven. But he pulled those back with birdies on eight and nine. And the popular Northern Irishman dramatically tied Clark for the lead with a perfectly judged putt on the 11th green that sent the crowd wild.

The two men exchanged pars over the next four holes, before Clark rolled in a 17-foot putt on the tricky par-three 16th for his first birdie of the day. For the third straight hole McIlroy narrowly missed his birdie putt, giving Clark a one-shot advantage with two holes to play. On the par-five 17th, McIlroy from deep rough yanked his ball into a fairway bunker, and found another bunker with his next shot, essentially handing the tournament to Clark, who birdied. "I don't think I could be too disappointed – I'm probably not playing well enough to be disappointed that I didn't win," said McIlroy. "But I had my chances on the back nine." Patrick Cantlay – trying to secure his place in the final field of 30 at next week's Tour Championship – had earlier briefly moved just one back from Clark. – APP

Uefa's Ceferin rules out running for Fifa presidency; Infantino makes pitch to poorer associations

Uefa, AFC and CONCACAF reportedly consider no-confidence vote against Infantino before next year's election

FIFA President Gianni Infantino laid out his manifesto for reelection as the champion of poorer soccer nations on Sunday as Uefa chief Aleksander Ceferin ruled out running against him but said he thought there would be an opposition candidate. Almost a month after Infantino tabled his now abandoned proposal to create a commercial body for Fifa tournament rights and sell off 20% to private investors, the battle for the future of global governance of the world's most popular sport rages on. European governing body Uefa, backed by the regional blocs for Asia (AFC) and North and Central America and the Caribbean (CONCACAF), has led the opposition and Ceferin suggested that Infantino should stand down.

"There are two options," he told "The Rest Is Politics: Leading" podcast.

"One option is that he realises that he doesn't have the support, and that's not only a political support of the ones who vote, but the political support of football community, the political support of fans, the political support of the players, former players, coaches. "And the second option that he goes to the elections in March, but in that case, I think he will have a candidate against him. But I don't know yet who."

Reuters has contacted Fifa for comment on Ceferin's criticism of Infantino and the sport's global governing body.

Sources familiar with the process told Reuters last week that Uefa, the AFC and CONCACAF were considering a third option – a vote of no confidence in Infantino ahead of the ballot in March next year.

Slovenian Ceferin, who said he had had no contact with Infantino since the controversy erupted, thought his lack of interest in succeeding the Swiss administrator increased his credibility. Opposition from Europe's smaller nations Ceferin said the proposal was a greater threat to the sport than the European Super League plan that Uefa successfully fought in 2021, and said opposition was not just from Europe's bigger nations. "On one side was England, Germany, who you understand don't want that, because this money is not so big for them. But on the other side was San Marino, Cyprus, Liechtenstein ... They said: we're not for sale," he added.

Infantino has shown no signs of walking away from the position he has held since 2016 and made it clear that he was banking on his appeal to the less well-off national associations to win reelection until 2031.

In a video interview released by Fifa after he met with members of the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) in the Dominican Republic at the weekend, Infantino said it was Fifa's job to close the gap between wealthy and poorer associations.

"We want to grow football in every one of our 211 countries in the world," he said.

"We need to find investments for all the others – opportunities for all the others. This is about, indeed, finding and giving opportunities, access, and resources to world football. "Some, unfortunately, don't need and they don't want that others grow, but we need to narrow this gap between the big, big countries and all the others.

"That's what we have been trying to do in the last 10 years and also in the last 10 weeks, and what we will be continuing to do in the next years." Infantino, who has support from the African and South American regional blocs, has looked to sideline the confederations and appeal directly to individual members throughout the crisis.

Infantino says well received in Dominican Republic CFU forms part of CONCACAF and Infantino said he had been very happy with how he had been received on the sidelines of an under-14 tournament in the Dominican Republic. CONCACAF President Victor Montagliani had asked Infantino to stay away from the tournament, saying his presence would overshadow the football.

Infantino said the tournament, which was funded by Fifa development money, was an example of the sort of work the governing body had done under his stewardship.

Also on Sunday, six Nordic Fifa members – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the Faroe Islands – met in Helsinki and issued a joint statement backing calls for Infantino's resignation.

In his podcast interview, Ceferin rejected allegations that Europe was obstructing efforts to help poorer football nations and took aim at what he described as attempts to portray Uefa as an entitled elite. "What I hear is that they play on, you know, arrogant Europe is against us," he said. "But I think someone should remind him (Infantino) that he is a European, and that he was supported by Uefa, which he forgot." – APP

It was so easy for Imran to make a...

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During the press talk, Gohar said that he and Khosa had arrived at the SC to meet with Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi in connection with the party's contempt petition against the government's alleged violation of its Aug 18 order for shifting Imran to Shifa International Hospital. "I asked to meet the chief justice. He was busy so it could not happen. Myself and Khosa sahib met the SC registrar and requested that a number be allotted to this case and it be fixed for hearing," he said. He said that the registrar had assured that a case number would be allotted to the contempt plea. Gohar said that they were also assured of the early fixation of the case before the SC. "This [Aug 18 order] cannot be ignored. The whole world is looking at the SC and whether it is able to implement its order," he said. "We only wanted PTI founder's medical tests to be conducted at a private hospital, with both his sister Uzma and his personal physician Dr Faisal Sultan included in the medical board examining him," he said.

Jemima urges UK PM to intervene

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Imran's family and party have long raised concerns over his health, with the Supreme Court finally issuing an order last week for him to be transferred to a private hospital from Adiala jail. However, the government authorities shifted him to Pims, a public hospital, citing security concerns due to the crowd gathered outside, and later shifted him back to Adiala jail in Rawalpindi after a medical board cleared him. 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. Jemima, in her post on the PTI founder, who is the father of Kasim Khan and Suleiman Khan, said: "For three years the father of my two sons, and Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, has been brutally penalised by his political opponents." She claimed that he has "endured 3 years of solitary confinement".

PM Shehbaz launches Pakistan National...

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The Ambassador said Pakistan now has more than seven million olive plants, while Italy's Olive Culture Project has supported laboratories, nurseries, business groups and training for more than 700 stakeholders. He said Italy is also supporting Pakistan's technical and vocational education through a 20-million-euro capacity-building programme focusing on high-value agriculture, including olive cultivation and production. He expressed hope that the new policy would transform Pakistan's olive sector into a thriving agro-industry, benefiting farmers, women and youth, while further strengthening Italy-Pakistan relations.

Protest at Capital Varsity...

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who are reportedly SUSIT students. He is accompanied by a woman, who is said to be a university official. The video showed the suspect hitting an individual with a stick and exchanging heated words with gathered protestors, following which a scuffle breaks out. An angry crowd surrounds the officer, and some individuals appear to assault him, following which he draws a pistol and points it at the crowd. The woman accompanying him appears to try to stop him, but the man then points the weapon into the air and discharges it, at which several police officers approach and encircle him.

Briefs

PSX drops over 199 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) faced downward pressure on Monday, shedding 199.84 points, a negative change of 0.11 percent, to close at 176,966.69 points against 177,166.52 points recorded in the previous trading session. The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 933.516 million shares, compared to 689.166 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value increased to Rs 44.100 billion from Rs 35.657 billion. Market capitalization decreased to Rs 19.870 trillion from Rs 19.882 trillion recorded a day earlier. Out of 498 companies that traded in the ready market, 222 posted gains, 241 suffered losses, while 35 remained unchanged, reflecting a mixed trend with a negative bias. Cnergyico PK led the volume chart with 266.477 million shares, followed by Tasdeeq Information with 148.563 million shares and Pak Refinery with 52.888 million shares. Among the top gainers, the Buxly Paints Limited advanced by Rs 54.12 to settle at Rs 595.31whereas the Thal Industries Corporation Limited surged by Rs 49.72 to close at Rs 1,395.78, while on the losing side, Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited declined by Rs 88.67 to close at Rs 9,212.40, while Sapphire Textile Mills Limited fell by Rs 59.79 to Rs 1,440.31. In the futures (DFC) market, turnover stood at 572.304 million shares with a traded value of Rs 24.093 billion, compared with 222.388 million shares worth Rs 10.832 billion in the previous session. Of the 314 companies traded in the DFC market, 158 advanced, 149 declined, and seven remained unchanged.–APP

HRL group signs MoU to develop smart city in Uzbekistan

ISLAMABAD: Habib Rafiq Engineering (Pvt.) Ltd. (HRL), one of Pakistan's leading conglomerates in construction, engineering, infrastructure and real estate development, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Khorezm Region of Uzbekistan to initiate the process of developing a new smart city as part of the historic city of Khiva. The landmark agreement marks an important step toward sustainable urban development in the Khorezm Region, with the proposed project expected to create new opportunities for investment, innovation, economic growth and regional connectivity, said a release issued here on Monday. The MoU was signed at the Governor's Office in Urgench, the provincial capital of Khorezm Region. Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram signed the agreement on behalf of Habib Rafiq Engineering, alongside H.E Alisher Dushanov, Deputy Governor of Khorezm Region. The initiative was spearheaded by Mr. Zahid Rafiq, Chairman of HRL Group, and Mr. Jahanzaib Zahid, Vice Chairman of HRL Group, reflecting their vision of strengthening regional connectivity, economic cooperation and sustainable development among friendly countries. HRL brings extensive experience in large-scale infrastructure, real estate and smart city development to the proposed project. In Pakistan, the company has played a key role in major urban developments, including Capital Smart City Islamabad, spanning approximately 14,500 acres, and Lahore Smart City. The group has also undertaken major infrastructure, housing, industrial and urban development projects in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Sahiwal and Islamabad. The proposed Khiva smart city seeks to combine modern infrastructure and technology with the preservation of the city's rich cultural and historical identity. With more than 2,500 years of history, Khiva is one of Central Asia's most significant historic cities and a major cultural destination.–APP

BOI minister reviews BFC one-year performance

Qaiser Sheikh said that improving the Ease of Doing Business remains a key priority of the government so that local and foreign investors can start businesses, invest and expand their business activities in Pakistan with greater ease

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh visited the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) Islamabad, and reviewed the Centre's one-year performance, business and investment facilitation initiatives, and future roadmap. On the occasion, the minister received a detailed briefing on the BFC's one-year performance, services provided to businesses and investors, progress on applications, and plans to further expand the scope of facilitation services. Qaiser Sheikh said that the establishment of the BFC is an important step towards providing businesses and investors with easy, fast and integrated services under one roof. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the government is taking practical measures to promote investment, improve the business environment and strengthen the economy, said a release issued on Monday. The federal minister said that BFC Islamabad has demonstrated significant performance during its first year of operations. From 20 August 2025 to 20 August 2026, a total of 7,709 applications were received from businesses and investors at the BFC. He stated that during this period, 6,896 registrations, licenses, certificates and other permits were issued, while 4,920 applications were processed within the stipulated timeframe. A further 2,050 applications were processed beyond the stipulated timeframe, while expert guidance and consultation were provided in 845 cases. Qaiser Sheikh said that the core objective of the BFC's performance is to promote business activity and investment and facilitate the creation of employment opportunities. He stated that through BFC facilitation, more than 4,100 new businesses were facilitated, investment exceeding Rs. 6.6 billion was facilitated, and more than 20,000 employment opportunities were supported. He further stated that a total footfall of 8,554 individuals was recorded at the BFC during the year. The highest number of applications, 1,288, was received in December 2025, followed by 1,264 in January and 859 in July 2026. The federal minister said that the BFC provides businesses and investors with access to essential information, guidance and relevant services through a single platform, eliminating the need to repeatedly visit different government offices. This is helping save time and simplify business procedures. Qaiser Sheikh said that improving the Ease of Doing Business remains a key priority of the government so that local and foreign investors can start businesses, invest and expand their business activities in Pakistan with greater ease. He said that the Board of Investment is also working on comprehensive reforms to eliminate unnecessary regulatory barriers faced by the business community. The objective of regulatory reforms is to reduce unnecessary procedures, paperwork, delays and institutional barriers and create a more conducive environment for business activity. The federal minister said that investment promotion, business facilitation and regulatory reforms are closely interconnected. The Board of Investment is working in a coordinated manner across these areas to provide maximum facilitation to businesses and investors. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said that the regulatory reforms being undertaken by the Board of Investment aim to relieve the business community of unnecessary complexities and make the process of accessing government services easier, more transparent and faster. He said that the reform process would be further advanced to create an even more conducive environment for business and investment in Pakistan. The minister said that the one-year performance of BFC Islamabad is encouraging; however, much greater progress is expected in the coming years. He said that the government would continue taking measures to make business and investment facilitation more effective and further simplify procedures for businesses.–DNA

SCO transport push opens new Eurasian Trade Routes

ISLAMABAD: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is placing transport and logistics connectivity at the center of its regional agenda as geopolitical tensions reshape global trade routes and supply chains. For Uzbekistan, an active member of the organization, stronger transport cooperation is emerging as a strategic priority, creating opportunities to connect Central Asia more closely with China, South Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Uzbekistan's freight traffic with SCO member states has grown significantly in recent years. According to figures cited by D. Ibragimova, Head of the Department at the Center for the Study of Transport and Logistics Development Problems under Uzbekistan's Ministry of Transport, international freight traffic between Uzbekistan and SCO countries increased by around 9 million tons, or 40%, over the past five years. The volume reached 33.5 million tons in 2025, accounting for about 80% of Uzbekistan's total international freight traffic. Russia accounted for 33% of the volume, Kazakhstan 32%, China 16% and Kyrgyzstan 10%, said a release issued here by the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Islamabad on Monday. The author estimates that freight traffic between Uzbekistan and SCO member states could rise to as much as 47 million tons by 2030. With the SCO now comprising 10 member states, the organization covers a vast geographic area stretching across major parts of Eurasia. This creates significant potential for developing alternative land routes at a time when geopolitical disruptions are increasing pressure on traditional supply chains. Transport cooperation has consequently become a major component of the SCO's expanding agenda. Key strategic documents adopted since 2022 have focused on developing efficient transport corridors, digitalizing logistics, promoting decarbonization and strengthening ports and logistics centers. The 2025 Tianjin Declaration further emphasized the importance of creating new and modernizing existing international transport routes, including the North-South and East-West corridors. It also highlighted digitalization, electronic data exchange and technological innovation as tools for ensuring stable and uninterrupted supply chains. A major challenge, however, remains the lack of sufficient railway connectivity between several SCO sub-regions. Infrastructure gaps, differences in railway gauges and technical standards, as well as complicated border procedures, continue to limit the creation of an integrated Eurasian rail network. Against this backdrop, Uzbekistan is supporting several projects with potentially far-reaching regional implications. Among the most important is the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, construction of which officially began in Kyrgyzstan's Jalal-Abad region in December 2024. The approximately 532.5-kilometer railway will include stations, bridges and tunnels. Preliminary estimates suggest that it could carry 8 million tons of freight annually by 2030, increasing to 10 million tons by 2040 and 13.5 million tons by 2050. The project could provide a new connection between China and Central Asia while creating opportunities for future links toward South Asia and Indian Ocean ports. Another strategically important initiative is the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railway. The proposed line could establish a shorter overland connection between Central and South Asia, linking Eurasian markets with Pakistan's seaports and, potentially, India and Southeast Asia. Preparatory work has already included field studies, digital terrain mapping and development of the technical component of a preliminary feasibility study. In July 2025, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed a framework intergovernmental agreement on preparing a feasibility study. Preliminary estimates cited from EY suggest the corridor could handle up to 22 million tons of cargo annually by 2030 and 34 million tons by 2040, with transit freight expected to account for a substantial share.–DNA

Jordan, China eye partnership on Palestinian two-state solution

DNA

BEIJING: Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi has expressed strong willingness to enhance cooperation with China to promote the two-state solution and resolve regional issues through dialogue and diplomacy. In an exclusive interview with China Central Television, Safadi, who is accompanying King Abdullah II on a visit to China, underscored that the Palestinian issue remains the core concern in the Middle East. He highly commended China's clear and principled stance on the issue. "We appreciate China's clear position within this framework. China supports the two-state solution, and China supports a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue. This is a position we respect. We also look forward to China being part of and playing a role in advancing efforts to achieve this solution," he said before his China visit. Safadi further elaborated on the broader principles for resolving conflicts in the region, emphasizing the necessity of adhering to international law.

"In general, we always want to resolve conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy. But the basis for this dialogue must be international law, international humanitarian law, the UN Charter, and international legitimacy resolutions, while respecting the principles of good-neighborliness and non-interference in internal affairs. This is the framework we follow to achieve security and stability," he said. Safadi expressed optimism about bilateral cooperation with Beijing. "We look forward to cooperating with China, which plays an important role in achieving this goal, achieving a just peace that guarantees the rights of all parties, brings security and stability, and ultimately drives economic development so that all peoples of the region can live with dignity and security."

72 suspected of starting forest fires held in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia: Indonesian police on Sunday arrested 72 people suspected of starting some of the recent forest and peatland fires as huge blazes in central and western parts of the country triggered a harmful cloud known as a choking haze. Indonesia has been battling fires driven by an intensifying El Nino pattern and a prolonged dry season, generating dense smoke that crossed into Malaysia, according to Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency, or BNPB. Fires are a regular problem in the country and often strain relations with neighbors. Plantation owners and traditional farmers often start fires to clear land for farming, said Mohammad Irhamni, director of special crimes at the National Police's Criminal Investigation Agency.

The arson suspects were being investigated in connection with 89 forest and land fire cases across five provinces on the island of Borneo and four on Sumatra, Irhamni said. He said most of the suspects were accused of deliberately burning land to clear areas for plantations at lower cost. Investigators were still tracing financial records to determine whether companies financed or ordered the land clearing, signaling the probe could expand beyond those arrested. "We will not stop at the perpetrators on the ground," Irhami said in a news conference Sunday in the capital, Jakarta. "We will determine who benefited from these activities and who was ultimately behind them." The suspects face charges that carry penalties ranging from hefty fines to prison terms of up to 15 years, he said. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto flew on Saturday to Central Kalimantan province, where more than 7,600 hectares (18,700 acres) have burned, to encourage authorities to get the haze cloud under control. Prabowo promised government resources required to contain the fires, including helicopters and water pumps, and vowed to hold accountable any companies found to have contributed to the fires. "I hope we can control this soon," Prabowo said during the visit. "We have experienced worse forest and land fires in the past, and we were able to overcome them." Accompanying the president was Prasetyo Hadi, the head of State Secretariat. He said at least four companies in West Kalimantan province are under investigation for allegedly using fire to clear land. If they are proven to have intentionally set the fires, they could face sanctions, including the revocation of their operating permits, he added. Smoke from the fires on Sunday blanketed parts of Borneo, the world's third-largest island shared by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. Indonesia administers about three-quarters of the island, where the country's Environment Ministry recorded more than 3,700 hot spots on Sunday. BNPB chief Suharyanto said fire activity had increased in West, Central and South Kalimantan provinces on Borneo, where many blazes worsen due to peatlands, prolonging the dangerous haze in several areas. Fires that appear "extinguished on the surface may still contain embers underneath, so sufficient rainfall is crucial to rewet the peat and fully suppress the fires," said Suharyanto, who, like many Indonesians, uses a single name. The western island of South Sumatra also battled fires, with more than 1,700 hot spots detected on Sunday, causing a choked haze cloud and reducing visibility to only 10 meters (33 feet) in some areas, the ministry said.–APP

Migrants, rescue ships face threats at sea

MARESILLE: A leading aid group said Monday that migrants crossing the Mediterranean and rescue ships that help them face increasing levels of threat and harassment from Libyan groups. Thousands of people have died crossing from Africa to Europe and SOS Mediterranee is leading part of a network of ships and planes that monitor these waters.The group said that the central Mediterranean was becoming "increasingly hostile," which it stated was bolstered by "the expansion of European cooperation with Libyan actors regarding migration deterrence." SOS Mediterranee said that on at least seven occasions in June and July, boats "linked to Libyan actors" had approached rescue vessels "at high speed" or trailed them for hours, engaging in "chases" into international waters. The group said there had also been a "significant increase in the presence of unidentified speed boats linked to different armed groups in Libya."

Ukraine backers gather as war escalates

KYIV, Ukraine: Ukraine on Monday hosts a meeting of its key European backers to press for critical air-defense supplies and more pressure on Moscow, with Russian attacks killing more civilians than at any time since the first months of the invasion. The meeting of the Coalition of the Willing will be jointly chaired by the leaders of Britain, France and Germany. UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham will be in Kyiv for his first international trip since entering 10 Downing Street, and several other leaders are expected to join remotely. EU Council President Antonio Costa is also due in Kyiv for the talks, which come amid the latest, deadly escalation of the war. Russia has been pounding Kyiv with ballistic missiles in recent weeks, ripping open apartment blocks and killing dozens of citizens in the capital.–APP

Landslide at Guinea landfill kills 30

CONAKRY: A landslide at a landfill in Guinea's capital killed 30 people, the government said on Sunday, after heavy rains overnight prompted the collapse of a massive mound of waste that engulfed nearby tents and shacks. The incident occurred less than a week after the government announced plans to close the site and relocate the waste because of the threat it posed, especially during the ongoing rainy season, which causes landslides and fatal flash floods each year in crowded, underdeveloped cities across parts of West Africa. The landslide took place at around 2 a.m. (0200 GMT) in the Gbessia commune of Conakry, according to a government statement. The death toll was 30, with six people seriously injured and 16 more lightly injured, the statement said. Rescue workers were using excavators and other tools to clear the site of the landslide, which witnesses said was large enough to bury an apartment building along with more precarious dwellings. .–APP

Islamabad's Drowning Habit

Soha Nisar

TEN feet. That is how high the water rose in Rawalpindi's Leh Nullah before dawn broke over the capital last Friday, turning Murree Road and Bhara Kahu into rivers and trapping commuters where they stood. No cyclone made landfall. No unprecedented deluge was recorded. This was an ordinary monsoon downpour, and it was enough, once again, to bring Pakistan's capital region to its knees. Before anyone reaches for the phrase "natural disaster," it is worth being precise about what actually happened. The rainfall itself was a natural hazard; the scale of disruption that followed was shaped by how the city has been planned, built and managed.

This was an entirely foreseeable monsoon spell meeting a drainage system, a set of encroached waterways and a planning culture that had four prior summers to prepare and chose, in each of them, to be surprised instead. Calling that nature's fault is not humility. It is an alibi.

There is also a physical reason "ordinary" spells now behave like extraordinary ones. A warmer atmosphere can hold roughly seven percent more water vapour for every degree Celsius of warming and that extra moisture does not fall gently; it is released in short, violent cloudbursts rather than the steadier rain older drainage systems were built to handle. Islamabad's infrastructure is not just poorly enforced. It is calibrated to a climate that no longer exists. That does not excuse four summers of institutional shrugging. It does mean the goalposts have moved, and pretending otherwise is its own kind of denial.

That distinction matters because it changes where the accountability sits. Islamabad does not flood because the sky has singled it out. It floods because the city has built, permit by permit, on the assumption that this year's rain would behave better than last year's. It never does. Streams that once carried water out of the capital have been narrowed, built over or turned into dumping grounds by developers whose projects encroached on natural drainage channels, while enforcement repeatedly failed to prevent it. Research on the Lower Indus below Kotri Barrage has found that sediment deposition there has reduced the flood-carrying capacity of that river reach by close to eighteen percent: a striking illustration of how sediment accumulation and upstream human intervention can silently erode a river system's ability to handle floods. Islamabad's own seasonal streams face a different but related set of pressures: encroachment, narrowing, and drainage never designed for today's rainfall intensity. Forests on the Murree hills have been stripped of the root systems that once held slopes together- witness the building that came down on the Murree Expressway last month, taken out not by fate but by a landslide, already weakened by deforestation. This is engineering handed over to politics, and politics losing, on schedule, every single year.

And yet the proof that Islamabad knows better is sitting in its own rulebook. Since a March 202G directive, CDA has made rooftop rainwater harvesting mandatory for all new construction in the capital and has moved to expand recharge infrastructure, including new recharge wells and storage tanks. The problem, then, is no longer a lack of recognition. It is whether enforcement can reach the city's existing housing stock and scale to match the size of the risk- extending to drainage and encroachment the same discipline now applied to rooftops. Other capitals facing identical physics have shown exactly what a serious response looks like, and none of it required inventing new technology. Copenhagen did not answer its catastrophic 2011 flood by laying bigger pipes and calling it solved. It rebuilt its relationship with rain- parks engineered to flood safely, public squares that double as reservoirs, tunnels that store and reuse stormwater rather than expelling it toward the nearest river. The redesign was not cheap, but it reflected a decision to treat flood resilience as long-term infrastructure rather than emergency expenditure. China wrote the same philosophy into national policy a decade ago, turning flood-prone Wuhan into proof that concrete is not the only material a city has to build with. What unites these examples is not the engineering, which is available to any government willing to commission it. It is a single decision, made once and defended for decades, that flooding is a design failure to be corrected rather than a weather event to be endured.

Third, end the jurisdictional theatre. Merge stormwater planning across the CDA, the RMC and the Cantonment Board into a single basin-level authority, because water recognises none of the administrative boundaries these bodies guard so carefully. Residents need real-time flood warnings, automated alerts and pre-agreed road-closure and evacuation protocols- not a press release after the water has already risen.

None of this is beyond Islamabad's means. All of it is within reach of a city that already has the budget, the regulatory authority, and, buried in its own building code, the right instincts. What it has lacked is the discipline to act on what it already knows before the water rises, rather than mourn what it lost after it recedes. Copenhagen needed one flood to commit to a hundred years of correction. Islamabad has had four, and is still waiting for the fifth to teach it the same lesson.

It should not need one.

– The writer is a policy analyst and researcher with a Master's degree in public policy from King's College London.

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TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2026 | WWW.ISLAMABADPOST.COM.PK

DNA DIPLOMATIC NEWS AGENCY

PTI's move to omit Naqvi from contempt plea sparks controversy

Sources familiar with the proceedings say issue was discussed at PTI parliamentary party meeting

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The decision to name Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif but omit Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi from PTI's contempt petition over the non-implementation of the Supreme Court's order for Imran Khan's transfer to Shifa International Hospital has triggered questions within the party and outside, with sources saying the move was contrary to the position taken by PTI's chairman in the parliamentary party meeting.

The controversy centres on a fundamental question whether the contempt petition was intended primarily to enforce the Supreme Court's August 18 order or to seek punishment of those allegedly responsible for its non-implementation.

Sources familiar with the proceedings said the issue was discussed at a PTI parliamentary party meeting, where the party chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan strongly emphasised that the matter should not be turned into a political exercise and should instead be left to the party's lawyers to pursue strictly on legal and professional grounds for the benefit of the jailed leader.

According to the sources, the stated objective was to ensure implementation of the Supreme Court's order directing that Imran be shifted to Shifa International Hospital and provided treatment under the arrangements specified by the court.

The sources said the chairman argued that the purpose of the contempt proceedings should not be to punish political personalities but to secure enforcement of the court's order. It was also pointed out during the discussion that in proceedings aimed at enforcement of a judicial order, the focus could be placed on the relevant administrative heads responsible for implementation, including the interior secretary and the principal secretary to the prime minister, rather than making senior political figures respondents.

The argument, according to the sources, was that naming both the prime minister and interior minister could give the proceedings an overtly political character and potentially divert attention from PTI's primary objective of implementation of the court's order. However, when the petition was subsequently prepared, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was named a respondent while Naqvi was left out. Why it was done, the parliamentary party has no idea.

The omission has since become a subject of discussion in political circles and media. PTI's legal team has publicly offered a different explanation. Barrister Salman Akram Raja said there had to be evidence linking an individual to the decision not to comply with the Supreme Court's order before that person could be named. He said this was why the interior minister had not been made a respondent, while the interior secretary had been nominated.

The petition, filed by Imran Khan's sister Uzma Khan through lawyer Uzair Karamat Bhandari, names the prime minister, law and information ministers, Islamabad's chief commissioner, the interior secretary, the Punjab inspector general of prisons and the Adiala Jail superintendent. It seeks contempt proceedings as well as immediate measures to enforce the Supreme Court's direction regarding Imran's transfer to Shifa International Hospital.

The government, meanwhile, has challenged the Supreme Court's original order while maintaining that PTI workers created a security situation that prevented Imran's transfer to Shifa. He was instead taken to PIMS for a medical examination and subsequently returned to Adiala Jail.

Briefs

Top Oman diplomat to visit Iran

TEHRAN: Oman's foreign minister will travel to Iran on Tuesday, Iran's foreign ministry said, as Tehran and Muscat seek a way to regulate the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Badr Al-Busaidi will hold the "ongoing political consultations between the two sides, as two littoral states of the Strait of Hormuz, to help strengthen peace and security in the region," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said in a statement on Monday. "The visit is aimed at strengthening Iran-Oman bilateral cooperation and Al-Busaidi will meet with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to discuss bilateral and regional issues," Baqaei added.

Iran has exerted control over Hormuz, a key waterway for oil and gas shipping, since the outbreak of the war in the Middle East on February 28. It requires vessels to obtain permission and pay transit fees before using the waterway. The United States wants the strait to return to its pre-war system of free navigation, while US President Donald Trump claims Washington "has total control" over Hormuz, through which around one fifth of the world's oil and LNG exports passed before the war. – **APP**

Pakistan seeks IMO support for seafarers' release

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has sought urgent intervention from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to secure the release and safe return of 10 Pakistani seafarers being held aboard MT Honour 25. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar made the request during a meeting with IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez in London, according to a statement from the Foreign Office on X. The MT Honour 25, a Palau-flagged product tanker, was seized on April 21, approximately 30 nautical miles off Somalia's Puntland region, with 17 crew members aboard, 10 of them Pakistani.

Syria sentences grand mufti

DAMASCUS: A Syrian court on Monday handed a life sentence to Ahmed Hassoun, the country's former grand mufti under ousted leader Bashar Assad, convicting him of crimes including inciting sectarian strife and exploiting his position. Hassoun, the 10th Assad-era figure to be sentenced under the new authorities, was Syria's top Muslim cleric for 16 years, known for his close ties to the former president and frequent appearances alongside him on religious occasions. – **APP**

Russian, Pak experts mull Cyber-security coop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) jointly held a hybrid Russian-Pakistani roundtable on information sovereignty and cybersecurity. The event brought together Dr. Dmitry Kiku, the RIAC Deputy Director General; Dr. Hassan Jalil Shah, the Principal of NUST Jinnah School of Public Policy and Leadership; Gleb Shubin, the Cultural Attache of the Russian Embassy in Islamabad; Egor Rykov, the International Business Development Manager at Positive Technologies, as well as leading experts from MGIMO and NUST. During a substantive exchange of views, Russian and Pakistani experts outlined.

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif launches Pakistan National Olive Value Chain Policy to harness the true potential of olive cultivation and processing. Islamabad, 24 August 2026. – DNA

4 Popular Mobilization Forces members arrested

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi security source told "Asharq" on Monday that a joint force from the Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence agencies arrested four members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), including Abu Jaafar, a member of the PMF commission's staff, from his home in the Al-Baladiyat area in eastern Baghdad. No official statement has been issued yet regarding the reasons for the arrest or the charges brought against them. The arrest came days after the detention and subsequent release of Abbas al-Yacoubi, the intelligence director of PMF operations in the "Baghdad Belt," on charges of "executing attacks targeting the US presence in Iraq." Last week, the Iraqi judiciary issued a decision fully dismissing all charges against al-Yacoubi, acquitting him completely and dropping all legal cases and procedures raised against him.

Al-Yacoubi holds the position of intelligence chief for the Harakat al-Nujaba movement, as well as intelligence director of the Baghdad Belt operations command. He was arrested on charges of executing attacks that targeted the US presence in Iraq. The Weapons Control File.

The arrest of al-Yacoubi came at a time when the government of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani is facing a sensitive file, which is the project to confine weapons to the state. Meanwhile, the Nujaba movement clarified its stance on this file over the past months, as it refused to consider the weapons of what it calls the "Resistance" as part of the unchecked weapons targeted by the government program. – **DNA**

Moody's improves Pakistan's sovereign credit rating to B3 from Caa1

Global ratings agency maintains Pakistan's outlook at "stable", citing country's stronger external position

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Moody's Ratings on Monday upgraded Pakistan's sovereign credit rating to B3 from Caa1, citing the country's stronger external position, better fiscal metrics and lower domestic financing costs.

The global ratings agency maintained Pakistan's outlook at "stable", Bloomberg reported. Pakistan's external vulnerabilities have eased as foreign-exchange reserves steadily increased, supported by sustained macroeconomic stabilisation, said Moody's.

"Lower domestic financing costs amid monetary easing and an improved fiscal position" have driven a "material improvement" in Pakistan's debt affordability, Moody's said. The country's strengthening credit profile is also showing "greater resilience to external shocks than in previous cycles," including the ongoing Middle East conflict, it added. The development comes as the country rebuilds its foreign-exchange reserves and pushes ahead with economic reforms after years of financial stress.

The rating action was announced after the close of stock market in the country today. Most dollar bonds gained with the note maturing in 2051 up by the most since August 20, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. S&P Global Ratings also upgraded Pakistan's sovereign credit rating in July, citing improving economic and financial conditions. Even with the upgrade, Pakistan's debt remains in speculative-grade territory, though its risk assessment has improved from very high to high. Argentina, Nigeria and Kyrgyzstan have similarly rated sovereign debt, it added.

Moody's said Pakistan's credit profile "remains vulnerable" because of fragile external finances, weak debt affordability and a relatively narrow revenue base. Reacting to the development, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has welcomed Moody's upgrade of Pakistan's sovereign credit rating, praising the government's economic team for its efforts to improve the country's economic outlook.

In April, Pakistan sold a global bond in a private placement, returning to international debt markets after more than four years. A month later, it sold its first yuan-denominated notes in China's onshore market in its cheapest foreign-currency bond offering.

On August 22, Russia marks National Flag Day

MOSCOW: On this day, we pay tribute to one of Russia's official state symbols, which, together with the national emblem and anthem, represents the country's sovereignty and independence and reflects the continuity of generations of its multinational people. Today, the Russian flag is also a visible symbol of protection and the future. In the special military operation zone, servicemen raise the tricolour over liberated settlements. The history of the Russian tricolour spans more than three centuries. In 1693, the young Peter the Great raised it as his personal standard in Arkhangelsk, and in 1705 he ordered the white-blue-red flag to be flown on merchant ships. Until the 19th century, Russian sailors would erect a commemorative cross on the shores of newly acquired territories.

In 1806, a new tradition emerged. A Russian expedition explored the coast of southern Sakhalin and raised two flags on shore. The St Andrew's Flag symbolised the role of the Russian Navy, while the white-blue-red flag marked the territory as a new Russian possession. The tricolour became the national flag in 1896, on the eve of the coronation of Nicholas II. On December 25, 2000, the Federal Constitutional Law "On the State Flag of the Russian Federation" was adopted. Under the law, the State Flag of Russia is a rectangular cloth consisting of three equal horizontal stripes: white on top, blue in the middle, and red on the bottom. President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Russia is a thousand-year-old country and civilisation, and our national flag is a symbol of our unity. I am confident that the national flag will always inspire us to move only forward – towards victory – and to uphold the glory of Russia. – **APP**

New Zealand moves to ban under age social media use

News Desk

AUCKLAND: New Zealand's government introduced legislation on Monday to ban under 16s from using social media, joining a number of countries seeking to keep youngsters off sites such as Instagram and TikTok.

Australia implemented world-first legislation banning children from social media in December, with the UK, France and others following suit. Under New Zealand's proposed law, firms like Meta could be fined up to 10 percent of their global revenue if they fail to comply. "We simply cannot accept the harm being done to a generation of New Zealand children," Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said.

"One in three children aged between 13 and 17 are now spending at least five hours on social media a day," he said. "Social media is exposing them to harmful content, addictive technology and pressures they are not equipped to deal with, and it's affecting their family life, mental health, sleep and education." Luxon specifically called out platforms Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Facebook, saying they would be required to take "reasonable steps to check users are over the age of 16." They would have to use "existing account information, facial age estimation, digital ID services and formal ID" to verify age.

Platforms would also be required to assess the risks they pose as well as report on how those dangers are being reduced, with penalties slapped on companies that fail to comply. Education Minister Erica Stanford said the Bill "places legal obligations on platforms."

"No penalties are proposed for children, their parents or caregivers," Stanford said.

- 'Safety of young people at stake' -

It's unclear whether the bill will pass, as both National Party's coalition partners – the libertarian ACT party and populist NZ First – have said they oppose it.

In a statement, the populist NZ First said they could not support the law given the "colossal failure" of the legislation in Australia, while ACT said they believed the law "won't work" and that teenagers would easily get around the ban. The main opposition party Labour has submitted a list of dozens of questions it wanted answered before deciding whether it would offer support – including how age verification will work and which platforms will be affected.

"We take this legislation very seriously," spokesman Reuben Davidson said. "The safety of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand is at stake and the risks they face in increasingly complex online environments are significant," he added, using the Maori-language name for the country.

Australia banned under 16s last year from the likes of Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, in a crackdown designed to protect children from online bullying and "predatory algorithms." A team of Australia-based researchers in a peer-reviewed study published in June found little evidence to suggest teenagers have turned away from social media as a consequence, however.

Published by Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Printed at Rohani Art Press, Islamabad Ph: 051-8488394 Email: newsroomisbpost@gmail.com