



# Islamabad Post

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**France committed to protection of human rights: envoy**

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**Dar in Jordan to attend meeting on regional issues**

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**Punjab CM for quick uplift work**

Detailed News On Page-02

## Rubio says Hormuz accord likely today

Iranian officials have not publicly commented on the latest round of talks, but diplomatic observers believe Tehran is seeking assurances against sanctions and recognition of its regional interests

DNA

**Iran demands inbound Hormuz control**

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN: The United States has reported significant progress in ongoing negotiations with Iran over the Hormuz Strait, with officials expressing optimism that a breakthrough could be reached within days. Speaking to reporters, Senator Marco Rubio said Washington was hopeful of concluding the talks "very shortly," stressing that the discussions were aimed at easing tensions in one of the world's most critical maritime routes. "We are in talks with the Iranians, and I think there is a chance we may have a deal today or tomorrow," added US regulator Bennett, signaling that both sides were moving closer to an understanding.

The Hormuz Strait, a narrow passage connecting the Persian Gulf to global markets, has long been a flashpoint for geopolitical tensions. Any disruption in its traffic has immediate consequences for international energy supplies. According to Saudi energy giant Aramco, the recent US-Iran conflict has already cost the global market an estimated 2.6 billion barrels of oil, underscoring the urgency of reaching a settlement. Analysts note that the talks come at a time of heightened concern over energy security. With oil prices fluctuating and supply chains strained, a resolution could

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TEHRAN: Iran wants control over inbound shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and visibility over its outbound traffic, with the ability to intervene if necessary, under a plan being discussed with Oman to reopen the strategic waterway, a senior Iranian source told on Tuesday. The source, who is involved in the talks, said this is "the general idea currently being discussed," and specified that the outbound line would follow a route between Iran and Oman, with exit clearance granted through Oman after notifying Iran. "Tehran is unlikely to change its position," the source added. In late July, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Karim Gharibabadi said Tehran had rejected an Oman proposal for an equal division of transit routes between the two countries, saying such a plan did not address Tehran's security concerns until long-term regional stability is achieved. Control of the strait,

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### Briefs

**SBP caps charges on digital sales**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Following demands from petroleum dealers, SBP has capped bank charges on sales of petroleum products through digital payment methods — including debit and credit cards and online transfers — to minimise the financial burden on end customers and promote digital inclusion. Under the decision, merchant discount rates (MDR) for card-based petroleum transactions have been capped at a maximum of 861 per litre, while charges on online transactions conducted through QR codes and bank have been capped at 20 paise per litre. Earlier, banks charged these transaction fees at their discretion, with rates varying from bank to bank and customer to customer. The charges ranged between 0.75p and 1.6p, resulting in a transaction cost of Rs64 per litre. "This was too high compared to the fixed and regulated dealer commission of Rs664 per litre. After adding the 15pc withholding tax and other fixed charges, dealers were left with little option but to adopt dishonest means to survive," explained Hassan Shah, spokesman for the APPDA.

**Lebanon and Israel hold new round of talks**

DNA

BEIRUT: Lebanon and Israel held a fresh round of US-sponsored talks in Rome on Tuesday, with Beirut scaling back its phased withdrawal from the country's south. Centripetal envoy delegations from the two countries arrived in the morning to the US embassy in the Italian capital where discussions are scheduled to run until Thursday. At negotiations in Washington in June, Israel and Lebanon agreed to a framework deal that involves the disarmament of Hezbollah, a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon's south, and the deployment of the Lebanese army to the region, starting in east areas known as "pilot zones." This week's negotiations are the seventh round of Washington-mediated talks since Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war in March with rocket fire at Israel in support of its backer Iran.

**Current system has 'lost public trust': PTI's Gohar**

PTI chief urges consensus to resolve country's political crisis constitutionally

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said on Tuesday that the current system had "lost public trust" and needed that a "reset" had become inevitable. Speaking to reporters outside Aitola Jai in Rawalpindi, Gohar said a key government ally — leader from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) — had claimed that the prime minister was "elected through rigging." He added that while he also considered the PPP to have come through rigged elections, Prime Minister Shabaz Sharif should have immediately sought a vote of confidence following the ally's statement.

He said the prime minister's silence showed that confidence had been lost, adding that the entire government structure had "practically collapsed." According to Gohar, the government had lost its moral, constitutional, legal and democratic legitimacy. The debate about the system's collapse and the demand for new administrative and personnel was spotted after Interior Minister Moini Nappi recently said: "The system we are living under has collapsed. Problems cannot be solved through it... If this system continues, we will still be sitting here 10 years from now discussing the same issue... You have to move towards administrative units."

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## PPP cries foul in AJK elections

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) continued alleging widespread rigging in the second phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections as polling concluded on Tuesday in two Muzaffargarh division constituencies where voting could not be held on August 2 due to unknown rule violations. Polling in LA27 and LA28 was held from 8am to 5pm, with results started pouring in. PPP leader Sherry Rahman alleged that polling staff in LA27 had been found at the house of a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supporter along with ballot papers. She said videos related to the alleged rigging had been submitted in election authorities and ordered and urged the AJK Election Commission to initiate immediate

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**Pakistan beat Korea in hockey match**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a thrilling encounter at the Sheikh Zayed Hockey Stadium, the Pakistan national hockey team staged a magnificent comeback to defeat South Korea by 4 goals to 2 in the third match of the ongoing Test series between the two sides. Despite trailing by a goal in the first quarter, the Green Shirts displayed aggression and attacking hockey in the second, third, and fourth quarters to turn the tide in their favour and clinch a sensational victory. South Korea had taken an early lead with a goal in the opening quarter, but Pakistan responded emphatically in the subsequent

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ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces (COAS & CDF), visited the National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC) at the Headquarters of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) — DNA

### Disaster management

**Armed forces ready to assist NDMA: CDF Munir**

CDF Munir commends NDMA's efforts to strengthen Pakistan's national disaster management capacity

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), III, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces (COAS & CDF), visited the National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC) at the Headquarters of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), where he received a briefing on Pakistan's disaster preparedness and coordinated response arrangements for the ongoing monsoon season. Chairman NDMA briefed the COAS & CDF on the operational capabilities of NEOC and its technology-enabled response mechanisms including "Insider Lens 2.0," that showed the prevailing monsoon situation and multibeam monitoring mechanisms. The COAS & CDF commended NDMA's efforts to strengthen Pakistan's national disaster management capacity.

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**Ishaq Dar to attend ministerial meeting in Jordan**

MAHMOOD ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is in Jordan to attend a ministerial meeting aimed at formulating a unified position on the situation in occupied Jerusalem, according to the Foreign Office (FO). The Ministerial Meeting on Jerusalem, scheduled to be held on Aug 5 (Wednesday), will bring together foreign ministers from Arab League member states and a group of Islamic countries to discuss the deteriorating situation in the region. The FO said in a

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## Portugal-Pakistan relations poised for a quantum leap

An exclusive conversation with Ambassador Paulo Domingues

EXCLUSIVE

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: His Excellency Paulo Domingues, the newly appointed Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, sat down with Centreline, Daily Islamabad Post, and the Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) to share his vision for the future of bilateral relations. Having only recently arrived in Islamabad, Ambassador Domingues spoke with optimism and conviction about the opportunities that lie ahead for Portugal and Pakistan. Domingues began by describing the honor he feels in representing Portugal in Pakistan, a country he called "strategically important, remarkably resilient, and blessed with extraordinary human potential." His immediate priority, he explained, is to bring the two nations closer together. Diplomatic relations between Portugal and Pakistan, he noted, have been dormant for more than a century, but he believes there is an untapped potential to elevate them to a new level. He outlined three main areas of focus during his tenure: strengthening political dialogue, expanding economic and business cooperation, and deepening people-to-people contacts through education, culture, and tourism. Sustained dialogue, mutual trust, and regular high-level exchanges, he said, will allow both countries to build a stronger and more dynamic partnership.

On the economic front, Domingues acknowledged that trade between Portugal and Pakistan remains modest but insisted that the scope for expansion is enormous. Portugal, he explained, has internationally recognised expertise in renewable energy, digital transformation, smart cities, and the ocean economy—areas where Portuguese companies can become valuable partners for Pakistan's development ambitions. "Our objective should not simply be to trade more," he emphasised, "but to build long-term partnerships that generate investment, innovation, and



employment in both countries."

Culture, Domingues believes, is one of the strongest bridges between nations. He envisioned plans to expand academic cooperation between Portuguese and Pakistani universities, encourage student mobility, strengthen research partnerships, and promote the Portuguese language. Discussions are already underway to introduce Portuguese language teaching in Pakistani universities, while exchanges in cinema, music, literature, gastronomy, and contemporary arts are also being explored. He stressed that cultural diplomacy is vital because "the more our peoples know each other, the stronger our friendship becomes."

Tourism is another area where Domingues sees great potential. Portugal has become one of Europe's most attractive destinations, known for its safety, hospitality, rich history, beautiful coastline, and diverse cultural experiences. He expressed a desire to welcome more Pakistani visitors for tourism, business, education, and family travel. At the same time, he praised Pakistan's breathtaking mountain landscapes, ancient civilisations, Buddhist heritage, vibrant cities, and renowned hospitality, describing the country as a "truly unique destination." Improving connectivity, increasing visibility through promotion, and facilitating exchanges between travel operators, he said, could



significantly boost tourist flows in both directions. As a member of the European Union, Portugal views Pakistan as an important partner in South Asia. Domingues emphasised that Portugal supports constructive engagement between the EU and Pakistan based on mutual respect, dialogue, and shared interests. While trade remains central, cooperation extends to education, climate action, migration, counterterrorism, regional stability, and sustainable development. He praised Pakistan's contributions to international peacekeeping and its efforts to promote dialogue in a complex regional environment, noting that the EU-Pakistan partnership has matured considerably in recent years. Domingues also spoke warmly about the Pakistani diaspora in Portugal, which now numbers around 60,000 people. He described them as an important and valued part of Portuguese society, contributing as entrepreneurs, students, and families. Diasporas, he said, often become the strongest ambassadors between countries, building business networks, encouraging investment, promoting tourism, and creating lasting human connections. He believes the Pakistani community in Portugal can play an increasingly important role in bridging the two nations.

Climate change, Domingues stressed, is one of the defining challenges of our time. Portugal has accumulated expertise in renewable energy, water management, coastal protection, environmental technologies, and climate adaptation, while Pakistan has experienced firsthand the devastating consequences of climate-related disasters. He sees genuine potential for collaboration in water efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, environmental innovation, and disaster resilience. Such partnerships, he argued, would benefit both countries while contributing to global sustainability. Reflecting on his first impressions of Pakistan, Domingues said he has been touched by the warmth, generosity, and hospitality of the people. He praised Pakistan's entrepreneurial spirit, youthful population, cultural richness, and determination to continue developing despite challenges. His message to the Pakistani people was simple yet heartfelt: "Portugal sees Pakistan as an important partner and a valued friend. I look forward to travelling across the country, meeting people from all walks of life, listening, learning, and working together to build an even stronger relationship between our two nations."

With conviction, Ambassador Domingues concluded that the future of Portugal-Pakistan relations is bright. Through dialogue, trust, and cooperation, he believes both countries can achieve much more together than they can apart.



Aleem  
launches road  
expansion  
drive

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Tuesday paid tribute to police martyrs at a ceremony marking Young-Shuhada-e-Police at the Motorway Police Headquarters, where he honoured the sacrifices of fallen police heroes, announced new safety measures for patrolling personnel, highlighted a sharp rise in National Highway Authority (NHA) revenue, and outlined a nationwide programme of motorway and highway expansion aimed at strengthening connectivity, trade and tourism. Speaking as the chief guest, Khan, accompanied by Inspector General Motorway Police Sultan Ahmad Chaudhary, laid a floral wreath at the Martyrs' Memorial and offered Fatiha for the fallen personnel. Describing Aug 4 as a significant day in the country's history, the minister said the sacrifices of police martyrs, including 59 officers of the Motorway Police, would always be remembered. He said the martyrdom of Safwat Ghayoor remained a symbol of courage and commitment for all security forces, adding that the Motorway Police had set an example of professionalism for the nation. To improve the safety of motorway patrol officers, Khan announced the establishment of modern police stations, dedicated parking areas and emergency ambulance services near toll plazas. APP

Governor  
Sindh visits  
HEC, meets  
Chairman

ISLAMABAD: Governor Sindh, Syed Muhammad Nohail Hashmi visited the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Secretariat here on Tuesday and met Chairman HEC, Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar. During the meeting, the two dignitaries exchanged views relating to the promotion of higher education, academic excellence, strengthening universities in Sindh, and enhancing collaboration between HEC and the provincial government for the development of higher education sector. Chairman HEC Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar briefed the Governor on the Commission's key obligations, functions, and initiatives, aimed at enhancing the quality, relevance and accessibility of higher education across the country. APP

Bilawal pays  
glowing  
tribute to  
police martyrs

KARACHI: The Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has paid glowing tribute to the nation's police martyrs on the occasion of the National Police Martyrs' Day. He said that the brave men and women of the police force have always stood on the frontlines against terrorism, extremism and crime, often making the ultimate sacrifice so that others may live in peace and security, adding that the unparalleled sacrifices have become an enduring symbol of courage, patriotism, and unswerving devotion to the motherland. The PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari reaffirming his Party's unwavering solidarity with the families of the martyrs and all serving police personnel. APP

Pak, Indonesia explore new  
avenues for bilateral trade

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan and Indonesia are gearing up to expand bilateral economic cooperation by addressing existing trade imbalances and establishing direct business-to-business linkages. The forthcoming 41st Trade Expo in Indonesia is being considered by both sides as an important opportunity to initiate a booster to the bilateral trade. Highlighting the imperative for direct private-sector engagement, the Ambassador of Indonesia, Chandra W. Sukotjo, paid an official visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), where he reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to deepening commercial ties with Pakistani traders and businesses community. He informed participants that Indonesia has simplified visa procedures for Pakistani business travelers and was considering visa fee reductions to enhance commercial mobility. The ambassador formally invited the Pakistani business community to participate in the upcoming 41st Trade Expo Indonesia (TEI), scheduled to take place from October 14 to 18 this year, showcasing core sectors like food and beverages, agricultural products, fashion, industrial goods, and furniture to provide Pakistani exporters a direct gateway to ASEAN markets. Bilateral trade between Pakistan and Indonesia is currently less than US\$ 5.0 billion. While this volume reflected strong commercial exchanges, trade analysts emphasize that the figure remained well below its actual potential. President

RCCI, Usman Shaukat noted significant room available to enhance the current bilateral trade, floating at lower volume between the two nations. "To bridge this gap from traditional commodity reliance toward high-value, multi-sector economic cooperation, both nations are exploring strategies across agricultural and halal food products, textiles and garments, pharmaceuticals, information technology and renewable energy", Usman said. He added that with expanding Pakistani exports of halal-certified meat, fresh fruits, and seafood standing at the forefront of their joint efforts remained vital area of mutual interest. Talking to APP, RCCI President, Usman emphasized the strategic importance of the Ambassador's engagement with the Chamber. "The primary objective of the Indonesian Ambassador's visit was to boost the current bilateral trade volume, which currently stands at a relatively modest level," he said adding that several potential sectors for mutual cooperation were identified during discussions with the ambassador. "The key areas such as food and beverages, agricultural commodities, fashion, industrial goods, and furniture will be the center stage of the expo", Usman informed. He expressed confidence that a substantial delegation of RCCI members would participate in the event. "We are working closely with Indonesian counterparts to advance cooperation in these sectors and drive trade expansion between both nations", he said. APP

Dittas Caves to be upgraded as  
Buddhist heritage site

The minister directed the installation of a modern telescope to enable Buddhist monks and other visitors to have a closer view of the ancient setup

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi on Tuesday said the historic Shah Allah Dittas Caves in federal capital, an important centre of the Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist heritage, would be developed into a world-class Buddhist heritage site with modern facilities. During a visit to the caves, the minister directed the authorities concerned to complete the ongoing conservation and development work at the earliest so the site could be formally inaugurated during the Gandhara Conference scheduled for September or October. Parliamentary Secretary Farah Naz Akbar accompanied him during the visit. The officials of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM) briefed the minister on the conservation work and informed him that a historic Buddhist-era stupa was located on a hillside opposite the caves but is not clearly visible from the site due to the distance. The minister directed the installation of a modern telescope to enable Buddhist monks and other visitors to have a closer view of the ancient stupa. He also instructed the authorities to prominently display information on the history and religious significance. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi said Prime Minister of Pakistan was taking keen interest in the preservation, promotion and international recognition of the Gandhara Civilization, adding that the Shah Allah Dittas Caves were upgraded in line with international standards. He said facilities including a cafeteria, gift shop and other visitor amenities would be established for local and foreign tourists, while decorative lighting would also be installed to enhance the site's appeal



during the evening. Later, the minister chaired a high-level meeting at the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, attended by Secretary National Heritage and Culture Asad Rehman Gilani, the Joint Secretary and other senior officials. The meeting reviewed development and conservation projects related to the Shah Allah Dittas Caves and other historical sites. During the meeting, a proposal was presented to prepare a special historical map depicting the evolution of Islamabad. The minister also directed the establishment of a dedicated 'Gakhar Corner' in the Directorate's gallery to showcase artefacts and information related to the historic Gakhar Fort near Kahuta and the Gakhar tribe. He further instructed officials to display artefacts from the ancient Mehrgarh Civilization to better highlight Pakistan's rich archaeological heritage.

He said members of the National Assembly from Balochistan had sought the ministry's support for preserving the century-old ancestral house of renowned poet and writer Syed Zahoor Shah Hashmi in Gwadar, as well as other historical sites in Turbat. He said the parliamentarians had been asked to submit formal written recommendations so the projects could be taken up after completion of the required legal process. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary National Heritage and Culture Asad Rehman Gilani said the gallery of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums would be reorganized and upgraded on modern lines. He added that efforts would be made to encourage educational visits by university students and enhance public participation to promote awareness of Pakistan's historical and cultural heritage. APP

Punjab CM discusses  
uplift, constituency issues

The CM said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was the most popular public party in Punjab as well as across the country and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. She said Punjab and the country would continue to move forward under the leadership of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif

LAHORE: Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) from Khushab, Asif Malik and Zafar Abbas Khan called on Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif here on Tuesday. The meeting discussed national political affairs, development projects and issues relating to the constituency. On the occasion, the MPAs apprised the chief minister of the public issues being faced by the people of Khushab. CM Punjab assured them that the issues would be addressed.

The MPAs congratulated the chief minister on securing the overwhelming confidence of the people in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and thanked her for the launch of the electric bus service in Khushab. They also paid tribute to her for presenting 10 electric buses to the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. On the occasion, the CM said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was the most popular public party in Punjab as well

as across the country and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. She said Punjab and the country would continue to move forward under the leadership of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. She said a common voice was now being heard from all provinces that Punjab was performing the best in every sector, including law and order. The MPAs said Maryam Nawaz, as chief minister, had carried out historic and record development works across the province.

They said the launch of the electric bus service had won the hearts of the people. They said thousands of commuters were benefiting daily from the electric bus service operating between General Bus Stand Khushab and Garot Chowk, Mitha Twana and Mangwal. The MPAs further said the Punjab government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, had set new records in public service. APP

Sardar Yousaf, Maulana Kabir  
discuss fostering tolerance

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, held an important meeting with the Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee and Khaitab of the historic Badshahi Mosque, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, along with renowned international preacher and interfaith scholar Dr. Leif Heland. The meeting convened to hold comprehensive discussions on promoting interfaith harmony, fostering tolerance, and safeguarding minority rights at both national and international levels. During the meeting, Federal Minister Sardar Muhammad

Yousaf affirmed that the Government of Pakistan remains fully committed to promoting interfaith harmony, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence nationwide, said a press release. He emphasized that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights and religious freedom to all citizens without discrimination based on faith or creed, highlighting the imperative for collective efforts to spread messages of peace and affection across society. Elaborating on the ministry's proactive measures, the Federal Minister highlighted that Interfaith Harmony Committees have been reactivated at national, provincial, and district levels

to unite religious scholars of all faiths on a single platform. He further detailed key government efforts, including the official observance of religious festivals for minority communities, the protection and restoration of places of worship, the allocation of special scholarships for minority students, and the active promotion of the "Bhikan-e-Pakistan" national narrative to effectively curb hate speech and sectarianism. Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, stated that the foundational message of Islam is anchored in peace, security, and love for humanity. APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### AUGUST

- Aug 01/China Armed Forces Day
- Aug 01/Switzerland National Day
- Aug 01/Lebanon Armed Forces Day
- Aug 01 /Syria Armed Forces Day
- Aug 4/Bukino Faso National Day
- Aug 09 /Singapore
- Aug 15/DFPR Korea Independence Day
- Aug 15/India Independence Day
- Aug 15/Poland Armed Forces Day
- Aug 17 /Indonesia Independence Day
- Aug 24/Ukraine Independence Day
- Aug 25/Uruguay Independence Day
- Aug 30 /Turkey Armed Forces Day
- Aug 31/Kyrgyz Republic Independence Day
- Aug 31/Malaysia National Day

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- Bomb Disposal.....15
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- Emergency Ambulance 1122 & Rescue Services 4451122
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- Cert Hospital.....9270907-11
- DHQ.....5560314
- IGI.....9299301-7
- Holy Family.....9290321-6
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- Polyclinic.....9218300-39
- Shifa International 4903695

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- Contentment Board 9270151-3

## Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9299224
- Police Town.....9299224
- Rural Town.....5773343

## Water Tank

- Islamabad.....03215744480



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Wolfgang Oliver Kutschera Ambassador of AUSTRIA, Global CEO Serona Hotels Azia Boolani and others inaugurate an exhibition held under the aegis of the Satriang Art Gallery, at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. DNA

# Pak calls for UN-backed Kashmir dispute resolution

He said a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Kashmir dispute was essential for regional stability and maintained that the issue could only be resolved through a UN-supervised plebiscite

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Monday renewed Islamabad's call for a UN-backed resolution of the Kashmir dispute, saying Pakistan would continue to observe August 5 as 'Toun-e-elshab' (Day of Exploitation) to commemorate India's 2019 decision to revoke the special constitutional status of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. Speaking at a joint press conference with All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) spokesman Professor Ghulam Muhammad Sufi, Muqam urged the international community to press India to implement United Nations Security Council resolutions by allowing the people of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise their right to self-determination through a plebiscite. Muqam said India's August 5, 2019, decision to abrogate Articles 370 and 35A

of its Constitution removed the region's autonomous status and constitutional safeguards that had previously restricted property ownership, voting rights and permanent residency for non-residents. He alleged that the constitutional changes had been followed by a crackdown on Kashmiris, including the use of force against protesters, demolition of homes and the detention of political leaders. Pakistan, he said, would continue to raise these issues internationally while asserting Kashmiris of its political and diplomatic support. The minister further said that India's constitutional changes were intended to alter the demographic composition of the disputed territory. He said a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Kashmir dispute was essential for regional stability and maintained that the issue could only be

resolved through a UN-supervised plebiscite. Muqam said Pakistan observed August 5 every year not only to highlight what it described as the suffering of Kashmiris but also to remind the international community of its responsibility to seek a peaceful resolution of the decades-old dispute. He said there was broad political consensus in Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, noting that the National Assembly, Senate, the legislative assemblies of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and the four provinces regularly adopted resolutions expressing solidarity with the people of Kashmir. Referring to the history of the dispute, Muqam said Pakistan and India had fought wars over Kashmir and stressed that durable peace in South Asia remained linked to its resolution.

Speaking at the same press conference, APHC spokesman Professor Ghulam Muhammad Sufi thanked Pakistan for its continued political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people. Sufi described Pakistan as an important party to the Kashmir dispute and said APHC leaders would participate in events across Pakistan to highlight the issue ahead of August 5. He reiterated the organisation's demand for a UN-backed plebiscite, saying the people of Jammu and Kashmir should be allowed to determine whether they wished to join Pakistan or remain with India. He also said that pro-Pakistan sentiment in Kashmir predicted the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and argued that while elections had been held in Indian-administered Kashmir, the people had yet to be given the opportunity to decide their political future through a plebiscite.—APP

## Executive training held on AI, digital transformation

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MITT) and Alkhilafat Joint Intelligence Group, organised a holiday executive training programme titled 'AI for Public Sector Leaders' here at IEC. The programme was organised pursuant to the Prime Minister's Office directive on advancing the strategic digital transformation agenda across Federal Ministries, Divisions, and Entities. The training was held at IEC's Smart Classroom, attended by members of the HEC's Senior Management Committee. The session was conducted by Dr. Jawad Shah, Senior Section Architect, Big Data and AI, Alpha Chord, Singapore, who shared insights into the evolving AI landscape, practical applications of AI in the public sector.—APP

# Chevening scholarships offer master's degrees to Pakistanis

Applications are now open for Chevening Scholarships, the Chevening Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Fellowship and the Commonwealth Startup Fellowship

## MAJNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The UK has opened applications for three flagship programmes that will help emerging Pakistani leaders, researchers and entrepreneurs across worldwide education, develop innovative ideas and build international networks. Chevening Scholarships offer fully funded postgraduate degrees at UK universities for individuals who can demonstrate leadership, influence and a clear vision for impact. The Chevening Oxford Centre

for Islamic Studies Fellowship supports mid-career academics and professors to undertake independent research at Oxford. Commonwealth Startup Fellowships supports high-potential entrepreneurs to strengthen their business, learn from UK experts and prepare to scale. British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMO OBE, said, 'Pakistan has no shortage of talent, and these programmes help outstanding Pakistanis develop the skills, networks and ideas needed to lead institutions, grow businesses and tackle some of the world's

biggest challenges.' Applicants should draw on their own experiences, ideas and ambitions, and must not submit AI-generated answers. Applicants found to have used AI-generated responses risk disqualification. All programmes include flights, course fees, visas and stipend payments to cover living costs. Beyond their academic and professional development, scholars will build international networks, experience different cultures and perspectives, and develop lasting connections with the UK and fellow leaders from around the world.

# Wajiha lauds students art work

ISLAMABAD: Minister of state for federal education and professional training, Wajiha Qamar on Tuesday appreciated the artwork of students highlighted issues in Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), underscoring that voices may be suppressed but the language of art continues to leave a lasting impact. She made these remarks, while addressing the event as chief guest, organized by the Youth Forum for Kashmir, in collaboration with the Institute of Home Economics and Design. The event organized a painting competition titled 'Conflict Through Art' to commemorate Kashmiri Exploitation Day. The event brought together nearly 200 young student artists from across Pakistan, who expressed their perspectives on the Kashmir issue through creative and thought-provoking artworks. Their paintings depicted the humanitarian challenges faced by the people of Jammu and Kashmir, including alleged human rights violations and the impact of the revocation of the region's special constitutional status. Among the other distinguished participants were Mr. Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman of the Kashmir Institute of International Relations; Mr. Zaman Bajwa, Executive Director of the Youth Forum for Kashmir; Ms. Rozina Faheem, Principal of the Institute of Home Economics and Design; and Mr. Azam Gulra, Adviser to the Minister for Youth Affairs. Addressing the audience, Ms. Wajiha Qamar commended the young artists for portraying the story of Jammu & Kashmir with remarkable creativity and sensitivity, noting that their work reflected resilience, hope, and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. She also paid tribute to the late Syed Ali Ghilazi, describing his life as a source of inspiration and recalling his well-known statement, 'We are Pakistanis, and Pakistan is ours.' She further stated that India is employing fifth-generation warfare and disinformation campaigns to mislead young people and distort facts. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Altaf Hussain Wani stated that Pakistan has consistently supported the Kashmir cause. He said that the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status constituted a violation of international law and urged the younger generation to deepen their understanding of the Kashmir dispute through research and informed study. Zaman Bajwa, Executive Director of the Youth Forum for Kashmir, outlined the objectives of the painting competition and emphasized the role of art and culture as powerful mediums for raising awareness about the Kashmir issue. He expressed confidence that the sacrifices of the Kashmir people would ultimately be recognized and acknowledged. During the event, Ms. Wajiha Qamar inaugurated the exhibition showcasing the participants' artwork. The ceremony concluded with the distribution of prizes among the winning artists in recognition of their outstanding creativity and meaningful artistic contributions.—APP

# Ayaz pays tribute to Police martyrs

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Saeed Ahsan Qureshi paid glowing tribute to the martyrs of the police force on Police Martyrs' Day, saying their unparalleled sacrifices for eliminating terrorism, maintaining peace and ensuring the rule of law would always be remembered. In a message issued on the occasion, the Speaker said police officers and personnel had rendered invaluable

sacrifices for the country's peace and security, displaying exceptional courage, professionalism and dedication to duty. He said the entire nation saluted the bravery, valor and commitment of the police martyrs, noting that the sacrifices made by the security forces and law enforcement agencies for the establishment of peace and the supremacy of law were unforgettable. Ayaz said the sacrifices of the martyrs were a source of pride for the nation and would continue to inspire future generations. He added that the police force had been playing a frontline role in the fight against terrorism and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens. The Speaker also paid tribute to the patience, resilience and courage of the families of the martyrs, acknowledging their enduring sacrifices for the nation.—APP

# Visionary leadership transforms COMSATS Internet Services

ISLAMABAD: From mounting liabilities and recurring losses to financial stability, expanding telehealth services and investment in digital infrastructure, the transformation of COMSATS Internet Services (CIS) over the past few years presented a story of institutional turnaround driven by strategic planning, financial restructuring and focused leadership. Once facing serious financial challenges and uncertainty over the future of its more than 250 employees, CIS has gradually moved towards financial stability while expanding its technological and public-service initiatives. Chief Operating Officer Naeem Javed, recalled the difficult circumstances confronting the organization when An-

nasheed Dr. Muhammad Naeem Zahara assumed charge as Executive Director COMSATS on November 1, 2022, he told APP. 'When Dr. Zahara took charge, CIS was like a sinking ship, struggling to stay afloat amidst severe financial stress. His leadership brought structure, accountability and a clear vision that helped us navigate through the crisis,' he said. General Manager of Accounts and Finance, CIS, Mahmood Akhtar said that the organization incurred a loss of Rs 166.5 million during the three years from July 2019 to June 2022, averaging more than Rs 55 million per month. He said accumulated current liabilities had exceeded receivables and continued to increase, creating serious

financial challenges for the organization. After assuming charge, Dr. Zahara undertook a detailed review of the financial situation and engaged stakeholders, including the top management of land/building service providers, in a series of negotiations over several months. A practical repayment mechanism was subsequently developed to clear accumulated liabilities while receiving monthly land/building service payments. Negotiated reductions in land/building rates, improved revenue management and financial discipline helped ease the pressure on CIS and enabled the organization to settle liabilities running into hundreds of millions of rupees during Dr. Zahara's tenure.—APP



## Briefs

IRSA  
releases  
353,400  
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 353,400 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 424,290 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1544.09 feet, which was 12.60 feet higher than the dead level of 1421.49 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 241,200 cusecs and 211,200 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Manda Dam was 120.65 feet, which was 12.65 feet higher than the dead level of 108.00 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 40,000 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Tamsa, Goda, and Sukkur was recorded as 300,200, 220,800, 228,800, and 198,700 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 43,400 cusecs of water was released at Mardan, Shoran, and 72,200 cusecs were released from River Cheshm at Marala. —DNA

Naqvi hails  
security  
forces

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has praised Pakistan's security forces for their continued intelligence-based operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, describing their recent actions as a demonstration of professionalism, courage, and operational excellence under the government's Anavechhayan vision for strengthening national security. Resisting to the latest operation in Lakki Marwat, the Interior Minister commended the forces for acting swiftly against militants, saying their timely response not only neutralized multiple attackers but also foiled their alleged plans. He described the operation as another example of the security forces' commitment to protecting the country from militant threats. Naqvi said the sacrifices and successes of the security forces in restoring and maintaining peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are valued by the entire nation. He emphasized that intelligence-based operations would continue to be the mainstay of the government's security strategy, reiterating the government's resolve to sustain pressure on armed groups through targeted counterterrorism measures. The Interior Minister also stressed that Pakistan's fight against terrorism remains a shared national cause, asserting that the public stands united with the country's security forces in efforts to safeguard peace and stability. He said the government's security strategy would continue to focus on intelligence-driven operations aimed at preventing attacks and reinforcing law and order.

NA body takes  
serious note of  
Balochistan coal  
mine tragedy

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development has taken a serious note over the tragedy of Balochistan coal mine and recommended the proper registration of mine workers and revising of mining licenses. The meeting was chaired by MNA Syed Rafiqullah held here at Parliament House to consider the implementation status of the previous recommendations and scrutinize the remaining recommendations relating to the Workers Welfare Fund (WWF). The Committee opened its proceedings by offering felicitations and paying tribute to the workers who lost their lives in the coal mine accident in Balochistan. Members observed that the recurrence of such incidents reflected a persistent failure of regulation and enforcement at the mine site. The Committee took particular note of the fact that a large number of workers engaged in the mining sector remain unregistered. —DNA

PIDE calls for trust, inclusion  
& accountability in Pakistan

The seminar featured Dr Mustansar Ali Ghazanfar, Associate Professor of Artificial Intelligence at the University of East London, while Dr Muhammad Yasir, Associate Professor of Fintech at PIDE, moderated the session

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) organized a seminar titled "Landscape of AI and Fintech in Pakistan", examining how artificial intelligence, financial technology and big data analytics can improve economic policymaking while safeguarding public trust, institutional accountability and sensitive information. The seminar featured Dr Mustansar Ali Ghazanfar, Associate Professor of Artificial Intelligence at the University of East London, while Dr Muhammad Yasir, Associate Professor of Fintech at PIDE, moderated the session. Dr Ghazanfar drew on his experience in AI strategy, responsible technology adoption, fintech research and institutional transformation to outline a practical pathway for Pakistan's digital future. Dr Ghazanfar said AI and fintech should be assessed through three interconnected principles: value, intelligence and accountability. AI can accelerate evidence gathering and policy research, while financial and administrative data can provide greater insight into economic activity. However, these benefits cannot create lasting institutional value without verified evidence, clearly assigned ownership and human approval. He stressed that responsible AI adoption

should begin with institutional needs rather than the purchase of technology. Before introducing any AI system, organisations should determine where it can create measurable value, what data it requires, what safeguards are necessary and who will remain accountable for its outputs. He noted that predictive, generative and agentic AI systems perform different functions and carry different risks; therefore, the level of oversight should correspond to the technology's autonomy, the sensitivity of the data and the possible consequences of error. The speaker urged institutions to move away from informal and fragmented use of AI towards governed workflows in which approved tools, documented evidence, human review and performance measurement are built into the process. He described AI transformation primarily as an institutional and cultural change involving people, processes and data, rather than a purely technical exercise. Discussing Pakistan's fintech landscape, Dr Ghazanfar acknowledged considerable progress in digital payment infrastructure but cautioned that rising transactions and account registrations do not automatically translate into meaningful financial inclusion. Fintech success, he said, should be measured by active usage, affordability, consumer confidence, effective complaint resolution and whether digital services improve people's financial resilience. The presentation highlighted that Pakistan's

digital payment infrastructure is advancing, while significant gaps remain in cross-border payments, independent access, consumer trust, digital readiness and evidence-based policy evaluation. Dr Ghazanfar argued that Pakistan's institutional payment challenge is wider than the absence of PayPal, as exporters and freelancers also face onboarding difficulties, foreign exchange costs, settlement delays and limited payment options. He also emphasised that digital readiness remains unequal across gender, income and location. Reliable connectivity, affordable devices, financial literacy, privacy protection and secure complaint mechanisms are necessary to ensure that digital expansion benefits women, rural communities and low-income citizens. On the safe use of generative AI, Dr Ghazanfar warned institutions against entering unregulated research, confidential datasets, internal documents, financial records, donor communications or personal information into public AI platforms. He recommended classifying data according to its sensitivity and using private or secure environments for confidential material. AI may help researchers find sources, organise evidence and prepare initial drafts, but humans must verify every factual claim, assess policy trade-offs and retain final decision-making authority. Dr Ghazanfar proposed that PIDE undertake a structured 90-day pilot involving one or two carefully selected

Allesaid research workspaces. The process would include assigning ownership, classifying data, approving tools, training staff and evaluating citation accuracy, reproducibility, efficiency and potential risks before deciding whether wider adoption is justified. The seminar concluded that Pakistan should not pursue technology merely for visibility or scale. Its priority should be measurable institutional value, stronger evidence, trusted digital services and clear human accountability. PIDE can contribute by independently evaluating fintech policies, supporting controlled data partner innovation through appropriate incentives, effective regulation and stronger public-private partnerships. He advised institutions not to restrict AI use altogether, as such an approach could prove counterproductive. Instead, they should introduce clear policies, approved tools and institutional facilities to enable responsible adoption. Given Pakistan's limited resources, he also recommended prioritising practical AI applications and regional computing partnerships rather than making immediate, costly investments in large-scale data-centric infrastructure.

Nation  
salutes police  
martyrs

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid glowing tribute to the country's police martyrs on Police Martyrs' Day, describing them as the nation's true heroes whose supreme sacrifices have safeguarded Pakistan's peace, security, and stability. In his message, the interior minister said that police officers and personnel who laid down their lives while maintaining law and order and combating crime occupy a place of enduring honor in the nation's history. He said their sacrifices represent a shining chapter in Pakistan's national story and will forever be remembered with gratitude and respect. Naqvi praised the police force for its unwavering commitment to protecting citizens despite facing extraordinary challenges. He noted that the force has demonstrated exceptional courage and bravery in the fight against terrorism and crime, making invaluable contributions to the restoration and preservation of peace across the country. Emphasizing the significance of their service, the minister said the sacrifices of police martyrs remain a guarantee of the nation's peace and stability. He added that the entire nation salutes its brave police officers and personnel, whose dedication continues to inspire future generations. Expressing solidarity with the families of the fallen, Naqvi reaffirmed the government's respect and support for those who have endured the loss of their loved ones in the line of duty, saying their resilience and sacrifices are shared by the entire nation. —APP

Talat claims  
growing public  
confidence

He maintained that voters had supported what he described as a record of performance and public service

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) election coordinator for Poonch Division, Talat Chaudhry, chaired a high-level meeting to review the party's preparations for the third phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections, expressing confidence that the party's governance record continues to resonate with voters. The meeting was attended by district coordinators, constituency coordinators and PML-N's nominated candidates from Poonch Division. Participants reviewed the party's election campaign, organizational arrangements and polling day strategy to ensure effective coordination ahead of the next phase of voting. Addressing the meeting, Chaudhry said the party's performance in the first two phases of the AJK elections reflected the confidence of the Kashmiri people in the governance of the federal and Punjab governments. He maintained that voters had supported what he described as a record of performance and public service. "The people of Kashmir voted for work and performance," the minister said, adding that the electoral outcome demonstrated growing public appreciation for the government's development agenda. He further asserted that every region of Kashmir aspired to achieve the level of development associated with Punjab. Commenting on the political opposition, Chaudhry urged Bhutto Zardari to accept the election results gracefully, remarking that political leaders should show composure in the face of electoral defeat. The meeting concluded with party leaders reaffirming their commitment to strengthening the election campaign in Poonch Division and ensuring comprehensive organizational preparedness for the upcoming phase of the AJK elections. —APP

Planning, Info  
ministers  
discuss PTV  
revamping

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal and Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Atifullah Tarrar held a detailed discussion on the revamping and modernization of Pakistan Television (PTV) under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). During the meeting, Ahsan Iqbal said the state broadcaster was a national asset that would be restored and equipped with modern facilities to strengthen its role in promoting national identity and unity, a move welcomed by the Ministry of Planning said on Tuesday. Atifullah Tarrar said the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting would support the Ministry of Planning for implementing the PTV revamping project under the PSDP. —APP

Pak's electric vehicle  
boom accelerates on  
Chinese technology

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Customs data show Pakistan's imports of Chinese plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles surging more than tenfold in the first half of 2026, as Pakistani consumers and policymakers embrace a fast-electricity auto market, according to Customs Data. Pakistan's roads are quietly being revolved for the electric car, and the customs data behind that shift tell an unambiguous story. Imports of Chinese plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs) surged by nearly elevenfold in unit terms during the first half of 2026, marking the fast-growing segment in the bilateral trade relationship between the two countries. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. According to trade statistics compiled by the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), Pakistan imported plug-in hybrid station wagons in the 1.6-1.5 liter class (commodity code 87050223) worth \$191 million in January-June 2026, up from just \$16.3 million a year earlier, a 1,078% jump in value driven almost entirely by a genuine surge in unit sell

units crossed 12,513, which rose 857%. Plug-in hybrid saloon cars in the same engine class followed a similar trajectory, climbing from \$9.2 million to \$59.5 million, with unit sales up nearly tenfold. Pakistan's electrified and compact vehicle imports from China, (HS 2925 to 313 2926) (CEN) said. Owais Mir, Founder and Chief Executive of Dynamic Engineering & Automation (DEA) Group told China Economic Net that plug-in hybrid (PHEV) crossovers, a category that was almost entirely absent from the Pakistani market a year ago, brought in a combined \$123 million in the first half of 2026 alone. The electrification wave extends beyond passenger cars. Imports of Chinese electric motorcycles nearly quintupled in value, from \$14.7 million to \$69.9 million, pointing to fast-growing adoption of electric two-wheelers, a segment with robust relevance for Pakistan's urban commuters, where motorcycles remain the dominant mode of daily transport for millions of households. "Every major new energy vehicle line plug-in hybrid wagons, saloons and AWD crossovers grew at triple-to-quadruple digit rates in the first half of 2026", Owais stated. Industry experts believe the pace of

growth reflects both pent-up consumer demand after several difficult years for Pakistan's auto-financing environment and the increasing affordability of Chinese-made hybrid and electric models compared with legacy internal combustion alternatives. Omar Malik, Chairman & CEO of Kinetic Drive, told China Economic Net that at the heart of Pakistan's historic automotive transformation lies the clean energy target aiming to convert 30% of the nation's vehicles to electric power by 2030. Underpinning this strategic synergy, Omar Malik observed that "demand is driven by policy," emphasizing that as Pakistan pursues its 30% conversion goal, "China's supply chain supports a competitive price, which supports Pakistan's industry." Rising fuel costs make electric mobility the inevitable future of affordable transportation, while smooth, child-free electric bikes offer Pakistan women a safer, quieter and more independent way to commute. This slashes daily travel expenses for families while directly advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for clean energy, climate action, and gender equality", Malik added.

TDAP trains farmers on new China  
maize protocol to boost exports

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a move aimed at enhancing Pakistan's agricultural exports to China, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) has held a five-day seminar series focused on the implementation of the new China maize import protocol, alongside improving sesame production through good agricultural practices and quality compliance. Held in the recent week, the seminars took place across Gilgit, Skardu, Khuzdar, Yuhari and Layyah, bringing together farmers, exporters, agricultural experts and government officials to strengthen export readiness for two of Pakistan's key agricultural commodities, Gwadar Post reported. The programme was organized by TDAP in collaboration with the Pest Warning & Quality Control of Pesticides Wing, Agriculture Department Fuzhou, the

Directorate of Plant Protection, the Maize & Millet Research Institute, and the Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology (NIAB). A key focus of the seminars was Pakistan's implementation of the new maize export protocol agreed with China, which introduces stricter phytosanitary and quality requirements aimed at facilitating safe and sustainable maize exports to the Chinese market. Experts guided participants on meeting China's import standards, with particular emphasis on aflatoxin control, Klau beetle surveillance and management, and compliance with pre- and post-harvest phytosanitary measures required under the protocol. Officials said effective implementation of these measures would improve Pakistan's ability to access China's large agricultural market while reducing the risk of export consignments being rejected because of quality or pest-related concerns. The seminars also highlighted

the importance of adopting good agricultural practices (GAP) to improve productivity, food safety and international competitiveness. Participants received technical guidance on cultivating high-yielding, climate-smart sesame varieties in arid/semi-arid regions, adapting to changing climatic conditions while improving yields and product quality. In addition to production techniques, experts stressed the need for value addition to increase export earnings, encouraging farmers and exporters to move beyond raw commodity exports by improving processing, grading, packaging and branding. Another major component of the programme focused on capacity building of district agricultural extension staff, equipping field officers with updated technical knowledge so they can train farmers on export-oriented production practices and compliance with international standards throughout the production cycle. —APP

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## New Israeli military-settler onslaught may be imminent

CHRIS DOYLE

EVERY August fills me with additional tension. Experience shows that those powers and leaders who have ambitions to commit atrocities know that this is an optimum time to do so. The same can also be said of the Christmas-New Year period. Those leaders who care about American and European pressure know that politicians from these states all head off on holiday at these times. As an advocate myself, I know how tough it is to build any political pressure when the political and media classes are sunning themselves on beaches, charting their way around golf courses or relaxing on family. Palestinians have every reason to fear this August. In Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu may well wish to smash any hint of progress following the latest deal with Hamas, which the US announced last week. Yet it is the West Bank where a full Israeli onslaught may be unleashed. All the warnings are there. Why the fear? Firstly, Netanyahu is facing an election in October in circumstances in which he requires a political miracle. His bloc lags in the polls. Only a major change in fortunes could swing it for him. Typically, this means an escalation on one or more fronts. US President Donald Trump has blocked action on Iran as he searches for a deal. Likewise on Lebanon, the US is pressuring Israel to back off, while Trump has invested in his relationship with President Ahmad Al-Sharaa of Syria, ruling the north out as a front to reactivate. This leaves Gaza and the West Bank. Netanyahu is facing an election in October in circumstances in which he requires a political miracle. Yet again, a degree of pressure is there for Netanyahu not to be the one that wrecks the minimal progress achieved on Gaza last week. The West Bank is the convenient remaining front. Secondly, the West Bank is the most electorally profitable front for Netanyahu. The Israeli right cares about the future of what they call Judea and Samaria far more than Gaza or Lebanon. Should the prime minister up the ante here, promoting further major settlement projects and land theft, he will be pleasing a ma-

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## How Iran Emerged as Fourth Center of Global Power

Qamar Bashir



The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants alleging that Netanyahu and former Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant bear criminal responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The warrants have intensified demands that Netanyahu be held legally accountable for Israel's conduct in Gaza. New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani has acknowledged that his city lacks the independent legal authority to execute the ICC warrant. He has therefore called upon the federal government...

THE Iran war began with the expectation that countervailing American and Israeli firepower would bring Tehran to its knees within days. Instead, the conflict has entered its sixth month. While the United States and Israel continue to claim tactical victories, Iran appears to be winning strategically. Political scientist Professor Robert Pape draws a clear distinction between tactical destruction and strategic success. He argues that Iran is winning because it retains decisive leverage over the Strait of Hormuz and has demonstrated its ability to threaten and disable American military installations throughout the region. Pape's most provocative assessment is that the war is transforming Iran into a potential 'fourth center of global power,' alongside the United States, China and Russia. His argument rests not on the number of aircraft, ships or military bases Iran possesses, but on Tehran's demonstrated ability to absorb massive attacks, preserve its political system, continue retaliating and deny a superpower the achievement of its declared objectives. The underlying lesson is difficult to dispute: a middle power has absorbed immense punishment while preserving the world's most powerful military alliance from forcing it into submission. If Iran can withstand such pressure, the consequences for the credibility of American power become even more profound when one imagines a future confrontation with China, or with China and Russia acting together. Ironically, as happened during an earlier phase when the United States reportedly faced shortages of critical weapons and ammunition, Washington has once again paused its attacks. Critics and analysts believe that this pause may not represent a genuine change of policy, but an attempt to gain time, replenish depleted stocks, complete military preparations and prepare for another escalation. Iran, meanwhile, has made the United States largely irrelevant to the discussions currently taking place between Tehran and Moscow. Iran has characterized these negotiations as bilateral talks with Oman concerning a mechanism for managing maritime passage through the Strait of Hormuz. This places Tehran at the center of any workable arrangement, with Oman as its negotiating partner, while Washington remains outside the formal discussions and dependent upon regional mediators. The Gulf governments have also discovered the limitations of relying upon American military bases for their security. Those bases were established to deter aggression, project American power and reassure their host governments. Instead, they became magnets for Iranian missiles and drones. After witnessing their vulnerability, the Gulf states are now asking a disturbing question: if these American bases cannot defend themselves, how can they be expected to defend their host countries? This vulnerability helps explain why Gulf leaders reported

ely pressed President Donald Trump to postpone further attacks on Iran. They understood that more strikes against Iranian power grids, desalination plants, oil installations and civilian infrastructure could invite retaliation against comparable facilities throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Nevertheless, concerns remain about President Trump's intentions. Russian security officials have warned that Washington and Israel may be contemplating a ground operation under the cover of ceasefire diplomacy. According to this assessment, negotiations could be used to keep Iran and the wider region relatively calm while the Pentagon completes its military buildup. Widely circulated reports claim that more than 50,000 American troops, including approximately 2,500 Marines, over 1,200 personnel from the 62nd Airborne Division and specialized forces, have been positioned in the region. The same reports cite hundreds of military aircraft and more than 20 naval vessels deployed near Iran. These figures have been presented by the analysts and outlets reporting the alleged preparations for a possible ground campaign. Pape describes the resulting American dilemma as an 'escalation trap.' If Washington continues fighting, it risks further casualties, regional retaliation, economic disruption and horizontal expansion of the conflict. If it withdraws without achieving its declared objectives, it must acknowledge that overwhelming military force failed to produce political submission. Pressure for a ground intervention may therefore increase precisely because the air campaign has not delivered a decisive strategic outcome. The war has also reached American homes through economic disruption and, potentially, cyberattacks. Federal investigators have examined cyberattacks against water systems in seven American states, with Iran reportedly among the suspected perpetrators. Representatives Seth Moulton, a retired Marine and member of the House Armed Services Committee, described such an attack-if Iranian responsibility is established-as 'an escalation of war.' He argued that Iran's cyber capabilities were predictable and that Washington should have protected critical American infrastructure before entering a war against a state capable of retaliating through unconventional means. The verified domestic economic damage is already serious. A under-spice energy price and Trump's approval rating at 35 percent, near the lowest point of his presidency. American gasoline prices have risen by more than 25 percent since the war began, while Democrats have moved narrowly ahead of Republicans on the question of economic management. The World Bank has reduced its projected global growth rate for 2026 from 2.9 percent to 2.5 percent, citing the Middle East conflict, rising energy prices, inflation and higher borrowing costs. The European Central Bank has similarly reported that the war has depressed household

confidence and consumption across the eurozone. Thus, countries that neither initiated nor participated in the conflict are nevertheless being forced to pay the economic price. Washington must therefore confront the question it has repeatedly avoided: whose strategic objectives are America now serving? Benjamin Netanyahu spent decades warning against Iranian aggression, securing economic ministries to dismantle its nuclear, missile and regional capabilities. Israel initiated the confrontation that Washington subsequently embraced, yet the United States now carries much of its military, economic, diplomatic and political burden. Meanwhile, Netanyahu's government continues its operations in Gaza, entrenches Israeli control in the West Bank and pursues its objectives in southern Lebanon. As the United States remains consumed by the Iran war and the Strait of Hormuz crisis, Israel continues advancing its territorial and ideological objectives associated by its critics with the project of a 'Greater Israel.' The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants alleging that Netanyahu and former Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant bear criminal responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The warrants have intensified demands that Netanyahu be held legally accountable for Israel's conduct in Gaza. New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani has acknowledged that his city lacks the independent legal authority to execute the ICC warrant. He has therefore called upon the federal government to arrest Netanyahu if the Israeli prime minister enters the United States. Tucker Carlson has amplified Mamdani's broader argument, declaring that Netanyahu has become a liability to both Israel and the United States and that Washington's 'blank cheque' policy must end. Carlson has urged other American politicians to show similar courage and reconsider a relationship in which American taxpayers finance Israeli policies while the United States bears the military, diplomatic and economic consequences. Mamdani's intervention expresses a widening demand for accountability in alliance wars not meant to instill fear and friendship must not require one country to inherit another government's wars. In this interpretation, Netanyahu's removal or prosecution would not by itself resolve every regional dispute, but it could remove a major destabilizing factor. America's choice is no longer between victory and negotiation. It is between a negotiated de-escalation and an expanding war in which every participant loses—except Israel, at least for the moment, loses the least.

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

## A Habit of Second Thought

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Control over highly enriched uranium, initially regarded as a non-negotiable and indispensable condition, was subsequently treated as a matter of secondary importance. It was argued that preventing the production of a nuclear weapon remained the essential objective, while questions concerning enriched uranium would be addressed in future negotiations

PRESIDENT Donald John Trump occupies a singular place in the history of American leadership. He is at once a politician, a successful businessman, and an instinct of freestyle improvisation. His manner of thinking, planning, and decision-making bears a character distinctly different from that of his predecessors; indeed, many observers contend that it has few, if any, precedents in the annals of modern American politics. Analysis frequently describe him as a man of remarkable flexibility, yet they also acknowledge that a position defended with absolute conviction at one moment may, in the next, be replaced by its very opposite without the slightest hesitation. This characteristic became especially evident following the commencement of large-scale military operations against Iran on 28 February 2026. A careful examination of the period, particularly up to the issuance of the Memorandum of Understanding conducted in June, reveals no fewer than seven significant shifts in President Trump's strategic approach. At the outset, he dismissed economic concerns altogether, declaring that the financial difficulties of the American people were of no consequence and that the sole imperative was to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. By the time of the 62nd summit, however, his tone had undergone a marked transformation. He began advocating the necessity of an agreement capable of shielding the global economy from a crisis comparable to the Hoover era and the Great Depression, pointing to instability in the financial markets as evidence supporting this revised position. His initial call for regime change in Iran was equally unequivocal. In a video address, he urged the Iranian people to rise against their government, declaring that the moment might represent their final opportunity for generations to come. Yet subsequent statements quickly abandoned this objective. Instead, he began speaking of normalising relations with Iran and cooperating with its existing leadership, occasionally describing those very leaders as more 'reasonable' than before. During the early phase of the conflict, the complete destruction of Iran's missile program, the industries responsible for its production, and the naval forces supporting it was presented as a principal objective. Later, however, his position softened considerably. He observed that while missiles might inflict damage upon limited areas, they were incapable of destroying the world, and since other nations possessed similar capabilities, Iran might also retain a lim-

ited missile arsenal. It was for this reason that the Memorandum of Understanding contained no provision regarding the dismantlement of Iran's missile program. A similar evolution occurred regarding Iran's nuclear program. Following the military operations of 2025 and again in 2026, it was asserted that Iran's entire uranium enrichment capability would be eliminated and that the nuclear threat would be extinguished permanently. In time, however, the objective was narrowed simply to ensuring that Iran would not acquire a nuclear weapon. Rather than insisting upon total dismantlement, reliance shifted towards international monitoring and continued negotiations. Iran's early heavy nuclear program, initially regarded as a non-negotiable and indispensable condition, was subsequently treated as a matter of secondary importance. It was argued that preventing the production of a nuclear weapon remained the essential objective, while questions concerning enriched uranium would be addressed in future negotiations. These strategic adjustments were underpinned by repeated tactical oscillations, in which stern threats were frequently followed by the postponement or cancellation of military action. A chronological review compiled up to August 2026 reveals numerous announcements and statements that were ultimately abandoned. The latest example occurred on 1 and 2 August, when military action was suspended following requests from Iran and several regional parties, together with the emergence of preliminary offers for a possible understanding involving the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and measures aimed at removing the nuclear threat. On 7 April, shortly before the operation of an ultimatum in which President Trump had threatened strikes against bridges

and power stations, a two-week ceasefire was agreed. He had warned that such attacks could extinguish an entire civilisation. On 21 April, at the request of international mediators, Iran agreed to a temporary ceasefire, although hostilities resumed at a later stage. At the beginning of July, following attacks upon commercial shipping, the ceasefire was declared terminated. Military strikes were launched against dozens, and subsequently scores, of targets. Congress was formally notified, and the Administration adopted an increasingly uncompromising public tone. Yet negotiations continued simultaneously. Oil sanctions followed a similarly fluctuating course. Temporary export licensing was granted, only to be withdrawn as sanctions were imposed. Military deployments, official statements, and even the interpretation of the Memorandum itself changed repeatedly. The initial maximalist objectives—the destruction of Iran's missile forces and navy, the complete elimination of the nuclear threat, the dismantling of regional proxy networks, and even the prospect of political change—gradually evolved into more limited and negotiable goals. Military expenditures, fluctuations in oil prices and global markets, domestic political considerations, constraints upon available munitions, and Iran's demonstrated resilience all appear to have contributed to this transformation. The June Memorandum of Understanding was, by its very nature, temporary and performance-based. Reports suggested that many of its principal provisions were to be minimal within only a few weeks, leading to renewed hostilities and a fresh round of negotiations. Thus, as the conflict entered its fifth month, the situation remained fluid, uncertain, and subject to continual change. The reasons underlying these successive alterations may never be known. In some instances they appear to reflect tactical calculation: it others they may have arisen from necessity or from long-established habits of political conduct. Certain critics have attributed these greater alterations, concerning the pattern of demand instability followed by recovery, was deliberately exploited for the financial benefit of President Trump and his family. Whatever the precise combination of motives, the record extending from late February to early August consistently reveals a pattern in which stern threats and uncompromising initial objectives gradually gave way to narrower, more negotiable positions, while rapid oscillations between threats of force and gestures of restraint remained the defining characteristic of the entire period.



## Briefs

Progress  
in Hormuz talks

FROM PAGE 01  
Stabilize markets and reassure allies dependent on Gulf exports. The US has emphasized that its priority is ensuring freedom of navigation and preventing further escalation in the region. Rubio highlighted that progress in the negotiations reflects a willingness on both sides to avoid prolonged confrontation. "The stakes are too high for miscalculation," he said, adding that Washington remains committed to diplomacy while keeping all options on the table. Benson's remarks suggested that technical details were being finalized, with the possibility of an announcement within 48 hours. While no specifics were disclosed, sources familiar with the talks indicated that discussions centered on maritime security guarantees, oil shipment protections, and mechanisms to prevent accidental clashes between naval forces. America's assessment of the economic toll has added pressure on negotiators. The loss of 2.6 billion barrels represents not only a blow to producers but also a destabilizing factor for consumers worldwide. Energy experts argue that restoring confidence in the Strait's stability is essential for global economic recovery. Iranian officials have not publicly commented on the latest round of talks, but diplomatic observers believe Tehran is seeking assurances against sanctions and recognition of its regional interests. The US, meanwhile, is balancing its security commitments with the need to avoid further disruption in global energy flows. The Horn of Strait has historically been a symbol of both vulnerability and strategic leverage. Any agreement reached in the coming days could mark a turning point, reducing risks of confrontation and opening the door to broader dialogue between Washington and Tehran. As negotiations continue, markets and governments alike are watching closely. A deal would not only ease immediate tensions but also signal a rare moment of cooperation in a region often defined by rivalry and mistrust.

Current  
system has  
lost public...

FROM PAGE 01  
Cell them provinces or give them any other name. While the PPP has rejected the idea, Naya's own colleagues — including Defense Minister Khawaja Asif and PM's adviser Raza Samadullah — have also not shown any support for the notion. Samadullah said Naya's comments made "no sense," while Asif termed him the "naïve political minister" in the cabinet and remarked that he is not accountable even to the prime minister in several matters. Meanwhile, Gohar said that instead of forming more governments under the existing circumstances, the people should be given the opportunity to decide through a fresh public mandate. The PPP chairman said the Constitution provided a mechanism for bringing a vote of no confidence and that his party would consult its allies. He said political consensus should be reached in the national interest to resolve the ongoing political crisis. He further said the House must make serious progress on the public demands of the provinces. While there should be no disagreement over restoring the system, he questioned who had pushed it into its current "default mode".

Armed  
forces ready  
to assist...

FROM PAGE 01  
He emphasized readiness, effective inter-agency coordination and swift response in safeguard lives and critical infrastructure. He reassured that the Armed Forces of Pakistan remain fully prepared to extend assistance to the civil administration and NDA in relief, rescue and rehabilitation operations.

Fifa refutes report Infantino  
sought Trump backing after  
failed World Cup sell-off plan

Infantino has not made any call to Trump or any members of his administration in recent days, says Fifa

PARIS on Tuesday dismissed as "pure fiction" a report that its President Gianni Infantino had sought support from US President Donald Trump's administration after the collapse of a plan to stage a World Cup in the United States. The denial came after the New York Post reported on Monday that Infantino had repeatedly tried and failed to reach Trump by phone since his proposal was announced on Friday and that he left behind an audio message.

"The Fifa President has not made any call to the US President, or any members of his

administration, in recent days. It is pure fiction," Fifa said in a statement to Reuters. The body has intensified over Infantino's failed plan to spin off the world soccer governing body's commercial assets into a new entity backed by private investors. Fifa's proposal to unlock up to \$4.2 billion from private investors by selling a roughly 20% stake in an entity overseeing competitions including the World Cup collapsed after strong resistance from stakeholders. With the plan shelved, attention has turned to the potential repercussions for Infantino, whose prospects of securing another

term as Fifa president from 2027 to 2031 have come under increased scrutiny. Trump and Infantino have forged a close relationship, appearing together at major soccer events including this year's World Cup co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada. Infantino presented Trump with the inaugural Fifa Peace Prize in December 2025, making him the first recipient of the award. The relationship attracted further attention because Thrive Capital — founded by Joshua Kushner, the brother of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner — had been ex-

pected to play a leading role in the proposed commercial rights venture. The New York Post also reported that Infantino had scheduled private talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. However, US Assistant Secretary of State for Global Public Affairs Dylan Johnson said in a post on X on Monday that there were no plans for Rubio to speak with the 66-year-old Fifa president. Infantino has taken to Instagram to amplify messages of support from member federations including Sri Lanka, Kuwait, Qatar and Morocco. — APP

Iran  
demands  
inbound  
Hormuz  
control

FROM PAGE 01  
The narrow waterway between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean that is the main route for about a fifth of world oil supplies and other vital goods, has been a main sticking point in efforts to resolve the US-Israeli war on Iran. It has been largely blocked since the start of the war in late February.

Pakistan  
beat Korea  
in hockey  
match

FROM PAGE 01  
Periods. Consecutive goals from Hayat Zakria, Rana Waheed Ashraf, Abdul Rehman, and Shahid Iqbal completely shifted the momentum in Pakistan's favor, securing a hard-fought 4-3 win for the home side. Hayat Zakria was named Player of the Match for his outstanding contribution. The match was graced by Chief Federal Officer Saeed Kamran Baloch as the chief guest, who appreciated the performance of both teams. At the conclusion of the match, the Pakistan Hockey Federation presented him with a commemorative shield as a token of gratitude.

Ishaq Dar  
to attend  
ministerial  
meeting...

FROM PAGE 01  
statement shared on social media. The meeting is to be attended by Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Amman Al-Salhi, the statement said. "The attending foreign ministers will also call on His Majesty King Abdullah II the Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, during the visit," the PO added. The foreign minister is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting to exchange views on regional developments, including the humanitarian situation in Palestine. The PO termed Dar's participation in the meeting "a manifestation of Pakistan's principled support for the Palestinian people and its commitment to the establishment of an 'independent, sovereign and contiguous' State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Pakistan and other Muslim countries have repeatedly condemned 'continued incursions by extremist Israeli settlers' into Al Quds Mosque — Jerusalem's third holiest site, located in east Jerusalem, which Israel captured in 1967 and later annexed."

PPP cries  
foul in AJK  
elections

FROM PAGE 01  
administrative and legal action, conduct a transparent investigation and hold those responsible accountable. The PPP leader said that it is highly questionable that the polling staff concerned had continued performing election duties despite what she described as clear evidence of irregularities. Sherry said the incidents had raised serious questions over the transparency and impartiality of the election, as well as the credibility of the institutions overseeing the process. She also demanded that all those responsible for influencing the electoral process be held accountable in accordance with the law. Meanwhile, Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Raza Samadullah rejected the PPP's allegations, saying a "fake video" related to LA-27 had been circulated as part of a "disinformation" campaign. Speaking to Geo News, he said no complaints had been received regarding polling staff at any polling station. He challenged the PPP to present any evidence it had before the Election Commission, asking whether the party had any formal complaint against polling officials to enable the commission to seek an explanation.

What does Saudi Arabia have to do to  
produce a successful national team?

RIYADH: In hindsight, Saudi Arabia's exit from the World Cup after a stalemate with Cape Verde does not look as bad as it did at the time. The Blue Shards were one of two teams to put two goals past runners-up Argentina, and the only team in the tournament to avoid both losing and conceding a goal to the eventual champions, Spain. But if that is what the Green Falcons were to take from the World Cup, it risks shifting focus away from the deeper underlying issues hindering Saudi football on the road to 2034.

PCB names Michael  
Smith as batting  
coach ahead of  
England Tests

Former South African cricketer joins Pakistan's coaching staff on two-year contract

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday confirmed the appointment of former South African cricketer Michael Smith as batting coach of the national men's team, with the 45-year-old set to join the side ahead of the upcoming three-test series against England. Smith has been appointed on a two-year contract and will work with Pakistan across both red-ball and white-ball formats. His first assignment will be the home Test series against England, which begins on August 19. Smith, a right-handed batsman, played domestic cricket in South Africa from 2003 to 2015, featuring in 89 first-class matches, 72 List A games and 16 T20s. He amassed 7,028 runs across the three formats, including nine centuries and 49 half-centuries. Holding a Level 4 coaching qualification, Smith brings extensive coaching experience to the role. He has previously worked with Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchises Islamabad United, Karachi Kings and Multan Sultans, while also serving as batting coach for Australia's Robert Hurricanes and Cricket Tasmania. He has additionally held consultancy roles with South African domestic sides KZN Inland and Eastern Province. Pakistan are scheduled to face England in a three-test series later this month as part of their international calendar. — APP

Pakistan boxer Qudratullah 'goes missing'  
in Glasgow after Commonwealth Games

Federation sources say boxer disappeared hours before team's departure

LAHORE: Pakistani boxer Qudratullah, who represented the country at the Commonwealth Games 2026, has reportedly gone missing around six hours before the national contingent was due to depart for home. Sources in the Pakistan Boxing Federation confirmed the disappearance to Geo News, saying the athlete was last seen in his hotel room at around 2am.

The team was scheduled to assemble in the hotel lobby at 9am before departing for Pakistan. However, when officials checked Qudratullah's room, he was no longer there, the sources said. The boxer's passport and return ticket remain in the custody of the team manager, they said. Last year, another promising boxer, Zohair, went missing during an international tour of Italy. On an earlier occasion, another member of the national boxing squad had also reportedly disappeared while abroad. Pakistan's 21-member contingent concluded its 2026 Commonwealth Games campaign with just one medal after boxer Fatima Zahra secured the country's only podium finish by claiming bronze in the women's 60kg event — one of the nation's poorest performances in the tournament's history. The result represents Pakistan's lowest medal tally since the 1998 Commonwealth Games, when the country won one silver medal. The national contingent had previously failed to win any medal at the 1990 edition, making Glasgow 2026 Pakistan's worst Commonwealth Games campaign in the past 36 years. Fatima's achievement was a historic one as she became the first Pakistani female boxer

Cape Verde  
coach takes  
club job in  
Morocco

CAP Verde coach Babacar, who took the small island nation to the 32nd year of their World Cup debut last month, has been appointed coach at Morocco's Boussinense. Before the club announced on Tuesday, no details of his contract were given, but it comes after protracted negotiations. He included the possibility that Babacar might stay on as Cape Verde coach and juggle the two jobs. The 55-year-old coach is, however, expected to quit the Cape Verde job in the next few days, according to media reports. Babacar won the Morocco league in 2025 and was runner-up this year. They also reached the African Champions League semifinals last season, and will participate in the continent's top club competition again this new campaign. Babacar, whose real name is Pedro Leitao Ribeiro, was named African Coach of the Year in 2025. — APP

Morocco, Algeria advance  
to WAFFCON quarter-finals

Goals from Marine Dafeur and Lynda Bendris earned Algeria a 2-0 victory over Kenya in a match played simultaneously, and they booked a last-eight place by coming second with six points

JOHANNESBURG: Hosts Morocco topped Group A at the Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFFCON) despite falling to Senegal on a two-goal deficit in a 6-0 draw with Senegal on Monday. Morocco advanced to the quarterfinals by finishing with seven points after beating Kenya 2-0 in their final match. The victory secured them a spot in the quarterfinals, where they will face Senegal. In the other match, Algeria booked a last-eight place by coming second with six points. Senegal ended with four points and Kenya with none as both were eliminated from the trophy after African women's football superpower. Morocco will face the Group B runners-up and Algeria the Group B winners in the quarterfinals. They will discover their opponents on Tuesday after the first matches in that round. In the first round, Group B with four points, Burkina Faso and Tanzania have three each and South Africa

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## Briefs

FIA offloads  
Afghan-  
origin  
Australian  
traveler

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Immigration Wing here at Islamabad International Airport offloaded an Afghan origin Australian passport holder after detecting the passenger fraudulently obtained a Pakistani family visa using forged marriage documents. An FIA official told APP on Tuesday that the passenger was intercepted during secondary profiling while attempting to travel to Australia on Emirates flight EK-613.

The official said a detailed examination of the travel documents revealed that the passenger had secured a Pakistani family visa through misrepresentation. He had claimed to be married to a Pakistani national, Maryam Anwar, and submitted a marriage certificate in support of his visa application. However, during questioning, the passenger failed to provide any evidence of the marriage, while the submitted Marriage Registration Certificate was found to be forged and prepared solely to obtain the Pakistani family visa.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the passenger had entered Pakistan on May 29, using the fraudulently obtained family visa. He further disclosed that he had paid 300 Australian dollars to an agent based in Australia to arrange the visa through fake documentation.

UN  
condemns  
civilian  
killings  
in Gaza

NEW YORK: The United Nations on Monday condemned civilian killings in Gaza and said health care facilities must be protected after a strike near Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital damaged a medical storage facility.

UN deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq said the World Health Organization reported the Saturday strike destroyed essential medical supplies it had delivered and caused minor damage to the hospital building. Haq said daily air strikes, shelling and shooting continued across Gaza over the weekend, reportedly killing dozens, including children and other civilians.

## France reaffirms commitment to human rights, freedom of expression

Ambassador Galey praised Sokrarith Henry for his dedication and for building excellent relations with journalists and media professionals across the country. He noted that human rights issues fell under Henry's responsibilities, and lauded his efforts in advancing dialogue and cooperation in this sensitive area



ISLAMABAD: French Ambassador posing for a picture with the embassy staff on the occasion of a farewell reception for the Sokrarith Henry, at the French residence. - DNA

## ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: At a farewell reception hosted in honor of the outgoing Head of Press and Political Section of the French Embassy, Sokrarith Henry, Ambassador of France to Pakistan Nicolas Galey underlined France's unwavering support for freedom

of expression and the protection of human rights, describing them as the "main pillars of democracy." The reception, attended by close friends of Henry from the media and diplomatic community, highlighted the strong ties cultivated between the French Embassy and Pakistan's press fraternity during Henry's tenure. Ambassador Galey praised Henry for his dedication and for building excellent relations

with journalists and media professionals across the country. He noted that human rights issues fell under Henry's responsibilities, and lauded his efforts in advancing dialogue and cooperation in this sensitive area. Ambassador Galey also mentioned that journalist Asad Ali Toor was unable to attend the reception due to his scheduled appearance before the National

Council of Cyber Investigations and Accountability (NCCIA). He emphasized that France attaches great importance to the protection of journalists and the broader principles of free expression, reiterating that these values remain central to France's foreign policy and diplomatic engagement worldwide.

In his remarks, Galey highlighted that France's commitment to democracy is inseparable from its defense of human rights. "Freedom of expression and human rights are not just ideals; they are the foundation of democratic societies," he said, adding that France will continue to stand by these principles in its partnership with Pakistan.

Sokrarith Henry, in his farewell speech, expressed gratitude to Ambassador Galey for his consistent support and encouragement. He reflected on his years of service in Pakistan, noting that he had tried his best to perform his duties with "utmost dedication and devotion." Henry thanked the media fraternity for their collaboration and friendship, acknowledging that their collaboration had been vital in fulfilling his responsibilities.

Henry's departure marks the end of a chapter characterized by active engagement with Pakistan's media community and a focus on strengthening bilateral understanding on political and human rights issues. His work, according to Ambassador Galey, has left a lasting impact on the embassy's outreach and relations with journalists.

The event served not only as a farewell but also as a reaffirmation of France's diplomatic priorities in Pakistan. By emphasizing freedom of expression and human rights, Ambassador Galey signaled that these values will remain at the forefront of France's engagement with Pakistan, even as personnel changes occur within the embassy.

The reception concluded with warm exchanges among attendees, reflecting the close bonds that have been built during his tenure. His departure was marked by appreciation from colleagues and friends alike, underscoring the respect he earned within both diplomatic and media circles.

Pakistan, Iran reaffirm  
commitment to boost bilateral  
trade to \$10bn

Islamabad hosts 10th Pakistan-Iran Joint Trade Committee meeting to strengthen economic cooperation

## SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran have reaffirmed their commitment to increasing bilateral trade to \$10 billion and expanding cooperation in trade, investment and the private sector, said a communique issued after bilateral talks said on Tuesday. The commitment was reiterated during the 10th Pakistan-Iran Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting, co-chaired by Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, Mohammad Atabak.

Atabak described Pakistan as a long-term strategic trading partner and expressed Iran's desire to expand trade and logistics cooperation through the ports of Karachi and Gwadar. The Iranian minister also voiced hope that a Pakistan-Iran Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would be concluded soon, saying electricity trade and regional connectivity offered new economic opportunities for both countries.

Khan said transforming historic ties between the two countries into a strong economic partnership was the need of the hour. The commerce minister stressed the need to finalise the proposed FTA at the earliest opportunity, adding that barriers affecting border

logistics, customs procedures and cargo movement must be removed to facilitate bilateral trade. The commerce minister said the establishment of joint border markets and the adoption of electronic data interchange systems would significantly boost trade between the two countries. He added that the private sectors of Pakistan and Iran were ready to expand commercial ties, while governments must provide a favourable and reliable business environment. Khan expressed confidence that the meeting would produce a practical roadmap capable of taking bilateral economic cooperation to new heights and unlocking the full potential of Pakistan-Iran trade relations.

An Iranian delegation, led by Minister Atabak, arrived in Islamabad on Monday night for a two-day visit to participate in the 10th JTC meeting and hold talks with senior Pakistani officials on bilateral trade relations. The delegation comprised 22 Iranian officials and a 16-member business contingent led by the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Oil ticks up after  
sell-off

"The scale of the sell-off seems fairly overdue, given that there's still considerable uncertainty. We've been in this situation multiple times before, only to see things unravel," ING analysts said in a note

meetings were scheduled.

"The scale of the sell-off seems fairly overdue, given that there's still considerable uncertainty. We've been in this situation multiple times before, only to see things unravel," ING analysts said in a note

"And with Iran denying that any talks are underway and Trump issuing warnings if no deal materialises, the backdrop clearly leaves ample room for a renewed escalation."

The Hormuz dispute is a central sticking point in talks. Washington says the memorandum of understanding agreed in June required Iran to open the waterway, while Tehran said the text explicitly preserved its authority.

Analysts at Barclays said crude oil and refined product net exports through the strait averaged 4.2 million barrels per day in the week ended July 31, versus 3.2 million the previous week.

In the Red Sea, six Saudi-flagged super-tankers changed course in the Gulf of Aden recently for southern Africa, while two tankers laden with Saudi oil crossed the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, shipping data showed on Monday. - APP

Pakistan gets a pass on  
new US visa bond rule

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is not among the 50 countries whose citizens may now be required to deposit up to \$20,000 as a financial guarantee before obtaining a US visitor visa under a new programme that took effect on Aug 1. The list published in the US Federal Register does not include Pakistan. Among South Asian countries, Bangladesh and Nepal are covered by the programme, while India is not. Afghanistan and Iran are not included because the United States does not maintain normal diplomatic relations with either country. The State Department said the decision followed a review of the 2025 pilot programme, which it said significantly reduced visa overstays among travellers from participating countries and improved compliance with US immigration rules. Officials said those findings prompted Washington to make the programme permanent.

The regulations make permanent a visa bond pilot launched in 2025 after the US State Department concluded that it had helped reduce visa overstays. The new rules also increase the maximum bond from \$15,000 to \$20,000 and eliminate the previous \$5,000 minimum bond available during the pilot programme. The 50 countries covered by the programme include 30 African nations as well as countries in Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The bond will be refunded if the visitor complies with all visa conditions and leaves the United States before the authorised period of stay expires. - APP

Russian and Ukrainian  
drone strikes kill at  
least 5 in each country

## DNA

MOSCOW: Ukrainian drone attacks in the region around Moscow killed five people, local officials said Tuesday, while authorities in Ukraine said Russian aerial strikes there also caused at least five civilian deaths. Since Russia's invasion more than four years ago, Ukraine has developed long-range drones that can hit targets deep inside Russia. In the past year, they have battered oil facilities, major storage depots and other key infrastructure. More than 16,000 civilians have been killed in Ukraine since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, according to the United Nations, with the vast majority of them occurring in areas under the Ukrainian government's control. Casualties have risen steadily each year. Meanwhile, escalating attacks by both sides on shipping in the Black Sea has reawakened fears that global food security could be put at risk.

5 اگست یوم است حصال کشمیر

آرٹیکل 370 اور 35A کی منسوخی

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