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**PM Shehbaz Sharif
lauds services of
French ambassador**

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**EU chief to
unfurl ban on
social media**

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**Shaza Fatima asks
Japanese firms to
Invest in Pakistan**

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PM Shehbaz says

Pak stands with Saudi Arabia

PM Shehbaz urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint and step back from brink of further escalation

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reiterated Pakistan's full support for Saudi Arabia's defence, saying Islamabad stood "shoulder to shoulder" with Riyadh following an attempted drone attack on Makkah. "I condemn in the strongest possible terms the dastardly and heinous attempted drone attack against the Holy Site of Makkah Al-Mukarramah," he wrote in a post on X. The prime minister's statement comes after Saudi Arabia said its air forces destroyed a Houthi drone south of Makkah before it entered prohibited airspace over the holy city. The drone, intercepted on Tuesday evening, was the second Houthi attempt to target Makkah, a spokesperson for the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen said. Houthi officials have denied targeting Makkah. PM Shehbaz hailed the "extraordinary vigilance, courage, and professionalism of the Royal Saudi Armed Forces" for their swift and heroic action. The prime minister urged all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to step back from the brink of further escalation. "Our region has already suffered far too much from conflict. Diplomacy and diplomacy remain the only sustainable path towards peace," he said. The prime minister reiterated that Islamabad stood "unwaveringly" with Riyadh in the defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for the security and sanctity of the Haramain Sharifain. A day earlier, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said that the Houthi military escalation inside Yemen, continued attacks against Saudi Arabia and the latest military developments along the Red Sea coast have brought the conflict to an extremely dangerous juncture. "Pakistan condemns, in the strongest terms, all Houthi attacks against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," he said while speaking during United Nations Security Council meeting on Yemen on Tuesday.

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**Saudis say Houthis
target Makkah**

DNA

RIYADH: The Saudi-led coalition battling Yemen's Houthis accused the rebels on Wednesday of targeting the holy city of Makkah, sparking outrage across the Muslim world and deepening the conflict roiling the region. Fresh fighting between the Houthis and the Yemeni government has dragged in Riyadh, with the Houthis declaring a maritime blockade on the kingdom and targeting its ships in the Red Sea. Last week's lightning offensive saw the group seize control of the entirety of Yemen's Red Sea coast and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a vital artery for Saudi oil exports as the wider Middle East war chokes off the Strait of Hormuz strategic shipping route. The Houthis swiftly rejected as a "lie" Riyadh's report that it shot down a drone from the rebels heading towards Makkah, which attracts millions of pilgrims each year. "The claims about targeting Makkah are a worn-out lie that has been used before and no longer fools anyone," Hazem al-Assad from the Houthis' politburo wrote on X. The Saudi coalition vowed retaliation, warning that the security of holy sites was a "red line." "The security of the Two Holy Mosques and the pilgrims is a red line, and the Joint Forces Command of the Coalition will not hesitate to take the necessary and deterrent measures against the Terrorist Houthi Militia,"

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Briefs

Pak hockey team may not go to India

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has formally asked the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) to move next month's men's Asian Champions Trophy out of India or shift all of Pakistan's matches to a neutral venue, citing the "sensitive bilateral situation" between the two countries. The request effectively rules out Pakistan playing their matches at the tournament's scheduled venues in Jaipur and Mohali unless the AHF agrees to the proposed change. Sources in the PHF said the latest decision to seek a neutral venue had been taken on the direction of the federal government. In an official statement issued on Wednesday, Wani said the request had been made to ensure a "safe, dignified and conducive environment" for Pakistan's players and officials.

South Africa pushes back on US curbs

DNA

PRETORIA: South Africa on Wednesday hit back at new US visa restrictions over its racial equity policies, accusing the Trump administration of distorting its laws and further straining ties between Washington and one of Africa's most influential powers. The dispute is the latest front in a broader clash over race, trade and diplomacy that has seen Washington cut aid, impose tariffs, expel South Africa's ambassador and boycott a G20 summit in Johannesburg, all against the unresolved legacy of white minority rule. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the new visa restrictions would target those who promote "race-based discrimination, incite violence, or enable land confiscation without compensation in South Africa".

FM Wang Yi says

China willing to 'safeguard' Iran's rights

China, a top economic partner of Iran, has long sought a detente in the months-long conflict in the Middle East, which has at times spilled over into neighbouring countries

DNA

BEIJING: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Beijing was willing to "safeguard" Iran's rights during talks with his counterpart Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday, as Beijing seeks to mediate in Tehran's war with the United States. China is "willing to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with Iran, and safeguard Iran's legitimate rights and interests", Wang told Araghchi as they met in the Chinese capital. "We encourage Iran and the US to stay rational and restrained," he added. The talks come one week before an expected trip by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Washington, where he will meet US President Donald Trump. China, a top economic partner of Iran, has long sought a detente in the months-long

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**Egypt's Sisi rejects
'any plans for
Palestinians**

NEWS DESK

EGYPTIAN President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi rejected on Wednesday any plans for Palestinian displacement, hours after Israel's defence minister said the army would "finish the job" in Gaza and remove Palestinians. During a visit by Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, Sisi "reiterated Egypt's firm stance against the displacement of Palestinian people or any attempt to

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Imran's hospital transfer SC expresses reservation at fixation of cases before FCC

Justice Shahid Waheed observes remark concerning cases fixation in constitutional court "bothering" them

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought legal assistance from the Attorney General for Pakistan on the Federal Constitutional Court's (FCC) jurisdiction to summon records and fix Imran Khan's hospital transfer case for hearing. A three-member bench headed by Justice Shahid Waheed and comprising Justice Naeem Akhtar Agha and Justice Iftikhar Ishaq heard petitions concerning the PTI founder's medical treatment and meetings with his family. AGP Mansoor Usman Awan appeared before the bench and read out the FCC's order, under which the constitutional court had summoned records of proceedings concerning Imran's transfer to Shifa International Hospital. The FCC had sought the records while hearing appeals filed by three Adiala jail inmates seeking treatment at private hospital and facilities similar to those granted to the former premier. The constitutional court has also sought records of similar matters from the high courts. During today's hearing, Awan told the top court that the Constitution empowered the FCC to summon records and cases involving constitutional questions. Justice Waheed, however, pointed to the

wording of the FCC's order, which stated that the records would be summoned and the cases fixed for hearing. "The word 'fix cases' in the Federal Constitutional Court's order is bothering us," Justice Waheed observed. The judge wondered how the FCC could hear the cases and sought the AGP's assistance on the matter. Awan said the Constitution clearly defined the jurisdictions of the FCC and Supreme Court, adding that he would assist the bench in determining where the constitutional court could summon records from. Justice Waheed said the SC was seeking to understand the intention behind the FCC's order and stressed that the questions being raised should not be given a negative interpretation. "We believe in mutual respect between the judiciary," the judge observed. The bench noted that the FCC's order stated that it would determine which courts could hear cases involving fundamental rights. "Fundamental rights are involved in every case," Justice Waheed remarked, citing the right to a fair trial as an example in criminal proceedings. The judge also observed that the FCC could interpret the Constitution, while matters other than constitutional interpretation remained with the SC.

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69th NATIONAL DAY OF MALAYSIA



ISLAMABAD: Chief Gues Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Food Security, High Commissioner of Malaysia Dato Azhar bin Mazlan and others cutting cake to celebrate the 69th National Day of Malaysia, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

**Dr. Najeeb to
be the AJK
President**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif has nominated Dr Muhammad Najeeb Naqi for the office of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Punjab Senior Minister Maryam Aurangzeb said on Wednesday. "PML-N supreme Nazir Sharif nominated Dr Naqi for the AJK president slot," she said in a post on X. Maryam said that Dr Naqi has been directed to submit his nomination papers for the presidential election. She also extended her congratulations to Dr Naqi on behalf of the party on his nomination and expressed her best wishes for him.

**Petroleum
dealers defy
govt fuel
scheme**

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: Petroleum dealers on Wednesday refused to sell petrol under the government's newly launched Rs100-perlitre relief scheme for motorcyclists, rickshaw owners and drivers of vehicles up to 800cc, citing concerns over its implementation mechanism and financial burden. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) Vice Chairman Anwar Kamal said the dealers were not convinced while preparing the scheme, making

Continued on Page 06

Talks to foreign media

Makkah defence pact contains no 'regional aspirations': ISPR chief

Lt Gen Chaudhry says Islamabad, Riyadh and Ankara will decide how to operationalise defence commitments under the pact



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief military spokesperson Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has described the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey as defensive, saying the pact has no "regional aspirations". "It is defensive, as the world also implies. There's nothing aggressive. There are no regional aspirations. It is a collective deterrence," said Lt Gen Chaudhry, Director-General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), in an interview with Al-Arabia English on Wednesday. The Makkah trilateral agreement — signed between Islamabad, Riyadh and Ankara on August 7 — provides for collective security and defence cooperation among the three states. The question about a response un-

der the Makkah defence pact arose amid Yemen's Houthis attacks on Saudi cities and energy infrastructure, becoming a second theatre of war in the Middle East. Responding to a question, the ISPR chief called the joint security pact "complementary", saying that member countries of the pact had independent relations with other alliances, countries and blocs. "So this mutual defence agreement is complementary in nature. It is not competing with any other relationship of all these countries with each other," he explained. When asked how Pakistan would respond if any member of the pact came under attack, Lt Gen Chaudhry said operationalisation details of the defence agreement are classified, and they are never made public.

"You see, you have multiple other agreements which are defensive in nature and committed in nature. But if you see, no country comes out and starts sharing its operational details in any military, because what you're asking is the 'how part' of how we are going to defend Pakistan against any aggression. I think that is always part of the operational classification and security. "So no country does that. So even so, what you're asking is how it will be done. It is for the three countries to decide, and it is for them to know and for them to actualise it." Speaking about the May 2025 conflict with India, Lt Gen Chaudhry said Islamabad taught New Delhi a lesson that a

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PHF requests relocation of Asian Champions Trophy 2026

ISLAMABAD: In an official statement, President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, Mubashir Ahmed Wani, stated the Pakistan Hockey Federation has formally requested the Asian Hockey Federation to relocate the Men's Asian Champions Trophy 2026 tournament or shift all of Pakistan's matches to a neutral venue. This decision has been made in light of the current sensitive bilateral situation and security conditions between Pakistan and India, ensuring a safe, dignified, and conducive environment for our national players and officials. Pakistan remains fully committed to the Asian Champions Trophy and the global promotion of hockey. We are prepared to play against all FIH member nations, including India, and stand firmly by the principle of keeping sports separate from politics. We strongly hope that the Asian Hockey Federation will favorably consider our honorable proposal for a neutral venue to ensure Pakistan's uninterrupted and full participation. **APP**

KP records 47pc C-section delivery rate

PESHAWAR: The rate of births through Caesarean section (C-section) under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health programme has reached 47.43 percent, raising questions about the medical necessity of the procedures and oversight of hospitals. According to a report, 83.4 percent of the C-sections performed under the programme were carried out at private hospitals. The report also pointed to cases where financial considerations, rather than medical necessity, were cited as one of the reasons for preferring C-section deliveries. Available data show that hospitals receive higher payments for C-section deliveries than for normal deliveries under the health programme. The package for a C-section has been fixed at Rs 25,575, while the package for a normal delivery stands at Rs 15,129. The figures have highlighted the need for closer monitoring of C-section practices and hospital billing under the program.

Orphan boy dies after alleged sexual assault

MUZAFFARGARH: An orphan boy, who was allegedly subjected to sexual assault three weeks ago, passed away during treatment at a hospital on Tuesday evening. According to the First Information Report (FIR), the victim, Muhammad Amdad, 15, was allegedly abducted at gunpoint on August 22 in the Rangpur area by the prime suspect, Kamran, alongside two unidentified accomplices. The accused forced him to consume an intoxicant before subjecting him to sexual assault. Following the tragedy, the boy was rushed to Nishit Hospital in Multan for critical medical care, where he ultimately succumbed to his condition on Tuesday evening. **APP**

Asifa reaffirms support for WFP's zero hunger efforts in Pakistan

She stressed the need for an integrated approach to maternal and child health, breastfeeding, immunisation, nutrition, early childhood development and the reduction of infant mortality and stunting

DNA

KARACHI: A delegation of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), led by Ms. Anita Hirsch, Representative and Country Director, WFP Pakistan, called on the Honourable First Lady of Pakistan, H.E. Asifa Bhutto Zardari, in Karachi.

The meeting was also attended by Senator Sherri Rehman, Sindh Minister for Education Syed Saeed Ali Shah, Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab, and Mr. Irfan Soomro, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The First Lady was briefed on WFP's work in nutrition, food security, school meals and climate resilience, particularly its collaboration under the Benazir Nashonuma Programme (BNP). Since its inception, BNP has reached over three million women and children nationwide, including more than 1.7 million beneficiaries across Sindh. The delegation also highlighted WFP's US\$40 million School Meals Programme, targeting 100,000 children in 614 government schools in Malir and Keamari, as well as interventions addressing acute malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, WASH and climate resilience. The First Lady underscored the importance of the Benazir Nashonuma Programme and its complementarity with the mandates of UN agencies working in Pakistan, particularly towards achieving SDG 2: Zero Hunger. She stressed the need for an integrated approach to maternal and child health, breastfeeding, immunisation, nutrition, early childhood development and the reduction of infant mortality and stunting. She also highlighted the importance of accessible paediatric healthcare, including the work of the Child Health Foundation, and called for greater national attention to population growth and its implications for health, education and development. Welcoming WFP's School Meals Programme, the First Lady expressed particular interest in centralised kitchen models and proposed greater emphasis on school-based agriculture and kitchen gardens, allowing children to learn about nutrition, agriculture and



healthy food through practical experience. Referring to the devastating floods of 2022, the First Lady emphasised Pakistan's climate vulnerability and the importance of moving from disaster response towards early warning, anticipatory action and community resilience. She highlighted Sindh's programme to construct around 2.1 million flood-resilient homes, with ownership provided to women of beneficiary households, and the leadership of Chairman Khilafat Bhutto Zardari in advancing the initiative. She also highlighted the Government of Sindh's development and social-sector interventions, particularly in Thrax. The WFP delegation briefed the First Lady on anticipatory action, disaster-resilient financing, early warning systems, climate-resilient agriculture and measures to protect livelihoods and

livestock from natural disasters. WFP's programmes also support kitchen gardening, community food security and women-led livelihoods in flood-affected areas. The First Lady reaffirmed her strong support for WFP's efforts towards achieving Zero Hunger in Pakistan and assured the delegation that she would lend her voice to advocacy and public awareness initiatives supporting nutrition and food security nationwide. She also expressed her continued support for WFP's ShareTheMeal initiative, to which she has personally contributed, and stressed the importance of sustained cooperation between the Government, the United Nations and development partners to ensure that Pakistan's most vulnerable women and children have access to adequate nutrition, healthcare and education.

Minister for developing dignified migration pathways

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Saif Hussain has stressed the need to develop safe, orderly, regular and dignified migration pathways based on genuine labour-market demand. He was addressing the Budgetary Process Thematic Working Group Meeting on Legal Pathways for Migration here on Wednesday, said a press release. The Minister said Pakistan deployed more than 750,000 workers overseas in 2025, reflecting the growing importance of labour mobility. He said Pakistan's approach focuses on preparing workers before migration, protecting them during employment, maintaining links with them abroad and supporting their reintegration upon return. He highlighted the

National Emigration and Welfare Policy 2025, which focuses on safe and regular emigration, skills development, welfare of overseas Pakistanis, disaster risk management, and reintegration of returning migrants. Chaudhry Saif Hussain also highlighted the EUPakistan Talent Partnership, aimed at providing pre-departure training, language courses, skills recognition and job matching for Pakistani workers in Europe. He called for stronger cooperation among governments, employers and training institutions to address labour shortages and make recruitment and visa processes more predictable. Speaking on the occasion, Director General International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) Susanne Raab stressed the need for

stronger international cooperation to develop effective legal pathways for migration and labour mobility. She thanked the Government of Pakistan for hosting the meeting for the second consecutive year. Susanne Raab said Pakistan's active engagement reflects its commitment to strengthening international cooperation on legal pathways and labour mobility. She described the Budapest Process as a long-standing platform for policy exchange and cooperation on migration among more than fifty governments and over fifteen partner organisations. She said well-designed legal migration opportunities can contribute to economic growth, address labour-market needs and promote safer, orderly and regular migration. **DNA**

EPA intensifies monitoring of smoke emissions

PESHAWAR: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has intensified its environmental monitoring activities and inspected 16 restaurants/BBQ/Tikka shops with a special focus on smoke emissions and associated air quality concerns, said a press release of the agency issued here on Wednesday. The activity was aimed at identifying and controlling smoke emissions from commercial food outlets, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations, and minimizing sources of local air pollution. Such preventive monitoring efforts are particularly important in view of the upcoming winter season and the need to safeguard public health and environmental quality. It said that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains committed to effective implementation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Act, 2014 and any violations observed during monitoring activities shall be dealt with strictly in accordance with the law. **APP**

PESHAWAR, Sep 16 (AP): Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has continued its environmental monitoring activities and inspected 16 restaurants/BBQ/Tikka shops with a special focus on smoke emissions and associated air quality concerns, said a press release of the agency issued here on Wednesday. The activity was aimed at identifying and controlling smoke emissions from commercial food outlets, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations, and minimizing sources of local air pollution. **APP**

KPRA team visits healthcare establishments

PESHAWAR, Sep 16 (AP): On the directives of Additional Collector Mardan and Malakand Region, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) Miss Wazir and Deputy Collector Ejaz Ali Khan, a team comprising Assistant Collector Mohan Ahmad and Inspector Abdul Waheed, conducted field visits across several private hospitals and healthcare facilities situated on Mardan-Nowsheera Road and Malakand Road. The team inspected 16 healthcare establishments to evaluate compliance with the KP Sales Tax on Services Act, 2022. The collected preliminary information for the non-compliant units, and a strict 7-day deadline was issued for them to complete their mandatory enrollment with KPRA. **APP**

New provinces vital for better governance

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Chairman Hazara Province Movement, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Wednesday called for the creation of new provinces, including Hazara, to bring governance closer to the people, improve service delivery and ensure greater public access to centres of power. Addressing a national dialogue organised by the Islamabad Bar Association, he said Pakistan had four provinces at the time of its creation and the number had remained unchanged despite a substantial increase in population, districts, tribes and administrative requirements. The time has come to create new provinces, including Hazara, he said, adding that the demand for Hazara province is constitutional, democratic and based purely on administrative considerations rather than linguistic or ethnic identity. Sardar Yousaf said the people should have adequate administrative and financial powers to generate revenue, formulate policies and implement them. Sardar Yousaf said the

in favour of Hazara province had been passed three times by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, while bills relating to its creation had also been introduced in the National Assembly and Senate. The minister said population growth had increased public needs and administrative challenges. Drawing an analogy with expanding families, he said that as families grew, new houses were built; similarly, the increase in districts and tribes provided a basis for considering additional provinces. He said the 18th Constitutional Amendment had devolved powers from the federation to the provinces, but adequate authority had not subsequently been transferred from provinces to districts and divisions. "Our struggle is aimed at empowering the people and ensuring their access to centres of power," he said, adding that the people should have adequate administrative and financial powers to generate revenue, formulate policies and implement them. Sardar Yousaf said the

Hazara Province Movement supported demands for new provinces from other parts of the country if they were based on genuine administrative and public needs. He said smaller administrative units could improve management and governance and help resolve people's problems more efficiently. Speaking on national and regional responsibilities, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said Pakistan, as a nuclear power, had an important role to play in regional and international affairs. Referring to Pakistan's agreement concerning the protection of Harmin Sharif, he said the protection of the holy places was a responsibility of all Muslims. He said Pakistan had made a commitment in this regard and that the entire nation was prepared to make every sacrifice for the protection of Harmin Sharif. The minister said Pakistan would firmly resist any action against the holy places and take necessary measures in this regard. President Islamabad Bar Association, Chaudhry Naeem Ali Gajjar, former chairman Bar Council, Raja Anwar Abbas and Counselors Layman Wajid, Abdul Wadid Qureshi said the debate on new provinces had now reached the legal fraternity and stressed the need to ensure public access to empowered administrative centres. **DNA**

CRBC canal breach Rescue, relief operations continue in DIKhan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The district administration of Dera Ismail Khan remained fully mobilised as rescue and relief operations continued following a breach in the Chushina Right Bank Canal (CRBC) near Pir Ashab village in Tehsil Paharpur, with officials closely monitoring the situation and taking measures to protect the affected population. Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Ulmatullah, accompanied by senior administrative officers, paid a detailed visit to the affected areas in Paharpur to review the situation and ongoing rescue and relief operations. He inspected the site of the breach, rehabilitation and strengthening work on the canal, measures being taken to control and divert the flow of water, and the situation of inundated agricultural land and residential areas. Officials of the Irrigation Department, Rescue 1122 and the Revenue Department briefed the Deputy Commissioner about the measures taken to control water pressure and erosion, strengthen the canal bank and evacuate residents and livestock from vulnerable areas. The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to utilise heavy machinery and all available resources without interruption to plug the breach and prevent further damage. He directed officials to ensure timely provision of food, clean drinking water and emergency medical facilities to affected people, besides arranging medical camps and necessary care for livestock. Revenue officials were directed to conduct a transparent and timely survey of damage caused to crops, houses and public infrastructure so that a comprehensive assessment could be prepared for further relief and compensation measures. **DNA**

Pakistan to soon be free of polio virus: Ayesha

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq has said Pakistan will soon be free of polio virus circulation through early detection, rapid response and high campaign coverage. She said almost the entire country would be cleared of polio virus in 2026, while a small pocket in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where three cases have been reported, would be targeted under a comprehensive plan to eliminate polio transmission by mid-2027. She was briefing health journalists from across the country on ongoing polio eradication initiatives and the planned Sub-National Immunization Drive (SNID), scheduled for September 21-27 to vaccinate 31 million children under five in 115 high-risk districts. National Coordinator National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) Amrullah Khan, Director General Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI), Dr. Masha Khan, Polio National Team Lead for UNICEF in Pakistan Melissa Corfman, relevant officials and health journalists from different cities attended the briefing. Ayesha Raza Farooq said that there has been a steady decline in detection of polio virus in environmental sampling, registering a plunge from 417 in 2023 to 124 from Jan to July in 2026. While the latest immunization campaigns achieved coverage of 98 percent in February, 99 percent in April and 98 percent in May 2026. Similarly, there has been a significant reduction of 96 percent in polio cases nationwide during the last three years declining from 74 in 2024 to 31 in 2025 and 4 till September 16, 2026,

reflecting progress towards eradication of the crippling virus, shared Ms. Ayesha. She said the upcoming campaign in 115 districts is synchronized with Afghanistan, focusing on reaching maximum zero-dose children, particularly among nomadic and migrant populations in both countries. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan represent single epidemiological block and for purging the region from polio virus, coordinated efforts and initiatives can prove meaningful, she added. Ms. Ayesha said the remuneration of 400,000 frontline workers, mostly women, had been increased by around 28 percent to improve the effectiveness of polio vaccination campaigns. The decision has been taken to motivate the brave and courageous front-line workers who go door-to-door in difficult environment and terrain for the protection of our children from permanent disability. Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication said recurring vaccination campaigns are critical for targeting remaining reservoirs and ensuring all the children are covered. She said the remuneration of 400,000 frontline workers, mostly women, had been increased by around 28 percent to improve the effectiveness of polio vaccination campaigns. The decision has been taken to motivate the brave and courageous front-line workers who go door-to-door in difficult environment and terrain for the protection of our children from permanent disability. Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication said recurring vaccination campaigns are critical for targeting remaining reservoirs and ensuring all the children are covered. She said the remuneration of 400,000 frontline workers, mostly women, had been increased by around 28 percent to improve the effectiveness of polio vaccination campaigns. The decision has been taken to motivate the brave and courageous front-line workers who go door-to-door in difficult environment and terrain for the protection of our children from permanent disability. Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication said recurring vaccination campaigns are critical for targeting remaining reservoirs and ensuring all the children are covered. **DNA**

Uzbekistan's media delegation explores Pa's diplomatic, media landscape

ISLAMABAD: A nine-member Uzbek media delegation, comprising representatives of print and electronic media, continued its eight-day visit to Pakistan with visits to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan Television (PTV), and leading private news channels. The delegation began its Pakistan visit by touring the Pakistan Monument at Shikarpur and the iconic Pishin Mosque on the first day. The visit provided the Uzbek journalists an opportunity to experience some of Islamabad's most prominent cultural and architectural landmarks. On the second day, the delegation visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where it met Senior Diplomat and Director General, Central Asia Hassan Ali Zaigham and experts on Central Asia and senior Foreign Office officials. On Wednesday, the Uzbek media delegation was briefed on regional developments as well as the longstanding bilateral relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. During the interaction, members of the Uzbek media delegation appreciated Pakistan's evolving regional partnerships, including its trilateral defence cooperation with Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The Pakistani officials highlighted the deep-rooted historical, religious and cultural ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, emphasizing that relations between the two countries are strengthened by centuries-old cultural similarities and shared traditions. The meeting also focused on expanding bilateral economic and trade relations. Both sides emphasized the importance of enhancing economic cooperation and developing stronger avenues for mutually beneficial partnerships between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. DG, CARs, Hassan Ali Zaigham underscored the significant role of the media in strengthening relations between the two countries. He said media organizations and journalists could contribute greatly to creating awareness about bilateral relations, cultural similarities and opportunities for cooperation. He also welcomed the visit of the Uzbek media delegation, describing it as a valuable opportunity to promote greater understanding and people-to-people contacts between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Following the Foreign Office visit, the delegation visited Pakistan Television, where the journalists visited various departments and reviewed the functioning of different sections of the national broadcaster. They were briefed on the organization's broadcasting operations and media production activities. The delegation subsequently visited leading private television channels, including SAMAA News and Hum News. During the visits, the Uzbek journalists toured different departments and observed newsroom operations, broadcasting facilities and other aspects of Pakistan's rapidly evolving electronic media industry. The visit is aimed at providing the Uzbek media representatives with a broader understanding of Pakistan's political, cultural, diplomatic and media landscape while creating opportunities for greater media-to-media interaction. **DNA**

FGEHA commercial plots auction fetch Rs 10.3b

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government Employees Commercial Plots (FGEHA) successfully concluded the two-day auction of commercial plots located in the prime sectors of G-13 and G-14, Islamabad. A total of 16 commercial plots were sold during the auction, generating revenue of Rs 10.3 billion. The auction witnessed strong participation and keen interest from investors, with competitive bids received for various commercial plots. The auctioned properties included prime commercial locations in G-13 and G-14, including

G-14 Markaz. The highest-value plot, Commercial Plot No. 8, measuring 2,000 square yards in G-14 Markaz, was sold for PKR 1.95 billion. The plot attracted significant interest from investors and received competitive bids during the auction. Director General FGEHA, Captain (Retired) Zafar Iqbal, expressed his satisfaction over the successful conclusion of the auction and stated that the response from investors reflected their confidence in FGEHA and the potential of commercial investment in Islamabad. **APP**

National
Days and
Armed
Forces Days

SEPTEMBER

Sept 01/Libya
Revolution Day

Sept 01/Tanzania
Defence day

Sept 01/Uzbekistan
Independence Day

Sept 07/Brazil
Independence Day

Sept 09/DPR Korea
National Day

Sept 09/Tajikistan
Independence Day

Sept 16/Malaysia
Armed Forces Day

Sept 16/Mexico
National Day

Sept 16/Papua New
Guinea
Independence Day

Sept 18/Chile
National Day

Sept 21/Malta
Independence Day

Sept 23/Saudi Arabia
National Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949

Rescue(Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/

Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.....1122

& Rescue Services.....4451122

Motorway Police.....9266044

Motorway Police.....92700020

Women Police Stations

Islamabad.....9225256

Rawalpindi.....927040120

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

FIA Flight Info.....115

FIA Cargo.....9240979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange.....92708315

WASA Rawalpindi.....5535489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMI.....5611111

MIL.....501114

Crest Hospital.....927999711

DHQ.....55563114

RGH.....9296301-7

Holy Family.....9296322-7

PIMS.....928170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-99

Shifa International 4603986

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9268301-64

Met Office.....9250960-6

RDA.....5555894

TMA.....5776886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad
Metropolitan

Corporate.....9292224

Peshawar Town.....9292224

Rural Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....03215244480



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Ayesha Ali hosted a farewell lunch for outgoing French Ambassador Nicolas Galey, thanking him for his contributions. She also warmly welcomed the new Italian Ambassador Ugo Ciarlatani and Spanish Ambassador Carlos Aragon as they begin their missions in Pakistan. DNA

PM orders implementation of
PIMS inquiry recommendations
within three months

The report, however, pointed out a "history of known but incompletely closed risks", citing prior warnings, such as the fire at the nursing hostel in Pims. "Yet those warnings had not been converted into a comprehensive, time-bound and independently verified corrective programme before the nursery fire," the report regretted

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed authorities to implement the short-term measures recommended in an inquiry report into the fire at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) within three months. He issued the directives while chairing a meeting on an action plan for improving Pims, where the inquiry report and the performance audit by the Ministry of National Health Services were reviewed, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The August 25 fire at a nursery in Pims' Mother and Child Hospital claimed the lives of 14 newborns. The incident raised concerns over fire safety measures and sparked calls for accountability, with criminal action being ordered against eight

officials. During Wednesday's meeting, the prime minister directed that the short-term measures in the inquiry report should be implemented within the next three months. He also emphasised taking "every possible step" to improve the hospital and align it with international requirements. He directed that assistance and recommendations should be sought from the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute and Research Centre for the fire safety system. He also directed that measures to ensure the free provision of medicines and facilities at the hospital be made part of the action plan. The prime minister called for personnel with strong professional reputations to be employed at the hospital, adding that a comprehensive action plan based on the recommended long-term measures should be formulated. PM Shehbaz also directed to carry out an audit of Polytechnic Hospital to address irregularities, adding that a plan for its restructuring should also be prepared. He said that Capital Development Authority (CDA) should ensure the implementation of fire safety measures in all public and private hospitals in Islamabad. "The CDA and relevant agencies should also conduct fire safety audits of public and private offices and buildings and ensure the implementation of safety measures," the premier was quoted as saying. During the meeting, the premier was informed that the performance audit of Pims found only 39.7 per cent compliance against indicators assessed. It was also informed that immediate implementation was being ensured on 37 proposed measures in light of the investigative report. The meeting was also briefed on short, medium and long-term measures for improving the hospital. The inquiry committee was formed on PM Shehbaz's directions on the day the fire occurred. It presented its findings and recommendations in a 13-page

report on Wednesday. The committee said that the deadly blaze was most likely caused by a localised electrical failure, while also citing out the hospital management for systemic and institutional failure that turned the fire into a catastrophe. The committee, headed by former interior secretary Shahid Khan, said in its report that abnormal localised electrical heating – possibly from excessive current, a high-resistance connection or another localised defect – most probably caused insulation failure and ignition of nearby combustible material. The report, however, pointed out a "history of known but incompletely closed risks", citing prior warnings, such as the fire at the nursing hostel in Pims. "Yet those warnings had not been converted into a comprehensive, time-bound and independently verified corrective programme before the nursery fire," the report regretted.

Suspect
in custody
injured in
accomplices'
firing: Police

ISLAMABAD: An alleged shooter, already in police custody in a robbery-murder case, was injured when four of his accomplices opened indiscriminate fire on an Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police team in an attempt to free him within the limits of Shila Police Station.

An official told APP on Wednesday that the police team was returning with the field accused, Asif Ali as Bahla, after recovering stolen property on his disclosure and identification when four of his accomplices, who were hiding along the route, opened fire on the police party.

The official said Asif was hit and injured in the firing by his own accomplices, while the police personnel remained safe due to bulletproof jackets and other protective measures.

The injured accused was shifted to a hospital for medical treatment. Police said Asif had been arrested in connection with a robbery-murder case registered at Shila Police Station. In the incident, a young man had fallen from a bridge and died while trying to escape a snatching attempt in the Shila area. The accused was also a previous record-holder in dozens of theft, robbery and street-crime cases and was wanted by both Islamabad and Rawalpindi police, the official said. Police also recovered property allegedly snatched during different crimes from the accused. Search operations were underway to trace and arrest the four accomplices allegedly involved in firing on the police team-APP.

NIPA
delegation
visits Ministry
of Foreign
Affairs

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of participants of the 47th Mid Career Management Course of the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA), Peshawar, currently undertaking an island study tour of Islam



مشرق وسطی میں جنگ کے باعث پٹرول کی قیمتوں میں بوشرا اضافے
کا بوجھ کم کرنے کے لیے
مہنگے پٹرول سے نجات کا تاریخی اقدام
وزیر اعظم کی خصوصی ریلیف اسکیم

پٹرول 100 روپے فی لیٹر سستا

موٹر سائیکل، چنگچی، رکشہ اور تین پہیوں والی سواریاں چلانے والے اور 800 سی سی سے تک گاڑیوں کے مالکان
ون ٹائم رجسٹریشن کے لئے اپنے شناختی کارڈ پر رجسٹرڈ موبائل نمبر سے



STEP-3
صوبے کے نام کا پہلا حرف
جہاں آپ کی گاڑی رجسٹرڈ ہے
موب. کا نام پنجاب P کے بعد space دیں
ویپیکل رجسٹریشن کی تاریخ
DD/MM/YYYY سال
من حیثیت اور سال ایسے لکھیں 06/10/2010

REG لکھ کر space دیں

اپنا قومی شناختی کارڈ نمبر

اپنا قومی شناختی کارڈ نمبر کے بعد space دیں

بغیر space کے تمپر پلیٹ

LHR123 ایسے لکھیں کہ بعد space دیں

چاروں تفصیلات اسپیسز کے ساتھ ایک ہی میسج میں لکھ کر 9771 پر ایس ایم ایس کریں

رعایتی پٹرول کے حصول کا طریقہ کار :

STEP-3

ٹوکن پٹرول پمپ پر دکھا کر

آپ رعایتی قیمت پر پٹرول

حاصل کر سکتے ہیں۔

STEP-1

رجسٹریشن کے بعد پٹرول ریلیف حاصل کرنے کے لیے پٹرول پمپ

جائے سے پہلے TOK لکھ کر 9771 پر بھیج دیں

STEP-2

موصول روپے والے میسج میں ٹوکن نمبر، گاڑی کا رجسٹریشن نمبر

پٹرول کی مقدار اور ٹوکن استعمال کرنے کی مدت درج ہوگی

ملک بھر بشمول آزاد کشمیر اور گلگت بلتستان میں پٹرول پر ریلیف کا آغاز ہو چکا ہے

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Briefs

IRSA
releases
230,100
cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 230,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 199,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1542.04 feet, which was 140.04 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 118,600 cusecs and 145,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1219.30 feet, which was 169.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 14,500 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Tarbela, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 182,600, 133,200, 107,500, and 46,200 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 17,600 cusecs of water was released at Noshara, and 14,500 cusecs were released from River Cheshab at Marala.

11,600
pilgrims
book private
Hajj 2027
seats

ISLAMABAD: As many as 11,600 pilgrims have completed bookings under Pakistan's Private Hajj Scheme 2027 through the official Hajj Portal, with 60,000 seats still available, while the Ministry of Religious Affairs said bookings would continue

NUML marks defence and martyrs day with seminar

Rector NUML Maj Gen Shahid Mehmood Kayani, HI(M) (Retd), underscored the pivotal role of youth in the development and progress of any country. He said that while there may be challenges and legitimate concerns, the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the motherland would never be shaken

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) organized a seminar to commemorate Defence and Martyrs Day, highlighting the sacrifices of Pakistan's forces and emphasizing the role of national unity and the younger generation in the country's progress and development. Distinguished Urdu poet, writer, literary critic and educationist Professor Jalil Aali and Dr. Arshad Mehmood Nasir, Head of the Urdu Department, Alama Iqbal Open University, were the guest speakers. Rector NUML Maj Gen Shahid Mehmood Kayani, HI(M) (Retd), Dr. NUML Beg Muhammad Rafiq Khan along with Deans, Directors, faculty members and a large number of students, attended the seminar. Addressing the gathering, Prof. Dr. Arshad Mehmood Nasir said that Pakistan is the outcome of a long struggle and countless sacrifices rendered by our forefathers. He acknowledged that the nation faces various challenges, but expressed confidence that through unity, perseverance, adherence to the values and legacy of our forefathers, and with the blessings of Almighty Allah, Pakistan would overcome these challenges. He stressed the need to preserve the country's national identity, remember its heroes and safeguard its cultural and historical heritage. Professor Jalil Aali, in his address, highlighted the significance of Pakistan's historic journey and the sacrifices that shaped the nation. He emphasized that the youth constitute the



most dynamic and vital segment of society and have a central role in determining the country's future. He called upon young people to remain connected with their national identity, uphold the values of unity, responsibility and patriotism, and contribute positively to society through knowledge, character and constructive action. Rector NUML Maj Gen Shahid Mehmood Kayani, HI(M) (Retd), underscored the pivotal role of youth in the development and progress

of any country. He said that while there may be challenges and legitimate concerns, the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the motherland would never be shaken. Addressing the students, he said that they were the future of Pakistan and carried the responsibility of playing their role in the country's progress and development. He expressed confidence that, with the will and blessings of Almighty Allah, Pakistan would continue to endure and prosper,

and urged the youth not to lose hope or give in to despair. A documentary showcasing the sacrifices and services of Pakistan's forces was also screened during the seminar, paying tribute to the martyrs and reinforcing the message of courage, resilience, patriotism and national unity. At the conclusion of the seminar, souvenirs were presented to the distinguished guest speakers as a token of appreciation, followed by a group photograph. —DNA

Ghani opens
balloting for
hajj facility
for Senate
employees

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Ghani on Wednesday inaugurated the balloting process for a Hajj facility for two Senate Secretariat employees in BPS-61 to BPS-67, generously sponsored by Senator Amir Wajiduddin Chishti. The balloting ceremony was held at the Senator Service Centre, Parliament House, Islamabad, and was attended by Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan, Senator Rahat Jinnah, Senator Amir Wajiduddin Chishti, Secretary Senate Syed Hasnain Haider, senior officials of the Senate Secretariat, and a large number of employees. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Ghani said that Hajj is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam and a profound act of worship. He added that Hajj is a means of seeking Allah Almighty's pleasure and closeness, and attaining the opportunity to perform this sacred obligation is a matter of great joy and honour for every Muslim. The Chairman Senate warmly congratulated the two fortunate employees selected through the balloting and extended his best wishes to them and their families. He expressed hope that they would undertake their sacred journey with devotion and return with the blessings of Allah Almighty. —APP

Industrial
production
grows
by 3.03% in
July

ISLAMABAD: The output of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) witnessed an increase of 3.03 per cent during the month of July 2026 compared to the same month of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. On a month-on-month

Madrasa graduates' RABTA
2026 delegation visits NBF

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of graduates of religious seminaries, participating in "RABTA 2026," organized by Darul-Ilm wa Tahqiq, has visited the National Book Foundation (NBF), Islamabad, as part of its educational and observational tour. The ten-day programme, titled "Learn by Exploring: Education, History, Recreation and Training Together," aims to introduce madrasa graduates to leading educational, academic, research, cultural and administrative institutions of the country, broaden their outlook, enhance their capacity for dialogue and familiarize them with the practical demands of the contemporary era. The delegation was led by Syed Aziz-ur-Rehman, Secretary of Darul-Ilm wa Tahqiq, and comprised Muhammad Owais, Abdul Raheem Tabani, Abdullah Madani, Muhammad Shoaib Siddiqui, Tahirullah, Muhammad Farooq, Junaid Waqas, Muhammad Tahir, Syed Ahmed Umar Qadri and Ubaid-ur-Rehman Zubair. On behalf of NBF, Muhammad Naeem Khan, Rehan Siddiqui and Muhammad Shahid Dhareja received the delegation and briefed the participants on the Foundation's publishing, academic and promotional activities, its various departments and its initiatives for the promotion of books and reading. The delegation visited the National Book Museum, where the participants viewed historical artefacts, rare and valuable books, ancient Qur'anic manuscripts, the Holy Qur'an Gallery, Sufi Corner, exhibitions dedicated to renowned poets and writers, and the Indonesian Corner. The participants took keen interest in the intellectual and cultural heritage preserved at the Museum. The delegation also visited the NBF Bookshop, where they explored books on various subjects and purchased books of their choice. Syed Aziz-ur-Rehman appreciated the academic resources

Thar coal
plants generate
16,447 GWh

ISLAMABAD: Power projects using Thar coal generated a combined 16,446.521 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity during FY2025-26, consuming 13.83 million tonnes of indigenous coal. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, six listed power projects with a combined installed capacity of 3,960 megawatts (MW) used Thar coal either fully or in combination with imported coal during the fiscal year. A calculation based on the figures given in the documents shows that their total Thar coal consumption stood at 13,834,263 tonnes during FY2025-26. Thar Coal Block I Power Generation Company (Pvt) Limited, with a capacity of 1,320 MW, was the largest generator on Thar coal. Located at Thar Block in Sindh, the plant generated 8,330,914 GWh while consuming 6,609,752 tonnes of Thar coal. The second-largest generator was

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بنو پاکستان کا مستقبل



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Untying the knot of Israel's deception

RAY HANANIA

AFTER 12 prominent Western nations last week announced they would ban or restrict trade in goods manufactured or produced by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, Israel began threatening to close their embassies. Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK announced they would introduce their own national sanctions on Israel's settlements or support existing EU restrictions. The import restrictions will target the racist settlement system, which is built on a discriminatory structure that strips Christians and Muslims of their legally owned lands and hands them over to Jewish Israelis for development and exploitation. Israel reacted with anger when the UK joined the boycott by issuing a widespread ban that targets all products produced in the West Bank by Israeli settlers, as well as many companies that provide services in the settlements. Tel Aviv ordered the closure of the UK's consulate in East Jerusalem. Britain is not closing its eyes to Israel's illegal actions and Tel Aviv's closure of the consulate shows how the more has shocked Israel's governing regime. Britain is not closing its eyes to Israel's illegal actions and Tel Aviv's response shows how shocked it is. The boycott helps redraw the line that separates the Israeli government's "legal" and "illegal" acts. This line has been blurred over the years by political manipulation and accommodation. Under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has served three terms totaling nearly 19 years in office, Israel has merged its illegal, violent policies into a strategy of asserting self-defense in the face of terrorism and antisemitism. In fact, Israel's policies of confiscating (i.e., stealing) lands owned by Palestinian Christians and Muslims and building racist Jewish-only settlements on them is a form of terrorism that is ongoing and more destructive than any one violent terrorist attack. The numbers tell the whole story of Israel's racism. In 1948, the new state of Israel took control of 78 percent of the historic lands of Palestine, steadily stripping land rights from non-Jews and putting them under the exclusive perpetual control of the Jewish National Fund. Land placed in this fund can only be owned by Israel and Jews, not Christians or Muslims, and is managed by the Israel Land Authority. In 1967, Israel occupied the remaining 22 percent of Palestine's land and slowly began chipping away at Palestinians' rights, taking their land into Jewish ownership via a settler movement funded by Israel's government and subsidized indirectly by hundreds of bil-

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lions of dollars granted from the US. As I have written many times, my family has been violated, with Israel destroying our home, roads and water well, while prohibiting my Christian Palestinian descendants from ever developing the land the way Jews are allowed to. Worse is that these terrorist settlers grow products on the stolen Palestinian lands, merge them with other products produced inside Israel and then sell them in markets around the world, conveying a false sense of legitimacy. Israel's conduct has fueled a backlash against pro-Israel candidates ahead of the US' midterm elections. But the world is starting to see through this deception — a criminal act that violates the most basic of international human rights — and is adding to the pressure on Netanyahu and Israel's government.

The most important message in what these 12 Western nations are doing is to clearly state that there is a legal difference between supporting the state of Israel and supporting the government of the state of Israel. Netanyahu and Israel's leaders have always merged the two concepts as a means to defend their actions. When settlers attack Palestinian lands, the state military steps in and responds to the Palestinians alone, often wrongly accusing them of initiating the violence. The imposition and reinforcement of sanctions will help untangle this ugly political knot, in which Israel provides a veneer that disguises the illegal conduct of its occupation. The response also gives weight to the movement to achieve a two-state solution as a means of ending the conflict, something the Israeli government has worked hard to undermine, block and erase. Netanyahu would like the idea of a two-state solution to disappear from the international dialogue, just as Israel has done everything it can to erase the Palestinian identity of historic Palestine.

As global criticism of Israel's double standards and hypocrisies grows, its political champions in America put more time, effort and resources into defending Israel. US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee has been playing a cat-and-mouse game with morality and justice, selectively condemning the settler violence, such as when it targets Christians in villages like Taybeh. He said the Israeli response to UK sanctions would have "a big impact" on Britons. President Donald Trump has not spoken forcefully in response to the sanctions, possibly recognizing that Israel's conduct and the terrorism of Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories has fueled a backlash against pro-Israel candidates ahead of the November midterm elections that could undermine his presidency and the Republicans' control of Congress. It is a perfect storm that undermines the Israeli propaganda that has distorted the truth about what Israel does to non-Jews. Israel uses violence against Palestinians to pressure them to leave the East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Israeli government's policy of stealing lands owned by Christians and Muslims for Jewish ownership must be stopped. The actions taken by the UK and 11 other nations last week will help the world untie the Gordian knot of Israel's deception.

US Congress Impeaches Hegseth over Illegal War with Iran

Qamar Bashir



Representative Thomas Massie's September 15 impeachment initiative presents a specific charge against Hegseth: that he knowingly implemented unlawful orders to wage war. The accusation concerns both the decision to introduce American forces into hostilities on February 28, 2026, and their continued employment afterward. Its central contention is that the administration acted without congressional authorization or an independent constitutional basis for immediate defensive action. This is the foundation of the impeachment effort, and it deserves to be stated fully and directly

THE effort to impeach Secretary of Defense Peter Brian Hegseth places a fundamental question before the United States Congress will constitute: Is it the president's duty to initiate, declare, or will presidential command become its own justification for war? Whether this effort succeeds or fails, its significance extends beyond one official's future. It demands accountability for initiating and continuing hostilities against Iran and challenges the displacement of congressional authority by executive decisions carrying profound human, military, and economic consequences.

Representative Thomas Massie's September 15 impeachment initiative presents a specific charge against Hegseth: that he knowingly implemented unlawful orders to wage war. The accusation concerns both the decision to introduce American forces into hostilities on February 28, 2026, and their continued employment afterward. Its central contention is that the administration acted without congressional authorization or an independent constitutional basis for immediate defensive action. This is the foundation of the impeachment effort, and it deserves to be stated fully and directly. The resolution identifies three circumstances that were absent when Hegseth directed American forces into hostilities against Iran: Congress had not declared war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, congress had not enacted any specific statutory authorization for introducing United States armed forces into hostilities against Iran and no national emergency had been created by an Iranian attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces. These points form the factual basis of the allegation that the operation did not satisfy the circumstances identified in Section 2(c) of the War Powers Resolution. The charge goes further. It states that no imminent attack upon the United States, its territories, possessions, or armed forces existed. In support, it invokes the March 17 resignation letter of Joe Kent, then director of the National Counterterrorism Center: "I cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran. Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation. Massie's case, therefore, challenges both the absence of congressional authorization and the claim that immediate defensive necessity supplied an alternative basis for commencing hostilities. From those premises, the resolution draws an unequivocal legal conclusion: the introduction of American forces was unlawful from its inception, and subsequent military actions continued that unlawful undertaking. It alleges that Hegseth nevertheless knowingly employed the powers, personnel, weapons, and resources of the Department of Defense to execute the order. The accusation is therefore one of personal responsibility in implementing allegedly unlawful military action. It does not treat his subordinate position within the administration as sufficient to discharge his obligations. Two forms of alleged abuse follow. First, Hegseth execut-

ed an unlawful order to commence hostilities despite the absence of the specified authorization or emergency. Second, he continued employing departmental personnel and resources after the initiation, without any subsequent declaration of war or specific statutory authorization. The resolution characterizes this conduct as substituting unlawful executive action for Congress's constitutional and statutory judgment. It seeks impeachment, Senate trial, removal and disqualification from federal office on the grounds that his conduct was incompatible with his duties and the rule of law. The charges against Hegseth are clear and understandable. The absence of an existential threat to the United States from an Iranian attack, discussed repeatedly in my own articles and by journalists, analysts, Democrats, and other public representatives, Iran's strategic calculations did not suggest a willingness to invite overwhelming destruction by launching an attack on American soil. The justification for initiating this war therefore demands the closest scrutiny.

The narrative recalls the manufactured justifications advanced for earlier interventions in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Afghanistan. In Iran's case, the grounds offered for war appear especially thin. Hegseth does not make an act of aggression convincing, and the assertion of danger cannot substitute for a credible explanation of why war was necessary. Hegseth is not the final decision-making authority. He acts under the direction and command of President Trump, the commander in chief. The accusations against the secretary therefore also raise questions about the president who authorized the policy. This effort may be a preview of a larger confrontation. If it succeeds, the president's own vulnerability will become more apparent. The war has also been brutal in its language. Hegseth's derogatory remarks about Iran and its leadership fall below the dignity expected of his office. Similar language from the president compounds that failure. The United States has long associated its standing with human rights, civility, and respect for human dignity and honor. Those ideals are undermined when its leaders speak contemptuously of another country and its people. Iran has now become central to the impeachment effort against Hegseth. Whether he survives politically or is removed, the charges threaten his standing. An official subjected to such scrutiny can suffer lasting damage among the public, international counterparts, colleagues, subordinates, and supporters. The same exposure may ultimately confront the president. Here lies an essential struggle of the American constitutional system: the executive can be called to account when it exceeds its lawful authority. Congress's role in decisions concerning war cannot be displaced simply because the president commands the armed forces. Constitutional responsibility must remain meaningful when its exercise becomes politically difficult. The administration's declaration that the war had ended makes its subsequent conduct particularly troubling. The president and Hegseth commu-

nicated that position to Congress, yet military operations continued. Their own description of the situation did not bring the fighting to an end. More lives were lost, while expensive munitions, missiles, and military systems continued to be consumed or destroyed without delivering the promised objectives. The impeachment effort therefore comes at an important moment. It may provide the jolt necessary to confront the administration with the consequences of its decisions. Leaders who have become complacent in their own assertions of power must recognize the reality on the ground. Iran cannot simply be defeated according to Washington's preferred timetable or compelled to accept whatever outcome the administration desires. The responsible course is to return to the pre-war position and address the destruction caused by the United States and Iran, including compensation for Iran. Continuing a destructive policy to avoid acknowledging failure only deepens the damage. Such a change would not diminish the United States or erase its standing as a superpower. It would reaffirm the capacity to recognize mistakes, correct policy, and restore constitutional discipline. National strength includes the ability to reconsider a course that has failed and to measure conduct against principles more enduring than any administration.

Whether the impeachment effort succeeds or fails, its central challenge remains: American power must answer to the Constitution. The country's credibility and stability depends on its willingness to correct its course and uphold the cherished values of human dignity, human honor, and civility. Any honest assessment must also preserve historical sequence and equal standards. Retaliation cannot be understood fully when the preceding action is omitted. American and Israeli operations require scrutiny alongside Iranian responses, including their purposes, scale, and consequences. Proportionality demands attention to specific conduct and civilian harm. Iran's lives possess the same value as those of American lives. Military superiority cannot confer an unrestricted entitlement to inflict destruction, and national allegiance should not determine whose suffering deserves recognition or whose actions require justification. Human dignity, human honor, and civility belong within this debate. Officials can oppose a government without humiliating its population or speaking casually about suffering. The credibility of the United States depends partly on whether its leaders uphold the values they invoke. When the impeachment effort succeeds or fails, it presses an essential demand upon the American government: that executive power answer to law, military decisions withstand scrutiny, and leadership remain grounded in the cherished values of human dignity, human honor, and civility.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)

Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

A Chapter that Refuse to Close

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



TWENTY-FIVE years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States appears to be approaching an uncomfortable moment of reckoning. The towers that fell in New York, the attack on the Pentagon and the crash of Flight 93 in Pennsylvania did more than kill thousands of people. They transformed American foreign policy and reshaped international politics. Within days, Washington declared a global "war on terror", a phrase that soon became the organizing principle of American policy across much of the world. A quarter of a century later, the question is no longer whether the war on terror changed the world. It clearly did. The more difficult question is whether that war has actually ended. Al Qaeda, the organisation that planned and carried out the September 11 attacks, has been severely weakened. Osama bin Laden is dead. Its organisational structure has been fragmented, and the group no longer possesses the capacity it once had to threaten the United States on the same scale. Yet terrorism has not disappeared. Jihadist organisations have emerged in different countries, adopted new methods and exploited political instability, weak institutions and civil wars. This creates an important distinction. The defeat or decline of one terrorist organisation does not necessarily constitute the end of terrorism. Nor does the disappearance of the original enemy automatically bring an end

to a foreign-policy framework built around that enemy. The costs were enormous. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed directly or indirectly in wars associated with the post-9/11 campaign. Millions were displaced. Entire societies were disrupted. Infrastructure was destroyed and political institutions weakened. In Afghanistan, two decades of international military involvement ultimately ended with the Taliban returning to power in August 2021. That ending was particularly revealing. The United States had spent enormous resources attempting to build a stable Afghan state capable of governing without permanent foreign military support. Yet when American forces finally withdrew, the Afghan government collapsed with extraordinary speed. The episode raised questions that should not be dismissed as merely military failures. Why did the world's most powerful military struggle for so long to achieve a sustainable political settlement? Why were political and social realities repeatedly underestimated? And why did Washington continue to pursue military solutions in conflicts where the underlying problems were fundamentally political? Michael Scott Doran's early warning that Washington was entering a conflict whose true dimensions it did not fully understand proved remarkably prescient. The post-9/11 experience demonstrated that military superiority does not automatically translate into political success. After September 11, governments understandably sought stronger mechanisms to prevent another attack. But emergency measures introduced in the name of national security gradually became part of ordinary governance. Surveillance expanded. Intelligence agencies acquired greater authority. Airport security and border controls changed permanently. In several countries, counterterrorism legislation affected civil liberties and political freedoms. The central dilemma was never whether states should protect their citizens from terrorism. They must. The question was how far governments could go in doing so without undermining the very political freedoms they sought to defend. For the United States, the tension between security and liberty became particularly visible through controversies surrounding detention, interrogation, surveillance and military ter-

ritories. Guantanamo Bay became a symbol of the unresolved legal questions created by the war on terror. The debate over whether terrorism should primarily be treated as a criminal challenge or an act of war continued for years. The post-9/11 order strengthened the role of military power in international affairs. It also contributed to a perception in many parts of the world that Western powers were prepared to use force selectively, often without sufficiently considering local political realities. This perception had consequences for America's standing in the Muslim world. While extremist violence was condemned by many Muslims, American military interventions were also viewed by large sections of public opinion through the lens of occupation, civilian casualties and double standards. The resulting resentment against Western extremist groups with an effective propaganda tool. This is perhaps one of the great paradoxes of the war on terror. The United States sought to destroy violent extremism, but some of the policies adopted in its pursuit created political grievances that extremist organisations could exploit. Yet it would also be wrong to reduce the entire post-9/11 experience to a catalogue of American mistakes. Governments faced a genuine security threat. The attacks demonstrated the capacity of a relatively small organisation to cause extraordinary destruction. No responsible government could simply ignore such a threat. The failure lay less in responding to terrorism than in allowing the response to become an open-ended strategic project without a clearly defined political objective. The global security environment has changed considerably since 2001. Strategic competition between the United States and China has become central to Washington's foreign policy. Russia's war in Ukraine has returned conventional interstate conflict to the centre of European security. The Middle East remains unstable, with political violence and militant organisations continue to operate in parts of Africa and Asia. This may explain why military solutions to terrorism are still seen as necessary. The war on terror has effectively ended. Al Qaeda is no longer the force it once was, and the United States no longer conducts the enormous military campaigns that

characterised the first two decades after 9/11. The institutional structures created during the war remain. Intelligence networks, counterterrorism laws, military partnerships and security doctrines continue to influence policy. More importantly, the habits developed during the war are not easily discarded. Instability, reliance on military force and the tendency to view distant conflicts primarily through the prism of security can survive long after the original threat has changed. For countries such as Pakistan, the legacy is particularly complex. The war against terrorism became a front-line post-9/11 campaign and paid a heavy human, economic and political price. Militancy, displacement, military operations and regional instability affected the country deeply. The war also altered Pakistan's relationship with both the United States and Afghanistan. The lesson for Pakistan and other countries is therefore not simply that terrorism must be defeated. It is that counterterrorism cannot succeed through military means alone. Political legitimacy, economic opportunity, effective institutions, education, justice and responsible governance are equally important. Twenty-five years after September 11, the world has learned that terrorism cannot be eliminated simply by killing terrorists. Organisations may be dismantled, leaders eliminated and territories recaptured, but violent movements can regenerate when the political conditions that sustain them remain unresolved. The United States may be closing the first chapter of the war on terror, but the consequences will remain part of international politics for years to come. The real measure of the post-9/11 era, therefore, should not be the number of terrorists killed or military operations completed. It should be whether states have become better at preventing violence without creating new grievances, whether societies have become more secure without sacrificing fundamental freedoms, and whether governments have learned that military solutions are not necessary to defeat terrorism. — The writer is Assistant Professor Pakistan Studies Imperial College of Business Studies Lahore muhammad.akram@imperial.edu.pk

Briefs

Pak stands with Saudi Arabia

FROM PAGE 01
During his address at the UNSC, Ambassador Ahmad recalled that Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif — in his conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — condemned the attacks and underscored that they threaten regional peace and stability with serious consequences for the global economy and energy security. "Pakistan will continue its earnest efforts at the highest levels to help diffuse tensions and advance peace and stability in the region," he said. Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, and prosperity of Saudi Arabia, he said, adding that Islamabad "fully supports the kingdom's legitimate right to take all necessary measures to defend itself against any threat."

Saudis say Houthis target...

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The coalition said in a statement shared by spokesman Turki al-Malik. The Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) — a bloc of 57 Muslim countries — condemned the "heinous" attack. Saudi Arabia had issued brief alerts on Tuesday over possible attacks in Makkah and across swathes of the kingdom's south, which borders Yemen. The alerts, including the first one issued in Makkah since the Middle East war erupted in February, came a day after a wave of ballistic missiles and drone attacks launched from Yemen wounded 13 people in the kingdom's south.

SC expresses reservation at fixation...

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The bench then questioned whether it should dismiss the petitions or refrain from hearing them in view of the FCC's order. Awan said it needed to be determined from where the FCC could summon records and what the consequences would be of its direction to fix cases for hearing. The AGP request of three weeks to assist the court on the matter. The Supreme Court accepted the request and adjourned the hearing for three weeks. During the hearing, Justice Waheed also raised questions over compliance with the SC's August 18 order regarding Iran's medical treatment and family meetings. The judge noted that the court had directed government officials to appear before it and questioned why none of them had attended Wednesday's hearing.

Makkah defence pact contains...

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military conflict between two nuclear countries and "especially two neighbouring nuclear countries is out of the question." "... what a strategic folly India made that we were the lesson that we taught in each domain, whether it was in the air, ground, cyber, sea... whether it was in information [or] it was in the diplomatic domain. So yes, a good lesson was taught to India." The ISPR DG India has a problem of internalisation of external issues. "For example, Kashmir is an external problem, established agenda on this in the United Nations Security Council, and they want to internalise it again through repression," he added. Lt Gen Chaudhry said the message that Pakistan kept on giving to Indians is "Pakistan believes in peace on equal terms; Pakistan is a very rational and objective player, a very rational and objective actor who believes in regional peace." However, the chief military spokesperson warned India against any military aggression, saying that Pakistan will not hesitate to safeguard its security and integrity.

Music bridges China-Pakistan friendship as diplomatic ties reach 75-year milestone

Qawwali, a centuries-old South Asian devotional tradition rooted in Sufi mysticism, draws on poetry to express themes of love, longing and spiritual union



DNA
CHENGDU: A series of musical exchanges in China have highlighted the enduring friendship between China and Pakistan as the two countries celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Consulate General of Pakistan in Chengdu hosted a reception to mark the milestone on September 16, China Eco-

nomics Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday. A special Qawwali performance by Pakistan's Marfat Sufi Band emerged as a highlight of the evening and the event was a shared stage: Chinese and Pakistani calligraphy artists also engaged in creative dialogue through an exhibition of their works. Qawwali, a centuries-old South Asian devotional tradition rooted in Sufi mysticism, draws on poetry to express themes of love, longing and spiritual union. The band's stirring renditions

offered guests an immersive experience of the shared cultural heritage between two nations, while the calligraphy exhibition added a visual dimension to the cross-cultural encounter. The celebrations continued on September 11 and 12, when the Marfat Sufi folk band performed at two events in Sichuan. Joined by Chinese artists, the Pakistani band conveyed love and peace through music, preserving authentic traditional folk melodies from Pakistan. The performances drew warm responses

from local audiences and underscored the power of music to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. In Beijing, the recent Great Wall Concert brought together Pakistani artists, including contemporary Qawwali artist Zain Zohaib, and their Chinese counterparts for a feast of music and dance. Staged beneath the Great Wall's towering ramparts, the performances unfolded with monumental sweep and emotional intensity, striking the audience with visceral force.

Pakistan Boycotts Israel Match at Samarkand Chess Olympiad



PAKISTAN WOMEN

US-France basketball rivalry grows

DNA
DUBAI: France's defeat to the US in Sunday's FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup final continued a remarkable recent pattern between two countries that have now met in three major basketball finals across the men's and women's game in just over two years. The US came from 14 points down to beat France 97-79 in Berlin, securing a fifth consecutive World Cup title and extending their winning streak in the competition to 36 games. For France, a best-ever World Cup finish was the latest sign of the country's growing presence at the top of international basketball, but also another major final that ended with the US taking gold. The pattern began at the Paris Olympics in 2024, when France reached both basketball finals on home soil. The men were first, with a 20-year-old Victor Wembanyama scoring 26 points as France pushed a US team featuring LeBron James, Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant. France remained within reach late in the game before Curry hit four 3-pointers in the closing stages to help the US secure a 88-87 victory and his first Olympic gold medal. The following day, France's women came even closer. The US edged the hosts 87-66 after Gabby Williams scored at the buzzer, only for her foot to be inside the 3-point line. Instead of forcing overtime, the basket left France one point short of a first Olympic gold in women's basketball. Two years later, the two countries were back in a major final, this time at the Women's World Cup in Berlin.

OUR CORRESPONDENT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has boycotted its scheduled match against Israel at the 46th FIDE World Chess Olympiad 2026 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, with the Chess Federation of Pakistan citing the country's policy towards Israel and solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Pakistan-Israel match was scheduled for Wednesday in the opening round of the prestigious international event. However, Pakistan declined to play against the Israeli team and did not take part in the scheduled match. Chess Federation of Pakistan (CFP) President Syed Zeeshan Nagvi said Pakistan had a clear and consistent policy regarding Israel and that the federation could not participate in a match contrary to the government's policy. Nagvi said the decision was also intended to convey a message of solidarity with the Palestinian people. "We have boycotted the match to express solidarity with the Palestinian people," he said. He further said Pakistan's participation in international sporting events was a neutral ground, but the federation would respect the Pakistan government's official position on Israel. The 46th FIDE World Chess Olympiad is being held in Samarkand from September 15 to 27, bringing together national teams from around the world. The event features separate open and women's competitions, with more than 350 teams registered across the two sections.

Lionel Messi set for Argentina farewell in Benin friendly

DNA
THE 39-year-old said in August he was retiring from Argentina duty after a two-decade international career that included winning the 2022 World Cup and Copa America triumphs in 2021 and 2024. "We made the decision to invite the best player in the world, the symbol of our national team, our captain, Lionel Andres Messi, so that he can have the farewell he truly deserves on October 6 here in Argentina," said Argentine FA president Claudio Tapia. The match against Benin will take place at Eliseo Platero's Estadio Monumental in Buenos Aires, which can accommodate 85,000 spectators. Tapia also invited all of Argentina's 2022 World Cup winners to join Messi for what he said would be an "unforgettable" occasion. Argentina began a series of three friendlies against Bolivia on September 20 in Cordoba — their first match since losing the World Cup final to Spain — before taking on Burkina Faso in Buenos Aires on October 3. Messi has been included in the squad for the third match against Benin, when he is expected to make his 208th and final appearance for the national team. He is Argentina's all-time record scorer with 125 goals. Following the death of his father Jorge last month, Messi had said he had "serious doubts" about continuing to play football of any sort for "much longer." "It was a decision that hurt and still hurts deep in my soul, but I understand that it is the right time," Messi said when he called time on his Argentina career.

Expo held showcasing cutting-edge technologies, already implemented in Pakistan

BEIJING: The 16th Smart City and Intelligent Economy Expo opened at the Ningbo International Convention and Exhibition Center, showcasing how technological cooperation is translating into concrete projects. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday. Running through Sept 13 under the theme "AI Transformation for a Brighter Future," the expo features free exhibition halls and more than 380 enterprises, institutions and industry organizations presenting frontier technologies, innovative products, solutions and applications aimed at empowering new industrialization and advancing digital intelligence urban development. Among the participants in the global digital intelligence collaboration zone is Enfiti Innovate, an open platform co-founded by Chinese and Pakistani entrepreneurs that connects international researchers and

startups with China's industrial ecosystem to accelerate project implementation in South Asia and Africa and other BRI countries. At its booth, Enfiti is displaying a portfolio spanning smart agriculture, AI-powered healthcare, horizontal technology transfer, R&D cooperation and consultation services. A highlight is the Smart Mobile Soil Laboratory, which integrates real-time soil testing, intelligent data analysis and AI-driven agricultural decision-making to support precision farming. The technology has already been implemented in Pakistan. "The feedback has been overwhelmingly strong," said Dr. Sami Iqbal, co-founder of Enfiti Innovate. "Having a platform like this to showcase cutting-edge technologies and exchange ideas with peers has been tremendously rewarding. We have already scheduled follow-up visits and in-depth discussions."

For BRI partners, such platforms signal a shift from connectivity-focused cooperation to shared innovation in agriculture, healthcare and manufacturing, turning joint research into solutions that can be deployed in local economies, he added. The companies also unveiled a new oral disintegrating film product developed with a Chinese pharmaceutical partner, making another step in its efforts to translate laboratory research into market-ready products. The zone's international character was further reflected by a Canadian AI smart health robot, Canonero AI digital employee, Russian MGC digital human and French photovoltaic energy storage solution. Their presence underscores the expo's role as a meeting point for global digital intelligence, where technology transfer and R&D cooperation can be matched with China's industrial capacity and market demand. — APP

Pak hockey team target Asia Cup final

KARACHI: After finishing at the 11th spot in the recently concluded FIBA World Cup in the Netherlands and Belgium, Pakistan men's hockey team will be desperately looking to finish on the victory podium in the men's hockey event of the 20th Asian Games in Japan. Samiullah told The Express Tribune on Wednesday, "If we get even a silver in this event, it will be a good achievement for our brigade." Samiullah was quick to add. The chief selector recalled that Pakistan played a few good games in the Hockey World Cup. "I think the team has played good matches in the World Cup, barring the one against Wales (3-5), which we should have won. It was unnecessarily drawn," Samiullah said. Pakistan have a rich history in the Asian Games, having won eight gold, three silver and the same number of bronze medals since the 1982 Jakarta edition. Pakistan last won a silver medal in the 2014 Incheon Asian Games. "We will need to improve a lot, especially within the area. If you don't manage clearance, you will give the opposition the chance to get penalty corners," Samiullah said. "There is also a big stamina issue with our boys, and we will also need to improve our goal-scoring ability. Our penalty corner conversion rate is also not that satisfactory. There are some of the grey areas which we should cover," Samiullah said. The chief selector said India is too tough a side and beating them would not be an easy task. "Even beating Japan is also not that easy," Samiullah was quick to add. In the quadrilateral event, Pakistan have been placed in Group B with Malaysia, China, Oman, Uzbekistan and Thailand. India, Japan, Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Indonesia are in Group A. The top two sides from each group will progress to the semifinals, which will be held on October 1, with the final to be conducted on October 3. Samiullah said foreign coaches have done well by making the players mentally strong. Pakistan, in recent matches, especially in the World Cup, have shown glimpses of sudden outbursts and scored goals in no time. But Samiullah said it would be useful to take the lead, hold it and further build on it. "This will happen only when you play controlled hockey in all zones," the chief selector said. Samiullah said the Korea trip has given Pakistan good practice ahead of the Asian Games. "It will help the team definitely in Japan. It was important," said Samiullah. Pakistan will launch their campaign with their match against Thailand on September 20. It will be followed by matches against Uzbekistan (September 22), China (September 24), Malaysia (September 25) and Oman (September 26). Pakistan squad: Muhammad Abdullah, Muhammad Sufyan Khan, Moiz Shakeel, Abdul Waheed Ashraf Rana, Abdul Hannan Shahid, Zakaria Hayat, Arshad Liaquat, Adeel Latif, Ahmad Nadeem, Ghazizadeh Ali, Ammar Shokeel Butt, Muhammad Hamdaddin Anjum, Abdul Rehman, Afray, Umar Mustafa, Abu Bakar Mahmood (captain), Abdul Manan and Muhammad Ahammad. — APP

Egypt's Sisi rejects 'any plans for Palestinians

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annihilate the Palestinian cause". Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz on Wednesday said it was only a matter of time before Israel resumes full-scale war in Gaza, "to finish the job so that we can also implement the migration plan".

China willing to 'safeguard' Iran's rights

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conflict in the Middle East, which has at times spilled over into neighbouring countries. "We do not wish to see regional tensions spilling over into Yemen and the Red Sea," Wang said. Recent fighting that flared up in Yemen between government forces and the Iran-backed Houthis has displaced more than 100,000 people inside the country while causing a closely watched topic at Xi's meeting with Trump, among other thorny issues ranging from trade to competition over artificial intelligence. Beijing related this week US media reports that Chinese entities supplied Tehran with satellite images of a military base housing US troops in Jordan, before and after an Iranian strike killed three American soldiers. Tehran has warned Beijing not to sell weapons to Iran, and Washington sanctioned three China-based satellite companies in May. Beijing related this week US media reports that Chinese entities supplied Tehran with satellite images of a military base housing US troops in Jordan, before and after an Iranian strike killed three American soldiers. Tehran has warned Beijing not to sell weapons to Iran, and Washington sanctioned three China-based satellite companies in May.

Petroleum dealers defy govt fuel...

FROM PAGE 01
the current mechanism difficult to implement. "We have reservations about the mechanism of the relief scheme," he added. Kamal said that relief should be provided to consumers directly through an easy and straightforward mechanism. Kamal said dealers' capital was already affected by inflation, while billions of rupees owed by oil marketing companies were pending. "But the financial burden of the relief scheme on dealers is not workable," he said. The association also demanded an increase in dealers' margins. "If the government pay dealers the amount for cheaper petrol?" Kamal questioned, adding that dealers had been contacting the government for the past three days but had received no response. Kamal reiterated that the government should sell petrol under the government's relief scheme in its "current form".

Dr. Najeeb to be the AJK President

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The election for the post will be held on September 24, according to the AJK Election Commission. Since Barrister Sultan Mahmood passed away in January, the office of the AJK president has remained vacant. Chaudhry Latif Akbar, then Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, performed the duties of acting president until incumbent Speaker Chaudhry Tariq Farooq assumed the role after being elected Speaker on August 25. Unveiling the election schedule at a media briefing on Tuesday, Chief Election Commissioner Justice (ret'd) Ghulam Mustafa Mughal said nomination papers would be filed with the returning officer on September 19 between 10am and 12noon and scrutiny would be conducted the same day. Justice (ret'd) Mughal said candidates could withdraw their nomination papers by 11:30am on September 23. Polling would be held at the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Secretariat on September 24 from 10am to 1pm. The vote count and result announcement would be made the same day after completion of polling.



Briefs

Police fire tear gas to break up Congo protests

KINSHASA: Police in Congo fired tear gas Tuesday to disperse hundreds of people demonstrating against constitutional changes they said could allow President Félix Tshisekedi to seek a third term in office.

The opposition coalition C64 organized demonstrations in the capital, Kinshasa, and several other cities, including Lubumbashi and Kindu in eastern Congo, despite restrictions on mass gatherings imposed due to the fast-spreading Ebola outbreak.

The protest in Kinshasa drew hundreds of people and began peacefully, but was dispersed by police with tear gas and warning shots after protesters clashed with pro-government supporters.

"The Congolese state is working with a political party 'God is great; I made it out alive. There was a massacre, and the police were firing at us,'" Congolese government spokesperson Patrick Muganyizi condemned the opposition for disrupting activities by falsely claiming schools would be closed on Tuesday.

"The right to protest is recognized in the Constitution, but it must be exercised properly," he said.

Police also dispersed a June rally in Kinshasa that C64 organized against the constitutional changes. Several people, including Fayulu, were injured, APP.

Malaysia to invite Myanmar leader over Rohingya repatriation push

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said on Wednesday he will invite Myanmar's coup leader to meet with him for an official visit in a bid to expedite the repatriation of Rohingya refugees.

Anwar announced in July that Myanmar had agreed to take back 5,000 members of the persecuted Rohingya minority, in a rare repatriation push that has prompted concern from rights groups Malaysia hosts more than 255,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with the UN refugee agency, including more than 126,000 Rohingyas from Myanmar, its largest refugee community. Both countries say a first wave of nearly 1,500 Myanmar nationals will be repatriated voluntarily in late September, although it is unclear how many Rohingyas will be included. Anwar said the diplomatic move was aimed at finding a solution to the Rohingya refugee issue, which has fuelled growing concern among locals. "No two weeks ago, I told the Home Ministry and cabinet ministers that I would invite the Myanmar president to make an official visit to Malaysia," the premier said during a podcast interview on Wednesday. —APP

Jordan secures zero tariffs for over 60% of US-bound exports

RYADH: More than 60 per cent of Jordanian exports to the US will retain zero-tariff treatment, while the remainder will face an additional duty of 10 percent, according to Jordan's minister of industry, trade and supply. Yaraub Qudus said the apparel and garment sector, along with pharmaceuticals, fertilizers and phosphate, had secured full exemption from the additional tariffs. Jordan News Agency, or Petra, reported. The arrangement preserves preferential access for Jordanian products and aligns with US tariff policy and changes the 10 percent levy among the lowest rates introduced under Washington's latest measures, Qudus said. The arrangement comes as Washington has expanded the use of tariffs as a tool of trade and economic policy, including a 10 percent Section 301 tariff on Jordanian goods tied to US concerns over forced labor import restrictions. The measure includes exemptions for specified products, while the new US-Jordan reciprocal trade agreement sets out preferential treatment for qualifying Jordanian goods. —APP

Quantum Valley Pak to open new pathways for youth: Ansan

"Today is not merely the inauguration of a project; it marks the beginning of a new direction for Pakistan's future," he said, describing the launch as a proud moment for the country

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ansan Iqbal on Wednesday expressed confidence that Quantum Valley Pakistan would open new pathways for the country's youth, startups and high-tech businesses while strengthening Pakistan's transition towards a knowledge and technology-driven economy. Addressing the launching ceremony of Quantum Valley Pakistan: "Shaping Pakistan's Innovation & Technology Future," the minister said the initiative marked the beginning of a new direction for Pakistan and would connect Pakistani youth with global centres of innovation and technology. "Today is not merely the inauguration of a project; it marks the beginning of a new direction for Pakistan's future," he said, describing the launch as a proud moment for the country. The ceremony was attended by Tim Rowe, CEO of Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC); Dougan Sherwood, Partner at CIC; and Seem Asmi, Managing Partner at Plug and Play. Ansan Iqbal said the centre of power in the 21st century was no longer physical strength but intellectual and creative capability, adding that countries with the best ideas and the ability to transform those ideas into products would advance in the global economy. He said nearly 60 per cent of Pakistan's population comprised young people, describing the country's youth as second to none in talent and potential.

"We have to bring together the capabilities of our youth and move forward with the spirit of Team Pakistan," he said. The minister said Quantum Valley Pakistan would provide a platform to connect Pakistani youth with modern technologies and creating pathways for innovation, entrepreneurship and high-tech business development. The minister said Pakistan's defence and diplomatic successes needed to be supported by a strong and sustainable economy. He said the government had set a target of transforming Pakistan into a \$1 trillion economy by 2035 and a \$3 trillion economy by 2047. "Achieving a \$1 trillion economy by 2035 is certainly difficult, but it is not impossible," he said, adding that Pakistan's achievement of becoming a nuclear power despite enormous challenges demonstrated that the country could also pursue ambitious economic targets through determination, innovation and col-



lective national effort. Ansan Iqbal stressed the need to learn from past mistakes and move the country towards economic sovereignty. "Pakistan needs a strong economic future for its young generation, not turmoil in its streets," he said. He said the world was advancing at unprecedented speed and Pakistan could not afford to lose time in accelerating its journey towards modern technologies. The minister underlined the importance of increasing exports to achieve complete economic sovereignty, saying Pakistan needed to build its technological and productive capacity. Recalling the establishment of National Centres in 2017 in emerging fields, Ansan Iqbal said the centres covered areas including Big Data and Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, Automation and Robotics, GIS and Space Technology, Applied Mathematics, Livestock and Genomics. Through these centres, universities were connected to develop a national technology network, he said. He added that under URAAN Pakistan, the country's technology journey was further accelerated in 2024, with the emerging technology ecosystem expected to contribute towards the government's target of increasing Pakistan's exports to \$100 billion by 2035. The minister said Pakistan's population of around 260 million represented enormous economic potential and the country needed to develop the capacity to generate at least \$400 billion annually in foreign exchange. "Pakistan's youth can earn millions of dollars in foreign exchange for the country through knowledge and technology," he said. —DNA

lab technology and innovation hubs and bring different stakeholders together within a modern technology ecosystem. He added that the initiative would create new opportunities for startups and promote high-tech businesses in Pakistan. During the ceremony, agreements were signed to strengthen technological collaboration and support the country's innovation ecosystem. The first agreement was signed between Cambridge Innovation Center and Quantum Valley Pakistan, while the second was signed between Plug and Play and Quantum Valley Pakistan. Ansan Iqbal termed the agreements an important step towards equipping Pakistani youth with modern technologies and creating pathways for innovation, entrepreneurship and high-tech business development. The minister said Pakistan's defence and diplomatic successes needed to be supported by a strong and sustainable economy. He said the government had set a target of transforming Pakistan into a \$1 trillion economy by 2035 and a \$3 trillion economy by 2047. "Achieving a \$1 trillion economy by 2035 is certainly difficult, but it is not impossible," he said, adding that Pakistan's achievement of becoming a nuclear power despite enormous challenges demonstrated that the country could also pursue ambitious economic targets through determination, innovation and col-

Indonesia expands Gulf cultural ties to preserve diverse Muslim heritage

Indonesia is expanding cultural cooperation with Gulf states to preserve the diverse heritage of Muslim societies, the culture minister said on Wednesday. He said the initiative was a cross-country effort to keep it relevant for younger generations. Minister of Culture Fadli Zon held talks with Gulf officials in recent months, as part of Indonesia's effort to strengthen cultural diplomacy. "This includes meetings with Saudi Minister of Culture Bader bin Abdullah bin Farhan, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Indonesia Khalid Jassim Al-Yassin, and the Qatari Ambassador to Indonesia Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Thani," he said. "Indonesia and the Gulf countries share an interest in safeguarding heritage and cultural traditions and national experiences," they are still connected by centuries-old links, through which their cultural cooperation can serve as "an important platform for sharing the diverse expressions of Muslim societies," Fadli added. He highlighted "strategic, multi-layered initiatives" Jakarta currently has with Gulf nations, including how the visit of Saudi culture minister to Jakarta in April "opened new avenues in joint film co-production, art residencies, museum innovation and digital culture" programs. Indonesia also hosted the renewal of their cultural partnership, following Jakarta and Riyadh's first such agreement in 2017. The two countries are also collaborating under the framework of intangible cultural heritage, including on preserving Arabic calligraphy and the extension of its recognition by UNESCO. This year, the world's largest Muslim-majority country will organize cultural programs with Qatar to celebrate their 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, with plans to showcase their national stamps. In 2025, the culture ministry's Directorate General of Cultural Diplomacy, Promotion and Cooperation signed an agreement with the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Center, as Jakarta aims to promote Indonesian literature and arts through major international events held in the UAE. In his meetings with the Qatari and Kuwaiti envoys last month, Fadli also proposed talks on bilateral cultural agreements to broaden cooperation in the sector. "Indonesia is committed to transforming its longstanding historical and spiritual ties into sustainable partnerships... We believe that the relationship between Indonesia and the Gulf can become an important model of cooperation between diverse Muslim societies," Fadli said. "By working together, Indonesia and the Gulf can ensure that culture does not just preserve the memory of our past. It can guide our societies through the challenges of the present and help us shape a more peaceful, inclusive, and humane future."

Syria protests spread to Kurdish-majority northeast

QAMISHLI, SYRIA: Hundreds of people took to the streets in Syria's Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli on Tuesday amid wider protests over fuel price hikes, the largest against the new authorities. Syrian authorities on Sunday announced an increase in fuel prices amid global surges due to the Middle East war. The price of diesel saw a 40 per cent increase, while petrol prices increased by 26 per cent. An AFP correspondent on Tuesday saw men and women in Qamishli holding placards that read "no to the policy of starvation", "pro-serve people's strength" and "no to the increase in fuel prices" while others chanted "our fuel is for the people". North and northeast Syria, a 20 per cent of the country's land and oil and gas fields and is now under government control after Damascus earlier this year ousted areas previously held by Kurdish forces. Despite a January agreement to integrate Kurdish forces and areas into the state, tensions have remained, as Kurds demand safeguards for their rights. "This decision is wrong. It's a decision against farmers, workers, and students — against all the poor in Syria," A. Rahman Khalil, 56, said. "People will not remain silent about this decision," he added. Khaled Nohait, 48, said the price increase was a "betrayal" and that they would return to what they were, and they must comply with the people's demands". Protests have erupted for three consecutive days in different parts of Syria's north, northwest and northeast. Damascus has sought to justify the move, citing higher prices in global energy markets due to the regional war. Syria currently relies heavily on imports to meet its fuel needs. The country's energy infrastructure remains dilapidated as a result of more than a decade of war and neglect. The ongoing protests are the first of their kind since the Islamist authorities seized power after ousting in December 2024 longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad, under whom demonstrations were strictly prohibited.

Shaza invites Japanese firms to explore Pak's tech sector

She identified artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, semiconductors, chip design, smart manufacturing, electric mobility, cybersecurity and clean technologies as areas with significant potential for cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday invited Japanese companies to explore investment and partnership opportunities in Pakistan's technology sector and other areas where technology can support economic activity. Addressing a virtual keynote at the Pakistan Business Seminar in Tokyo titled "Pakistan's Digital Transformation and Opportunities for Partnership with Japan," she said Pakistan was ready to work directly with Japanese companies interested in the country's technology sector and into areas where technology could support economic activity. The minister invited Japanese companies to visit Pakistan, interact with young engineers, technology companies, universities, academics, startups and innovators, and assess the capabilities already available in the country. She said Pakistan was a young, innovative and

entrepreneurial country, with 68 per cent of its population of around 240 million people under the age of 30. Pakistan produces more than 75,000 IT graduates and software engineers annually. At the same time, its ICT export pipeline had grown by almost 20 per cent annually over the past four to five years, she added. Shaza Fatima said Japan was expected to face a shortage of around 800,000 IT professionals by 2030, while Pakistan continued to produce tens of thousands of IT graduates and software engineers every year. She proposed greater cooperation through Japanese research and development centres in Pakistan, stronger university-industry partnerships and joint product development by Pakistani and Japanese engineers. She identified artificial intelligence, robotics, semiconductor, chip design, smart manufacturing, electric mobility, cybersecurity and clean technologies as areas with significant potential for cooperation. She also highlighted Pakistan's emerging capabilities in very-large-scale integration (VLSI), chip verification and embedded systems, saying these could create further opportunities in semiconductors and advanced engineering. "Pakistan does not want to remain simply a consumer of technologies for the future. We want to help build them," she said. The minister said investment decisions required predictability, intellectual property protection, skilled human capital and confidence in government policies. Recalling the longstanding Pakistan-Japan relationship, she said the two countries had supported each other's economic development through different phases.

"From cotton to code, from trade to technology, that is the offer that we want to make," she said, expressing Pakistan's desire to move from cooperation towards co-creation. She cited "shinrai" (trust) and "showa" (harmony) as two Japanese concepts that could define the next phase of bilateral cooperation. "Japan brings technological excellence and precision. Pakistani youth brings talent and ambition," she said. The minister said Pakistan and Japan already had a strong foundation of friendship and cooperation and could now work together to develop technologies and products for global markets. Referring to the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), she said the whole-of-government platform provided investors with a coordinated interface across government departments. She said the SIFC aimed to make it easier for investors to enter, invest, operate and grow in Pakistan by reducing administrative hurdles, accelerating decision-making and improving policy coordination. She said the Digital Nation Pakistan Act, passed by Parliament last year, provided a framework for the digital transformation of the economy, governance and society. Pakistan currently has around 16 million broadband subscriptions and more than 17,000 kilometres of optic backbone, she said. 750 per cent of the country's population was utilised and available for next-generation connectivity and 5G, she said. The minister said connectivity was meaningful only when it created opportunities, enabling Pakistani developers and professionals to work with companies and industries around the world. —DNA

Amazon says unable to reactivate UAE, Bahrain data centers

WASHINGTON, United States: Several Amazon data centers in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain hit by drone strikes in March cannot be reactivated, the company's cloud arm said on Tuesday.

Amazon Web Services (AWS) said it was unable to restart several sites in Bahrain and one in the UAE. AWS has three sites in Bahrain, according to its website.

"After a thorough assessment, we have determined that we are unable to restore access to the resources and data hosted exclusively in this Region," it said in a status update. AWS said in early March that drone strikes damaged two of its data centers in the UAE and a facility in Bahrain. The incidents, which occurred a few days after the United States and Israel began attacking Iran, were "a result of the ongoing conflict" in the Middle East, AWS said at the time. AWS is the world's leading cloud computing provider, competing with rivals including Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud to offer infrastructure that underpins popular apps and websites, as well as powering generative AI. —APP

Saudi-China eco ties deepen as trade exchange tops \$100b

JEDDAH: Saudi-Chinese relations are currently in an excellent phase, according to China's Consul General in Jeddah, Wang Jun. Speaking to Al-Qabasidiah, Yi said this year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the comprehensive and cooperative strategic partnership between the two countries, adding that bilateral trade reached \$100 billion in 2025. Yi said China is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner, while the Kingdom ranks as China's largest trading partner in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia's imports from China amounted to about \$50 billion during the first half of this year, with China's imports from Saudi Arabia exceeding \$26 billion during the same period. In contrast, the Kingdom's imports from China amounted to about \$10 billion.

Yi said trade between the two countries is "very balanced," adding that bilateral trade relations have remained strong despite regional tensions. He also highlighted the growing economic and trade ties between Saudi Arabia and China. Yi said Chinese companies are actively supporting the implementation of Saudi Vision 2030, noting that China leads among countries contributing to infrastructure and new-energy projects in the Kingdom. He mentioned investments, he estimated that Chinese investment in Saudi Arabia has exceeded \$4.26 billion, while Saudi investment in China has grown, particularly in new energy, advanced technologies and biotechnology.

Saudi investment also includes the culture and education sectors, with Yi confirming that the strength of relations and the depth of the partnership are encouraging more Chinese companies to invest in the Saudi market. —APP

Saudi-Egypt trade exceeds \$82.2b over 5 years

RIYADH: Trade between Saudi Arabia and Egypt reached \$82.2 billion from 2021 to 2025, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 5.6 per cent, according to the Saudi Press Agency. Bilateral trade reached about \$18.1 billion in 2025, an increase of 11 per cent from the previous year, according to data from the General Authority for Statistics. The figures reflect the continued strength of trade relations between the two countries, supported by the diversity of traded goods and growing economic and commercial cooperation. Saudi Arabia is Egypt's third largest trading partner globally, underscoring the importance of economic and trade relations between the two countries. —APP

Briefs

US House votes for third time to end Iran war

DNA

WASHINGTON: For a third time, the US House has voted to end the war in Iran, approving a war powers resolution that would halt President Donald Trump's ability to continue military action without congressional approval. The roll call late Tuesday, 220-204, was similar to earlier efforts this summer, with a few more Republicans joining all Democrats voting to bring an end to the conflict. None of the resolutions have made it to the president's desk, where Trump would almost certainly veto the measure. "Remember when Donald Trump said that this war would last just a few weeks?" said Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., who served as a Marine during the Iraq War and pushed the resolution forward. He said it's time for Congress to "actually ask tough questions, as the Constitution directs us to do, rather than be subservient to another warmongering administration."

Republican Rep. Brian Mast of Florida, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, questioned which military resources Democrats would want to remove from the region where he said Iran remains a threat. Mast said Trump is against "forever wars, and that is what he is ending the decades of hostilities from Iran. 'They are a continuous ongoing threat to the United States,'" Mast said. "Enough is enough. Last war powers vote before the midterms. The action is likely the last House vote on the Iran war ahead of the midterm elections, where the conflict overseas is playing a substantial role in the political campaigns. The war that Trump launched Feb. 28 has dragged, with on-again, off-again deadly missile strikes being exchanged and causing havoc in the region for nearly seven months."

60 killed in goldmine collapse

KHARTOUM: The collapse of a gold mine in southern Sudan has killed at least 60 small-scale miners, survivors told AFP on Wednesday, while many more are missing and feared dead under the rubble. Shells began collapsing in the Al-Zarqa mine near the town of El-Nahud in West Kordofan on Tuesday, and by the following morning 60 bodies had been retrieved. "We don't know how many more are still inside," one of the survivors, Khair al-Sayed Jabara, told after taking part with fellow miners in the all-night rescue operation. - APP

Outgoing French envoy meets PM Shehbaz Sharif

Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed warm regards for President Emmanuel Macron and wished Ambassador Nicolas Galey every success in his future endeavours

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nicolas Galey, the outgoing Ambassador of the French Republic to Pakistan, paid a farewell call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif today. During his tenure in Pakistan, Ambassador Galey spent an eventful time fostering stronger bilateral ties. He hosted scores of diplomatic and social gatherings at his residence, engaged actively with the media, and worked to deepen mutual understanding between the two nations. The Prime Minister appreciated Ambassador Galey's valuable contribution towards strengthening Pakistan-France relations. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further expand and deepen its longstanding partnership with France through enhanced political dialogue, economic engagement, development cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges. Both sides underscored the importance of regular high-level exchanges and continued cooperation on regional and global issues of mutual interest. Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed warm regards for President Emmanuel Macron and wished Ambassador Nicolas Galey every success in his future endeavours.



ISLAMABAD: The outgoing ambassador of the French Republic to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Nicolas Galey called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on 16 September 2026. - DNA

KP CM Sohail Afridi claims attempt made to 'kill' him in Wazirabad

Gujranwala police deny allegations, say person caught was police official deployed for security duty

KHAYBER PAKHTUNKHWA Chief Minister Sohail Afridi claimed on Wednesday that an armed assailant was sent to target him after he travelled from Sialkot to Wazirabad during his Punjab street movement, alleging that his security team caught the "suspect" and recovered a pistol from him. In a video statement, CM Afridi said that the man was sent in plain clothes with the "intention of killing him" but was caught by his security team. "A pistol was recovered from the person who was caught, and he was handed over to the local police," he claimed. KP CM Afridi spent a busy day in Lahore on Tuesday and visited different areas in connection with the Punjab street movement. The PTI has announced nationwide protests and a long march towards the federal capital on September 27 to demand the release of jailed party founder Imran Khan.

In the video statement, CM Afridi further claimed that electricity at the house where he stayed in Sialkot was cut off and its generator was damaged. "When we moved to Umar Dar's house, the electricity was also cut off there, and the generator was damaged," Afridi said. The claim comes two days after CM Afridi said he was "abducted" by authorities in Lahore and later left by the roadside without security. However, the KP chief minister was not formally arrested, while Punjab Information Minister Azam Bhatti rejected his allegation and said Afridi had entered a Punjab Police vehicle of his own accord. In a statement, Gujranwala police rejected CM Afridi's claims saying the person caught was a police official deployed for security duty. The police said the official was detained and subjected to violence despite showing his police card. - APP

Pak extends airspace closure for Indian aircraft until Oct 24

Ban applies to all Indian-registered aircraft including military flights

KARACHI: The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has issued a new Notice to Airmen (NOTAM), extending the closure of Pakistani airspace to Indian flights till October 24. According to the NOTAM, the ban applies to all Indian-registered aircraft and aircraft operated or leased by Indian airlines/operators, including military flights. The airspace closure was initially imposed on April 23, 2025, and the latest notice marks the 17th NOTAM issued to extend the restriction. Islamabad banned Indian airlines from using its airspace in April last year after New Delhi suspended the Indus Waters Treaty following the deadly Pahalgam attack in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). India

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

Seoul top diplomat off to US

SEOUL: Seoul's top diplomat is set to meet his US counterpart in Washington this week, officials said Wednesday, with billions in deals and a possible Hormuz deployment on the agenda. Foreign Minister Cho Hyun is due to depart on Thursday for a trip that will run until Saturday, and includes talks with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Seoul's foreign ministry said. South Korea committed to \$350 billion in US investments under a deal struck last year to avoid the worst of President Donald Trump's tariffs, but specific projects and final terms were still being negotiated. Seoul is also weighing a possible military deployment to the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which has become a central point of contention in the war in Israel and the United States launched on Iran. Trump has heavily pressured ally South Korea to help, but Iran has warned Seoul to stay out of the key waterway. "The two sides will discuss a wide range of issues, including South Korea-US relations, the Korean Peninsula and regional and global issues," Seoul's foreign ministry said. - APP

UK to no longer stand by Israel

DUBAI: Britain will "no longer stand by" while Israel kills Palestinian children in Gaza, First Secretary of State Louise Haigh said on Tuesday, pledging to increase pressure on Tel Aviv over the war and illegal settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank. Speaking at the Trades Union Congress in Brighton, Haigh said Prime Minister Andy Starling was right to acknowledge that Britain had been "too slow" in its response to the situation in Gaza and the West Bank. "At a time when it has never been more important to remind the world who we are, we hesitated," Haigh said. "We will no longer stand by while innocent Palestinian families are torn apart, while innocent children are killed in Gaza, and while the hope of a two-state solution evaporates before our eyes," she added. Haigh said sanctions announced last week by Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband were intended to "change course," adding that Britain was "purposefully targeting the illegal settlements" and increasing pressure on the Israeli government. The measures include sanctions targeting individuals and companies linked to Israeli settlement expansion, as well as a ban on imports from settlements in the occupied West Bank. "The Israeli people are not responsible for the actions of their government," Haigh said. "We will stand against injustice. We will stand up for peace." She added that Britain would work with international partners to "speak with one voice" and help preserve the prospect of a two-state solution. - APP

Weapons dealer among 'JAAC-linked network' caught

Citing information obtained from his mobile phone and subsequent backtracking, Chaudhry said Zia was in contact with Majid, whom he said carried out special tasks for JAAC member Sardar Aman

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said authorities had traced a "network" allegedly linked to the proscribed Joint Action Committee (JAC), including a weapons dealer. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, the minister recalled the government's move to proscribe the JAC in Azad Jammu and Kashmir in June. He observed that many questions were raised, including whether the ban was a political decision. "At that time too, you were told that they were proscribed with great responsibility, based on the evidence that has reached us, investigation into which is underway and many things have surfaced," he said. The state minister went on to say that questions were raised about audio clips that surfaced on social media, allegedly linked to the JAC, and whether they were AI-generated. He then played a montage of news channels reporting on the situation in AJK in recent months, including incidents and footage that the authorities linked to JAC as well as attacks on security personnel. "Many of our critics continued to criticise these as well without knowing the facts," Chaudhry remarked. The state minister said a "network was captured" during an IBO, which began with tracing a person named Zia. He identified Zia as a resident of AJK who was "working as a weapons dealer for various people for the past eight to 10 years." "For the past two years, he has been directly supplying weapons to the closest members of JAC," the minister claimed. He said Zia was arrested during an IBO carried out after security forces were targeted in a firing incident in Kashmir. Citing information obtained from his mobile phone and subsequent backtracking, Chaudhry said Zia was in contact with Majid, whom he said carried out special tasks for JAC member Sardar Aman.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen toughens social media curbs

DNA

STRASBOURG: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen will on Wednesday unveil long-awaited plans to protect children from online harm by curbing access to social media, video-sharing platforms, games and AI chatbots for under-15s. A global backlash against social media has piled pressure on policymakers, with a rising body of evidence showing negative impacts on children's physical and mental health. Australia is last year became the world's first country to ban social media for under-16s, triggering a wave of similar moves elsewhere. Von der Leyen will use her annual keynote speech to the European Parliament to outline new EU legislation, which according to a draft document will set strict limits on access to social media, AI chatbots and online gaming for under-15s. Below that age, there would be a tiered system of access under parental supervision, and a ban on addictive design features such as so-called infinite scrolling where children are concerned. If platforms break the rules, they face fines of up to six percent of annual turnover, according to a second document seen by AFP. Among those listening in the grand chamber will be Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney whose country has



also moved to curb social media for under-16s. Von der Leyen has faced pressure from member states including France, Denmark and Greece for action across the 27-nation bloc. The commission's president and tech chief Henna Virkunen will formally present the proposed "EU KIDS Act" in Strasbourg, France, on Thursday. The EU has already told Meta platforms Facebook and Instagram as well as TikTok to change their "addictive" design through its content law known as the Digital Services Act, but Brussels believes existing rules are not sufficient to see the changes it wants. While the vast majority of EU states back stringent rules on platforms, dig-

ital and children's rights groups raise concerns over how the curbs will work in practice, as well as over a new age-check app the EU is preparing to roll out. "Age verification is not a silver bullet and would raise serious privacy and data protection concerns," said European consumer organisation BEUC's Agustín Reyna. Under the EU draft, children under 13 would only have access to "fully parent-controlled accounts on 'child-friendly' services" with strict safety standards. No access at all for children below the age of three. Ahead of her address, von der Leyen received competing appeals from children's rights groups, parents and Big Tech. Some 21 parent movements from across Europe called for an age limit of 16 until platforms are safe. Von der Leyen also had to consider a setback in France, where the government tried to ban social media for children under 15, only to be struck down by a top court on freedom of expression grounds. A reworked proposal was submitted this week.

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