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Govt keen to have enhanced relations with Turkey: Dar

Detailed News On Page-01

KP CM Sohail says province uplift priority

Detailed News On Page-02

Planning minister for investing in human capital

Detailed News On Page-02

Terrorists strike in KP

15 cops among 21 martyred in police lines blast

"The operation will continue until the complete elimination of Fitna-ul-Khawarij," the IG was quoted as saying, adding that the police's morale remained high

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR At least 21 people, including 15 police officials, were martyred on Friday when an explosive-laden vehicle detonated near a mosque in Kohat Police Lines, followed by terrorists storming the compound and attacking police facilities, according to senior police and district health officials. Footage aired on television showed citizens gathered next to a building with a collapsed wall, digging through rubble and helping the injured. The bomb attack caused severe damage to the mosque structure. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General (IG) Zulfiqar Hameed told that a vehicle-borne suicide bomber initially struck the building's gate, following which several attackers headed towards the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) building, where they were neutralised. Around three others tried to move towards the Special Branch building. The attack was claimed by the Hafiz Gul Bahadur-led Ittehadul Mujahideen. Meanwhile, the CTD said the Additional IG CTD had reached the site of the Kohat mosque blast, where an operation against the attackers was under way. An exchange of fire between CTD personnel and the terrorists was ongoing, the department said, adding that the Additional IG had entered the site himself to take part in the operation and lead the personnel. An initial handout from IG Hameed said the explosion occurred at a mosque at Kohat Police Lines. It added that initial reports suggested an explosive-laden vehicle was rammed into the building. In a later statement, he said that a suicide bomber detonated himself near the Special Branch building, adding that an exchange of fire was underway with Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists.

Continued on Page 06

10 India-sponsored militants killed in KP operations: ISPR

DNA

PESHAWAR Security forces killed 10 militants belonging to the India-sponsored Fitna al-Khawarij in multiple engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa between September 15 and 17, while six soldiers were martyred in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Thursday. According to the military's media wing, an intelligence-based operation was conducted in North Waziristan district following reports about the presence of militants in the area. During the operation, security forces effectively engaged the militants' position, killing six members of Fitna al-Khawarij after an intense exchange of fire, the ISPR said. In a separate encounter in Hangu district, security forces killed four more militants, bringing the total number of terrorists eliminated during the operations to 10. The ISPR said weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the militants killed during the operations. The militants, it added, had been actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area. Meanwhile, an IED exploded on a security forces convoy on September 17.

Continued on Page 06

Ishaq Dar meets UK, Turkiye envoys

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar @MShahid50. Discussions centered on Pakistan-UK relations, and the understandings reached during the DPM/PM's recent visit to the UK in August, aiming to further strengthen cooperation across areas of mutual interest. The DPM/PM underscored the importance of sustained high-level engagement, and also discussed regional and international developments of mutual interest. Meanwhile, Ambassador of Turkey, H.E. Irfan Nezirli, called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar @MShahid50. The Ambassador briefed the DPM/PM on progress under various bilateral institutional mechanisms aimed at advancing cooperation across a range of areas, following recent high-level interactions between Pakistan and Turkey.

Expensive petrol PTI MPs reach Sindh Assembly on donkey carts

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI PTI lawmakers in Sindh arrived at the provincial assembly on donkey carts — in protest. The ministers and treasury MPs should also reach the assembly the same way on donkey carts, PTI's Sajid Ali was seen saying a ride that showed him riding a donkey cart and holding a placard as he protested the "petrol bomb dropped on the people".

Other MPs, led by Ali, also held placards and raised slogans against the federal government over the recent increase in petrol prices. They rode donkey carts from areas near the assembly to its main gate and demanded the government withdraw the increase in petroleum prices immediately. Speaking on the occasion, Ali said that the protest was aimed at highlighting the plight of the common man due to skyrocketing fuel prices. "Petrol has become so expensive that we cannot even come to the assembly in our vehicles," he said, adding that the people were bearing the brunt of the government's policies. Renewed hostilities in the Middle East,



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott calls on DPM Ishaq Dar. — DNA

Brotherly connection

Pakistan will go 'to any extent' to defend Saudi Arabia, vows ISPR DG

Islamabad's commitment extends to Makkah and Madinah's protection, says Lt Gen Chaudhry

DNA

RAWALPINDI Pakistan's armed forces have pledged to go "to any extent" to defend Saudi Arabia, with the military's chief spokesperson saying Islamabad's commitment to the kingdom's security was "unconditional". "Pakistan fully stands with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, both diplomatically and physically," Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director-General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said in an interview with Arab News on Thursday.

His remarks come amid attacks by Yemen's Houthis militia on Saudi cities, as the spreading Middle East war created new threats to global oil supplies. Saudi Arabia's civil defence said a Yemeni living in Saudi Arabia had been killed by debris from a drone intercepted over the western city of Taif, the first death Riyadh has announced in repeated Houthi attacks since fighting escalated last week. It has previously said more than 80 people were wounded. The ISPR chief reiterated that Pakistan's commitment to Saudi Arabia extends to the protection of Makkah and Madinah, saying "we are present there to protect Haramain Sharifain".

"There should be no doubt on that," he said, adding that Pakistan will continue to defend Saudi Arabia against any aggression. Lt Gen Chaudhry maintained that Islamabad's commitment to the kingdom's security was "unconditional", saying "it stems from an emotive, deep-rooted, historical and unbreakable bond" between the two states. Discussing the regional situation and Pakistan's efforts for peace in the Middle East, the military's spokesperson said that Islamabad was in contact with regional states to seek "a negotiated and peaceful outcome" to the conflict. Pakistan emerged as a key mediator in the Middle East conflict after the US and Israel launched coordinated attacks against Iran on February 28. In response to the strikes, Tehran launched retaliatory attacks on US military bases in the Gulf and closed the Strait of Hormuz, while Hezbollah began attacking Israel. Washington and Tehran signed the Jerusalem Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in June after months of negotiations mediated and facilitated by Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06

Trump weighs renewed major attacks on Iran

DNA

WASHINGTON US President Donald Trump is weighing whether to resume large-scale military attacks on Iran as he approaches what he described as a major decision over the next phase of the war, Axios reported on Thursday. "I have a big decision coming up. Do I want to go in and annihilate them [the Iranian regime] or do I not? It's a big decision. Anything could happen with us," Trump told Axios in an interview. His comments come ahead of a

planned meeting on Tuesday with leaders from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Trump told Axios that he intends to use the meeting to hear directly from Gulf leaders about how they view the conflict and what should come next. "I want to find out where they are and how they are doing. We have been very protective of them," he said. According to Axios, the talks could help shape whether

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Court disposes of PTI leader plea

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday disposed of a petition filed on behalf of PTI leader Hamid Akhtar's mother and wife, seeking permission for them to meet the former federal minister, who is in police custody on physical remand in a May 9 case. ATC-IV Judge Sarfaraz Muhammad Akram Khan passed the order on September 17. The petition sought directions to the relevant authorities to allow the petitioners to meet Akhtar, who is confined in police lockup, and to grant him access to legal counsel. In his order, the judge noted that, when asked, the prosecution's counsel had no response regarding Rule 26.28 of the Police Rules, 1934 — the provision governing family and legal access to people in police custody.

IHC rules no party can occupy roads

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ruled that no political party has the lawful right to occupy public roads, highways, interchanges, toll plazas or buildings, in its detailed verdict on a petition against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) planned long marches to Islamabad on September 27. The 37-page verdict was issued by an IHC larger bench headed by Chief Justice Saqib Nisar and comprising Justices Muhammad Saifur Durrani and Justice Muhammad Ahsan Ali on Friday. "No political party, political leader, provincial government or public office holder has any lawful right to occupy any public roads, highways, interchanges, toll plazas, buildings or other such places within or leading to or out of the ICT.

Hafiz Naeem says JI's long march to reach Islamabad on Sept 23-24

Jama'at-e-Islami chief says people will begin arriving in federal from all four directions on September 20

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Jama'at-e-Islami (JI) chief Hafiz Naeem Rehman on Friday said that the party's march will reach Islamabad on September 23 and 24 and a train march will leave Karachi on September 20. Addressing a press conference in the federal capital, the JI chief said that people would begin arriving in Islamabad from all four directions on September 20, while during that the party would not block roads. "We are coming to get relief, not to lay hands on anyone," he said, adding that the government had been asked to grant permission for the protest. "Our only demand is to abolish the levy," he said, arguing that major political parties were not addressing the issues faced by ordinary Pakistanis. Rehman said that the government had agreed to demands during their negotiations but had not implemented them.

Continued on Page 06

Govt to stop anyone marching on Islamabad: Naqvi

MEHREZ PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Friday that the government would stop anyone from marching towards the federal capital "in every possible way" and file contempt of court proceedings against those who violated a recent Islamabad High Court (IHC) decision. He was addressing a press conference in Islamabad alongside other officials. The interior minister's remarks came in the wake of PTI's call for a nationwide protest, including in Islamabad, on September 27 to demand

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

Massive fraud in Foreign Office attestation branch

Prime Minister Ishaq Dar orders probe into Foreign Office Attestation Fraud

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has taken serious notice of media reports alleging billions of rupees worth of fraud in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' attestation branch. The reports suggested irregularities in the system responsible for issuing apostilles and document verifications, raising concerns about transparency and accountability in a process that directly affects citizens and businesses. In response, the Deputy Prime Minister directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a formal inquiry. A three-member committee has now been constituted to investigate the attestation system and identify loopholes that may have enabled malpractice. The committee comprises Federal Secretary Petroleum, Law and Finance. According to the official notification, the committee will be led by Secretary Petroleum Hamid Yaqoob Sheikh as convener. The other members include Secretary Law Raja Naeem Akbar and Special Secretary Finance Qasim Sarwar Abbasi. The committee has been tasked with conducting a thorough review of the attestation

procedures, examining financial records, and recommending reforms to prevent future irregularities. The move comes after widespread media coverage highlighted alleged corruption in the attestation branch, where applicants reportedly faced exploitation and unauthorised charges. The allegations suggested that fraudulent practices had been ongoing for years, potentially amounting to billions of rupees in losses. The Deputy Prime Minister's swift action reflects his government's commitment to accountability and institutional reform. Officials within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have acknowledged the seriousness of the matter, noting that document attestation is a critical service for Pakistanis seeking employment, education, or business opportunities abroad. Any compromise in this system undermines public trust and damages the country's international credibility. The inquiry committee is expected to submit its findings within a stipulated timeframe, after which further action will be taken against those found responsible. Political observers believe the probe will serve as a litmus test for the government's anti-corruption drive.

Continued on Page 06

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CM okayays housing scheme amendments

"Bringing unregistered housing schemes within the legal framework is the primary objective of extending the housing regulations," the chief minister said

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi chaired a meeting of the council of the Land Use and Building Control Authority (LUBCA), approving several measures aimed at regulating housing schemes, streamlining building approvals and curbing illegal construction activities. The chief minister approved a proposed amendment to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Housing Schemes Regulations 2024 and directed authorities to expedite the process of determining the legal status and granting approval to unimproved and illegal housing schemes. Afridi ordered that a cut-off date be fixed for registration applications

from all unregistered and illegal housing schemes. He directed that strict action be taken under the law against schemes that fail to submit applications within the prescribed period or do not fulfil the required conditions. "Bringing unregistered housing schemes within the legal framework is the primary objective of extending the housing regulations," the chief minister said. He also directed the authorities to develop a centralised system under LUBCA for the approval of building plans for all development authorities, except the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA). The chief minister asked officials to submit a final plan within two weeks on either integrating the development authorities or establishing a centralised system. He said an integrated and effective mechanism was essential for improving the performance of development authorities and ensuring transparency. The meeting also considered a proposal to create 21 new posts to enhance LUBCA's developmental capacity. Officials briefed the meeting on matters relating to the approval and renewal of the enlistment fee structure and the introduction of a uniform debris fee. The council gave its

in-principle approval to the proposed enlistment and renewal fee structure and uniform debris fee. A proposal to exempt residential building plans covering up to five marlas from the debris fee was also discussed. The chief minister directed that the matter be placed before the Finance Committee. The council decided to retain the existing revenue-sharing formula between LUBCA and the tehsil municipal administrations (TMAs). Under the current formula, LUBCA receives 25 percent of the revenue while TMAs receive 75 percent, according to the briefing. The council also approved LUBCA's revised budget for fiscal year 2025-26 and its budget for 2026-27. The chief minister directed the formation of a Finance Committee under the council, which will make final recommendations on matters involving financial implications. Afridi said preventing illegal construction, promoting sustainable development and strengthening TMAs were simultaneously necessary. He stressed that effective enforcement of relevant laws and serious measures were essential to achieve the desired results.

Ashrafi honoured with Global Peace Award

ISLAMABAD: The Church of Pakistan has honoured Chairman of the Pakistan Ulama Council and Coordinator of the National Paigham-e-Annam Committee, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, with the "Global Peace Award" in recognition of his services for peace, interfaith harmony and religious tolerance. President of the Church of Pakistan, Bishop Azad Marshall presented the award to Mr Ashrafi at an investiture ceremony in Lahore, appreciating his long-standing efforts to promote peace, religious harmony and dialogue across the country, said a press release. Bishop Azad Marshall said Ashrafi had made sustained efforts for the protection of the rights of non-Muslim citizens living in Pakistan and for promoting dialogue and harmony among followers of different religions. He said Ashrafi's national and international role in advancing interfaith harmony and peace was commendable and worthy of appreciation by Pakistanis and all those committed to peace. Receiving the award, Ashrafi expressed his gratitude to the Church of Pakistan and Bishop Azad Marshall, saying that under Bishop Marshall's leadership, the Church of Pakistan had been playing an important role, in cooperation with leaders of different faiths and Muslim schools of thought, in promoting peace, national security and Pakistan's stability. Ashrafi said the joint efforts of Muslim and non-Muslim religious leadership through the National Paigham-e-Annam Committee would further strengthen peace, interfaith and intra-faith harmony and national unity in Pakistan. Threading the Church of Pakistan for the Global Peace Award, Ashrafi reaffirmed his commitment to continuing efforts for peace, dialogue, religious harmony and the protection of the legitimate rights of all Pakistanis.—APP

Khichi pledges federal support for Balochistan's uplift

QUETTA: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to extend full support to the provincial government in ensuring the development and prosperity of Balochistan. Speaking at the conclusion of the High-Level Consultative Session on Regional Realities, Regulatory Environment, and Strategic Alignment, hosted by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) in collaboration with CoE-CVE Balochistan, Khichi said his ministry would serve as a helping hand for NGOs and civil society organisations, assisting development bodies in their efforts to uplift the province. He emphasised that the federal government's determination to showcase the talent of local artists on international platforms, offering institu-

tions such as Lok Virsa and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) to promote cultural heritage globally. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi praised the role of NGOs and civil society in supporting provincial initiatives, noting that their contributions are vital to complement government efforts. He lauded the provincial government under Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti for working tirelessly for the welfare of the people of Balochistan while simultaneously countering terrorism. Highlighting education initiatives, the Minister said the Prime Minister has announced the establishment of 10 Danish Schools across various districts of Balochistan. Construction work is underway on six schools, while the PC-1 for the remaining four is in the final stages. These institutions aim to provide quality edu-

cation to students in remote areas. Aurangzeb Khichi further revealed that the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture has allocated 48 percent of its budget for 2025-27 budget for development projects in Balochistan. He vowed to include the Mehrghar Civilization, located on the Kachi Plain near the Bolan Pass, in the UNESCO World Heritage List by next year. "Mehrghar, dating back 9,000 to 11,000 years, is one of the world's oldest civilisations and deserves global recognition," he said. He added that the federal government, in collaboration with the provincial administration, plans to restore heritage sites across Balochistan to preserve the province's rich cultural heritage. "Pakistan is a land of immense diversity," he remarked, reiterating—DNA

Punjab CM opens Lahore Auto Show

Prominent brands, including Suzuki, Kia, GAC, Chery, Saggar, BYD, G-Tour, Hyundai and Honda, have set up stalls displaying cars, motorcycles, electric and semi-electric vehicles and locally manufactured auto parts.

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Friday inaugurated the Pakistan International Auto Show 2026 at the Expo Centre Lahore, formally launching the three-day event featuring leading local and international automobile companies. The chief minister held an informal meeting with industrialists associated with the automobile industry and appreciated their contribution to national economic development. She said the automotive industry was an important sector of industrial development, investment and employment, adding that the Punjab government was committed to promoting local production, investment, technology and innovation. She said the auto show would help promote business linkages, investment and technology transfer. Representatives of the electric vehicle and tractor manufacturing industries appreciated the Green Taxi, CM Bike and Green Tractor schemes. They said the initiatives had supported local manufacturing and provided a boost to the tractor and electric vehicle sectors. After the inauguration, the chief minister visited various stalls, inspected electric vehicles and showed keen interest in an electric ambulance. She also examined the latest vehicles, bikes and generators, inspected Suzuki's biogas model and interacted with foreign experts at Honda, Suzuki and other stalls. Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated the quality of "Made in Pakistan" products. PAFPM Chairman Usman Aslam Malik, Chief Organizer Syed Nabeel Hashmi and others briefed her about the exhibition. The auto show is being held in four halls of the Expo Centre with 120 exhibitors, including 44 international and 63 local exhibitors. Prominent brands, including Suzuki, Kia, GAC, Chery, Saggar, BYD, G-Tour, Hyundai and Honda, have set up stalls displaying cars, motorcycles, electric and semi-electric vehicles and locally manufactured auto parts.—APP

CDA to auction prime hotel plots on Sep 26

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is opening an important new chapter in Islamabad's hospitality and investment landscape with the open auction of five prime hotel plots on September 26, 2026. The auction will be held at 10:00 am at Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad, offering investors a rare opportunity to secure strategically located sites in one of Pakistan's most prominent and internationally recognised cities. At a time when Islamabad is gaining increased international visibility through high level diplomacy, peace initiatives, international engagements, business activity and tourism, CDA is inviting investors to participate in the development of the capital's next generation of hotels and hospitality facilities. The auction is not simply about acquiring land. It is an opportunity to invest in Islamabad's future. Islamabad has increasingly emerged as a venue for high level diplomatic engagement and international dialogue. The capital hosted negotiations between the United States and Iran in April 2026 as part of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to facilitate dialogue and peace. Pakistan subsequently welcomed the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding in June 2026. Such engagements have further highlighted Islamabad's capacity to host senior international delegations, diplomatic missions, business leaders and major international events. Set against the magnificent Margalla Hills, enriched by extensive greenery and

open spaces and distinguished by its planned urban environment, Islamabad offers a rare combination of natural beauty, tranquillity, modern infrastructure and the dignity of a national capital. For visitors arriving from around the country and the world, Islamabad provides an experience where diplomacy meets nature, business meets leisure, and modernity meets tranquillity. Above all, visitors experience the warmth and hospitality of the people of Pakistan. The objective is to encourage private-sector investment in hospitality infrastructure capable of serving international delegations, diplomats, business executives, sports and recreation participants, tourists, families and leisure travellers. The investment opportunity is there more much larger than the development of individual hotel properties. It is about helping build the infrastructure of a city that is increasingly connected with the international diplomatic, business, tourism and conference community. CDA is also committed to facilitating investors regarding electricity-line shifting, sewerage upgradation, land clearance and other allied services. Hotels, resorts, restaurants, conference centres and mixed-use hospitality projects can help Islamabad welcome more visitors, host larger international events and strengthen its position as a destination for diplomacy, business, conferences, tourism and leisure. CDA invites investors to come forward and be part of the transformation of Islamabad into an even more welcoming, internationally connected and hospitality friendly capital.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Irfan Davudov paid a courtesy visit to Alisher Tukhtayev, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan. —DNA

Textile export increases 5.55%

ISLAMABAD: Textile exports witnessed an increase of 5.55 per cent during the first two months of the current financial year (2026-27) as compared to the same months of last year. The textile exports from the country were recorded at US \$3,279 billion during July-August (2025-26), according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The textile commodities that contributed in trade growth included cotton yarn, the export of which increased by 34.80 percent to \$169.679 million from \$118.195 million, while knitwear export surged by 4.79 percent to \$1,004 million from \$958.634 million. The other commodities that witnessed growth in trade included towels, the export of which rose by 6.74 percent to \$191.135 million from \$178.063 million, ready-made garments up by 13.59 percent to \$827.001 million from \$728.068 million, made up articles (knit towels and bed wear) increased by 6.95 percent to \$146.032 million from \$136.540 million, and the export of other textile materials surged by 3.91 percent to \$133.153 million from \$128.140 million.—APP

Kundi expresses deep sorrow on martyrs, injured in Kohat blast

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffer Khan Mandokhel expressed deep sorrow over the martyrs and injured in the explosion at Kohat's Old Police Lines. In a condemnatory statement, he said that the end of the

mentality based on terror and horror has become inevitable, for this purpose, we have to demonstrate national unity and consensus, with joint efforts, we could crush the evil intentions of terrorists and saboteurs.

Governor Mandokhel prayed for the forgiveness of the martyrs and the speedy recovery of the injured in the Kohat explosion and also expressed solidarity and sympathy with the bereaved families and the injured.

Aleem orders completion work on M-4 by Dec 15

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to accelerate work on the Pindi Bhatian-Faisalabad section of M-4 Motorway and complete its expansion from four to six lanes by December 15. Chairing a high-level meeting on development projects in the NHA Central Region, the minister reviewed progress on various ongoing motorway and national highway schemes and issued directives for their timely completion, said a press release. The meeting reviewed progress on several ongoing projects on Motorways and National Highways and took important decisions to accelerate construction activities and ensure timely completion of the projects. The meeting was briefed on

the progress of the project to expand the Pindi Bhatian-Faisalabad Motorway M-4 from 4 to 6 lanes. Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan directed that work on the project be further accelerated and instructed the authorities to ensure completion of the scheme work on M-4 by December 15 under all circumstances. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan said that construction work on the Lodhran-Multan Expressway was also progressing rapidly and would provide significant relief to the people of South Punjab. He directed that all ongoing projects in the NHA Central Region be completed according to the prescribed targets. Federal Minister also directed that preliminary work on the Lala Musa Bypass on National Highway 165 (GT Road) be expedited. He said that work on the rehabilitation

project of Baba Farid Bridge over the River Sutlej would also commence soon, while progress would be ensured on projects aimed at connecting the Layyah and Deraa bridges with the adjoining highways in South Punjab. Abdul Aleem Khan directed the Authorities to ensure the best possible and high-quality construction of the Flood Nagar Interchange on N-5, stressing that modern requirements must be kept in view while developing new infrastructure to provide better and safer travel facilities to the public. He further directed that new highways should be equipped with modern lighting, quality infrastructure and well-developed rest areas. He said that there would be no compromise on the quality of new construction projects and that the Islamabad-Murree Expressway should be adopted as a model for infrastructure development. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan made it clear that every single penny of public expenditure would be accounted for and that national resources would not be allowed to go to waste.—DNA

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National
Days and
Armed
Forces Days

SEPTEMBER

Sept 01/Libya
Revolution Day

Sept 01/Tanzania
Independence 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 445122

Motorway Police 92760020

Motorway Police 92760020

Women Police Stations

Islamabad...922596

Rawalpindi...92760020

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance...115

PIA Flight Info...115

PIA Cargo...9280979

Railway Inquiry...117

Railway Exchange 92708316

WASA Rawalpindi 5555489

CAA...9281092

Hospitals

CMH...5611111

MHL...561116

Cant Hospital...927600711

DHQ...55563114

RGH...9280301

Holy Family...92903227

PIMS...926117079

Polyclinic...921830049

Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CTA...922133443

CTA...920830104

Met Office...92503606

RTA...5555864

TMA...5770886

Contentment Board 9270153

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation...9209224

Potohar Town...9209224

Rural Town...5773443

Water Tank

Islamabad...0321-5744480

US
Embassy completes
Steam Builder program

Celebrating innovation across Pakistan's Lincoln corners network

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Embassy in Pakistan's celebrated program participants and trainers at Lincoln Corner Islamabad to mark the completion of the "STEAM Builder" program, a flagship initiative that trained more than 100 participants in 3D printing, coding, and digital modeling. The ceremony featured participants from six Lincoln Corners across Pakistan, underscoring the reach and impact of this nationwide skills-building effort rooted in American excellence in technology and innovation.

Delivered in close collaboration with the Pakistani technology firm An Corps, the STEAM Builder program gave participants hands-on experience with cutting-edge tools and equipped a new generation of Pakistani innovators to compete in the rapidly evolving digital economy.

In his remarks at the closing ceremony, Acting Minister for Public Diplomacy David Moyer said, "STEAM Builder is more than a training program. It is a statement about Lincoln Corners serving as hubs of technology, creativity, and opportunity where

Pakistan's rising STEAM talent gains tools and skills drawing upon American technology and educational models that fuel innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth."

Looking ahead, the Lincoln Corners network, consisting of 15 locations across the country, will build on this momentum with an expanded slate of STEAM-focused programming in 2027, which will mark the 80th anniversary of U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relations.

Shariah-compliant
digital
financing
for small
businesses

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Friday approved Shaamil Tajir, a digital application offering Shariah-compliant financing of up to Rs3 million to eligible small businesses. Developed by SECP-licensed Shaamil Financial Services, the application will enable microentrepreneurs to purchase inventory from approved suppliers through a simpler and faster digital process, said a news release. The initiative aims to bring under-served businesses into the formal credit system and help them expand their operations. "Technology-enabled financing can expand access to formal credit for underserved businesses," SECP Chairman Dr. Kabir Ahmed Siddiq said, adding that the commission would facilitate responsible digital financing while ensuring regulatory oversight and consumer protection.

The approval supports the federal government's access to finance agenda for SMEs and other priority sectors. Between July 2025 and June 2026, licensed lending NBFCs provided approximately Rs253 billion through 2.5 million loans to micro, small and medium enterprises—APP

IRSA releases
223,900
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 223,900 cusecs of water from various stations with an inflow of 195,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1540.38 feet, which was 138.38 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 108,000 cusecs and 185,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1218.90 feet, which was 168.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 20,200 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Tarbela, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 165,100, 132,800, 106,500, and 45,000 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 19,400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 19,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala—APP

Ahsan stresses human capital
to drive future exports

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday emphasized the need for Pakistan to develop human resources and design capabilities in chip designing and other advanced technologies to build the foundations of a modern, export-oriented economy. Addressing an event organized by Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology (GIKI), the minister said that semiconductor chips are the heart of virtually every modern device, from mobile phones and laptops to vehicles, sophisticated machinery and small equipment. "This is the capability on which the modern economy is based," he said, stressing that Pakistan had lagged behind in the sector but could still establish its ecosystem by investing in human resources and developing capabilities. The minister said the first building block for developing any new technological ecosystem was skilled human capital capable of designing and developing advanced technologies. He welcomed the participation of around 160 trainees in the program, including approximately 46 women, saying that it was encouraging to see Pakistani women preparing to play a meaningful role in modern technological life.

expressed the hope that some trainees would establish small chip-design laboratories, while others would find employment with international companies and, eventually, build billion-dollar technology companies. The minister said the modern value chain was no longer limited to acquiring knowledge or education, but required the ability to transform knowledge into technology, technology into products and products into commercially viable businesses. He observed that in the past, exports were largely associated with physical goods transported through containers, whereas the future economy would increasingly be driven by intellectual property, knowledge and knowledge-based products. The trainees to emerge from the program as technology entrepreneurs capable of converting their skills into intellectual property, commercially successful products and businesses could contribute to Pakistan's economic development, he added. Recalling his earlier association with the vision behind the GIKI, the minister said he had witnessed how an ambitious institutional concept could ultimately be transformed into reality. He said the institute had developed into a major engineering institution and was contributing highly trained human re-

sources to Pakistan. Referring to Pakistan's economic and technological history, the minister said the country had been regarded as a rising star internationally during the 1960s and 1970s, but had gradually fallen behind other nations. He stressed the importance of national self-reliance and said the way an individual or nation viewed itself could affect its sense of self-esteem and its ability to move forward. The minister also discussed the changing nature of power in the modern world, saying that influence was no longer confined to military strength but also involved the ability to shape how people think and perceive the world. He said education should develop questioning, higher-order thinking and collective capabilities rather than merely produce individuals trained within existing structures. The minister emphasized the need for an education system that would develop critical thinking and collective competence, enabling young Pakistanis to undertake technological opportunities and contribute to national development. Minister Iqbal said that investment in advanced technological skills, entrepreneurship, intellectual property and exports would be important for Pakistan as it sought to strengthen its position in the emerging knowledge economy.

NDMA sets urban
flood resilience
plan by 2027

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Friday convened a seminar to address recurring urban flooding and identify structural and institutional measures to strengthen the resilience of Pakistan's cities before June 2027, bringing together government departments, development authorities, urban planners, water management experts and other stakeholders at the National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC). The seminar, titled "Urban Flood Resilience Measures—Vision 2027: Beyond the Rains and Floods," examined the urban flooding experienced during 2025-26, focusing on flood-prone areas, valuable infrastructure, drainage capacity and gaps in stormwater management and institutional coordination. Participants stressed that urban flooding could not be tackled through rainfall management alone and called for a broader approach covering drainage capacity, urban development, infrastructure maintenance, stormwater management and coordinated emergency preparedness. The discussions reviewed the condition and capacity of existing drainage networks, stormwater runoff, retention and pumping arrangements, deterioration of drainage infrastructure and the need to restore natural drainage corridors. The participants also identified priority interventions to be completed before June 2027, including improved drainage maintenance and preparedness, enhanced stormwater management and drainage capacity, protection of natural waterways and integration of flood resilience measures into urban planning and development. The seminar brought together representatives of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), Lahore Development Authority (LDA) and other development authorities and partner organizations to identify institutional responsibilities and areas requiring coordinated action. In his closing remarks, Chairman NDMA Lt. Gen. Iqbal Malik, HI (M), called for a proactive and coordinated approach to urban flood management, with greater emphasis on preparedness, resilient infrastructure, institutional ownership and timely implementation of identified measures. He stressed the need to move beyond a reactive response to rainfall and flooding towards sustained, long-term planning to make Pakistan's urban centres more resilient. The seminar concluded with an emphasis on coordinated follow-up and practical interventions under the Vision 2027 framework to reduce recurrent urban flood risks. APP

SPI-based
inflation
rises 0.49pc

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI)-based weekly inflation increased by 0.49 percent during the week ended on September 17, 2026, for the combined consumption group, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported here Friday. According to PBS data, the SPI for the week rose to 368.05 points from 364.26 points recorded in the previous week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 10.64 percent. The SPI for the week rose to 368.05 points from 364.26 points recorded in the previous week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 10.64 percent. The SPI for the week rose to 368.05 points from 364.26 points recorded in the previous week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 10.64 percent.

changes. On a week-on-week basis, the items that witnessed an increase in prices included diesel, which rose by 7.29 percent, followed by petrol 6.40 percent, LPG 3.26 percent, garlic 1.94 percent, eggs 1.72 percent, pulses 0.89 percent, plain bread 0.74 percent, pulse masoor 0.49 percent, mustard oil 0.44 percent, pulse moong 0.39 percent, mutton 0.26 percent and ground 0.07 percent. On the other hand, the prices of bananas decreased by 8.17 percent, followed by tomatoes 5.66 percent, onions 4.57 percent, chicken 2.53 percent, powdered milk 0.40 percent, whole wheat flour 0.28 percent, rice IRI 4/9 0.16 percent and sugar 0.14 percent. On a year-on-year basis, major increases were observed in the prices of diesel (12.77 percent), LPG (60.42 percent), diesel (54.21 percent), petrol (48.00 percent), electricity for Q1 (33.54 percent) and wheat flour (33.27 percent). A decrease was observed in the prices of potatoes (35.31%), sugar (20.95%), eggs (19.31%), chicken (15.26%), salt powder (13.96%), pulses gram (12.42%), pulse masoor (11.26%) and pulse moong (8.49%).

DIG orders action against
vehicle theft, robbery gangs

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad Ali Waheed directed the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) to intensify action against active gangs involved in car and motor cycle theft and street robberies across the federal capital. An official told media on Friday that the DIG issued the directions during a visit to the CIA, where he inspected the record room, looked up other sections and reviewed the unit's overall performance and investigation work. During the visit, Ali Waheed held an introductory meeting with CIA In-charge Brigadier Nadeem Shah, the in-charge of the Anti-Vehicle Lifting Unit (AVLU) and investigation officers. The DIG directed officers to ensure the arrest of proclaimed offenders and criminals with previous records and make operations against criminal elements more effective—APP

24m Pakistanis benefit from PM
fuel relief package: Tariq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Tariq Faiz Chaudhry on Friday said around 24 million Pakistanis were benefiting from the Prime Minister's petrol relief package, under which eligible consumers were being provided fuel at Rs 100 per litre lower than the prevailing price. Addressing a press conference, the minister said the package was aimed at providing relief to people facing difficulties due to rising living costs, particularly those using motorcycles, rickshaws, Qinqi vehicles, loaders and cars up to 800cc. He said eligible consumers could use the subsidy, with the relief amounting to Rs 100 per litre. Tariq Faiz said the registration process had been kept simple and transparent, enabling eligible citizens to apply through their mobile phones. After successful registration, applicants receive a token or reference number which can be used at designated petrol stations to obtain the subsidized fuel. He said the SMS service for registration had also been made free on the Prime Minister's direction, removing the charges initially associated with the service. He said the government had also established facilitation camps on a voluntary basis across the four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Islamabad to assist people facing difficulties in registration or receiving the relief. He said parliamentarians and political leaders were assisting citizens through these camps, adding that several such camps had also been established at different locations in the capital. Chaudhry said he had personally visited several facilitation camps in the capital, where a large number of motorcycle users and people operating small vehicles for public

transport and livelihood had approached the teams. He said their feedback and complaints were being conveyed directly to the teams supervising the package. He said the Finance Ministry and other relevant departments were working on implementation of the package under the Prime Minister's direct supervision, while a committee was reviewing the implementation and issues on a daily basis. He said some initial issues had emerged in the implementation of the scheme, particularly regarding the payment mechanism for petrol station owners, but these had been resolved after meetings with the All Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association. Giving details of payments, the minister said data collected from Islamabad and surrounding areas showed that 865 petrol stations had provided their details, while payments amounting to Rs 122 million had already been made to petrol stations. He said the government's decision to target specific segments was intended to ensure that the subsidy reached people who needed it most rather than providing a blanket subsidy to all consumers. "By the subsidy is provided to everyone, segments of society that may not need it would also benefit," he said, adding that motorcycle rickshaw and small vehicle operators relied on their vehicles for their livelihood and household expenses. The minister said the government was also taking initiatives to ensure that the subsidy reached people who needed it most rather than providing a blanket subsidy to all consumers. "By the subsidy is provided to everyone, segments of society that may not need it would also benefit," he said, adding that motorcycle rickshaw and small vehicle operators relied on their vehicles for their livelihood and household expenses. The minister said the government was also taking initiatives to ensure that the subsidy reached people who needed it most rather than providing a blanket subsidy to all consumers.

Beverage industry
may drive broader
economic recovery

ISLAMABAD: Beverage industry has the potential to drive broader economic recovery in the country, Dr. Faisal Hashmi, Senior Director The Coca-Cola Company and Chairman of the Beverages Advisory Foundation said in his address at the Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit 2026, held on Friday. The event brought together top corporate leaders, policymakers, and economic experts to deliberate on strategies for sustaining economic stabilization and industrial growth. Dr. Hashmi noted, "We have seen a few misfires from the government, and we are thankful for these great efforts. We have been working with other industries to support the stabilization of the economy." Emphasizing the private sector's role in long-term growth, he said that the beverage industry alone has invested around \$3 billion over recent years. "Elaborating further on the sector's potential," Dr. Hashmi later noted that the vast, untapped growth capacity of Pakistan's beverage industry is a key contributor to the broader economic recovery. He stressed that providing a level playing field and an equitable, business-friendly tax regime are established, the sector can expand its economic footprint significantly through transparent tax compliance, high-quality production standards, and large-scale investment in responsible packaging, global investors will view Pakistan's high-density market far more favorably, opening doors to much-needed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Strengthened FDI and sustainable growth in the beverage sector will, in turn, enable industry leaders to reinvest meaningfully into local communities through social impact initiatives, environmental stewardship programs, and youth development, ensuring economic growth translates into lasting community progress," he added. Dr. Hashmi advocated for a balanced fiscal policy that incentivizes compliant, formal market players while bringing the large informal sector under regulatory oversight and the tax net. Documenting and regulating informal operators, he noted, would not only widen the national tax base and safeguard consumer health through standardized quality controls, but also send a strong, positive signal to global markets and investors—APP

Briefs

DIG reviews operations against criminals

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad Ali Waseem visited the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Headquarters and Crime Investigation Agency (CIA), reviewing their performance, professional matters and ongoing operations against criminal elements in the federal capital.

An official told APP on Friday that during the visit to CTD Headquarters, SSP CTD Sand Khan gave the DIG Ali a detailed briefing on the department's working, professional matters and various operational measures. Ali directed CTD officers to further improve operations through an effective strategy and perform their professional responsibilities with dedication and efficiency. During his visit to the CIA, the DIG Ali inspected the record room, lockup and other sections. He also held an introductory meeting with CIA in-charge DSP Suleman Shah, the in-charge of the Anti-Vehicle Lifting Unit (AVLU) and investigation officers. The meeting reviewed the CIA's overall performance, investigation work and ongoing operations against criminal elements. The DIG Ali directed officers to launch effective and result-oriented action against active gangs involved in car and motorcycle theft and street robberies. He also ordered the preparation of lists of proclaimed offenders with previous criminal records and directed officers to ensure their arrest. Ali called for strong action against those involved in the buying and selling of stolen cars, motorcycles and their parts. He directed all officers to perform their duties with integrity, honesty and responsibility and ensure timely and effective police services for citizens.

The DIG Ali warned that officers found involved in negligence, carelessness or corruption would face departmental action as well as legal proceedings in accordance with law.

Zamurd lauds Alkhidmat Hospital's affordable healthcare services

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Street Home Chairman Zamurd Khan visited Alkhidmat Razi Hospital Rawalpindi and praised Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan for providing quality healthcare services to deserving people at affordable rates. He was accompanied by Alkhidmat Foundation Chairman and All Parties Hurriyat Conference Jamna and Kashmir Executive Member Altaf Ahmed Bhat, said a press release here. Alkhidmat Razi Hospital Management Board Chairman Engineer Abu Usaid Zahid, Vice Chairman Syed Arshad Farooq and other board members welcomed the guests. Zahid briefed them on the hospital's welfare-based healthcare model. He said thousands of patients were being provided modern medical facilities at highly subsidised rates, while deserving patients received free treatment with the support of philanthropists. He said the hospital's services were being provided with the sole aim of serving humanity and seeding the pleasure of Allah Almighty. Altaf Ahmed Bhat appreciated the hospital's commitment to serving people without discrimination. He said the hospital had remained true to its vision of ensuring that no person was denied medical treatment due to a lack of financial resources. Zamurd Khan expressed satisfaction over the quality of facilities being provided to patients and appreciated the tireless efforts of the hospital management. He paid tribute to the administration for its selfless service to humanity and assured it of his full support in advancing the hospital's welfare mission. At the end of the visit, commemorative shields were presented to the guests. —APP

Federal secy directs faster completion of autism centre

The federal secretary reiterated that timely completion and operationalisation of the centre remained a priority and directed all relevant authorities to complete the necessary arrangements within the stipulated timelines.

ISLAMABAD: Secretary for Federal Education and Professional Training Nadeem Mahbub on Friday reviewed progress on the under construction Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Islamabad and directed concerned authorities to accelerate work, remove implementation bottlenecks and ensure the facility is operationalised within the committed timelines. During his visit to the construction and renovation site, the federal secretary received a detailed briefing on the project's physical progress, implementation schedule, outstanding works, human resource planning and overall operational preparedness. He reviewed ongoing construction and renovation activities and directed all concerned teams and stakeholders to expedite implementation while maintaining strict standards of quality, safety and accessibility. Nadeem Mahbub also called for close coordination among relevant authorities to identify and resolve emerging bottlenecks, stressing effective communication and stronger inter-agency collaboration to keep the project on schedule. The



Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorder is being established as a flagship federal initiative under the directions of the Prime Minister to strengthen special and

inclusive education through an integrated, multidisciplinary system. The centre will provide specialised assessment and educational services, speech, occupational and behavioural therapies, rehabilitation, life skills development, research and professional capacity-building opportunities, parent counselling and family support, vocational training and other multidisciplinary services. The facility is being designed around autism friendly, accessible and low stimulation environments, with specialised classrooms, therapy and sensory rooms, assessment facilities, counselling areas, life skills development spaces and secure therapeutic outdoor areas. The purpose-built centre is aimed at providing a safe and supportive environment for children with autism and their families while strengthening the country's special education framework and expanding access to specialised support services. The federal secretary reiterated that timely completion and operationalisation of the centre remained a priority and directed all relevant authorities to complete the necessary arrangements within the stipulated time-lines. —DNA

Turkish varsities' delegation visit MUST to foster academic ties

The session provided an opportunity to exchange perspectives on strengthening academic and research linkages, advancing faculty and student mobility, and pursuing joint initiatives. The discussions also explored areas for building deeper and more enduring institutional partnerships between NUST and leading Turkish universities.

ISLAMABAD: National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) welcomed a high-level 18-member delegation from Turkey. The delegates included Vice Chancellors and Rectors of leading Turkish universities and senior officials of the Council of Higher Education of Turkey (COHE). H.E. Irfan Neziroglu, Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, was also present at the occasion, said a press release on Friday. Welcoming the distinguished guests, Rector NUST Dr Muhammad Zahid Latif highlighted the importance of

further strengthening institutional linkages between Pakistan and Turkey and advancing meaningful partnerships across areas of mutual interest. The session provided an opportunity to exchange perspectives on strengthening academic and research linkages, advancing faculty and student mobility, and pursuing joint initiatives. The discussions also explored areas for building deeper and more enduring institutional partnerships between NUST and leading Turkish universities. The visit also

featured a guided tour of H-12 campus, with the delegation visiting the National Science & Technology Park (NSTP), School of Interdisciplinary Engineering & Sciences (SINES), Center for Emerging Technologies (CENTECH), and the all-inclusive sports complex. The visit reflects the strong bond between NUST and Turkish higher education institutions. It also provided a valuable platform for continued dialogue and the development of meaningful, long-term partnerships between the two countries. —APP

Naqvi condemns Kohat blast

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohi-ud-Din Naqvi on Friday strongly condemned the explosion near the Old Police Line in Kohat and expressed grief over the loss of precious human lives in the incident. The minister said he was deeply saddened

by the deaths caused by the blast and extended his condolences and sympathy to the families of those who lost their lives. He said the government stands with the families of the victims during this difficult time and shares their grief. Mohi-ud-Din Naqvi also prayed for the early recovery of those injured in the explosion

and expressed hope that they would regain their health soon. The interior minister said the nation stands united with the affected families and will continue to support them in this hour of sorrow. He paid tribute to the brave police officers and conveyed his heartfelt sympathies to their relatives. Commenting on the incident, Mohi-

AI comes to help smallholder farmers

ISLAMABAD: An Artificial Intelligence (AI) platform in the United States, Agrinetic has announced the introduction of its Disease Intelligence Engine (DIE) for South Asia to help smallholder farmers better understand the risk of disease in crops. The aim of this South Asia initiative is to put useful disease-related information directly into the hands of farmers who generally have limited access to modern agricultural services and early warning systems, said a press release. The Disease Intelligence Engine also helps agricultural experts, agricultural retailers and industry organisations to make more informed decisions. In the first phase, the focus is on bringing advanced crop disease technology within the reach of smallholder farmers. Agrinetic is working with a team based in the region to develop and bring a mobile application to the market. The application is being developed according to the crops, disease risks, farming practices and language requirements of the region. Smallholder farmers are an important part of regional agriculture and global food security. They produce food for their families, their communities and larger supply chains but when facing disease, they have fewer technical, financial and advisory resources available to them compared with larger farms, says a press release. "Historically, the farmers who could benefit the most from timely information about disease have been the ones with the least access to this information," said Scott Plato, Director, Agronomy Innovation and Technology. "Our aim is to change this situation by making this technology practical, affordable and accessible to smallholder farmers." The other purpose of this technology is to help farmers identify potential disease risks earlier, prioritize field inspections and make more informed decisions regarding crop protection. "We are not taking a product built for large-scale agriculture and simply placing it directly into a new market," Plato said. "We are also working with people in the region to shape this experience naturally around the needs of local farmers, crops and rural communities." Agrinetic expects the mobile application to support locally important crops and diseases and, through a simple digital platform, provide disease risk alerts, field-level information and practical decision-making support for farmers. The company is also considering opportunities for collaboration with agricultural retailers, processors, exporters, cooperative organizations, spraying service providers and other organizations that support smallholder farmers. The local team will support product development, adaptation to local needs, field testing, engagement with farmers and commercial launch. Agrinetic believes that this local partnership approach will be very important to ensure that the technology proves relevant, reliable and usable in everyday farming decisions. —APP

Better Public services, road management ordered

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry visited the Traffic Police Headquarters and directed officers to further improve driving license facilities, traffic management and other services for citizens. An official told media on Friday that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Khairul Karim Khan briefed the IGP Sohail on the overall performance of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP), its operational matters and working of different sections. The IGP Sohail directed traffic police to further improve the provision of driving licenses and other traffic-related facilities and strengthen citizen-friendly policing. He said enforcement of traffic laws should go hand in hand with continued public awareness, adding that smooth traffic flow, public convenience and road safety remained among the top priorities. Sohail directed traffic officers and personnel to maintain professional conduct and discipline while performing their duties and continue measures to make Islamabad's traffic system more organized and effective. He said protection of citizens' lives and property, enforcement of traffic laws and provision of better public facilities remained key priorities of Islamabad Police. —APP

Alibaba, Pakistan Post agree to automate sorting centres

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Post Office Department (PPOD) and Alibaba Group have agreed to automate parcel sorting at Pakistan Post as part of a government-backed drive to modernise postal operations, improve technology-based services and upgrade postal infrastructure, with the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication leading the collaboration under the prime minister's directives. According to an official document available with Wealth Pakistan, PPOD and Alibaba Group have agreed on the automation of PPOD sorting centres. The initiative is part of a broader drive by Pakistan Post to modernise its operations and expand technology-based services. Pakistan Post is also implementing the prime minister's e-commerce initiative, with the Ministry of Finance serving as the lead ministry. —APP

CDNS to mobilize Rs 60b thru Islamic bonds

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has set a target of Rs60 billion for mobilization through Islamic finance bonds during fiscal year 2026-27, as it moves to further expand Shariah-compliant investment products in the country. The target has been set after the CDNS mobilized Rs41 billion through Islamic investment products in the first 11 months of FY2025-26, against the annual target of Rs65 billion. A senior CDNS official said the higher mobilization re-

flected increasing demand for interest-free investment options among individual and institutional investors. The official said the CDNS had given greater attention to Islamic finance during the current fiscal year, with the response from investors encouraging the institution to further expand its Shariah-compliant offerings. Islamic bonds and Shariah-compliant savings certificates have emerged as important components of the CDNS's Islamic investment portfolio, providing investors with avenues consistent with Islamic principles and helping channel domestic savings into economic activity. The CDNS mobilized Rs24 billion through Islamic investments during FY2024-25, while nearly Rs75 billion was raised through Islamic bonds in FY2023-24. Officials said the institution was also pursuing reforms aimed at improving access to Islamic investment products, including digital transformation, enhanced customer services and the introduction of new savings instruments. The measures are aimed at making investment in Shariah-compliant products more convenient while encouraging wider participation in Islamic savings schemes. The CDNS expects continued expansion of Islamic finance to support the development of Pakistan's Islamic economy and contribute to broader financial inclusion and sustainable economic growth. —APP

FGEHA meeting reviews housing projects, recent successful auction

ISLAMABAD: The 52nd meeting of the Executive Board of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) was held at the Ministry of Housing and Works here on Friday. The meeting was chaired by the Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. Secretary Housing and Works, Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Mahmood, Director General FGEHA, Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, and other members of the Board also attended the meeting. The meeting undertook a detailed review of FGEHA's ongoing housing projects, recent developments, the Authority's recently concluded successful auction, and its future course of action. The Federal Minister for Housing and Works expressed satisfaction over the successful auction conducted by FGEHA and appreciated the Authority's continued efforts, stating that its sustained hard work was producing positive results. He said that, in line with the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the concerted efforts of the Ministry of Housing and Works and FGEHA have been commendable and had resulted in a strong expression of confidence by investors in the Authority. Federal Minister congratulated the Secretary Housing and Works and the Director General FGEHA on this important achievement and said that the Ministry and FGEHA, through mutual cooperation and coordinated ef-

forts, were making significant progress in the housing sector. Federal Minister noted that FGEHA's various projects were progressing at an accelerated pace, including Sector F14/F15, the joint venture project Margalla Orchard in collaboration with DHA, and other housing projects. He directed that all possible measures be taken to ensure their effective and timely progress. The services and contributions of Dr. Syed Tasnuir Hussain Shah, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Mr. Ahsan Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Enclave/Institution, were also specially acknowledged. Their role in the preparation of the National Housing Policy and in facilitating important matters and drafts related to the Ministry of Housing and Works was appreciated. Their contributions were described as significant in advancing policy formulation and future initiatives in the housing sector. Federal Minister stated that FGEHA's recent successful auction was an important milestone reflecting the growing confidence of investors in the Authority. He observed that the participation and confidence of investors demonstrated that FGEHA was making progress in advancing its projects and creating new opportunities for investment in the housing sector. Federal Minister further emphasized that the process of providing plots to existing allottees of FGEHA would be expedited. —APP

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The five keys of global shipping in the 21st century

LUKE COFFEY

BACK in 1904, when Adm. Sir John "Jacky" Fisher became Britain's First Sea Lord, he set about modernizing the Royal Navy. He looked across Britain's global empire, understood that he had finite resources and a limited number of ships, and had to think creatively and strategically about how to organize the force. His assessment could be summed up in a few memorable sentences. "Five keys lock up the world. Singapore, the Cape, Alexandria, Gibraltar, Dover. These five keys belong to England," he reportedly said. Fisher believed that control of these crucial maritime chokepoints was central to Britain's ability to exercise global sea power. More than 120 years later, the British Empire no longer exists and none of today's keys "belong to England". Instead, today's deeply interconnected global economy relies on the world use of maritime spaces often described as part of the global commons. Within this system, five new keys stand out for their ability to lock up the world in the 21st century: the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Gibraltar, the Suez-Bab Al-Mandab corridor, the Strait of Hormuz and the Turkish Straits. Some featured, either directly or indirectly, on Fisher's original list. Others are new additions, reflecting changes in global commerce and technology. But there can be little doubt that a major disruption at any one of them can have ramifications far beyond the region in which it is located.

A major disruption at any one of these keys can have ramifications far beyond the region in which it is located. The scale of commerce passing through these five waterways is remarkable. One recent study estimated that the Strait of Malacca accounts for about 20 percent of global maritime trade by value, while the Strait of Gibraltar and the Suez-Bab Al-Mandab corridor each account for about 15 percent. The Strait of Hormuz is important for a different reason. Its significance comes less from containerized trade than from the extraordinary concentration of oil and gas, upon which global markets depend. The Turkish Straits remain vital as well. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated their military and strategic importance, but their economic significance should not be overlooked. They provide the Black Sea's only maritime connection to the Mediterranean and global markets. Oil and other commodities from the Eurasian landmass pass through them, as do grain and agricultural products shipped from Russian and Ukrainian ports to consumers around the world. There are notable differences between the world Fisher confronted in 1904 and the one policymakers face today. Fisher's keys were geographically dispersed, stretching from the Cape of Good Hope in the Southern Hemisphere to the

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS/ABC Certified

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

Off Awan Plaza, Block 18A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



Dover Strait in the English Channel. Today's five keys, by contrast, form a remarkable band across the Northern Hemisphere covering less than 40 degrees of latitude. Three of the five are concentrated in the broader Middle East, serving as another reminder of why the region remains so strategically important to the global economy. The other two – the Strait of Gibraltar and the Strait of Malacca – form the bookends of this band of maritime commerce.

Two major shipping routes are deliberately excluded from this list: Russia's Northern Sea Route and the Panama Canal. Moscow has long promoted the Northern Sea Route, which follows Russia's Arctic coastline, as an emerging connection between Asian and European markets. Despite years of ambitious claims, however, the numbers remain remarkably modest. Transit between European and Asian markets remains a tiny fraction of the volumes moving through established routes such as Suez. Alongside these five maritime keys, a global bypass is emerging across the Eurasian landmass: the Middle Corridor. Viewed from the US, the Panama Canal's strategic and economic importance is unparalleled. About 70 percent of cargo transiting the canal by tonnage either originates in or is destined for the US. Even so, Panama does not have the same systemic impact on global shipping as the five keys identified here.

Alongside these five maritime keys, a global bypass is emerging across the Eurasian landmass: the Middle Corridor. This route connects Asian markets with Europe through Central Asia, across the Caspian Sea and through the South Caucasus, while bypassing both Russian and Iranian territory. Billions of dollars are being invested in expanding railways, ports and other transport infrastructure along the route. It will never fully replace maritime shipping. The economics and sheer carrying capacity of container ships make that unrealistic. But for certain goods, particularly high-value or time-sensitive products, the Middle Corridor can provide a workable alternative while helping governments and businesses diversify their supply chains.

There is another major difference between Fisher's world and ours: the means by which a key can be locked. In Fisher's time, warships ruled the waves. Naval power was used to secure maritime routes, deny them to an adversary or reopen them during war. Today, an actor does not necessarily need to even have a say at all to threaten international shipping. Like with Iran, drones and other unmanned systems, aircraft and increasingly sophisticated long-range missiles can threaten vessels from hundreds of kilometers inland. In some cases, these capabilities are in the hands of nonstate actors like the Houthis. Then there is an added complication of shipping insurance. Sometimes, just the threat of missiles or drones can produce economic effects far beyond the military resources required to launch them. A Strait does not necessarily have to be physically closed to become commercially unusable. If the threat to shipping becomes sufficiently severe, insurance premiums can soar and shippers reroute their cargo. Times have changed. The old world has changed. The reasons for their importance have changed too. But one thing has not: the geopolitical consequences when the lanes of global trade are disrupted. Fisher's five keys reflected the strategic realities of the British Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. Today's five keys reflect the realities of an interconnected global economy in the 21st century. Like-minded partners and allies must work together to preserve freedom of navigation and ensure that the five new keys of shipping remain open.

Iran's President Heads to New York as the Costs of Trump's War Mount

Qamar Bashir



The military picture adds another layer. Photographs supplied to CBS News by active service members revealed damaged aircraft, buildings, vehicles, and equipment at American positions in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. They give visible form to losses otherwise expressed through official statements and aggregate figures. Such images raise questions about force protection, preparedness, and the resources required to sustain operations. They also demonstrate that technological superiority has not insulated...

THE decision to allow Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to attend the United Nations General Assembly comes at an uncomfortable moment for President Donald Trump. More than 200 days into the war, Iran remains an adversary Washington must confront diplomatically as well as militarily. Meanwhile, Americans face higher fuel prices, mounting military expenditure, and growing doubts about the administration's strategy. The Iranian delegation's arrival in New York will place those contradictions on an international stage. The political contrast is striking. A government subjected to American military pressure will send its president and foreign minister to speak before the world from American soil. Their presence cannot establish surrender by either side, but it challenges any expectation that military force would quickly remove Iran from the diplomatic equation. Tehran remains a participant whose decisions matter to ending the conflict. That reality gives the visit significance beyond the issuing of travel documents. The decision can therefore be read as preserving room for political engagement while military pressure has failed to produce an enduring settlement. It does, however, leave open a channel at a time when the costs of continuing the war are becoming harder to separate from American domestic life. The question is whether the administration will use that opening to pursue an achievable outcome or continue relying on promises of eventual success. For American households, the war's consequences are increasingly tangible. On September 17, the national gasoline average reached \$4.44 per gallon, nearly 50 percent above its pre-war level. Diesel reached a record \$6.40. These figures translate geopolitical conflict into the price of commuting, delivering goods, operating machinery, and running a business. Families do not need a strategic briefing to understand the difference between an assurance that events are under control and a fuel bill that keeps rising. Diesel makes the burden especially pervasive. Its cost enters trucking, agriculture, construction, and other activities that sustain everyday commerce. Businesses may absorb part of the increase, but others pass it through to customers. Energy specialists have also warned of higher heating expenses.

The pressure intended to influence events overseas consequently reaches American kitchens, workplaces, and household budgets. Other supply disruptions contribute to these prices, but the Iran war is an important part of the economic strain. That strain provides a direct connection between foreign policy and public frustration. A prolonged war becomes politically harder to sustain when citizens cannot identify either its destination or its benefits. Initial uncertainty can turn into opposition as costs accumulate. The administration must explain why continued sacrifice will produce a strategic benefit rather than simply ask the public to wait. Its difficulty is that recent polling records substantial doubt about the existence of a clear strategy.

The September Fox News survey found that 71 percent of registered voters believed the administration lacked a clear plan to end the conflict. That included 43 percent of Republicans and 83 percent of independents. Sixty percent considered the decision to take military action wrong. These results cannot be dismissed as opposition confined to Democrats. They also indicate that voters who once voters whose confidence the administration needs, including within its own political coalition. With the midterms approaching, those doubts carry obvious consequences. Trump's overall approval stood at 39 percent in the same survey. Electoral outcomes remain uncertain, and national polling cannot determine control of either chamber. Nevertheless, Republicans face the task of defending a government whose handling of the war has attracted broad criticism. Higher living costs make that task more difficult because they bring the consequences of distant decisions into the daily experience of voters.

The military picture adds another layer. Photographs supplied to CBS News by active service members revealed damaged aircraft, buildings, vehicles, and equipment at American positions in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. They give visible form to losses otherwise expressed through official statements and aggregate figures. Such images raise questions about force protection, preparedness, and the resources required to sustain operations. They also demonstrate that technological superiority has not insulated American assets from serious damage. The financial accumulation reinforces those questions. The Congressional

Budget Office estimated that the conflict had cost the Department of Defense approximately \$38 billion through August 1. Expenditure on this scale requires an explanation of objectives and results. Americans are entitled to ask what further operations are expected to achieve, how long they will continue, and what alternatives have been examined. Rising expenditure cannot itself become a reason to continue spending in pursuit of an undefined conclusion.

This is the background against which Iran's leaders will arrive. Their visit gives Washington an opportunity to connect existing interests, agendas, or misperceptions to a concentrated gathering of international officials. Trump's planned discussions with Gulf leaders add a regional dimension. Those governments have their own interests in reducing attacks and restoring commercial stability. Their presence could help identify terms that address practical concerns, even if the parties remain far apart on larger political questions. A breakthrough need not begin with a presidential handshake or a comprehensive agreement. It could begin with authorized exchanges through intermediaries, a defined negotiating agenda, or micro-agreements that reduce immediate risks. What matters is whether communication produces changes in conduct. A visit followed only by competing speeches would leave the central problem intact. A visit that establishes sustained talks could become an important step toward ending a war that continues to impose costs without a settled political outcome. Washington's strongest response would be to treat that possibility seriously. Seeking an agreement would no longer leave Americans powerless. Recognizing that military capability and political success are different things, the Iranian delegation's presence offers no guarantee of peace, but it creates an occasion to test whether diplomacy can achieve what continued confrontation has not. After more than 200 days, the administration owes Americans more than another prediction of success. It owes them a credible course toward ending the war and limiting its further human and economic damage.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rid)

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

The strategic asset Europe has overlooked

Adrien Geiger, Brune Poirson
and Bertrand Badré

Encouragingly, the EU has many of the tools it needs to act. The Soil Monitoring Law, in force since last December, sets out a common framework for assessing carbon content, erosion, biological activity and the capacity to retain and infiltrate water. A 2024 regulation requires member states to compile accounts for seven specific ecosystem services (although the services provided by soil, chief among them water retention, remain marginal). And in July, the European Commission adopted certification...

WHEN the EU determines which assets are strategic, it tends to focus on those where a rival already dominates production (or could one day). That is why we hear so much about semiconductors, batteries, rare earths and hydrogen. But we almost never hear about an EU asset that cannot be replicated elsewhere: Europe's soil. Often regarded as part of the landscape, soil is, in fact, vital infrastructure. It is the foundation of our food systems, producing 95 percent of the food the world consumes. Moreover, European soils hold some 75 billion tonnes of carbon, several times that in the living biomass of its forests, and its porous structure serves as a buffer against droughts and floods – destructive events that have become increasingly common features of European summers. But Europe's soil is drying. According to the European Commission, an estimated 60 percent to 70 percent of EU soils are unhealthy and their degradation costs the economy more than 50 billion (\$67 billion) annually. Given that it can take up to a thousand years for a few centimeters of fertile topsoil to form, continuing down this path could have severe consequences. The problem is that what is not counted cannot be protected – and policymakers rarely price the value of healthy soil. When a country's soil ecosystem collapses, its gross domestic product barely moves, although it is undoubtedly poorer. Europe, in particular, knows the risks of unaccounted dependencies: after gas supplies from Russia were cut following the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, European governments had to allocate roughly 500 billion to shield their citizens and industries from soaring energy prices. When a country's soil ecosystem collapses, its gross domestic product barely moves, although it is undoubtedly poorer. The degradation of soil is different because it is a gradual process for which we are wholly responsible. Because this is not a case of a foreign adver-

sary deciding overnight to withhold a critical input, policymakers often fail to recognize that healthy soil builds robustness – the ability to continue functioning in the face of perturbations. Encouragingly, the EU has many of the tools it needs to act. The Soil Monitoring Law, in force since last December, sets out a common framework for assessing carbon content, erosion, biological activity and the capacity to retain and infiltrate water. A 2024 regulation requires member states to compile accounts for seven specific ecosystem services (although the services provided by soil, chief among them water retention, remain marginal). And in July, the European Commission adopted certification methodologies that will help farmers access financial rewards for measurable soil outcomes. What the bloc lacks, however, is an overarching plan for connecting these measures and turning healthy soil into an advantage for those who maintain it. The Common Agricultural Policy pays for sustainable practices but not for verifiable improvements in soil health and water retention. The European Commission has an opportunity to change that with its framework for European climate resilience and risk management, expected later this year.

As business leaders, investors and advisers across these value chains, we believe that the framework, which aims to make resilient a guiding principle for investment, should include three commitments. Dead soil leads to lower yields, higher food prices and greater exposure to drought and flooding, all of which are expensive. For starters, it should expand mandatory ecosystem accounting to the services provided by healthy soil, starting with water retention, and call for their inclusion in national economic accounts. It should also extend outcome-based rewards beyond carbon to soil health and water retention, so that farmers and land managers can gain from measurable results. Lastly, it should ensure

that these indicators guide public support and investment decisions, just as carbon costs do today. Some will argue that Europe cannot afford these commitments. Quite the contrary: dead soil leads to lower yields, higher food prices and greater exposure to drought and flooding, all of which are expensive. Worse, this form of fragility is a regressive hidden tax. To protect the people with the least from being squeezed by higher food prices and subject to intensifying climate disasters, we must abandon the fiction that degrading soil has no real costs. Europe is not alone. In August, the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification convened in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, with a focus on restoring degraded land. While governments agreed to mobilize new funding initiatives for land restoration and drought resilience, they failed to reach a binding global framework on drought, underscoring the persistent gap between scientific urgency and political action. But there is still hope. Many countries in the Global South, especially producers of coffee, cocoa and fruit, have begun to treat soil health as a strategic asset. Despite this progress, efforts on soil degradation remain fragmented. Europe should promote a soil alliance, backed by governments that agree on the importance of measurement and the need for rules that reward soil restoration. It should also pursue this agenda at October's UN Biodiversity Conference in Yerevan, Armenia, and November's UN Climate Change Conference in Antalya, Turkey, and make it a cornerstone of its new resilience framework. As the French poet Rene Char wrote, "Our inheritance was left to us by no testament." Soil passes from one generation to the next and yet it does not appear in our economic accounts. Instead, for decades, Europe has counted only what it produces, not what it possesses. Unless and until that changes, the slow death of the continent's soil will continue.

Briefs
15 cops among 21 martyred...

FROM PAGE 01
"The operation will continue until the complete elimination of Fata-ul-Khwarizmi," the IG was quoted as saying, adding that the police's morale remained high. Fata-ul-Khwarizmi is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-ul-Taliban Pakistan. At around 3:30pm, police said the clearance operation was "in its final stages". The statement detailed that seven terrorists had attempted to infiltrate Police Lines after the explosion. So far, six terrorists, including a suicide bomber, have been killed," the statement said. Separately, KP Chief Minister Sahab Azfar said a detailed report on the incident, saying the targeting of innocent citizens was "deeply regrettable and unacceptable," as per a statement issued by his office.

10 India-sponsored militants...

FROM PAGE 01
resulting in the martyrdom of six soldiers, according to the military's media wing. Sanitation operations are under way to eliminate any other militants who may still be present in the area, the ISPR said. The military said the counterterrorism campaign under the vision of Ameer-ud-Din, approved by the Federal Expenditure Committee on the National Action Plan, would continue at full pace. The campaign, it said, aims to eliminate foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the region. The ISPR said the sacrifice of the soldiers further reinforced the armed forces' commitment to safeguarding the country. Pakistan witnessed a surge in terror activities, particularly in its KP and Balochistan provinces, since 2021, when the Afghan Taliban came into power. According to a report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the two provinces remained the country's main hotspots for violence during the second quarter of 2026, with KP emerging as the worst-affected region.

JJ's long march to reach...

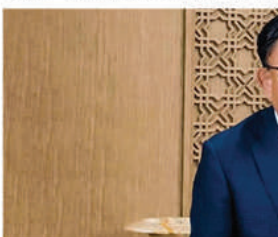
FROM PAGE 01
The JJ chief's remarks come days after the party rejected the government's special fuel relief scheme, saying that the package cannot be a substitute for abolition of petroleum levy. The federal government has launched a special relief scheme providing Rs100 per litre discount on petrol for motorcycle, rickshaw and chingchi owners and drivers of vehicles up to 800cc. Under the relief scheme, owners and users of motorcycles, rickshaws and other two and three-wheeled vehicles will receive Rs100 per litre of petrol on up to 20 litres of petrol per month. Owners of small vehicles up to 800cc engine capacity will receive Rs100 per litre of petrol on up to 30 litres of petrol per month.

Trump weighs renewed...

FROM PAGE 01
Washington makes another push for diplomacy or moves toward a renewed military escalation. Any return to major combat operations would also require coordination with key US partners in the region. Trump declined to tell Axios whether he expects to make a decision before or after the US midterm elections. Several US officials believe the current situation, which Axios described as an increasingly difficult military and diplomatic holding pattern, cannot continue indefinitely. Some officials have raised the possibility that Trump could return to major combat operations after Saudi Arabia and Qatar raised concerns against Saudi oil and gas infrastructure. Axios previously reported,

Chinese scholar on a journey into Indus Valley history

The symbols carved into it reminded him of prehistoric rock-art symbols associated with China's Hongshan culture, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday



DNA
BEIJING: The research journey of Zhou Yushu, president of Inner Mongolia Honder College of Arts and Sciences, began with an object small enough to fit in the palm of a hand. In 2023, Zhou came across an ancient Indus Valley seal at Honder College's North China Rock Art Research Institute. The symbols carved into it reminded him of prehistoric rock-art symbols associated with China's Hongshan culture, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday. For Zhou, who had spent years studying the origins of Chinese writing, the encounter raised a question that would keep him up at night: Could similarities between symbols from two ancient civilizations, separated by thousands of kilometers, offer clues to their shared past?

view with CEN. Oracle bone inscriptions, he noted, already represented a mature writing system. That suggested that Chinese writing must have gone through a much longer process of formation and evolution before the appearance of those inscriptions. He began applying approaches he had used in studying prehistoric Chinese rock art and pottery symbols to the seals of the Indus Valley. The more he looked, the more questions emerged. Following the symbols Zhou and his research team eventually examined 400 relatively complete seals and interpreted 132 individual characters, grouping them into 10 thematic categories. The research later became the basis of his book, Study of Ancient Seal Script Symbols from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro: Exploration of the Indus Valley Script Origins, bringing together the team's work on the symbols and their possible cultural connections.

curating themes involving ancestors, fertility, natural phenomena, rituals, animal worship and everyday life in both the Indus Valley and prehistoric Chinese cultures. Among the findings that particularly interested him were symbols he interprets as references to ancient waterways, a thunder deity, and ancestor and fertility imagery. The comparisons have led Zhou to propose a broader hypothesis: that some prehistoric populations may have moved westward from areas of present-day China through routes including the Karakoram Corridor and reached the Indus Valley, with possible links extending further west. Zhou stresses, however, that the proposed migration and cultural transmission scenario remains a research hypothesis and requires further archaeological evidence. That uncertainty is part of what keeps the research open-ended. The decipherment of the Indus script remains a major challenge for scholars, Zhou said, while Pakistan still

Jazza' Dickens eyes return to the top ahead of Dubai bout

DNA
DUBAI: James "Jazza" Dickens returns to action this Saturday when he headlines the BATL Promotions event at the Meydan Hotel in Dubai, on a card which also features two talented Emirati fighters. Liverpool-born Dickens, 35, secured the interim super-featherweight title in July 2025 by defeating AJB Batyrgaziev via a stunning fourth-round knockout in Istanbul, before losing the belt to Anthony Gancice earlier this year. Ahead of Saturday's fight against Tanzania's Ramadhan Kimanya, Dickens spoke to Arab News about his desire to become a world champion again.

"I'm feeling very good and it's great to be back in action. It's nice to be fighting in Dubai, where I live now, so I don't have to travel anywhere for once. I've been in camp with my team, and my coach Albert (Arayapanyan) at the Gold on King gym. Now the fight is almost here. I'm excited to get back out there and headline the BATL Promotions event on Saturday. It was another great experience. I've had a few world title fights now, so I was getting used to them. But you're just got to accept the situation that you're in sometimes, and you've got to make the most of it. I'm not taking my eye off the ball. I'm learning all the time and I'm looking forward to working on what

we've been doing in the gym and hopefully pleasing my coach on Saturday. The crowd's a little bit different as they aren't so many people drinking. It's a calmer crowd. I'm not too keen on when people in the crowd are going nuts, and then you realise it's one of your cousins usually causing the trouble (laughs). It's nice and peaceful now. It needs to be that type of environment where people are there to just genuinely admire the sport, and that's why I go and watch sport. There are certain places where they don't make too much noise, they just clap when they see good quality, they're really into the actual art of fighting, so I don't mind a crowd like that. Yes, I think it's amazing.

18th Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu C'ship gets ready to receive 12,000 athletes

ABU DHABI: Preparations for the 18th Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championships are gathering pace with the organising committee outlining plans to accommodate almost 12,000 international athletes and global media, while advancing preparations for the opening ceremony. The championship will take place at the Yas Viceroy Hotel, Abu Dhabi, from Nov. 9 to 21. The plans were discussed during a meeting chaired by Mohamed Salem Al-Dhaheri, vice chairman of the UAE Jiu-Jitsu and Mixed Martial Arts Federation, and chairman of the organising committee. "Our focus now is on accommodating the increasing number of athletes and academies from around the world and working closely with our partners to expand the international reach of the 18th edition," the Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship has grown year after year and become one of the biggest events for both athletes and academies. "We want to continue delivering the championship to the highest standards, in line with Abu Dhabi's position reputation as a global destination for jiu-jitsu." The meeting was attended by Mohamed Hussein Al-Marzouqi, federation board member and vice chairman of the organising committee, and Fahad Ali Al-Shamsi, secretary-general of the federation. - APP

Rizwan contacts ICC ACU amid investigation: sources

ACCORDING to sources, Rizwan contacted the ACU and requested guidance regarding the ongoing matter. The wicket-keeper batter reportedly sought guidance through the ICC's online web portal and asked whether the ACU was aware of the questioning being conducted by authorities in Pakistan. International cricketers can seek guidance from the ACU through the online portal. The ACU can also provide guidance to players and officials on anti-corruption matters, assess information or allegations brought to its attention, and coordinate with relevant cricket boards and authorities where appropriate. In cases involving an investigation by a national agency, the ICC can clarify the applicable anti-corruption procedures and advise players on their obligations and the appropriate format for reporting or addressing corruption-related concerns. Earlier this year, Rizwan's response to a questionnaire issued by the NCCIA surfaced, in which he said that he had served the Pakistan team to the best of his ability as a cricketer. Rizwan said he received a notice from the NCCIA on 8 September but had not been informed which online betting activity he was allegedly being linked to. He also said he had not been provided details of the relevant incident or his alleged role in it. During his appearance before the agency, Rizwan said he repeatedly sought details of the allegations against him but was not provided with the information despite asking for it. In his written response, Rizwan said the ICC Anti-Corruption Unit was the relevant forum for dealing with corruption allegations against him. - DNA

Abhishek has record T20 ton as India sweep T20 series 3-0

NEW DELHI: Opener Abhishek Sharma hit a record T20 century off 30 balls to set up a crushing 127-run win for India in the third match against Afghanistan and sweep the series 3-0 on Thursday. Left-handed batsman Sharma's ton was the fastest in a T20 international between full Test-playing nations as he guided India to 221-7 at New T20 International Stadium, Afghanistan, who were the official hosts for the series, checked the opposition surge after Abhishek departed for 108 off 34 balls and India lost their way from 142-1 in 10 overs. But the Afghan batters once again disappointed and were bowled out for 94 in 14.1 overs. Afghanistan had posted 156-8 and 159-8 while batting first in the first two matches. Left-arm spinner Asar Patel struck twice in his first over to send back Rahmatullah Gurbaz, for 15, and Saqlainullah Atal, for one, and Afghanistan could never recover from the losses. Seam bowler Nitish Kumar Reddy also took two wickets in one over to return figures of 3-25. Leg-spinner Ravu Bishnoi wrapped up the Afghanistan innings with his third T20 century as he surpassed Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza's ton off 33 balls against Gambia in 2024 and Finn Allen's effort from the same number of deliveries in New Zealand's T20 World Cup semifinal win over South

Africa earlier this year in India. The only two faster T20I hundreds came in matches between the low-order batsmen of the two teams. The ICC's T20I record book shows that the overall record of 27 balls after his century against Cyprus two years ago while Muhammad Fakar needed just 29 balls for his ton in the T20I series between India and Afghanistan in 2025. Abhishek took India to the Afghanistan bowling attack after India were limited to bat first. The swashbuckling opener hit a six to reach 99. He completed the hundred with a single and sat in meditation pose to celebrate. He finally fell for 108 off 34 balls to leg-spinner Rashid Khan. The 26-year-old's knock was laced with nine fours and 11 sixes. His opening stand of 142 with Sanju Samson, who hit 50, put India on course for a big total but the Afghan bowlers hit back with regular vigour. Tilak Varma was run out for two by Rashid and Afghanistan departed after his second successive half-century as he fell to pace bowler Asmatullah Omarzai. Omarzai struck another blow helped by a stunning catch by Rashid in the deep to send back Shriram Dule for 99. The duo raised their 100 in six overs but managed just 79 from the last 60 balls. India now head to Japan for the Asian Games starting September 19 at Nagoya-Aichi. Afghanistan will send a largely different team to the Asian Games under Dawlat Rasooli. - DNA

Athletes 'can't take it any more' as Asian Games issues mount

The continent's premier sporting spectacle opens in Nagoya and Aichi prefecture on Saturday, but the build-up has been soured by several issues

DNA
NAGOYA: The Asian Games in Japan were facing more accusations of poor organisation Friday with a world champion gymnast "totally exhausted", the public drafted in to rescue stranded athletes and South Korea lodging a complaint about a Japanese workday. The continent's premier sporting spectacle opens in Nagoya and Aichi prefecture on Saturday, but the build-up has been soured by several issues. That includes a shortage of rooms for the more than 7,000 athletes and officials - a bigger number than the Olympics. Some teams have also criticised the quality of the accommodation, including beds that are too short. To save money there is no athletes' village, organisers instead putting competitors in hotels, temporary cabins and on a cruise ship. Organisers say the accommodation is safe, cost-effective and comfortable. Chinese gymnast Zhang Boheng, who won two silver medals at the

Paris Olympics and has two world championship titles to his name, said he and some of his teammates were left waiting for six hours after landing on Wednesday. "I'm totally exhausted," he said in a video published Thursday and shared widely on Chinese social media. "I didn't expect that after a long flight, the first thing I could eat would be close to 7:00 pm," the 26-year-old said. He said the wait was caused by registration and paperwork, before heading to the cruise ship where 4,000 Games participants will be housed in Nagoya's port area. But when they arrived at the ship, he said heavy rain prevented them from boarding. "A whole day was basically wasted like this," added Zhang. "In the end we really couldn't take it any more so we decided to book rooms at a hotel to rest." The video has since been taken down but Chinese state media said that other Chinese athletes also faced travel delays upon arrival. Beijing's consulate in Nagoya contacted Chinese citizens in the area to give the

badminton team lifts after issues with a shuttle bus and a shortage of public transport tickets, Xinhua reported. Chinese social media users applauded athletes, including table tennis star Sun Yingsha, for stretching and exercising at the airport. The hosting Asian Games officials have since been viewed more than 94 million times on Weibo. India's team had similar delays at the airport. "There was an issue in getting accreditation for athletes at the airport during immigration. There were long queues with a lot of other nations waiting," India's chief de mission and Indian Olympic Association (IOA) treasurer Sahdev Yadav told AFP. "We are sorry to hear that and we have got everything sorted." Worldout controversy South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that some of the country's athletes waited at the airport for more than five hours on Thursday. "We are aware of the situation including reports that athletes have had to wait for hours and we are doing our best to handle it," a Korean Sport and Olympic Committee (KSOC) official told AFP. Also on Friday, the KSOC said it had filed a complaint with Japanese organisers for curtailing a Japanese warship at a welcoming ceremony. The event on Tuesday included a person dressed as Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who led Japan's invasions of Korea in 1592-1598, and the ceremony was criticised by South Korea. Historical issues are sensitive between South Korea and Japan, with Hideyoshi's invasion a significant episode in Korean history and Korea under Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945. Despite the mounting issues Asia's Olympic chief hinted that future editions of the multi-sport event could be even bigger. "In order to support to increase the number of athletes, not to decrease athletes," said Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) director general Husain Ahmadullail. He conceded that he wished there was an athletes' village in the area to ease the strain on the city. "We need to listen also to the organisers, to the host, how they would look for the future, after the Games, after the closing ceremony."

Govt to stop anyone marching...

FROM PAGE 01
the release of party founder Imran Khan and mobilise people for the Supreme Court of the Constitution. Last week, the administrations of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad had started preparations to counter the PTI's announced nationwide protest, including a request for detention of activists, arranging for law and order situation. Officials from all provinces and federal law enforcement agencies had also attended the meeting. "In light of the detailed IHC judgment, there is no possibility of allowing the federal capital or any other province," he said. The minister said that if anyone took to the streets, the government would first pursue legal action before filing a contempt petition against them for violating the IHC order. At the same time, he said, "We will use the marchers in every possible way." All law enforcement agencies had been informed of the decision "with all clarity," Nagri added. He said weapons had been used and losses suffered in protests in the past. "This time, we are communicating very clear rules of engagement to our law enforcement agencies. They will not remain silent if a bullet is fired at them," he said. He urged the protesting party's leadership to hold demonstrations in their respective provinces and cities. "Plans for locking down the capital or charging into another province will never be allowed," he said. "It is our responsibility to stop this protest to ensure the protection of the lives and property of the citizens and the interior minister said."

Massive fraud in Froud Office...

FROM PAGE 01
Transparency advocates have welcomed the decision, urging the committee to ensure that its recommendations lead to structural reforms rather than temporary fixes. Civil society groups have also called for digitisation of the attestation process to minimise human involvement and reduce opportunities for graft. The Deputy Prime Minister's directive underscores the importance of safeguarding public institutions from malpractice. As the investigation proceeds, citizens will be watching closely to see whether accountability is enforced and whether longstanding issues with the Foreign Office's attestation system are finally resolved.

Pakistan will go 'to any extent' to defend Saudi...

FROM PAGE 01
The ISPR chief said the Islamabad Media Centre "consensus document" that offered the only viable pathway out of the ongoing situation in the region.

PTI MPs reach Sindh Assembly on donkey carts

FROM PAGE 01
which has resulted in disruption of major oil supply routes, have caused fuel prices to rise in the last two months. Currently, the government adjusts fuel prices daily. After the latest change on Thursday, the price of petrol stood at Rs390.79 per litre while high-speed diesel (HSD) costs Rs424.92 per litre. These prices are the highest in the country since the Rs114 per litre levy by the government in taxes and duties on petrol and Rs100 per litre on diesel.

Briefs

Rupee gains
01 paise
against
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 01 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.25, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 277.24. According to the Foreign Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278 and Rs 278.5, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.21 and closed at Rs 318.27 against the previous day's closing of Rs 318.06, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs 1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.54 and closed at Rs 370.56 compared to the previous day's Rs 371.10. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham came down 01 paise and closed at Rs 75.48, while the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged at Rs 73.80.—APP

Gold prices
rise by Rs
6,900 per tola

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices in the country increased by Rs 6,900 per tola on Friday, with the price of 24-karat gold reaching Rs 460,336 against Rs 453,436 recorded on the previous trading day, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. The price of 24-karat gold per 10 grams increased by Rs 5,914 to Rs 39,463 against Rs 38,879, while that of 22-karat gold rose by Rs 4,232 to Rs 36,177 from Rs 35,644. In the international market, gold prices increased by \$69 to \$4,398 per ounce from \$4,329. Meanwhile, silver prices also witnessed an upward trend, with 24-karat silver per tola rising by Rs 200 to Rs 7,169 from Rs 6,969. The price of 24-karat silver per 10 grams increased by Rs 257 to Rs 6,146 from Rs 5,889, while international silver prices rose by \$3 to \$66.91 per ounce from \$63.91.—APP

SBP injects
over Rs 2.64t
in the market

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Friday, injected Rs 2,640.45 billion through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) for maintaining liquidity in the market. The central bank conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7 and 14-day tenors on September 18, 2026, and injected Rs 2,395.45 billion against 17 bids while other Rs 245 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO. The central bank received 15 bids for the Reverse Repo Purchase of 14-day tenor, cumulatively offering Rs 384.5 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.54% to 11.57%. The SBP accepted all the 5 quotes with the entire amount at 11.54% rate of return. Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for the 7 and 14-day tenors. For the 7-day tenor, the central bank received one bid offering Rs 10 billion at 11.56% rate of return. SBP accepted the quote with the entire amount at the offered rate. The central bank also received 5 quotes for the 14-day tenor offering Rs 344 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.53% to 11.57%. SBP accepted an amount of Rs 325 billion against the 5 bids at the offered rate of return. The total amount offered at 11.53% was Rs 292 billion, of which SBP accepted Rs 272.5 billion on a pro rata basis.—APP



London: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, along with Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Jameel Ahmad, and members of the Pakistani delegation, in a group photo during the J.P. Morgan Emerging and Frontier Markets Opportunities Conference

Exports must be at heart
of country's eco strategy

The ICCI President stressed that industrial competitiveness is the foundation of export growth, and urged the need for addressing the challenges like high energy costs, taxation issues, regulatory barriers, expensive financing, weak logistics and other structural constraints that raise the cost of doing business

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mahmood on Friday called for a comprehensive, long-term and clearly defined roadmap for sustainable economic growth, stressing that Pakistan can no longer afford fragmented and short-term economic policies. He said the country needs continuity, policy consistency and a shared national economic vision under which government institutions, the private sector and other stakeholders work together to transform Pakistan's economy into a productive, competitive and export-oriented one. Talking to different visiting delegations of business leaders here on Friday, he said exports must be placed at the heart

of Pakistan's economic strategy, as sustainable growth could not be achieved merely through borrowing, consumption and repeated cycles of external financing. He emphasized the need to diversify the export basket, expand market access, improve product quality and branding, and support exporters in entering high-value international markets. Special attention should be given to IT and digital services, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, processed food, textiles and value-added agriculture, while SMEs should be given support to global supply chains through technology, skills development and digital platforms. The ICCI President stressed that industrial competitiveness is the foundation of export growth, and urged the need for addressing the challenges like high energy costs, taxation issues, regulatory barriers, expensive

financing, weak logistics and other structural constraints that raise the cost of doing business. He further proposed that the government for developing a 10-year National Economic and Export Roadmap with measurable annual targets for investment, exports, industrial output, employment, productivity and foreign direct investment. Sardar Tahir Mahmood said Pakistan also needs to move from an import-dependent and consumption-driven model towards production, innovation and investment-led growth. He urged greater facilitation for domestic and foreign investors, development of Special Economic Zones and industrial clusters, modernization of infrastructure, promotion of renewable energy, investment in technical and vocational skills, and stronger linkages between universities, research institutions and industry. He

added that overseas Pakistanis should be provided attractive and transparent investment channels so that their capital, expertise and international business networks can contribute to the country's productive capacity. The ICCI President said the business community is ready to play its role in Pakistan's economic transformation and called for a permanent institutional mechanism for structured consultation between the government and the private sector. He stressed that Pakistan's economic future should be measured not only by the size of its GDP, but by the number of businesses that expand, jobs that are created, products that reach global markets and investments that remain productive for decades. He expressed confidence that with policy continuity, institutional coordination and a focused export strategy, Pakistan can unlock its immense economic potential.

Israeli, Lebanese
armies face off
in village after
Israel advances

DEIR MISSAS, LEBANON: Israeli's military moved forward on Friday in a south Lebanon village, facing off against a Lebanese army position after deploying tanks and detonating stun grenades, according to an AFP photographer and other media in the area. Israel has been occupying a stretch of south Lebanon since war broke out in March against Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, but the Lebanese army is supposed to gradually take control of the area under a framework agreement between the two countries. Under the deal, Iran-backed Hezbollah is meant to disarm and Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, but progress has been slow, with Israel warning it will stay put as long as its foe remains a threat. In the village of Deir Missas on Friday, located on the edge of territory occupied by Israel, two Israeli tanks advanced along a road towards the settlement, the AFP photographer said. The tanks stopped in front of a barricade made from earth, beyond which Lebanese army vehicles were stationed. "An Israeli force advanced on the outskirts of the village of Deir Missas, up to a junction near a recently established Lebanese army position, where they launched 'stun' stun grenades in the surrounding area," the AFP photographer, the Lebanese army recently established itself at the site and also has a presence at other locations in Deir Missas on the edge of the Israeli-occupied zone, according to the photographer. But the Lebanese army has stayed out of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. The militant group dragged Lebanon into war with Israel on March 2 in support of the Iranian partners. Israel responded with massive airstrikes and a ground invasion of the south. On Thursday, a meeting was held between Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, French President Emmanuel Macron and Jordan's King Abdullah II to muster international support for Lebanon's army as it seeks to take control of south Lebanon.—AGE nci

Italy
prepares
naval
operation to
protect ships

DUBAI: Italy has activated its navy to prepare for a possible operation to ensure the safe passage of Italian ships through the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, Defence Minister Guido Crosetto said on Thursday. Crosetto said Italy would not wait for the European Union's Aspides maritime mission to decide whether Italian vessels could safely transit the strategic waterway. "We have decided, with the chief of staff, not to wait for Aspides to decide whether the ships can pass or not," Crosetto said at the Risoria Mare forum in La Spezia, according to Italian news agency ANSA. The Italian Defence Ministry said Crosetto had instructed the Navy to prepare what was necessary to guarantee the safe transit of Italian ships through the Bab Al-Mandab. ANSA reported that Italy is assessing whether military assets already deployed in the region could be placed under national command. The frigate Bergamini, currently in Djibouti, could potentially be used, although no final deployment decision has been announced.—APP

Pakistan's exports
to China surge
45pc to \$478m

The annual report said Pakistan's overall goods exports declined 5.93 percent to US\$30.139 billion in FY2025-26 from US\$32.040 billion in the previous fiscal year, while exports to China increased during the same period

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's merchandise exports to China rose 45 percent year-on-year to US\$478 million during the first two months of fiscal year 2025-26, according to the latest trade report of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP). According to the August 2026 Monthly Trade Report issued on September 12, Pakistan exported goods worth US\$478 million to China during July-August 2026, compared with US\$331 million during the corresponding period of FY2025-26, registering an increase of US\$147 million. According to TDAP, China remained Pakistan's second-highest export destination during the period, after the United States. Pakistan's exports to the US stood at US\$1.172 billion, followed by China at US\$478 million and the UK at US\$409 million. Pakistan's exports to China also recorded strong growth in August. Shipments reached US\$338 million, compared with US\$158 million in August 2025, marking a 51 percent year-on-year increase. China's share in Pakistan's total goods exports also increased during the period. Based on TDAP figures, China accounted for around 6.6 percent of Pakistan's exports during July-August 2026, compared with about 6.5 percent during the same period of the previous fiscal year. Pakistan's total merchandise exports to all partner countries increased 7.04 percent to US\$6.459 billion during the first two months of FY2026-27, from US\$6.10 billion in July-August 2025. The TDAP report also showed growth in several major Pakistan export commodities during the period. Refined copper exports with a 42 percent to US\$175 million, while cotton yarn exports rose 38 percent to US\$159 million. Rice exports increased 23 percent to US\$394 million, while livestock meat exports rose 34 percent to US\$77 million. Exports of petroleum oils excluding crude oil increased 99 percent to US\$137 million, while exports of other oilseeds and oleaginous fruits rose more than fourfold to US\$62 million. Pakistan's exports to China also increased during the previous fiscal year. According to TDAP's Annual Report 2025-26, released Friday, Pakistan exported goods worth US\$2.668 billion to China in FY2025-26, compared with US\$2.421 billion in FY2024-25, registering a 10 percent increase. China was Pakistan's second-highest export market after the United States during FY2025-26. The annual report said Pakistan's overall goods exports declined 5.93 percent to US\$30.139 billion in FY2025-26 from US\$32.040 billion in the previous fiscal year, while exports to China increased during the same period.—DNA

Palestinian state more distant
than ever, year after recognition

RAMALLAH: When France, Britain and other Western powers last year recognized a Palestinian state, entrepreneur Adam Bader felt a sense of hope. "I was happy when I heard about it," said Bader, 27, who lives in the occupied West Bank's city of Tulkarm, which has seen repeated Israeli raids in recent years. "Now a year on, we're not seeing any improvement. On the contrary, he said. "The situation is getting worse by the day and no one can do anything." A year after the recognition, Palestinian statehood in real, tangible terms looks more distant than ever. Israeli settler violence has soared. Palestinians are being pushed into ever-smaller areas and the Palestinian Authority has only been weakened. French President Emmanuel Macron, vowing to find a new path forward amid global outrage over Israel's offensive in Gaza, on September 22, 2025 led a special UN summit to recognize a Palestinian state. Ten countries, also including Britain, Canada and Australia, recognized Palestinian statehood, bringing the number of UN member-states doing so to around 137, more than four-fifths of the UN membership. But Israel, which enjoys support from the United States, adamantly rejects Palestinian statehood, and has stepped up efforts to isolate the Palestinian Authority of president Mahmoud Abbas. While Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stopped short last year of formally annexing the West Bank, observers say unofficial annexation is creeping as his rightwing government

approves an unprecedented number of settlements. "Recognition makes the two-state solution a reality politically and diplomatically, but unfortunately on the ground it still depends on the illegal behaviour of Israel, which is not implementing international resolutions," Omar Abdallah, deputy foreign affairs minister of the Palestinian Authority, told AFP. Israel's ambassador to the UN, Gideon Schar, said, "The two-state solution is a diplomatic ruse to avoid looking at reality in the face," she said. Across the West Bank's limestone hills, thousands of Israeli flag line roads used by Israeli settlers, with the occasional graffiti "No future in Palestine" scrawled on walls, as a call for Palestinians to leave. Netanyahu argues that a Palestinian state would be a "reward for terrorism" after Hamas on October 7, 2023 carried out the deadliest attack ever on Israel, which responded with a massive military operation in Gaza. "As long as I am prime minister, an Iranian-controlled Palestinian state will not be established—neither in Gaza nor in Judea and Samaria. Period," Netanyahu said last month, using the biblical name for the West Bank. Iran, which the United States and Israel attacked in February, backs Hamas in Gaza. The Palestinian Authority, centred in the West Bank, is led by Fatah, Hamas's arch-rival. Ahead of the anniversary, Israel ordered the closure of the

UK consulate serving Palestinians from Jerusalem, angered after Britain led France and Canada in sanctions over rising attacks by settlers. Foreign Minister Gideon Schar, explaining the move, said Britain's Labour government was attempting to "force upon Israel" a Palestinian state, but the attempt was "doomed to fail." The Palestinian Authority, established in 1990s, has been starved of cash in part by Israel's decision not to give it customs revenue it collects on its behalf, and struggles to pay its civil servants. Israel has objected to the Palestinian Authority's historic payments to families of imprisoned or slain Palestinians, including those who carried out attacks against Israel. In early 2025, Israel built nearly 1,000 gates in the West Bank, at the entrances of nearly all villages and towns, which it closed on occasion to control Palestinian movement. Palestinians have also decried a policy of "maximum land, minimum Arabs" where settlers push out isolated herder communities from rural areas to establish settler outposts. The UN says extremist settlers have been responsible for an average of six attacks per day on Palestinian and Palestinian property in the West Bank in 2026. Palestinians complain that Israeli perpetrators of violence are almost never brought to justice, and are protected by the army. Defence Minister Israel Katz has called for police to take over civilian matters from the military in the West Bank, a move observers see as a further step towards annexation.—UNA

Uzeyir
Hajibayli
Music Festival
Kicks off

BAKU Sep: The 18th Uzeyir Hajibayli International Music Festival, dedicated to Azerbaijani genius composer and founder of professional Azerbaijani music Uzeyir Hajibayli, kicks off in Azerbaijan on September 18. Co-organized by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and Azerbaijan's Ministry of Culture, the festival will run until September 30. Bringing together renowned musicians and bands, the festival's concert program will be held in various cities across Azerbaijan, including Baku, Aghjabadi, Ganja, Shusha, Lachin, Agdam and Lankaran, and will also feature presentations, performances and exhibitions. A wide range of events will additionally be held in Ukraine, Germany and Turkey as part of the festival. This year's edition will also feature the inaugural Congress of Composers of the Turkic World.—APP

Pakistani
cinema
marks strong
presence at
TIFF

TORONTO: The 51st edition of the Toronto International Film Festival, presented by Rogers, runs from September 10-20, 2026, bringing together more than 200 films and industry professionals from over 80 countries. This year's full schedule includes 253 titles, screening across Roy Thomson Hall, Princess of Wales Theatre, TIFF Lightbox and other venues. The festival's program features the world premiere of San Heider's Being Heumann, and is being billed as North America's largest film festival with a strong focus on diverse voices and underdog stories. Pakistani cinema and producer Mahira Khan made her presence felt at the Toronto International Film Festival 2026, representing Pakistan's growing footprint in global cinema and arts. Attending as part of a Pakistani delegation, Mahira Khan participated in red carpet screenings, industry panels, and networking sessions aimed at building co-production opportunities between Pakistani and international filmmakers. Mahira attended the world premiere of Your Mother Year Mother, directed by Basman Tariq, and moderated conversations as part of the festival's Community Impact programming. During the festival, Mahira and Tariq will also receive the Muslim Stars Award in Cinema and Arts Award, recognizing their contributions to cinema and their efforts to bring underrepresented stories to wider audiences. Speaking on the sidelines of TIFF, Mahira Khan said, "It's an honour to represent Pakistan at TIFF. This platform is not just about films, it's about cultural exchange. Pakistani stories deserve a global audience, and festival like TIFF give us that stage."—APP

Syria seeks
US-backed
security deal
with Israel
but rejects
occupation

DUBAI: Syria wants to pursue a US-backed security agreement with Israel but will not accept the occupation of its territory, Damascus' UN envoy Ibrahim Othbi said on Thursday, accusing Israel of undermining diplomatic efforts with military incursions and airstrikes. Othbi told the UN Security Council that Syria had chosen dialogue and mediation to avoid further regional escalation, while Israel had responded with attacks and incursions. "Israel penetrated our villages, displaced our people, bombed our facilities while we chose to spare the region further suffering," he said. "We want to see real solutions and a US-sponsored security agreement, as we have demonstrated through actions, not words. However, this is not the case, accepting the occupation or relinquishing the rights of our people." Othbi said Syria had returned to the international community with a focus on rebuilding state institutions, integrating military forces, combating Daesh and other militant groups, dismantling drug-smuggling networks and strengthening ties with neighboring countries.—APP

