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US vice president in spotlight as party gives him support

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Mushahid Hussain praises Chinese leadership in speech

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Azma defends use of jet by CM Maryam

Detailed News On Page-08



No power outages for more than two hours: PM

The prime minister also ordered the establishment of Consumer Grievance Redressal Committees at the level of power distribution companies (Discos) to address public complaints related to electricity supply and other issues across the country

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday took notice of increasing electricity load-shedding in various cities across the country and directed that no area should face load-shedding for more than two hours. The prime minister gave these directions while chairing an important review meeting on power load management in the country. The meeting was briefed that due to the prevailing regional situation, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and transportation difficulties affecting the supply of regasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG), electricity generation had been reduced, resulting in a decrease in power output. Consequently, load management had to be carried out to maintain balance between demand and supply. The prime minister directed that, keeping in view the regional situation and future requirements, immediate measures be taken to address the disruption in RLNG supply. He directed that all available resources be utilised effectively so that no area faces load-shedding for more than two hours. The prime minister also ordered the establishment of Consumer Grievance Redressal Committees at the level of power distribution companies (Discos) to address public complaints related to electricity supply and other issues across the country. He directed that the redressal committees should also include public representation, and that the grievance committees be made functional within one week. The meeting was informed that electricity consumers could lodge their complaints through helpline number 118, and that upon registering a complaint, the consumer is provided with a token number as well as the expected time for resolution of the complaint.

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Briefs

Forces thwart terrorist bid

MAKRAN: Security forces foiled an attack on the protection squad of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Tump in Tump district of Makran Division, security sources said on Friday. According to security sources, terrorists belonging to Fitna al-Hindustan targeted the vehicle of the Deputy Commissioner Tump in an attempt to abduct personnel of his protection squad. Security forces responded promptly and effectively, thwarting the attack and foiling the abduction attempt, the sources said. All personnel of DC Tump's protection squad were rescued safely and in time, according to the security sources. During the operation, the attackers fled the scene, leaving behind a vehicle and weapons, the sources said. - APP

Modi meets Iranian president

TEHRAN: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Friday and underscored the need to protect the freedom of navigation and commerce, and the safety and well-being of seafarers, India's foreign ministry said. The talks were held on the eve of the annual summit of Brics leaders in the Indian capital, which will see the participation of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, among others. India is walking a tightrope in the conflict, boasting historical and cultural ties with Iran, strong, strategic relations with Israel and close friendships with Arab countries, where millions of its nationals live and work. The South Asian nation has been particularly affected by attacks on vessels transiting the region, which have killed at least 10 Indians. - APP

NA Opp leader and PM to hold consultations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Consultations have begun between the offices of the opposition leader and the prime minister to arrange a meeting following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's letter to National Assembly Opposition Leader Mehmood Khan Achakzai regarding the appointment of a new chief election commissioner (CEC), Achakzai said in a statement. A day ago, Dawn, citing an official source, reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz had decided to initiate a dialogue between the government and opposition by inviting Opposition Leader Achakzai for mandatory consultations on the appointment of a new CEC. Earlier in August, Achakzai urged the prime minister in a letter to appoint a new CEC, along with two members representing Sindh and Balochistan. In a social media post on X on Friday, Achakzai said consultations had begun between the offices of the opposition leader and the prime minister following the latter's letter to schedule a meeting.

LHC bars medical colleges from expelling Afghan students

Afghan students could be sent back after completing medical education, remarks Justice Ishaq

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday barred all medical colleges in Punjab from expelling Afghan medical students amid petitions challenging their removal. Justice Khalid Ishaq heard petitions filed by more than 30 Afghan students against their expulsion from medical colleges in the province. During the hearing, the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council's (PM&DC) lawyer argued that the Afghan students did not have the required documents. "The principle across the world is that you cannot stay without a valid visa," the lawyer said. Justice Ishaq questioned how the students had been granted education visas when they were admitted to medical colleges. The judge also questioned the decision to send the students back after four years of education, observing that the students should have been heard before any decision was taken against them. The PM&DC lawyer argued that the matter concerned state security and

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Afghan women deported

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: An Afghan woman who was accused of supporting a Daesh-inspired plot in the United States and whose case was the first for an obscure and long-dormant court has been deported, the Justice Department said Friday. Nazira Hajji Zada was arrested in July at her Fort Worth, Texas, home and brought before the Alien Terrorist Removal Court on a Justice Department application to deport her from the US. On Friday, the department said that she had waived her rights to challenge her detention and had agreed to be deported. It wasn't immediately clear when or to where she was deported.

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KP AG questions maintainability of plea against PTI long march

During the hearing on Friday, KP Advocate General Utmankhel argued that an appropriate legal remedy was available to the petitioner before the Islamabad chief commissioner and that the extraordinary jurisdiction of the high court under Article 199 of the Constitution — under which a high court may take up a matter if it is satisfied that no other adequate remedy is provided by law — could not be invoked in the present circumstances

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advocate General Shah Faisal Utmankhel on Thursday questioned the maintainability of a petition filed in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against the PTI's planned protest in the federal capital on Sept 27. The PTI has announced a nationwide protest on Sept 27 to demand the release of party founder Imran Khan and mobilise people for the supremacy of the Constitution. A citizen, Waqas Ahmed, has challenged the routine move on the grounds that the protest could disrupt routine life, traffic and business activities in the federal capital. A larger bench, headed by IHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar, is hearing the case. Justice Muhammad Azam Khan and Justice Muhammad Asif are also a part of the bench. During the hearing on Friday, KP Advocate General Utmankhel argued that an appropriate legal remedy was

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Islamabad police chief replaced

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced a major reshuffle in Islamabad's police leadership, replacing Inspector General (IG) Ali Nasir Rizvi with Sohail Chaudhry. Ali Nasir Rizvi has been appointed Director General of the National Accountability and Anti-Corruption Investigation Agency (NACCIA). His tenure as Islamabad's police chief drew criticism, with officials acknowledging that law and order in the capital worsened under his watch. Rising street crime, delayed investigations, and public dissatisfaction with policing standards were cited as key concerns. Sohail Chaudhry, previously serving in Lahore, has now been entrusted with the role of Inspector General of Islamabad Police. Authorities expect his appointment to bring renewed focus on law enforcement and improved security in the federal capital. Government sources expressed confidence that the new IG will prioritize crime control, strengthen community policing, and enhance coordination with federal agencies. "The capital city requires robust policing and effective crime prevention measures. With IG Sohail Chaudhry's experience, we anticipate significant improvement in law and order," one official remarked. The reshuffle comes at a time when Islamabad faces mounting challenges, including rising incidents of theft, street crime, and public safety concerns. Analysts believe the change reflects the government's intent to restore public trust in law enforcement and ensure the capital remains secure.

Russian drones kill two in Ukraine

NEWS DESK

KYIV: An early morning Russian drone strike on a petrol station in Kyiv killed two people and hospitalized four, the city's mayor said on Friday. Fears are growing in the Ukrainian capital that Moscow has launched a new campaign targeting fuel stations there — a tactic that Russia's troops have long deployed in areas closer to the front line. "There are now two killed in the morning attack on the Kyiv gas station," Mayor Vitali Klitschko said on social media. The emergency services posted footage of a burnt out forecourt, still smoking after the drone attack. Ukrainian oil giant Ukrnafta reported two of its petrol stations were

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HONG KONG: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu shake hands following their high-profile meeting in Hong Kong. - DNA

Saudi Arabia attacks Houthis

Houthi seize Yemen's strategic Perim Island

Government forces confirmed their withdrawal from the island following heavy clashes, but vowed to launch a counteroffensive. "We will deploy weapons and aircraft to retake Perim and secure the Red Sea coast," a Yemeni military spokesperson said

NEWS DESK

ADEN: Iran-backed Houthi rebels have captured Yemen's Perim Island, a strategic outpost at the mouth of the Bab al-Mandab Strait, according to military sources. The seizure of the island, also known as Mayyun, has raised alarm across the region as it sits astride one of the world's busiest maritime corridors linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Government forces confirmed their withdrawal from the island following heavy clashes, but vowed to launch a counteroffensive. "We will deploy weapons and aircraft to retake Perim and secure the Red Sea coast," a Yemeni military spokesperson said. Coalition aircraft have already carried out strikes on Houthi positions near Mokha and Dhubbab, aiming to disrupt rebel supply lines.

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UN rallies behind Saudi Arabia

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK CITY: The UN Security Council on Thursday expressed its overwhelming condemnation of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and near-unanimous solidarity with Riyadh, as member states warned that Yemen risked sliding back into full-scale war for the first time since a 2022 truce agreement. The emergency session was requested by the UK, the council's penholder on Yemen, and Bahrain after Houthi forces launched renewed missile and drone strikes

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Afghan commander killed in Khurram

NEWS DESK

KURRAM: Security forces killed four terrorists, including Afghan national Ubaidullah Saad in a successful intelligence-based operation (IBO) against Fitna al Khwarij in Kurram District. Security sources said that the killed terrorist, Ubaidullah Saad, son of Ghulam Ghaus Salehi, was a resident of Shah Qila village in Afghanistan's Logar province and was affiliated with Fitna al Khwarij. Ubaidullah Saad was involved in multiple

terrorist activities in Pakistan, the sources said. Security forces will continue operations without discrimination against anti-state elements infiltrating Pakistan from Afghanistan. No compromise will be made on the country's peace and security and the protection of the lives and property of the people, the sources added. Earlier, on 6-Sep-2026, Pakistan security forces killed 21 khawarij in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) operations from September 3 to 5,

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NADRA, Passport services expansion essential for public: Kundi

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday directed the authorities to expand National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and Passport services to major rural areas to ensure better access to essential public facilities. The Governor issued the directives during separate meetings with Director General (DG) NADRA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khalid Inayatullah Khan and Acting Zonal Head Immigration and Passports, Farhan Shahzad at the Governor House. During the meeting, the Governor was briefed on the progress regarding the transfer of land for the construction of a NADRA building in Dera Ismail Khan. He was also informed that 26 Citizen Facilitation Centres would soon be inaugurated across the province. Governor Kundi said providing maximum convenience to the public remained among the government's top priorities and warned that negligence in this regard would not be tolerated. The meeting also reviewed measures being taken to address public issues related to NADRA services in Kurram. In a separate briefing, the Acting Zonal Head of Immigration and Passports informed the governor that passport services had been launched in phases at NADRA offices, with initial facilities already available and their scope to be expanded gradually. Governor Kundi stressed the need to bring public services closer to people's doorsteps, saying improved access to essential facilities would help ease citizens' difficulties.—APP

Four selected for Pride of KP awards

PESHAWAR: Four individuals from different fields have been selected for the Pride of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Awards, which will be presented on September 15 at COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad Campus, during the 9th edition of the Metrix Pakistan Youth Summit. The summit is being powered by the Directorate of Youth Affairs, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the organisers, a total of 368 applications were received through the official registration process at prideofkp.pk/register. Following the scrutiny and assessment of applications, four individuals were selected for the awards. The organisers said the selection was made on merit. The selected awardees include Ashfaq Ahmad of Swabi, who has been associated with healthcare services. According to his application, Ahmad developed and promoted an emergency orthopaedic, sports and spine centre in Topi, Swabi, and has independently performed more than 4,000 surgeries in a peripheral healthcare setting. Dr Faisal Khan, associated with COMSATS University Islamabad.—APP

FIFA Football for schools targets 3m Pakistani school kids

The Football for Schools programme is expected to give a significant boost to grassroots football, school sports, youth development and girls' participation, while creating a broader talent pool for Pakistan's future football teams. One editorial point: If the 3 million, 162,000 footballs and 3,000 schools figures are official figures announced at the press conference, this version is ready for publication.

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), in collaboration with FIFA, has launched the Football for Schools programme in Pakistan, setting an ambitious target of reaching 3 million schoolchildren and distributing 162,000 footballs to more than 3,000 government schools across the country. The landmark initiative aims to take football to the grassroots, provide children with greater access to sporting opportunities and create a sustainable pathway for developing Pakistan's next generation of football talent. Speaking at a press conference in Islamabad alongside FIFA Football for Schools Programme Manager Antonio Sanchez, PFF President Syed Mohsin Gilani said the programme marked the beginning of a major effort to promote football at the school level and bring more children into organised sports. "We have no shortage of football talent or young people in Pakistan; what we need is to provide them with proper opportunities," Gilani said, adding that the PFF's objective was to promote football in schools and establish regular school-level competitions. He said more than 50 government school teachers had already received master football training, while international coaches would also be brought to Pakistan to provide young players with training based on international standards. Gilani further announced that the PFF, in partnership with FIFA, was launching a Football Centre of Excellence, which would be developed to international standards and feature two football pitches, providing an important platform for youth development and high-quality training. Sanchez said the development of football in Pakistan was only at the beginning and expressed confidence in the work being undertaken by the PFF. He assured that FIFA would extend all possible support to strengthen the programme and expand football opportunities for children across the country. He said the Football for Schools initiative was primarily focused on Pakistan's youth and aimed to give children greater opportunities to play, learn and develop through football. He appreciated the efforts of PFF President Mohsin Gilani in promoting and developing the sport in Pakistan, assuring that FIFA stood fully behind the country's football development. Sanchez said the programme would initially focus on creating opportunities through school-level tournaments, coaching and



structured platforms, while providing children with the skills and environment needed to develop their abilities. He added that FIFA intended to expand the project across Pakistan, stressing that the launch was only the beginning of a broader and long-term commitment to grassroots football development. "Football talent can emerge from any country, and Pakistan is no exception. Young people simply need the right opportunities and environment to develop their abilities," Sanchez said. "I have felt tremendous enthusiasm for football in Pakistan within just a

few days of arriving," he added. Sanchez said FIFA wanted to see every child playing football while ensuring that girls in Pakistan also received meaningful opportunities to participate and progress in the sport. The Football for Schools programme is expected to give a significant boost to grassroots football, school sports, youth development and girls' participation, while creating a broader talent pool for Pakistan's future football teams. One editorial point: If the 3 million, 162,000 footballs and 3,000 schools figures are official figures announced at the press conference, this version is ready for publication.

Atif for steps to further strengthen Pakistan, Africa eco ties

ISLAMABAD (PR). The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) hosted the first Pak-Africa Roundtable Conference, chaired by FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh. The conference featured detailed discussions on promoting trade, investment, economic cooperation, and business ties between Pakistan and African nations. Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Consuls General from various African countries—including Morocco, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Kenya, and Ethiopia—attended the event.

Addressing the conference, Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, highlighted that the FPCCI is actively working to boost economic activities with African nations and will continue to play its role in solidifying trade relations. He stated that the African region holds immense importance for Pakistan, as reflected in current government policies, and that the FPCCI will serve as a bridge between the business communities of both sides. Sheikh stressed the need to enhance business-to-business (B2B)

and chamber-to-chamber connections to link Pakistan with the African market. He identified vast opportunities for investment and job creation, adding that Africa's emerging economies will play a crucial role in the future global economy. He highlighted key Pakistani sectors—including agriculture, pharmaceuticals, minerals and mining, technology, food, and infrastructure—that offer significant trade and investment potential in Africa, emphasizing that both regions should leverage their large populations, resources, and expansive markets. The FPCCI President noted that over fifty countries in the African region hold strategic value for Pakistan. Practical measures are needed to solidify economic ties, and the FPCCI remains committed to expanding trade relations and exploring new business avenues. Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hamid Asghar Khan stated that Pakistan assigns special importance to promoting trade and economic cooperation with African nations, noting that strengthening economic links with Africa

is a top priority of Pakistan's foreign policy. He emphasized that Pakistan wants to further expand mutually beneficial economic partnerships with African countries, where the private sector and business community play a pivotal role. He encouraged the Pakistani business community to fully capitalize on the opportunities available in African markets, adding that the Government of Pakistan will provide all possible facilitation to foster trade and investment. Khan noted that coordinated diplomatic and commercial efforts are required to enhance Pak-Africa ties, praising the FPCCI Roundtable Conference as a significant step forward. Ambassador of Zimbabwe stated that Zimbabwe seeks to promote trade and investment with Pakistan, noting vast potential to increase bilateral trade volume through direct business community linkages. Ethiopian Ambassador Omer Hussein Oba remarked that strong B2B connections and chamber-to-chamber cooperation could significantly boost mutual trade. He highlighted opportunities for collaboration in agriculture, industry, minerals, and technology, adding that Ethiopia can serve as a gateway for Pakistani businesses into African markets. The Ambassador of Sudan commended FPCCI's initiatives, noting the critical role of the private sector in driving bilateral trade. He highlighted potential cooperation in textiles and other sectors, assuring that Sudan welcomes Pakistani investors.—DNA

12 falcons confiscated from poachers

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department on Friday released 12 falcons confiscated from poachers into their natural habitat, contributing to the restoration of their wild population, preservation of ecological balance and maintenance of the natural food chain. Provincial Minister for Forest, Environment and Wildlife, Pir Musavir Khan Ghazi was chief guest at the ceremony and released the falcons. Conservator Wildlife Central Circle, M. Israr briefed the Minister that the falcons had been confiscated on September 10, 2026, at around 5:30 p.m. by Wildlife Department staff deployed at the Peshawar Motorway Toll Plaza. The birds were recovered from a Daewoo bus bearing registration number FSJ-444. The enforcement operation was conducted on the directions of DFO Wildlife Peshawar, Mrs. Manahil Wahab as part of intensified efforts to curb the illegal trapping, transportation and trade of protected wildlife species. Pir Musavir Khan appreciated the vigilance, dedication and effective enforcement efforts of the field staff, saying protection and restoration of wildlife populations were essential for maintaining biodiversity, ecological balance and healthy natural food chains. He said effective wildlife conservation also contributed to addressing environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change.—APP

CDWP clears seven projects worth Rs116b

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives/Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday chaired a meeting of the CDWP that approved and recommended seven development projects worth around Rs116 billion under the government's development and reform agenda. Of these, five projects costing Rs21.590 billion were approved by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP), while it recommended two major projects worth Rs94.301 billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further consideration, a news release said. Among others, the meeting was attended

by senior officials from the federal and provincial governments, Planning Commission members, the Chief Economist and Vice Chancellor PIDE. The projects covered food and agriculture, governance, higher education, information technology, sports and water sectors and were aligned with the Uraan Pakistan vision of strengthening human capital, modernizing governance, improving infrastructure and promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The CDWP approved the revised "Promotion of Olive Cultivation on Commercial Scale in Pakistan - Phase-II" project at a cost of Rs5,014.919 million. Reviewing the project,

Ahsan Iqbal recalled that the initiative was launched in 2014 under Vision 2025 and stressed the need for a professional, result-oriented approach with greater private-sector participation. He said successful private-sector olive growers should be brought into the initiative to help expand commercial production. He particularly highlighted the potential of the Kallar Kahar-Islamabad corridor and the wider Potohar belt and directed that this potential be incorporated into the project. The project envisages expansion of olive farms in Balochistan and NMDs, while the minister emphasized that olive plantations should ultimately cover one million acres.—APP

Al-Mustafa trust raises funds to expand free healthcare services

RAWALPINDI: The annual fundraising dinner of Al-Mustafa Trust was held on September 10, 2026, at Galaxy Hall, Topi Rakh, Rawalpindi, where philanthropists and compassionate citizens from the twin cities participated in large numbers and extended financial support to the Trust's humanitarian mission. The event commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Colonel Zafar Ali Sufi, followed by a Naat-e-Rasool Magbool presented by Muhammad Naeem Mirza. A documentary was then screened, highlighting the Trust's services and achievements. Chairman Al-Mustafa Trust Lieutenant General Muhammad Mustafa Khan (Retd) gave a detailed presentation on the organisation's performance and various healthcare initiatives. Later, Master of Ceremonies Brig-

adier Muhammad Sarfraz (Retd) invited the founder and patron of Al-Mustafa Trust, Lieutenant General

Ghulam Muhammad Malik (Retd), to address the gathering. In his remarks, General Ghulam Muhammad

Malik expressed gratitude to Allah Almighty for blessing the Trust's efforts with acceptance and remarkable progress. He said the organisation had expanded significantly and was now reaching communities across Pakistan. He appreciated the dedication and selfless services of the Trust's workers, directors and trustees and prayed for its continued growth and success. Over the years, the organisation has expanded its network considerably. According to the Trust, its 53 medical centres, dispensaries and mobile dispensaries are providing quality medical treatment, free medicines and diagnostic tests to around 1.8 million poor and deserving patients annually at 102 locations across the country. The Trust is a registered organisation approved by

the Government of Pakistan and undergoes an annual audit by an internationally reputed firm. The Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy has also recognised its performance, awarding it 93 percent in its detailed assessment, reflecting its governance and management standards. The Chairman and senior management of the Trust serve without remuneration, dedicating their services to humanitarian work and seeking the pleasure of Allah Almighty. Al-Mustafa Trust's medical centres provide a range of healthcare facilities, including qualified doctors, nursing staff, pharmacies, ambulances, ECG, ultrasound, X-ray and laboratory services. Major centres also offer specialist consultations in cardiology, chest diseases, dermatology, paediatrics, gynaecology and psychological healthcare.—DNA



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

SEPTEMBER

- Sept01/Libya Revolution Day
- Sept01/Tanzania Defence day
- Sept01/Uzbekistan Independence Day
- Sept07/Brazil Independence Day
- Sept09/DPR Korea National Day
- Sept09/Tajikistan Independence Day
- Sept16/Malaysia Armed Forces Day
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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Hamza reviews digital communication initiatives

Attaullah Tarar said digital media had become an effective means of disseminating information and maintaining communication with the public in the present era. He said countering negative propaganda and fabricated news against Pakistan was an important responsibility of the DCD

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President and former Punjab chief minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif on Friday visited the Digital Communication Department (DCD) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and reviewed its ongoing digital communication initiatives. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Federal Secretary Information Ashfaq Ahmed Khalil and senior officials of the ministry received Hamza Shahbaz on his arrival. Attaullah Tarar gave him a detailed briefing on the DCD's various sections, scope of work, and functions, including its use of digital technology and social media platforms for public communication. Hamza Shahbaz took a keen interest in the activities of the department and appreciated the Ministry of Information's efforts to strengthen digital communication. He said digital media had become an important means of providing timely information to the public and effectively highlighting government initiatives. He said the effective use of digital platforms could help project Pakistan's positive image and national narrative to audiences around the world. Hamza Shahbaz also appreciated the ministry's initiatives in the field of digital communication and the use of modern technology to improve outreach. Attaullah Tarar said digital media had become an effective means of disseminating



information and maintaining communication with the public in the present era. He said countering negative propaganda and fabricated news against Pakistan was an important responsibility of the DCD. He stressed the need to highlight the government's initiatives and national narrative on digital platforms in accordance with modern communication requirements. He

said the DCD and PTV Digital were playing an important role in achieving these objectives. The meeting also discussed ways to strengthen public outreach and effective communication through digital technology, social media, and other platforms. The participants also discussed measures to further expand the digital reach of content through PTV Digita . Hamza Shahbaz was

briefed on various initiatives being undertaken in the digital communication sector and the use of modern technologies to enhance public outreach. Federal Minister Rana Mubashir Iqbal, Minister of State Abdul Rehman Kanju, Prime Minister's Media Coordinator Badar Shahbaz Waraich and Prime Minister's Special Assistant Talha Burki were also present.—APP

HEC, ACCA explore avenues of collaboration

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), a globally recognised professional accounting organisation, visited the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Secretariat and called on Chairman HEC Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar on Friday. The ACCA team comprising Executive Director, Relationships, ACCA Ms. Lucia Real Martin, Chief Executive Officer ACCA Pakistan Mr Assad Hameed Khan, and other no-

tables apprised the Chairman HEC of the ACCA operations and achievements in Pakistan and appreciated HEC for its services in the higher education sector. The delegates also informed the Chairman HEC about the ACCA centres functioning in Pakistan, the accomplishments of ACCA members/graduates, and the successes of accountancy professionals exporting services to foreign reputed firms from Pakistan. The two sides discussed the potential of

collaboration, particularly in the areas of research and capacity building. They also had a detailed discussion on equivalence and accreditation of qualifications, impact of the Chartered Accountancy professionals on the national economy, and the way forward to strengthen linkages between academia and professional bodies. Chairman HEC Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar reiterated HEC's commitment to quality of higher education and research. He acknowledged the importance of Chartered Accountancy professionals for organisations, underlining the need for promoting literacy and training of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital currency, supporting entrepreneurship, and encouraging continuous professional development (CPD) in all academic disciplines including Chartered Accountancy. He highlighted the significance of the impact of professions on the national economy.—APP

Ultra-low TDS water not healthier water

ISLAMABAD: The growing use of Reverse Osmosis (RO) systems in households is prompting water quality experts to caution consumers against unnecessarily removing minerals from drinking water and treating an extremely low Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) concentration as a sign of superior water quality. In an interview with APP, Director, National Water Quality Laboratory, Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Saika Imran, said RO systems were useful where water containing excessive dissolved salts or specific contaminants requiring treatment, but their unnecessary use could remove naturally occurring minerals from otherwise acceptable water. She said a TDS concentration below 100 milligrams per litre, particularly concentration

of 20, 30 or even 14 milligrams per litre, should not automatically be considered ideal drinking water. "People often assume that if the TDS concentration is very low, the water is safe and better. This is not correct," she said. According to her, reverse osmosis removes dissolved substances, including mineral salts, from water. Therefore, where the source water already meets the relevant quality standards and is free from harmful chemical and microbial contamination, unnecessary RO treatment may not be required. She said water with TDS levels in the range of around 300 to 500 milligrams per litre could provide a more desirable mineral content, while the national drinking water standard permits TDS up to 1,000 milligrams per litre. For bot-

tled water, she said the applicable TDS standard was 500 milligrams per litre. Saika Imran explained that TDS levels naturally varied from region to region because of differences in geology and water sources. Water in Islamabad, for instance, generally had TDS levels of around 300 to 600 milligrams per litre, while freshwater sources in mountainous areas such as Hunza could have levels of around 200 milligrams per litre. In contrast, groundwater in parts of South Punjab could have substantially higher TDS, while levels in the Cholistan region could reach around 25000 to 30000 milligrams per litre, she said. She stressed that the appropriate treatment depended on the actual quality of the source water rather than simply its TDS concentration.—APP

Plan to spur electricity demand

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), led by Chief Executive Officer Javed Kureishi, on Friday met with Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari. The meeting focused on exploring strategic avenues to stimulate electricity demand, optimize existing generation capacity, reduce power sector costs, and promote electricity consumption to drive national economic activities, said a press release. During the meeting, Dr. Naveed Arshad, on behalf of the Pakistan Business Council, delivered a presentation on a strategic framework. The presentation addressed the interconnected challenges of demand and cost within the power sector, highlighting potential growth areas and proposing actionable measures for the optimal utilization of existing generation capacity.

The framework also evaluated projections indicating a potential annual demand growth of approximately 44 to 45 Terawatt-hours (TWh) over the next five to seven years. The presentation detailed opportunities to foster electricity consumption across key sectors, including electric buses and vehicles, gas-to-grid transition, agriculture, data centers, railways, and industrial operations. It was highlighted that generating incremental demand would allow fixed capacity costs to be distributed over a larger volume of consumed units, thereby helping to stabilize per-unit tariffs for end-consumers. Federal Minister Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari stated that boosting electricity demand, ensuring efficient utilization of available generation capacity, and lowering power sector costs remain central to the government's reform agenda. He emphasized that the government was actively implementing multiple measures to reduce system expenses and alleviate unnecessary financial burdens on power consumers. The minister informed that approximately 21 million consumers were currently benefiting from 40 to 50 percent power subsidies, and the government was executing structural reforms to rationalize the cross-subsidy burden. He added that lowering system expenses and establishing a more sustainable, targeted subsidy mechanism were essential to protect consumers from unmerited financial strain. The minister reaffirmed that the government would not encourage or support projects that violate the principle of least-cost generation. He made it clear that if any project deviated from the least-cost framework, the resulting financial burden would not be passed on to electricity consumers.—APP

FIA Islamabad issues travel advisory for overseas

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad Zone has advised dual nationals and overseas Pakistanis travelling to Pakistan to ensure they carry valid travel documents and meet all applicable immigration requirements before starting their journey. An FIA official told APP on Friday that dual nationals travelling to Pakistan should carry a valid Pakistani passport, National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP), or Pakistan e-Visa where applicable. The FIA clarified that Pakistani nationals working abroad could return to Pakistan even if their CNIC had expired, provided they possessed other required travel documents in accordance with applicable regulations. It advised passengers to verify relevant travel and immigration requirements before boarding their flights and ensure that their documents were in order. The agency urged travellers to check the validity of their passports and make sure their identity documents were up to date and acceptable for travel.—APP

SSP reviews Faisal Masjid, Imambargahs

ISLAMABAD :Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad, Qazi Ali Raza, on Friday visited Faisal Masjid and different Imambargahs and mosques across the federal capital to review security arrangements for Friday prayers. An official told APP that during the visits, the SSP Qazi inspected security deployment at the religious places and briefed police officers performing security duties. He directed the deployed personnel to remain alert and vigilant and ensure effective security arrangements during Friday prayers. Qazi also instructed officers to maintain close watch at their respective duty points and perform their responsibilities with full attention to ensure the safety of worshippers.—APP

IRSA releases 243,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 243,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 186,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1546.42 feet, which was 144.42 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 116,300 cusecs and 154,800 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1221.15 feet, which was 171.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 11,400 cusecs.—APP

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Briefs

FUUAST, KFU
discuss
academic
coop

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST) Islamabad and Kazan Federal University (KFU) Russia discussed further academic cooperation and preparations for the 3rd Pakistan Russia International Conference 2027, in an online meeting held.

The meeting discussed joint degree programmes, joint research and cooperation in different fields, including Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science and Pharmacy. The participants also discussed more academic interaction between teachers and students of both universities. The meeting was attended by senior faculty members and officials from both universities. From FUUAST, the participants included Dr. Hina Mudassir Director ORIC, Dr Lubna Bashir Incharge Dean, Faculty of Pharmacy, Dr Saba Bashir, Chairperson Department of Artificial Intelligence, Khawaja Tahir from the Department of Computer Science, Dr Faisal Javaid, Head of the Department IR & Mass Communication and Deputy Director ORIC, Dr. Muhammad Arif Khan and Dr. Amir Ahmed Farooqui. The KFU delegation was led by Dr Timirkhan Alishev, Vice Rector, Kazan Federal University, Dr Artem Valentinovich Krestyaninov, Acting Dean of the Higher School of International Relations and World History, Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies, KFU, Dr Rustem Chanyshiev and other faculty members and officials also attended the meeting.—APP

Plan to spur
electricity
demand, slash
power costs

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), led by Chief Executive Officer Javed Kureishi, on Friday met with Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari. The meeting focused on exploring strategic avenues to stimulate electricity demand, optimize existing generation capacity, reduce power sector costs, and promote electricity consumption to drive national economic activities, said a press release. During the meeting, Dr. Naveed Arshad, on behalf of the Pakistan Business Council, delivered a presentation on a strategic framework. The presentation addressed the interconnected challenges of demand and cost within the power sector, highlighting potential growth areas and proposing actionable measures for the optimal utilization of existing generation capacity. The framework also evaluated projections indicating a potential annual demand growth of approximately 44 to 45 Terawatt-hours (TWh) over the next five to seven years. The presentation detailed opportunities to foster electricity consumption across key sectors, including electric buses and vehicles, gas-to-grid transition, agriculture, data centers, railways.—APP

Businessmen urged support
Found Group in ICCI polls

Zafar Bakhtawari said the Founder Group is fully united and that ICCI is an excellent platform and a prestigious institution for resolving the issues of the business community

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Founder Group Mian Muhammad Tariq Sadiq has urged all traders of Islamabad to cast their votes in the ICCI elections on September 16 and support the Founder Group candidates for the resolution of their issues, promotion of business activities and a better future for the business community. He said the Founder Group has been serving the business community for the last 40 years, and its outstanding performance is a clear testament to its services. He expressed these views while addressing a dinner hosted by former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari in honour of the Founder Group leadership and candidates contesting the ICCI elections in Blue Area. Founder Group Council Members Khalid Javed, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Abdul Rauf Alam, Zafar Bakhtawari, Mian Akram Farid, Amir Waheed, Ijaz Abbasi and Chaudhry Masood, along with presidents and office-bearers of various markets of Islamabad and a large number of traders, attended the event. Zafar Bakhtawari said the Founder Group is fully united and that ICCI is an excellent platform and a prestigious institution for resolving the issues of the business community. He said ICCI membership has now become a matter of honour for traders. The Founder Group has been serving traders for four decades and has received their strong confidence in every election. He said the Council Members have kept everyone united and would continue to maintain unity and consensus. He stressed that Islamabad should be given an empowered assembly, its due share



should be allocated under the NFC Award, and the business community should be given an effective role in the local government system. Mian Akram Farid said the Founder Group's four decades of service are the strongest evidence of its performance and the confidence of the business community. He said the group has always believed in consultation, unity and collective decision-making. He urged traders to remain united and ensure the success of Founder Group candidates on September 16. Amir Waheed and Ijaz Abbasi, while introducing the candidates, said the Founder Group has always given priority to merit, capability and service. They said the current panel has the ability and commitment to effectively highlight and resolve the issues faced by the business community. They added that the Founder Group candidates genuinely represent the interests of traders. Presidential candidate Zakaria Zia said the confidence placed by the business

community in the Founder Group would be transformed into practical performance after victory. He pledged to make ICCI a more effective platform for resolving traders' issues and improving the business environment. Presidential candidate Umar Hussain said resolving the issues of the business community is their top priority. If elected, they would make every effort to facilitate traders, promote business activities and further strengthen the role of ICCI. Chaudhry Wajid Ayub said the real strength of the Founder Group lies in the trust of the business community and its strong unity. He said traders would demonstrate their confidence in the Founder Group leadership and candidates through their votes on September 16. Naveed Malik said the business community needs a strong, active and united voice to address its challenges. He said the Founder Group has always stood by traders and would continue to raise its voice for the protection of their rights. Kashif Chaudhry said practical

measures are essential to overcome the difficulties faced by the business community and create a business-friendly environment. He said the Founder Group leadership and candidates are united for the protection of traders' interests. Chaudhry Rauf said the success of the Founder Group is, in fact, the success of the business community. He said the strong participation and votes of traders on September 16 would ensure the success of the Founder Group candidates and further strengthen ICCI. Blue Area President Yousaf Rajput said the business community of Blue Area stands firmly with the Founder Group leadership and candidates and would extend its full support on September 16. Abrar-ul-Haq, Executive Committee candidate from Blue Area, said the traders of Blue Area are united for the success of Founder Group candidates. He said the vote of the business community would further strengthen the Founder Group's effective role in serving traders and protecting their interests.

University
fever leaves
affiliated
colleges
struggling

ISLAMABAD: For many students, the choice between a university and an affiliated college is increasingly driven by the name on the degree. As students favour universities for wider exposure and better career prospects, affiliated colleges are losing ground despite offering lower fees, shorter class timings, proximity to home and more personalised learning, even when the degree is awarded by a university.

Peer pressure, rankings and institutional reputation reinforce the perception that universities offer better career prospects. This leaves colleges facing the challenge of proving that they can provide equally meaningful education and opportunities.

Maryam Naveed, a BS English student at Fazaia Bilquis College of Education for Women, told APP that she chose college for its comfortable, focused and supportive environment. She credits individual attention from teachers for her academic and professional growth, which helped her secure teaching work at a government institute and an online job. She values close support and approachable teachers but notes that monitoring can sometimes feel restrictive compared with university life. She also participated in sports, student council activities, workshops and conferences. Despite recognising universities' stronger professional networks and exposure, she considers choosing college an excellent decision and says the right choice depends on a student's goals. Shaiza Fatima, a BS Physics graduate from PIES, (Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences) University, Islamabad, offers the university perspective. She told this scribe that universities provide greater opportunities for personal growth and independent thinking. University education, she said, promotes discipline and concept-driven learning. She believes students associate universities with better career prospects, while peer pressure, rankings and institutional reputation also influence their choices. However, she stressed that college and university graduates can achieve similar careers through hard work. In her view, universities offer greater freedom to think creatively, explore interests and pursue curiosity. Ms. Aysha Masood, a lecturer at Fazaia Bilquis College of Education for Women, sharing her insight with APP said that colleges can offer structured learning, close interaction with students, personalised attention and strong mentorship.—APP

Mushahid
praises Chinese
leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a special event marking the 50th death anniversary of Chinese leader, Chairman Mao Zedong, lauded his historic contributions to China and the world. The largely attended function was hosted by the Pakistan-China Institute, whose Chairman, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, delivered the keynote address. Other speakers included prominent journalist Hamid Mir and leading lawyer Salman Akram Raja. Former Speaker of the National Assembly, Syed Fakhar Imam, was the Chief Guest while the function was presided over by the former Foreign Minister and Ambassador to China, Inamul Haq. Senator Sitara Ayaz gave the vote

of thanks at the end of the function. In his keynote speech, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that Chairman Mao was among the three historical giants of the 20th century who shaped the course of history through their leadership and vision, the other two being the leader of the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin and Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Terming Chairman Mao as the builder of new China, Senator Mushahid Hussain said that during the quarter century of his rule, Chairman Mao liberated Chinese peasants from feudalism, doubled the life expectancy, increased the literacy rate from 20% to 93%, made China a nuclear power through indigenous efforts in science and technology and emancipated Chinese women, while

ensuring food, clothing, housing and basic health facilities for all Chinese. He thus laid the Foundation of today's peaceful, prosperous and powerful China. Senator Mushahid Hussain also praised Chairman Mao as the architect of friendship with Pakistan and he was the one who gave full support to Pakistan during the 1965 war against India, while also supporting oppressed causes like Kashmir and Palestine as well as the liberation movements in Africa. Senator Mushahid Hussain said that on three occasions, Chairman Mao played a decisive role in saving the Chinese Revolution and in protecting the interests of China and its people. The first was in 1935 where Chairman Mao led the Long March, which saved the Communist Party and preserved the People's Liberation Army. Then in 1966, he launched the Cultural Revolution in order to save China from the fate of Soviet Union as he feared that the Chinese system was becoming corrupted. He thus helped China to avert the fate of the Soviet Union, which broke up eventually in 1991. In 1971, it was Chairman Mao's master stroke in diplomacy through his opening to America which delinked the United States from the Soviet Union to prevent their gang-up against China.

Asifa for collective
responsibility to
protect kids from
abuse

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari on Friday said every child had an absolute right to grow up safe at home, school, in the community and increasingly, in the digital world. In a statement on child protection, she said violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect of a child could never be dismissed as a private matter, social custom or an unfortunate circumstance. "When a child is harmed, society has failed in its most basic duty of care," she said. Asifa said children across the world continued to face physical and sexual violence, trafficking, forced labour, child marriage, exploitation and abuse online. She said the United Nations had repeatedly warned that violence against children remained widespread yet preventable, adding that protecting children required political will, strong institutions and sustained action "In Pakistan, this responsibility is especially urgent," she said, adding that recent evidence concerning online exploitation of children reminded that threats to childhood were evolving rapidly. She said technology must expand children's opportunities, education and knowledge and must never become a doorway through which predators entered their lives. The first lady said child protection could not begin only after a tragedy had occurred and must begin with prevention, including informed parents, safe schools, trained teachers, responsive police and social services, stronger protection mechanisms, responsible digital platforms and communities willing to speak when they saw a child at risk. She said where a crime against a child had occurred, there must be no silence, stigma or protection for the perpetrator. "A frightened child must be heard. A harmed child must be protected. A survivor must be treated with dignity. And an offender must face the law," she said.—APP

FDE upgrades 30
science labs in schools

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Friday inaugurated 30 newly renovated science laboratories at 22 institutions of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), including Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB), F-8/4, as part of the Prime Minister's Education Reforms Programme to modernise public-sector schools and promote hands-on science education. Federal Education Minister Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui inaugurated the facilities, which have been equipped with modern scientific equipment, improved safety features and activity based workstations to enable students to learn through experimentation and inquiry. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Nadeem Mahbub, FDE Director General Javed Iqbal Mirza, senior ministry and FDE officials, heads of educational institutions, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Siddiqui said science education could not reach its full potential without op-

portunities for students to observe, investigate, experiment and discover. He said modern laboratories would help develop innovation, creativity, collaboration and critical-thinking skills among students and prepare them for the scientific and technological demands of the future. Mr Mirza said while talking to the ceremony that Phase-I of the Science Laboratories Renovation Project had been completed, covering 30 laboratories in 22 FDE institutions. The upgraded facilities comprise 15 combined science laboratories, six physics laboratories, five chemistry laboratories and four biology laboratories. According to the FDE, many of the laboratories had been established decades ago and had become outdated. They have now been redesigned and equipped according to modern scientific and pedagogical requirements. The laboratories feature activity based workstations with water, gas and electricity facilities, allowing students to conduct practical experiments and engage in collaborative learning.—APP

Pakistan, Tajikistan agree to
enhance trade cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Friday emphasized the need to further enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation with Tajikistan. He said that the existing trade volume between the two countries needed to be improved through greater engagement and by exploring new and alternative avenues of trade. The minister held a meeting with Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Yusuf Sharifzoda and discussed bilateral trade, agricultural cooperation, economic relations and ways to further strengthen ties between the two brotherly countries. During the meeting, the Tajik Ambassador conveyed an invitation to the Federal Minister to attend the upcoming Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) meeting scheduled to be held in September. The Federal Minister said that Pakistan and Tajikistan enjoyed historic, brotherly and cordial relations, rooted in shared religious, cultural and civilizational bonds. He said Tajikistan held a

special position among Pakistan's partners in Central Asia. Rana Tanveer Hussain highlighted the significant potential for cooperation between Pakistan and Tajikistan in agriculture, food processing, livestock, agricultural technology and value addition. He said both countries could benefit from each other's expertise and experience to promote cooperation in the agri-

culture and food sectors. Ambassador Yusuf Sharifzoda said that the decline in bilateral trade needed to be addressed and emphasized the importance of exploring alternative options and new avenues to revive and expand trade between the two countries.

Both sides agreed to continue efforts to strengthen trade and economic linkages, enhance busi-

ness-to-business contacts and explore new opportunities for cooperation in agriculture and food-related sectors.

The meeting also underscored the importance of regional connectivity, expanded trade and economic cooperation in further strengthening the longstanding and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan.—DNA



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Iran is betting on Hormuz

JASON D. GREENBLATT

TEHRAN believes the Strait of Hormuz is its strongest weapon in this war. The US is making it increasingly expensive to use. Iran says it struck two American vessels and eight oil tankers in the Gulf this week. The US says the claim that Iran hit American warships is false, and separate reports of merchant ships being struck do not confirm Iran's account of the tankers. Whatever the real scale, the attacks came after the US destroyed five Iranian oil tankers on Tuesday, 10 in a week by Central Command's count, following Iranian missile launches at an American warship. Brent crude crossed \$100 on Wednesday for the first time since late July. This is day 194 of the war against the Iranian regime, and in those 194 days Brent has closed above \$100 on only about 40 trading days, almost all of them in one concentrated stretch from mid-March to late May. Since May 22 it has closed above \$100 only once before today, on July 23, and fell back below \$100 the following day. Over the summer, the market learned to live with a mostly closed Hormuz, and Brent spent July and August between \$70 and \$95.

I have always believed the strait was Iran's principal leverage point. I also know from my own sources that the Iranian leadership sees Hormuz as its most important weapon. That does not mean they have lost interest in a nuclear weapon. They have not. It does not mean they no longer want to destabilize the Middle East. They most certainly do. But they firmly believe their ability to threaten passage through Hormuz is their best chance to keep the regime alive, threaten their neighbors and eventually regain the power they have lost during this war.

While Iran can make commercial shipping through Hormuz dangerous, the US can make it harder for Iran to sell and move its own oil.

Iran does not need to keep every ship out to make that weapon work. It needs to make passage dangerous and expensive enough that oil prices rise, insurance costs soar and governments feel pressure to make concessions to get traffic moving again. It continues to work hard at exactly that, and the cost lands first on the Gulf's own exporters, ports and shippers. Before the war, more than 100 ships a day passed through the Strait. Lloyd's List Intelligence counted about 12 per day in the last week of August, and war-risk premiums have run as high as 7.5 to 10 percent

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of a ship's hull value, according to Marsh.

President Trump is responding by materially increasing the cost to Iran. The pressure now reaches Iran's oil exports and tankers, its access to banks and financial networks and, as of this week, its airlines and the foreign companies helping keep them flying. On Tuesday, the Treasury Department sanctioned 27 Iranian airlines and the intermediaries supplying Mahan Air with aircraft. On Friday, it sanctioned a Turkish bank set up to move Iran's oil revenue from China into Türkiye and convert it to cash and gold. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said more banks will follow, week by week.

The destruction of five Iranian tankers takes that pressure beyond sanctions. While Iran can make commercial shipping through Hormuz dangerous, the US can make it harder for Iran to sell and move its own oil. Hormuz works as leverage only as long as Iran can impose more pain than it absorbs. President Trump is steadily reducing the economic value Iran gets from its oil trade while attacking the networks that sustain the regime. Tehran's strongest card is becoming much more expensive to play.

Iran is showing no sign that it is ready to negotiate in good faith. On the contrary, Tehran talks about an understanding with Oman while firing missiles at Jordan, claiming attacks on American warships, announcing an exclusion zone at the mouth of the Gulf and sending the Houthis after Saudi airports and Aramco facilities. The regime has chosen to fight its way out of the pressure rather than negotiate its way out. Economic pressure takes time, especially against a regime that has spent decades learning how to survive sanctions, so the question is: Whose clock is running? The midterm elections in the US are on Nov. 3, 55 days from today. Inside Iran there is a real focus on exerting enough pressure on oil prices and Gulf shipping before then to force President Trump to change course. I think Tehran is reading the wrong clock. Whatever happens on Nov. 3, President Trump is still president on Nov. 4, and his term runs to Jan. 20, 2029. Part of Iran's equation is those 55 days.

What should concern Tehran more is that President Trump has those 55 days and 809 more after them. Even if the Democrats do exceptionally well on Nov. 3 and make Washington far more difficult for the administration, President Trump has spent a career operating on many fronts at once. He can deal with his opponents in Congress and with the Iranian regime at the same time. If Tehran assumes otherwise, it has badly misread the man it is dealing with. Iran is betting that Hormuz can carry the regime through this war and outlast the pressure. The US is making that bet more expensive every week, and the American political calendar may not offer Tehran the exit it appears to be counting on.

Support Yemen to stop the Houthis' march toward Bab Al-Mandab

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

The hostilities resumed on Aug. 30, when the US said it had targeted two Iranian launchers on Larak Island after observing Iranian forces preparing to launch rockets carrying sea mines toward the Strait of Hormuz. Iran subsequently attacked neighboring countries and ships crossing the strait – a drill Tehran has perfected since the start of the war in February. On Sept. 2, Mohsen Rezaei, Iran's new security chief, announced a “new strategy.” In a post on X, he wrote: “You will soon witness that Iran's new strategy across the battlefield, diplomacy and countering the economic siege will shatter your foundations.” Apparently on Tehran's instructions, the Houthis shattered their four-year-old truce with the government on July 3 On Tuesday

COORDINATED attacks by Iran and its Houthi proxy resumed last week after a lull in the fighting during August. The apparent objective is to control both the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. Iran resumed attacks on shipping in the Gulf and the Houthis renewed their attacks on Saudi Arabia and parts of Yemen held by the internationally recognized government. The Yemeni government is trying to stop the Houthis' march and it needs genuine support from the international community. For days, the Houthis have besieged forces loyal to the government in the coastal city of Mokha, about 180km south of Hodeidah and 80km north of Bab Al-Mandab. It would be a major setback if the news about the fall of Mokha is confirmed, making it even more urgent to support the government in reversing Houthi advances and denying them access to the coastal area facing the strait and the hills overlooking it. The hostilities resumed on Aug. 30, when the US said it had targeted two Iranian launchers on Larak Island after observing Iranian forces preparing to launch rockets carrying sea mines toward the Strait of Hormuz. Iran subsequently attacked neighboring countries and ships crossing the strait – a drill Tehran has perfected since the start of the war in February. On Sept. 2, Mohsen Rezaei, Iran's new security chief, announced a “new strategy.” In a post on X, he wrote: “You will soon witness that Iran's new strategy across the battlefield, diplomacy and countering the economic siege will shatter your foundations.” Apparently on Tehran's instructions, the Houthis shattered their four-year-old truce with the government on July 3 On Tuesday, Iran said it had attacked more than a dozen vessels trying to pass through the Strait of Hormuz and announced a large expansion of the no-go zone extending beyond its territorial waters. While the number of ships struck is disputed, it is clear there has been an uptick in the number of attacks and the accompanying rhetoric. Apparently on Tehran's instructions, the Houthis shattered their four-year-old truce with the government on July 3, when Iran dispatched a flight by Mahan Air to Sanaa, in violation of the Yemeni government's ban. The carrier belongs to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and has been banned by many countries, including Yemen, as it is known to ferry fighters and arms to Iran's proxies. When the airline tried to land another plane at Sanaa airport on July 13, the government prevented it from doing so. However, it managed to land in another Houthi-controlled area, carrying what is believed to be a pleneload of armaments and military advisers, accompanied by a Houthi delegation. Almost immediately after returning from Iran, the

Houthi started attacking Saudi Arabia, Red Sea shipping and government-held areas of Yemen. As Iran and the US reengaged in talks in August and paused fighting in the Gulf, the Houthis also tempered their provocations. But when Iran resumed fighting in the Gulf, the Houthis followed suit. On Sept. 3, they launched a large offensive against government positions in coastal regions and the hills overlooking the Red Sea in an attempt to control the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. The clashes spread to Yemen's interior, with government forces gradually gaining the upper hand there while apparently losing ground along the coast. On Tuesday, the Houthis struck the cities of Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jazan and Najran in Saudi Arabia's southwest, injuring 73 civilians, including women and children. With these continuing attacks, all previously established channels of communication between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia appear to have broken down. The aim of the Houthi attacks is to get closer to Bab Al-Mandab and threaten shipping from the hills overlooking the waterway. This week's unprovoked attack elicited widespread condemnations and expressions of support for Saudi Arabia. Pakistan expressed its “unwavering solidarity.” Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said that the three-nation Makkah Joint Defense Agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye could become operational in the event of aggression against the Kingdom. Asif warned that “unprovoked aggression or spillover of whatever is happening in Yemen into Saudi Arabia will definitely make this agreement operational.” He added: “No one should have any doubt in this. We are bound by the terms and conditions of this pact. God willing, we will honor them in case there is a need.” The UN, Gulf Cooperation Council, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Arab League and many others condemned the Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stressed: “The US has a very strong defensive military relationship with Saudi Arabia and we're watching those events very closely.” He added: “The Houthis, in many ways, are agents and proxies of the Iranians. I think behind some of this is clearly the Iranian hand.” Iran's statements give evidence to Rubio's remarks about those links. Iranian leaders have repeatedly threatened to disrupt maritime traffic in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. In April and later in June, Ali Akbar Velayati, a former foreign minister and close adviser to Iran's supreme leader, said that the strait's security should not be taken for granted, adding that “the resistance has the capability to lock both waterways.” Also in June, hard-liner Rezaei, then-senior adviser to the supreme leader and a former com-

mander-in-chief of the IRGC, told CNN that the conflict could spread to other maritime routes, including the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea and Bab Al-Mandab. The threats from Rezaei have become more bellicose since he was appointed secretary of the Supreme National Security Council on Aug. 10. According to a report by Reuters, the closure of Bab Al-Mandab was discussed during the Houthis' visit to Tehran in July. They were asked to stand ready to close the Red Sea oil route when needed. They returned to Yemen on July 13 and immediately began attacking both Saudi Arabia and government positions, coincidentally with new threats in the Iranian official media about the closure of the strait.

It has become clear that the aim of the Houthi attacks is to get closer to Bab Al-Mandab and threaten shipping from the hills overlooking the waterway. Already, maritime traffic in that area is less than half of what it was in more peaceful times. But if they succeed in reaching the strait, international shipping could stop in Bab Al-Mandab just as it has in the Strait of Hormuz. This is part of Iran's grand strategy of controlling them to disrupt energy supplies from the region.

The oil markets understand the situation, with the Brent oil price jumping above \$101 on Wednesday, the highest in months. The price will likely go up if the fighting continues – and it will go through the roof if the Houthis manage to close this strategic chokehold, through which more than 10 percent of world trade passes. The government of Yemen is fighting to prevent this nightmare scenario from coming to pass and is seeking to safeguard freedom of navigation. It needs the generous support of the international community to complete the job and deal effectively with the multiple threats it is facing. First, in fighting terrorist groups, such as Al-Shabab in Somalia, Al-Qaeda and Daesh, which are going to take advantage of the situation, especially since some of them are known to work with the Houthis. Second, in preventing southern separatists from helping the Houthis by interfering with government forces trying to reach the front lines. Third, in helping clear sea mines and interdicting weapons Iran is likely to send to the Houthis. The Yemeni government needs international support as its meager resources and defense supplies could run out if the war is prolonged.

– Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg is the GCC assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation. The views expressed here are personal and do not necessarily represent those of the GCC.

Antimigrant protesters bringing militancy to UK's streets

Mohamed Chebaro

Surely those that marched in Dover and Portsmouth are not like the Blackshirts just yet. But the resemblance is there After two nights of vigilante, militant-style action against migrants, people have begun to question whether the UK is witnessing the rise of fascism. What we saw at the weekend was a reminder of Italy's Blackshirts, the violent private army and paramilitary wing of Benito Mussolini's National Fascist Party, which was founded in 1919. Not long after them came the Hitler Youth of the 1930s...

THE number of migrants arriving on British shores in small boats so far this year has fallen by more than 40 percent compared to the same period last year, with the people smugglers being forced into a change of tactics due to the French and British police's closures of many gaps. However, the last week has seen alarming incidents of “intimidating and thuggish behavior” – as described by a government spokesperson – by far-right activists. On Sunday, roads in Portsmouth were blocked after a boat carrying 140 migrants was brought ashore there. This came the day after similar scenes of direct action had blocked roads and disrupted travel in and out of the Port of Dover. In both incidents, organized men in black, with some wearing balaclavas, blocked traffic and even smashed the windscreens of police cars. Though largely peaceful, the protests reflect a change in tactics, raising questions about policing, intelligence gathering and the lack of robust measures taken against them. The threat posed by these groups should not be belittled. There is the potential not just for a climate of fear among immigrants but also a threat to law and order and the standing and reputation of the UK as a tolerant country. The police, the government and officials from all parties condemned the protests. Many rightly questioned the scale of Kent police's failure after it emerged a tipoff was received the day before the far-right agitators blocked Dover's roads. Details were apparently passed to police after residents of a nearby village heard individuals boasting in a pub about going to Dover to “attack Muslims.” That information fell on deaf ears and Kent police even later described the protest as “spontaneous.” Far-right groups are of the opinion that no action taken or policy adopted by the government is good enough Nick Lowles, the chief executive of Hope Not Hate, an organization that charts far-right activity, told the BBC: “To have 300, 400 people with balaclavas marching down the streets, stopping traf-

fic. You know, it's not just good enough. We need to call these people out for their politics and for the type of Britain that they want to see.” He added: “We've got different ways to register our protest. We do not go on the street. We do not burn people out of their houses. We do not cause trouble and threaten to fight the police.” We should be careful about the repercussions of these images and videos being widely shared and the normalization of those scenes and the messages they convey. They are not viewed only by people in the UK but are also disseminated around the world. Hope Not Hate was quicker than the police to inform the public that the Dover disturbances were organized by a far-right group called Patriot Platform. This new network was launched in June, uniting smaller, localized antimigrant groups. It claims to represent a Christian “army of patriots,” rallying around a vision of reclaiming the country's borders and a message that Britain belongs to the British. It seems its adherents are ready to adopt vigilante methods to combat immigration in an effort to revive the country's Christian values, as the group claims. After winning power in July 2024, the Labour governments of first Keir Starmer and now Prime Minister Andy Burnham have fought to curb the arrival of small boats across the Channel, using a variety of laws and tactics to deter people from making the dangerous journey. But the past two years have also shown that far-right groups are of the opinion that no action taken or policy adopted by the government is good enough, as if antimigrant agitation could be a conduit to replacing Labour with Reform UK, the party led by colorful euroskeptic politician Nigel Farage. Surely those that marched in Dover and Portsmouth are not like the Blackshirts just yet. But the resemblance is there After two nights of vigilante, militant-style action against migrants, people have begun to question whether the UK is witnessing the rise of fascism. What we saw at the weekend was a reminder of Italy's Blackshirts,

the violent private army and paramilitary wing of Benito Mussolini's National Fascist Party, which was founded in 1919. Not long after them came the Hitler Youth of the 1930s, which transitioned from a fringe, violent paramilitary wing into a powerful, mandatory state apparatus. Surely those that marched in Dover and Portsmouth are not like the Blackshirts of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists just yet. But the resemblance is there to be seen. This time, the “enemy” is not the Jews of the 1930s but migrants, who are seemingly considered to all be of the Muslim faith. How the government can act against this clear and present danger is not obvious, as it could end up with more ugly scenes. Already, citizens have taken it upon themselves to “defend the realm” through encircling hotels and government facilities housing migrants or wearing black uniforms and balaclavas and blocking roads and ports. Surely the obvious thing to ask is who is behind them? Who is financing and organizing these acts, which we are told are only the beginning? It is going to be very difficult for the British government to undo the damage caused by the men in black at Dover and Portsmouth. Launching an investigation to find any lapses of intelligence or policing should be the first step. Governments across Europe seem to be increasingly at the mercy of far-right forces that are riding high in a changing world. This emerging threat rests on three aspects: the far-right nativist ideology; a warped digital realm that magnifies and spreads toxic, hate-filled content; and an unexplained financial lifeline. The task ahead is daunting. The so-called patriotic drive of the far right is not aimed at migrants alone – its real enemies are democracy, liberties and the rule of law. Its methods are not peaceful protests but organized activism bordering on vigilantism and militancy.

– Mohamed Chebaro is a British-Lebanese journalist with more than 25 years of experience covering war, terrorism, defense, current affairs, and diplomacy.

Briefs

No power outages for more than two hours: PM

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The meeting was further informed that at present, except for six electricity consumers in Rajanpur district, no consumer across the country was facing disruption in power supply due to monsoon rains.

Joint opposition to convene...

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Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Fazalur Rehman at his residence. Speaking to journalists outside Fazal's residence, Gohar said, "Today was the first meeting regarding the joint opposition," adding that they decided to take all political parties into confidence on national issues. The development came a day after Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry had announced that parliamentary debate on the creation of new provinces would be held in October. The "joint opposition platform" would be used for consultation on assembly sessions and matters concerning prisoners, he added. The PTI chairman said they had previously discussed formation of a joint opposition with the JUI-F chief, adding that they agreed on the issue in the Senate and National Assembly. Gohar said the first meeting had been encouraging and that consultations would continue in the future too.

LHC bars medical colleges from...

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cited visa requirements in the United States. Even in America, you cannot stay without a valid visa," the lawyer said. Justice Khalid Ishaq remarked that the students could be sent back after completing their medical education. Rejecting the state security argument, the judge said there was no state security issue involved in the matter. The LHC judge directed that no medical college would expel the students or cancel their examination papers, and adjourned further proceedings until next Friday. The development comes a day after the PM&DC clarified that there was no nationality-based prohibition on medical education in Pakistan.

Afghan women deported

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The swift resolution averts what could have been a protracted legal fight testing the authority of the court, which was established in 1996 but until July had not received any petitions, as well as the strength of allegations against Hajji Zada. The Justice Department has described Hajji Zada as a supporter of the Daesh and identified her at the time as the mother and mother-in-law of two Afghan men who were convicted in Oklahoma of plotting an attack in the US on Election Day in 2024. The plans were foiled before any attack took place.

Afghan commander killed in...

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ARY News reported on Sunday, citing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). As per details, Pakistan security forces conducted operations against Fitna al-Khawarij in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). According to the ISPR, 10 more Khawarij hiding in North Waziristan were killed during the operations. The military's media wing said the number of militants killed in an attempted infiltration on September 1 has now risen to 25. In another clash in North Waziristan, seven khawarij were killed, the ISPR said.

New China-Pakistan business center opens in Beijing to boost trade ties

The district has established an overseas expansion service center integrating resources in finance, legal services, logistics, data and other areas to help businesses navigate market access and cross-border operations

DNA

BEIJING: A new China-Pakistan business platform has been launched in Beijing, offering companies from the two countries a new channel to explore trade, investment and broader economic cooperation. The China-Pakistan Business Center was unveiled on Sept. 8 during the 99 Global Business Linkage Festival 2026 and Fengtai District Opening-up Development Conference in Beijing. The center, located in Beijing's Lize Financial Business District, is expected to serve as a cross-border business window connecting Pakistani enterprises

with Chinese markets and business resources, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The launch comes as Beijing's Fengtai District seeks to expand services for companies entering emerging markets, particularly countries of the Global South. The district has established an overseas expansion service center integrating resources in finance, legal services, logistics, data and other areas to help businesses navigate market access and cross-border operations. For Pakistani businesses, the new center could provide a more direct channel to connect with Chinese companies, distributors and service providers, while helping



Chinese enterprises better explore opportunities in Pakistan and the wider South Asian market. The China-Pakistan initiative was accompanied by another distinctive

form of bilateral engagement at the event. Supported by the Embassy of Pakistan in China and the Pakistan Women's Association Beijing (PWAB), a China-Pakistan

thalassemia charity initiative was introduced at the opening ceremony, with a dedicated Pakistani public welfare booth set up at the event. The booth brought together Pakistani exhibitors showcasing locally distinctive products, including handmade leather jackets, footwear, wooden handicrafts, carpets and scarves, jewelry, brassware and porcelain tea sets. According to the organizers, participating Pakistani enterprises have committed to donating proceeds generated through booth operations in accordance with formal agreements with the Pakistan Thalassemia Welfare Association. The funds will be directed

toward medical assistance for thalassemia patients, medical equipment procurement and healthcare personnel training in Pakistan. The combination of business activities and charitable engagement added a people-to-people dimension to the event, allowing Pakistani products to serve not only as commercial goods but also as a vehicle for public welfare and cultural exchange. The initiative comes against the backdrop of growing China-Pakistan economic ties, with cooperation increasingly extending beyond traditional merchandise trade into logistics, services, technology and industrial collaboration.

Dressing room leaks: Rizwan, Imam 'questioned' by NCCIA for two hours

Sources say both cricketers seek additional time to submit answers; appear before agency in Lahore

LAHORE: Former Pakistan white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan and Imam-ul-Haq appeared before the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) in Lahore at 3pm on Thursday, sources told Geo News. The two cricketers were questioned by the NCCIA for about two hours at its Johar Town office in Lahore about alleged dressing-room leaks during the England series, the sources added. They were also asked about their contacts and meetings during practice sessions and matches in England. The duo sought more time to submit further responses to the NCCIA, sources added. 34-year-old Rizwan,

who hails from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is among the seven cricketers who were suddenly dropped from the Pakistan squad on an emergency basis following the team's defeat in the Lord's Test. He travelled from London to Islamabad after being dropped from the squad. Rizwan, who has represented Pakistan in 47 Tests, 103 ODIs and 106 T20Is, reportedly contacted the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) before appearing before the NCCIA at its Lahore office on Thursday. He subsequently appeared before the agency. The board has refrained from commenting on Rizwan's appearance before the agency or the

ongoing investigation. PCB sources said that since the inquiry is still underway, no comment would be made at this stage. Meanwhile, board sources said that unverified and baseless reports concerning cricketers and officials are being circulated in the media. Apart from Rizwan, Imam was also served a call-up notice as part of an investigation involving data retrieved from their mobile phones, sources told Geo News. According to sources, the PCB took custody of the players' mobile phones before handing them over to the relevant authorities. A third Pakistan cricketer has also reportedly re-

ceived a notice from the agency. The reason behind the PCB's decision to take custody of the players' phones remains unclear, as the board has yet to issue an official explanation. The development comes after Pakistan suffered heavy defeats in the first two Tests of the ongoing series against England. Following the loss at Lord's, the PCB took emergency measures by releasing seven players and two coaches from the squad. The players released were Rizwan, Imam, Salman Ali Agha, Ali Usman, Aamer Jamal, Owais Zafar and Khurram Shahzad, while head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed and bowling coach Umar Gul were also relieved of their duties with the team. - APP

KP AG questions maintainability...

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available to the petitioner before the Islamabad chief commissioner and that the extraordinary jurisdiction of the high court under Article 199 of the Constitution – under which a high court may take up a matter if it is satisfied that no other adequate remedy is provided by law – could not be invoked in the present circumstances. He also pointed out that the petition was moved against a political party that had not been impleaded as a respondent. He questioned why the PTI had not been made a party to the petition if the proceedings concerned its planned protest, while CJ Dogar asked whether the PTI was actually planning to undertake the long march. The chief justice further asked the advocate general if he agreed with statements made by KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi regarding the planned long march. The chief justice, however, did not specifically refer to any particular remarks by the KP CM. Utmanhkel replied that the office of the advocate general was not concerned with the chief minister's political narrative but only with his official responsibilities. On the court's directive, he also read out the oath administered to the KP CM and argued that he had not violated his oath through any of his statements. Referring to Article 5 of the Constitution, the chief justice asked whether the chief minister was constitutionally bound to remain loyal to the state. "CM Afridi is very much loyal to the state," AG Utmanhkel replied. He reiterated that political statements by the chief minister did not fall within the domain of the advocate general's office, suggesting that the PTI and the chief minister should be impleaded as parties to the petition.

Houthi seize Yemen's...

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The Bab al-Mandab Strait is vital for global trade, with nearly 10 percent of international shipping and Gulf oil exports passing through its narrow waters. Analysts warn that Houthi control of Perim could allow them to threaten commercial vessels, target Saudi oil tankers, and tighten Iran's influence over global energy flows. The escalation comes amid wider regional tensions, with the Strait of Hormuz effectively closed due to the Iran-U.S. standoff. This has made Bab al-Mandab even more critical as an alternative route for energy shipments. Oil prices have already surged past \$100 per barrel, reflecting fears of further disruption. Humanitarian agencies report that the fighting has displaced more than 20,000 civilians in recent days, while over 500 combatants have been killed. Observers believe Saudi Arabia may intensify military operations to prevent the Houthis from consolidating control, while Iran is expected to leverage the crisis to pressure global powers.

UN rallies behind Saudi Arabia

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on Sept. 8 against several targets in southern Saudi Arabia, including a military air base and energy facilities. The attacks injured 73 people, including women and children, and sparked fires that temporarily disrupted operations at a major oil refinery in Jazan. The UN's special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, told the council that his repeated warnings of a return to large-scale conflict had "now turned into a harsh reality." Houthi forces had seized the port city of Mokha, he said, giving them "a direct presence on the shores of the world's most vital straits" and raising further concern over freedom of navigation. Fighting had spread to Marib, Juf, and Al-Baida, he added, civilians were killed in Taiz, Hodeidah, Al-Baida and Juf, and the shelling of displacement sites in Marib had killed children and destroyed shelters.

Russian drones kill two...

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hit simultaneously on Friday morning. "This is yet another deliberate strike on civilian facilities that provide people with fuel and essential goods," CEO Bogdan Kukura wrote on social media. "There is no military objective in such attacks. This is terror against the civilian population," he added. The strikes on the petrol stations follow weeks of Russia raining down a new kind of faster, jet-powered drone on Kyiv, including to attack logistics centers, warehouses and commercial supply chains. The devices travel at up to 600 kilometers (370 miles) per hour and are harder for Ukraine's air defenses to intercept.

Pakistani delegates explore China's High-Tech capabilities

BEIJING: More than two dozen Pakistani companies and a large number of Pakistani professionals are participating in the 13th China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS), being held here from September 9 to 11, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday. Their participation highlights Pakistan's growing engagement with China's expanding services sector and creates new opportunities for business cooperation. According to Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, a major CIFTIS conference on September 11 will bring together more than 75 companies from Pakistan and China to explore partnerships, joint ventures, and new avenues of trade. "The Pakistan Pavilion stands ready to facilitate these connections. Pakistan is open for business," he said. Amid a global shift toward digitalization, the fair offers a real-world testing ground for practical technology transfer. For Pakistani stakeholders navigating supply-chain restructuring, China's deployment of artificial intelligence, green logistics, and advanced trade facilitation provides measurable, logic-driven pathways for upgrading South Asian industry. EPZA Focuses on Upgrading Export Competitiveness: For Pakistan's Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA), which operates under the Ministry of Industries and Production, the primary imperative is equipping domestic export manufacturers with mod-



ern capabilities to compete in rigorous international markets. "This is an exceptional platform to learn how we can enhance services for our industrialists," said Daim Darab Siddiqui, Facilitator for Industrialists in the Investment Promotion Department of EPZA. "CIFTIS promotes meaningful collaboration between the governments of Pakistan and China, offering direct exposure to the infrastructure our industries require." Siddiqui underscored that the value of the fair lies in actionable industrial facilitation rather than abstract diplomacy. "My focus is to guide our industrialists on future requirements, introducing them to technologies that allow them to compete globally." - APP

October 8, 2005 - The Day Kashmir Trembled



TANVEER HUSSAIN

ON October 8, 2005, life was moving along its usual course, just as it did every other day. Then, at around 8:50 in the morning, the majestic mountains of Kashmir suddenly began to tremble. Within moments, a powerful earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale shook Azad Kashmir and vast surrounding areas. Its epicenter was near Muzaffarabad. The devastating disaster claimed the lives of nearly 80,000 people, injured hundreds of thousands and left millions homeless. Where cities had been bustling with life only moments earlier, there were suddenly piles of rubble everywhere. Several areas

looked like the ruins of ancient Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. School buildings collapsed, burying innocent children beneath the debris. Even hospital staff who had dedicated their lives to serving humanity fell victim to the disaster. When the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Muzaffarabad collapsed, hundreds of patients, doctors and Army personnel were trapped beneath the rubble. Homes, markets, government buildings and hospitals suffered extensive damage. Everywhere, there were scenes of devastation. In some places, families were desperately trying to recover the bodies of their loved ones from the ruins; in others, people were searching beneath the rubble for any sign of life. Thousands remained trapped under the debris for hours and, in some cases, for several days. Those whose homes had survived relatively intact were also afraid to go inside because of the danger of aftershocks. To make matters worse, heavy rain began to fall after the earthquake, and then the electricity supply also failed. Darkness engulfed everything. Beds, blankets and other necessities were still inside the houses, but many homes

had either collapsed completely or developed such dangerous cracks that entering them meant putting one's life at risk. Millions of people spent that terrifying night in the cold and rain under the open sky. With no widespread access to mobile phones at the time, people were desperately worried about the safety of their loved ones, unable to know whether they were alive or dead. Another tragic aspect of the disaster was that the earthquake struck at a time when winter was beginning to set in across the mountainous regions. The homeless had neither proper shelter nor enough warm clothes or food. Roads leading to remote mountainous areas were blocked by landslides, cutting off many villages from the outside world. Reaching such places with relief supplies was an enormous challenge. Yet, in the midst of this devastating situation, the people of Pakistan once again demonstrated that humanity is the greatest force in times of crisis. Large numbers of people from across Pakistan began making their way towards Kashmir to help the victims. The government, Pakistan Army, religious organizations, welfare groups and ordinary cit-

izens all shared a common goal: to rescue those trapped under the rubble and deliver food, medicines, blankets and warm clothes to the survivors. The soldiers of the Pakistan Army played a central role in the rescue and relief operations. Where roads had disappeared and vehicles could no longer reach, soldiers carried relief supplies on their shoulders to some of the most difficult and remote areas. Helicopters were used to deliver food, medicines and tents to isolated communities and to evacuate the injured to safer locations. Later, several countries, including the United States, also provided helicopters, aircraft, medical teams and relief supplies. The international community did not leave Pakistan alone in this hour of need. The United States pledged a total of \$510 million in assistance, while its military helicopters carried out thousands of flights, delivering relief supplies and transporting thousands of people to safe locations and medical facilities. A U.S. mobile military hospital in Muzaffarabad also provided medical treatment to the injured. Kuwait announced \$100 million in assistance, while Japan provided financial aid as well as experts, military personnel and heli-

copters for relief operations. NATO also launched a major humanitarian operation in Pakistan. Around 3,500 tons of relief supplies were delivered, while engineers, medical personnel, helicopters and other specialists took part in the rescue and relief effort. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Japan, European countries and many others also extended assistance in different forms. Doctors, engineers, rescue specialists, tents, blankets, food and medical supplies arrived in Pakistan from different parts of the world. It was a time when the world demonstrated that natural disasters have no borders—and neither does humanity. The Government of Pakistan also provided financial assistance to help affected families rebuild their homes and restore their lives. Through the combined efforts of the international community and the people of Pakistan, the foundations of a new life were gradually laid in the devastated areas. At the Donors' Conference held in November 2005, dozens of countries and international organizations pledged billions of dollars for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Two decades have now passed since that tragedy, yet October 8, 2005, remains one of the most pain-

ful chapters in our collective memory. The earthquake did not merely destroy buildings; it also taught us a profound lesson about the fragility of life. No matter how much wealth, property, status or comfort a person possesses, everything can become meaningless in the face of a single act of nature. The earthquake also taught us that, in the most difficult moments, it is human beings who come to the aid of other human beings. When everything seems to be lost, extending a helping hand, giving someone a blanket, rescuing an injured person from the rubble or providing shelter to a homeless family can become an act of immense kindness. Today, when we look around and see the comforts and luxuries of our lives, we should never forget October 8. Wealth, fame, beauty, youth, status and all the luxuries of this world are temporary. What remains is our character, our deeds and the mercy of Allah. Whatever Allah has blessed us with, we should accept it with gratitude. And whatever we have not received, we should accept with patience and pray to Allah for something better. For the true beauty of life does not lie in constantly seeking more; it lies in recognizing what we have as a blessing and being grateful for it.

Briefs

**Gwadar
Fishermen's
registration,
boat
inspection
begins**

GWADAR: Under the provincial government's fisherman-friendly policy, the registration, measurement, and inspection of Gwadar fishermen's boats has commenced. The entire activity is being carried out under the supervision of Assistant Director Fisheries Muhammad Aslam Askani, on the special instructions of Director General Fisheries Balochistan Atiqullah Khan, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. In this regard, the Fisheries Pasni inspection team visited various landing areas in Pasni, where fishermen's boats were registered, measured, and inspected. On the occasion, fishermen were advised to complete the registration of their boats as soon as possible and obtain cards for their crew members so that they do not face any difficulties while fishing in the deep sea. Fisheries Officer Muhammad Yunis and Inspectors Zarif Noshervani, Rahim Bakhsh, and Hasil Khan were also present with the inspection team.—APP

**Gold prices
fall by Rs
5,600 per tola**

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24-karat gold in the local market decreased by Rs5,600 per tola on Friday, settling at Rs456,736, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold fell by Rs4,801 to Rs391,577, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold decreased by Rs4,401 to Rs358,958. In the international market, the price of gold declined by \$56 to \$4,342 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs253 to Rs6,871, while the price of 10 grams of silver fell by Rs217 to Rs5,890. The international price of silver also declined by \$2.53 to \$63.92 per ounce, the association added. — APP

**Cooking was
already an
artform in
Bronze
Age Syria**

COPENHAGEN: While the folk of Bronze Age Europe were mostly making do with simple stews and bread, people in Syria were already importing ingredients and using pots of differing temperatures to support "sophisticated" cuisine, researchers said on Friday. The evidence from Danish experts suggests people living in what is now the city of Hama 4,500 years ago were already enjoying dishes of simmered goat, gazelle and cereals. The city's cooked used pots with different heating properties depending on the type of meal they were about to prepare, much as we choose between cast-iron or non-stick frying pans today. Mette Marie Hald, from the National Museum of Copenhagen, and her team reached the conclusion after examining animal bones, plant remains and fats from inside cooking pots found in the city. "It feels a bit modern, actually, the way that you have different pots and you have different sort of serving wares," the archaeobotanist told AFP. Locally produced pots were made from clay and calcite, while others were made from clay mixed with basalt and were imported from as far away as China. Meals could be prepared with imported ingredients such as gazelle, which itself came from much further east. Hald said the evidence of "sophisticated cooking" they had uncovered in Hama was supported by recipes written down in much later periods. Danish archaeologists started digging in Hama in the first half of the 20th century, she said, so there has been quite a lot of research on everyday life there. But she added that they had not really focused on food culture before. "This is a period of kingdoms, well-organised cities and stratified societies," she said. — APP

Pak Chengdu consulate hosts grand reception to mark

The local audience enjoyed Pakistan and Chinese artistic collaboration and expressed that the bilateral relations between China and Pakistan should touch new heights in future

DNA

BEIJING: The Consulate General of Pakistan in Chengdu hosted a grand reception marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China at Wanda Reign Chengdu. Mr. Tanvir A. Bhatti, Consul General of Pakistan in Chengdu, presided over the event. Mr. He Yanzheng, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Sichuan Provincial People's Congress and Ms. Zhang Tao, Director-General of the Foreign Affairs Office of Sichuan Province were the chief guests. The gathering brought together consular representatives of multiple countries stationed in Chengdu, people from all walks of life in Sichuan, as well as members of the Pakistani community in southwest China to mark this important milestone in bilateral relations. A video message by H.E. Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China was also broadcasted. He noted that culture serves as living testimony to friendship, with art giving tangible expression to the heartfelt bonds between peoples. He recalled the



profound friendship forged by Pakistan and China through 75 years of shared weal and woe, and extended sincere gratitude to all sectors in Sichuan for their consistent support for Pakistan-China friendship.

Mr. He Yanzheng, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Sichuan Provincial People's Congress, spoke at the reception. He extended felicitations on the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplo-

matic ties. In his speech, he highlighted that Sichuan will leverage its comparative strengths, broaden people-to-people and cultural exchange channels, advance multi-faceted sub-national interactions with Pakistan, and contribute Sichuan's share to the China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. The reception featured distinctive Sino-Pakistani cultural displays and performances. An exhibition of Chinese and Pakistani calligraphy works was displayed, where calligraphers from both countries engaged in artistic exchanges. The artistic presentations from Chinese and Pakistani sides offered guests an immersive experience of the time-honored cultural affinity shared by Pakistan and China. Special Qawali performance by Pakistan's Marifat Sufi Band remained hallmark of the event. The reception enabled Chinese and foreign guests to mingle, exchange greetings and converse on friendship and cooperation. The local audience enjoyed Pakistan and Chinese artistic collaboration and expressed that the bilateral relations between China and Pakistan should touch new heights in future.

Jam, Hong Kong chief vow stronger eco ties

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan met Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), China, Mr. John Lee Ka-Chiu, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepen trade, economic cooperation and people-to-people linkages between Pakistan and Hong Kong. Mr. YAU Ying Wah, Algernon, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of HKSAR, and Pakistan's Consul General in Hong Kong, Mr. Riaz Ahmed Sheikh, were also present during the high-profile meeting. During the meeting, the Chief Executive appreciated Minister Jam Kamal Khan's strong address at the Belt and Road Summit earlier in the day, particularly his message of international cooperation, connectivity and shared economic prosperity, said a release issued here on Friday. Mr. John K.C. Lee thanked Pakistan for its role in promoting peace and contributing towards regional stability, noting that reduced tensions and greater stability were vital for global economic growth. He also appreciated Pakistan's leadership and constructive engagement in this regard. The Chief Executive highlighted the longstanding and close relationship between Pakistan and China and acknowledged its positive contribution to the Belt and Road Initiative. He also appreciated the efforts of the Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong for bringing the two sides closer and promoting greater exchanges in recent years. Minister Jam Kamal Khan thanked the Chief Executive for Hong Kong's warm hospitality and reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to its historic relationship with China, while emphasising the importance Pakistan attaches to expanding its trade and economic partnership with Hong Kong. The Minister highlighted the presence of a significant Pakistani diaspora in Hong Kong and acknowledged its valuable contribution to Pakistan's economy, particularly through remittances and stronger people-to-people linkages. Seeking to unlock new avenues of cooperation, Jam Kamal Khan called for greater engagement in trade in services, aviation, finance and business-to-business connectivity. He particularly urged Hong Kong to explore the resumption of Cathay Pacific flights to Pakistan, saying improved air connectivity could support business, tourism and commercial exchanges. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen cooperation and explore new areas of mutual economic interest. Minister Jam Kamal Khan also extended an invitation to Chief Executive John K.C. Lee to visit Pakistan. Earlier, the Federal Minister held a separate meeting with Mr. Algernon Yau, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of HKSAR, and exchanged views on expanding bilateral trade and economic engagement. Mr. Yau appreciated Minister Jam Kamal Khan's strong support for the Belt and Road Initiative expressed during his summit address. The Commerce Minister proposed deeper institutional and business engagement through the exchange of business delegations, improved aviation connectivity and enhanced cooperation in finance, services and trade. The meetings reflected Pakistan's broader push to translate its longstanding friendship with China and Hong Kong into stronger commercial linkages, greater business interaction and new opportunities for trade and investment. —DNA

Zelensky urges more int'l pressure on Russia for civilian deaths

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky chided the international community Wednesday for not taking a tougher stance against Russia over its escalating bombardment of civilian areas of Ukraine. At the end of August, Russia launched a week of nighttime and daylight attacks on Kyiv in its heaviest sustained bombardment of the Ukrainian capital since its full-scale invasion began more than four years ago. The relentless missile and drone strikes have continued this month and aim to sap civilian morale, Ukrainian officials say.

International economic sanctions on Russia and efforts to isolate Moscow diplomatically haven't stopped the invasion. Zelensky urged countries to step up the pressure. "Unfortunately, there has been too little response from the international community to these strikes, which are taking people's lives practically every day," he said on social media. "But a response is needed — Moscow must not go into the winter believing that it can get away with missile and drone terror without

consequences," he said. The United Nations said last month that increasing Russian aerial attacks killed or wounded more Ukrainian civilians in July than in any month since March 2022, with 437 killed and more than 2,600 wounded. In all, more than 16,800 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and more than 51,000 wounded since the Russian invasion, according to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. Moscow always denies it aims at civilians and says it is targeting military-related facilities. The US has

renewed its push to end the fighting, sending special envoys over the weekend to Kyiv and Moscow, although Washington's efforts haven't yet delivered any substantial progress. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said late Tuesday that the Ukraine-Russia talks were "substantive" but much remains to be done. Kyiv apartment block residents reel from a drone strike. Russia's aerial attacks overnight into Wednesday killed at least two people and wounded seven, Ukrainian officials said, as Moscow fired ballistic and cruise missiles as well as drones at six regions. Four of the wounded were in a 22-story residential building in Kyiv's Darnytskyi district, where a drone damaged the 11th floor and started a fire on the 12th floor, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said. Olha Smal, 62, who lives on the 12th floor, said the blast wave flung her across her kitchen. One of her bedrooms caught fire, and smoke quickly filled the apartment, she said.—APP

Fenced off: Thailand builds border wall after Cambodia clashes

PONG NAM RON, Thailand: A concrete fence topped with looping barbed wire runs for a kilometer along the Thai-Cambodia border, punctuated only by marker stones erected during French colonial times. It is the first stage of an 8.4-kilometer (5.2-mile) wall being installed by the Thai military in the east of the country, following last year's deadly clashes with its Southeast Asian neighbor. Standing 3.6 meters (11.8 feet) high and comprising reinforced concrete, a mesh of galvanized steel and rolls of barbed wire, the barrier runs through farmland in Chanthaburi province. "We built the fence to prevent illegal activities," notably the smuggling of people and goods, Captain Prachya Hantim, commander of the Royal Thai Navy Marine Task Force in Chanthaburi, told AFP during a visit on Thursday. Thailand and Cambodia have been at odds for decades over the demarcation of their 800-kilometer border, and deadly clashes broke out in July and then December last year. The neighbors signed a ceasefire agreement in late December, but both sides accuse each other of truce violations. Not far from the fence is a small Thai village, home to fewer than 200 people who grow corn and fruit, including durian and longan. Villagers say the structure has cut into farmland along the porous border, but those who spoke to AFP were broadly positive. "We accept it, we accept losing some land in order to gain security," said Suwin Muangmeung, who runs a grocery store. She acknowledged she does not always know where the border actually is. "It gives us a sense of security in our daily lives, since our plantations are along the border," added village chief Itchira Aranchaiyasiri. "We never really know when Thailand and Cambodia will reconcile, or when we'll be able to communicate with each other properly. But having this fence here helps." The wall would cause some disruption, he said: "In the past, we used to come and go freely, or visit each other quite easily." But he added: "We have to adapt". The border was largely drawn up during negotiations between Thailand — then known as Siam — and France, which controlled Cambodia as part of its Indochina colonies between 1863 and the mid-1950s. Gates through the new wall have been designed to accommodate existing multilingual stone markers, whose inscriptions include the words Siam and "frontiere" — French for border. Captain Prachya insisted the structure was "entirely within Thai sovereignty — 100 percent". "Every single step follows the law and can be checked. In fact, Cambodian forces inspect our work at every stage," he said. Thailand closed its borders with Cambodia after the fighting, which drove half a million people out of their homes. Most have since returned, although 20,000 Cambodians are still displaced. Storekeeper Suwin, 62, is old enough to remember vast numbers of refugees coming over the border to escape the fighting that followed the fall of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in 1979. "My feeling on the fighting was different when I was young. I did not feel anything seriously," she told AFP. "But when I see the losses from the most recent fighting, my heart aches." She asks her military customers what she should do to ensure her safety. "They told me to be careful," she said, adding that she has a bunker at her house, just in case.—APP

Govt committed to business friendly approach: Talal

ICCI to act as one window platform between business community, govt deptts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), led by President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, called on Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry and discussed the sealing of commercial plazas and other critical issues confronting Islamabad's business community, including CDA-related regulatory matters, Floor Area Ratio (FAR) charges, parking requirements and compliance requirements. The ICCI delegation also highlighted concerns arising from the sealing of commercial plazas following the unfortunate fire incident at the PIMS Nursery, emphasizing that while public safety and strict adherence to fire-safety standards are of paramount importance, enforcement measures should be implemented through a transparent, consultative and facilitative mechanism so that businesses are not subjected to unnecessary disruption. The delegation stressed the need for a balanced approach under which fire and safety deficiencies are identified, communicated clearly to property owners and businesses, and reasonable opportunities are provided for corrective measures, wherever legally permissible. It was emphasized that the business community fully supports measures aimed at protecting lives and property but seeks clarity, consistency and due process in regulatory enforcement. During the meeting, it was agreed that

these and other issues would be pursued through structured consultation with ICCI, which would serve as a single-window platform for coordination between the business community and the relevant authorities. The arrangement is expected to facilitate direct engagement, timely identification of problems and practical solutions acceptable to all stakeholders. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry reaffirmed that restoring and strengthening the confidence of the business community remains a key priority of the

government. He assured the delegation that the genuine concerns of the business community would be considered and that efforts would be made to address them through a coordinated and pragmatic approach. Speaking on the occasion, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President ICCI, said that the business community stands firmly for safety standards and responsible regulation, particularly where public safety is involved. However, he stressed that regulation should facilitate compliance rather than create.

**At least
46,000 flee
escalating
fighting in
Yemen: UN**

Geneva: At least 46,000 people have been displaced since the fighting resumed between Houthis militia and government forces in southwest Yemen last week, the United Nations said Friday. "At least 46,000 people have been displaced in Yemen since fighting escalated last week," the UN's International Organization for Migration said in a statement, warning that "the number is alarmingly rising by the hour".—APP

**Cyberattack
ruled out in
UK air traffic
glitch**

LONDON: UK air travelers faced more misery Wednesday with nearly 400 flights scrapped across the country, as Britain's air traffic control service scrambled to recover from a technical glitch which it ruled out as a cyberattack. After 1,746 flights were canceled Tuesday following the outage, another 399 were axed Wednesday — the majority to and from London Heathrow, one of Europe's busiest airports — according to aviation analytics firm Cirium. More than 330,000 passengers were affected over the two days of disruption, with 155,000 seeing their flights canceled while around 180,000 experienced delays, industry body Airlines UK said. "We ended up sitting on our plane for just over five hours," Matt Erster, 28, who was returning to Boston via Heathrow from his honeymoon in Paris on Tuesday, told AFP. When they were finally allowed to disembark from the plane, "it turned into a gigantic, chaotic scene", Erster said. The baggage collection "felt like an apocalyptic situation", and there were no hotels available in a two-hour radius. "It was the worst travel experience I've ever had." - 'Thorough' probe - The head of the National Air Traffic Services (NATS), Martin Rolfe, said "we have at this point ruled out cyber" activity as a cause. "We don't believe it was a cyberattack," he told BBC radio. Rolfe said NATS will be doing a "very, very thorough" investigation into what exactly caused the incident. National carrier British Airways said it had to cancel nearly 550 flights — 200 of them Wednesday — due to the incident, which it said affected 85,000 of its customers. This week's travel chaos followed a technical glitch in July last year that saw scores of flights to and from the UK canceled, prompting anger from airline chiefs. Britain suffered its worst air systems failure in years in 2023, with more than 700,000 passengers affected after hundreds of flights were delayed or canceled.—APP

**Sweden races
into final
stretch before
election**

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's party leaders campaigned on Friday in the final stretch of a close election race that could see either the center-left take back power or the far right enter government for the first time. While Europe is dominated by right-wing governments, opinion polls in Sweden have for months shown the opposition left-wing bloc holding a strong lead ahead of Sunday's general election, although this has narrowed considerably in the final days of the campaign. "The most important thing is that the right wing wins, to continue what they have started," pensioner Kurt Flodin, 79, said of Conservative Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson's outgoing government. In particular, he wanted Kristersson to continue efforts to curb organized crime that has plagued the country for years, he told AFP for an upmarket neighborhood of Stockholm. The premier made tackling crime one of his top priorities during his four-year term. For their part, the center-left Social Democrats — which governed for the better part of the 20th century and remains Sweden's biggest party — have pledged to help struggling households pay their bills and bolster the welfare state. These issues matter to Jenny Larsson, a theater worker who celebrates her 54th birthday on election day. She told AFP she was unhappy with politicians "blaming immigration for things that are not caused by immigration.—APP

Briefs

Intel reports warned Spain of mass entries in Ceuta

MADRID: Spanish Intelligence and security reports declassified had warned of possible "mass entries" by migrants into Ceuta just before thousands crossed into Spain's North African enclave from Morocco. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez had told parliament when he announced he would declassify these 40 documents that there was "no information that conveyed the magnitude" of "the crisis we were going to suffer" on July 30 and 31. "Internal communications have been detected in migrant groups in which they are trying to organise mass entries on the night of 29/07/2026," reads a document from CENIF, a border division of the National Police, issued on the eve of the arrival of more than 70,000 migrants in the small Spanish territory. CENIF said almost 1,000 people swam in from Morocco between July 1 and 28 — "a drastic upward trend compared to last year," and "a consolidated and priority threat". An urgent memo from the National Intelligence Centre on the afternoon of July 29 warns of "several calls to carry out entries into Ceuta" in Facebook groups, one of them with over 160,000 members. In a message on X Wednesday, Sanchez said that "with the information available at the time, no one could have foreseen the migration crisis that unfolded on the 30th and 31st. No competent body did so. Neither in Spain nor in the EU." — APP

Fourth polio case reported in KP

SHAMIM SHAHID

ISLAMABAD: The National Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Eradication (NEOC) on Friday confirmed a fourth polio case in Pakistan during the ongoing year, with the latest case reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district. The government-led Polio Eradication Initiative urged all parents and caregivers to ensure that their children are vaccinated during the upcoming door-to-door campaign from Sept 21 to 27, and in every subsequent campaign, to protect them from lifelong disability. Three of the four cases have been reported from southern KP, where security-related access constraints have resulted in children missing critical vaccination, allowing wild poliovirus to continue circulating. "Thanks to the safe and effective polio vaccine, Pakistan has reduced polio cases by 99.8 per cent, from an estimated 20,000 cases in the early 1990s to 31 in 2025. So far in 2026, four cases have been reported, mostly concentrated in southern KP," a statement issued by the polio programme said. "While overall poliovirus transmission in the country has declined since 2025, transmission remains persistent in southern KP," it added.

Vance seizes Maga spotlight as Republicans begin looking beyond Trump

Vance's speech stays largely on script, unlike Trump's free-wheeling speaking style

WASHINGTON: Vice President JD Vance took centre stage at the Republican convention in Dallas on Thursday in a speech seen as an early test of his 2028 White House prospects, offering a message of nationalistic pride that resonated with the pro-Trump crowd. As party leaders grapple with slipping approval ratings and uncertainty over November's midterm elections, they are also looking for signs of who might eventually carry President Donald Trump's movement forward. Trump, who followed Vance to the stage with closing remarks, offered little commentary on his vice president's high-profile appearance, instead imploring supporters to vote Republican on November 3, the stated purpose of the first-of-its-kind midterm convention. The president has yet to signal who he would back in 2028, though Republicans frequently speculate about

whether Vance or Secretary of State Marco Rubio is best positioned to lead the party after he leaves office. With Trump constitutionally barred from seeking a third term, Vance is widely regarded as a leading contender for the nomination. He spoke of an "American birthright" to safety and prosperity that he said Democrats opposed. "Don't give the country over to a bunch of crazy people because you happen to disagree with us on a policy issue here and there," Vance said, reinforcing a convention theme that cast Republicans as the party of common sense and Democrats as the party of "crazy." Vance's 40-minute speech stayed largely on script, unlike Trump's free-wheeling speaking style, and at times resembled a presidential nominating convention speech. But in one apparently spontaneous moment, a protester waved a Mexican flag, prompting Vance to respond, "Well, my friend, if you love Mexico so much, get your ass over there," triggering a loud round of applause and chants of "USA, USA, USA." Vance then offered to buy the man a plane ticket. Supporters cited the 42-year-old's youth and appeal to grassroots activists as reasons he is well positioned to advance the party's populist, anti-establishment agenda once Trump leaves the political stage. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Dr Oumer Hussein Oba presenting traditional Ethiopian items to Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Foreign Secretary, who retired from service on September 11, 2026. — DNA

Hormuz shipping traffic falls to single digits, data shows

Five vessels entered the strait, including a Panamax vessel carrying dry bulk cargo, a Handysize vessel laden with steel, a Handysize vessel carrying grains, a medium-range tanker loaded with dirty petroleum products, and a Supramax vessel carrying dry bulk cargo

DNA

SINGAPORE: Vessel transits at the Strait of Hormuz fell to seven on Thursday from 11 the previous day, preliminary ship-tracking data showed on Friday, well below the 10-day average of 15. Of the seven vessels, two Panamax ships exited the strait, one carrying fertilizer and the other sailing in ballast, according to data from ship tracker Kpler as of 0306 GMT. Five vessels entered the strait, including a Panamax vessel carrying dry bulk cargo, a Handysize vessel laden with steel, a Handysize vessel carrying grains, a medium-range tanker loaded with dirty petroleum products, and a Supramax vessel carrying dry bulk cargo. The figures exclude any vessels that might have crossed the strait with their Automatic Identification System transponders turned off to avoid detection. Meanwhile, two ballast QatarEnergy-linked vessels, the Al Ghashamiya and the Al Daayen, appeared

South Korea, Iran FM discuss Hormuz

NEWS DESK

SEOUL: The foreign ministers of South Korea and Iran discussed the Strait of Hormuz in a phone call on Friday, Seoul said, days after confirming it was weighing a "contribution" to the waterway's security. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly pressured ally South Korea to provide help for the war in the Middle East, saying Seoul rejected his request for assistance in securing the waterway that is crucial to global oil supplies. South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun spoke by phone with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi at Tehran's request, "discussing the recent situation in the Middle East", and the Strait of Hormuz, the foreign ministry in Seoul said in a statement.

PM urged to address deteriorating press freedom environment

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Nine press freedom and human rights organisations, including international bodies, have penned a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, urging him to take "immediate action to address the country's rapidly deteriorating press freedom environment". The organisations include the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters without Borders, CIVICUS, the International Federation for Human Rights, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the International Press Institute, the Freedom Network, Bolo Bhi and Rural Media Network Pakistan. In the letter, the organisations said they were writing to express "deep concern over Pakistan's rapidly deteriorating press freedom climate". "In recent months, journalists in Pakistan have disappeared, faced detention and crim-

inal investigations, been blocked from reporting in certain parts of the country, and lost jobs due to government and law enforcement agencies' pressure," the organisations said. "These developments have further eroded the ability of Pakistani journalists to report freely and safely," they said. The organisations also said it was "alarming" to see the growing use of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (Peca), and investigations by the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) against journalists for reporting on matters of public interest. They said that authorities had also introduced restrictions on reporting in AJK, "imposed internet and telecommunications blackouts, taken regulatory action against broadcasters, and imposed draconian new guidelines requiring journalists working for international media outlets to obtain authorisation before reporting outside the three main cities".

Azma defends use of official jet

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's use of the provincial government's jet during her recent private visit to London has triggered a fresh controversy, with opposition leaders questioning the use of an official aircraft for a family event. CM Maryam travelled to London last week to attend the graduation ceremony of her daughter Mahnoor and returned to Lahore on Wednesday. The government insists the CM bore all expenses of the trip. Responding to criticism that the CM used the official jet for a private visit, Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari rejected the allegation. "Absolutely incorrect. The Punjab chief minister paid all expenses for her London trip out of her own pocket," she said in a post on X on Thursday.

Chaos at North Korean Embassy reception

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: What was meant to be a solemn celebration of North Korea's National Day turned into an embarrassing diplomatic episode in Islamabad last night. According to reports, the reception hosted by the North Korean Ambassador took an unexpected turn when a Pakistani minister, during his speech, expressed support for the "reunification of both Koreas." The remark reportedly irked the North Korean Ambassador, who engaged in a heated debate with the minister in front of stunned guests. Witnesses described the exchange as tense, with the atmosphere quickly deteriorating. Matters worsened when guests allegedly refused to leave the venue after the allotted time, insisting on consuming more liquor served at the reception. The North Korean Embassy was eventually forced to call in security to disperse the crowd. Diplomatic sources suggest that liquor sales are a known source of revenue for North Korea's missions abroad, and the embassy's decision to serve alcohol at the event may have contributed to the disorderly scenes. The incident has raised eyebrows in diplomatic circles, with observers noting that such public disagreements and unruly behavior are rare at official receptions.

PSX remains under pressure amid rising oil prices

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) remained under pressure on Friday as rising international oil prices amid the US-Iran conflict raised concerns over higher domestic fuel prices, fuelling inflationary pressures and fears of a possible interest rate hike. The benchmark index touched an intra-day low of 166,141.17, down 2,723.87 points, or 1.61%, from the previous close of 168,865.04. During the session, the KSE-100 index hit an intra-day

high of 168,240.89, still 624.15 points below the previous close of 168,865.04. Ismail Iqbal Securities Chief Executive Officer Ahfaz Mustafa said the market was facing pressure from rising international oil prices amid the US-Iran conflict and the resulting increase in petroleum prices locally. "The rise in energy costs will push inflation up, and participants are pricing in a slight chance of a rate hike in the next monetary policy," he said. — DNA