



Islamabad POST

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US President to give citizens \$5000 if his party wins

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Pak to continue backing Saudi Arabia: Sajjad

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Kundi calls for industrial growth in KP

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FO briefing

Pak reaffirms support for Saudi Arabia

The Spokesperson strongly condemned recent Houthi attacks on civilian and economic sites in Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jazan and Najran, reiterating Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kingdom's sovereignty, territorial integrity and prosperity

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan, the newly appointed Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, delivered his first weekly press briefing on Thursday, outlining Pakistan's active diplomatic engagements and reaffirming solidarity with Saudi Arabia amid regional challenges. The Spokesperson strongly condemned recent Houthi attacks on civilian and economic sites in Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jazan and Najran, reiterating Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kingdom's sovereignty, territorial integrity and prosperity. "Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the leadership, government and brotherly people of Saudi Arabia," he said, pledging continued support for efforts to promote peace and stability in the region. Ambassador Khan highlighted Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar's recent telephone conversations with counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Egypt, Kuwait and Norway. These discussions focused on strengthening

Foreign Office clarifies UAE visa policy rumors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office has dismissed media reports and rumors regarding the United Arab Emirates' visa policy for Pakistanis, stating that the facts are contrary to speculation. According to the spokesperson Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan who made this clarification during his weekly press briefing on Thursday, the number of visas issued to Pakistanis by the UAE is nearly seven times higher than the number of individuals repatriated from the country.

Over the past five years, an average of 7,000 to 8,000 Pakistanis have been sent back annually for various reasons, including illegal residency, overstaying visas after three months, involvement in fights, or minor criminal activities. In contrast, approximately 40,000 to 50,000 Pakistanis have been granted visas each year during the same period, securing employment opportunities in the UAE. The spokesperson emphasized that these figures highlight the strong demand for Pakistani workers in the UAE and reaffirm the positive trajectory of bilateral relations.

bilateral ties, advancing regional co-operation, and coordinating positions on pressing international issues. On Palestine, Pakistan joined Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Qatar,

Türkiye and the UAE in condemning Israeli proposals advocating the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza.

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After much ado

Parliamentary debate on new provinces to be held next month

Tariq Fazal clarifies Islamabad adopting new governance model, not becoming separate province

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry announced Thursday that parliamentary debate on the creation of new provinces would be held in October. In a statement, the minister said that the National Assembly and Senate sessions scheduled for that month would provide the appropriate forum for the discussion. He said no sessions of the National Assembly or Senate were being held in September, but that October sessions would facilitate the debate. "The real place for the debate on new provinces is Parliament House," he said. Clarifying a separate but related matter, Tariq Fazal said Islamabad was not going to become a new province, but was instead moving toward adopting a new governance model. "There has been no talk of making Islamabad a separate province," he said. The announcement came amid a growing

political debate over Pakistan's governance structure, with ruling allies Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) appearing divided over the creation of new administrative units or provinces. The debate was ignited in July by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, who said the country's governance system had "collapsed" and called for fundamental reforms, arguing Pakistan should move toward new administrative units with greater powers devolved to lower levels. He later stood by his assessment that the system had been "completely destroyed", while clarifying he was referring to its deterioration over the past 80 years rather than any particular government. On September 5, Naqvi said the creation of new administrative units should be based on the people's wishes, describing the moment as requiring a system reset. "Reset does not mean breaking down the system.

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IMF mission to arrive on Sept 23

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: An International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission is due to visit Pakistan on September 23 for a biannual review of the country's economic performance and implementation of the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the \$1.4bn Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) for the period ending June 30, 2026. Pakistan is currently under a \$7 billion, 37-month IMF programme, aimed at stabilising the economy through fiscal discipline, structural reforms, and measures to support long-term growth. Official sources said that during an almost two-week visit

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MPs irked over poor mobile services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication on Thursday expressed serious concern over the poor quality of mobile and internet services and decided to summon telecom companies (telcos) to seek direct answers over persistent network problems. The committee was also informed by an official of the Engineering Development Board (EDB) that efforts were underway to seek tech giant Apple's entry

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ISLAMABAD: Dr. Musadik Masood Malik, Federal Minister of Pakistan for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Ambassador of Ethiopia Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Prime Minister Coordinator on Tourism Sardar Yasir Ilyas, Dean of the African Group Mohamed Karmoune, Ambassador of Morocco, Additional Foreign Secretary Hamid Asghar Khan and others cutting cake to celebrate the Ethiopian New Year. - DNA

New Year and Hibri day

Relations with Ethiopia on a positive trajectory, says minister Musadik

Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador of welcomed the guests and extended Ethiopian New Year greetings to all present

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad has celebrated Enkutatash, the Ethiopian New Year, and Hibir Ken (Unity in Diversity Day) with the national zeal and fervor under the theme "Diversity: Ethiopia's Adornment." The celebrations brought together diplomatic corps, Parliamentarians, government officials, the business community, media, civil society, and members of the Ethiopian community in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. H.E. Dr. Musadik Masood Malik, Federal Minister of Pakistan for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, graced the occasion as chief guest. H.E. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Advisor and National Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Tourism, and H.E. Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa), attended as guests of honor. H.E. Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, welcomed the guests and extended Ethiopian New Year greetings to all present. In his remarks, the Ambassador highlighted the significance of Enkutatash, marked by the blooming of the Adey Abeba flower, and noted that Ethiopia is the only African nation never colonized, with

its own Ge'ez calendar and alphabet. He said the New Year's message of hope, resilience, and a bright future mirrors the growing Ethiopia-Pakistan relationship, strengthened by Pakistan's Look Africa and Engage Africa policies and joint economic and environmental efforts. He thanked Dr. Musadik for his unwavering support and then formally invited Pakistan to support Ethiopia's hosting of COP32 in Addis Ababa in 2027, calling for stronger climate cooperation for the Global South. The Ambassador also paid tribute to Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan on his retirement, thanking him for his role in strengthening Pakistan-Africa and Ethiopia-Pakistan relations and wishing him success ahead. The Federal Minister for Climate Change extended the Ethiopian New Year greetings and praised Ethiopia for its economic and green transformation under the leadership of Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed. He recalled his participation in the celebrations in the Ethiopian New Year during his stay in Chicago, calling the people of Ethiopia lovely and its culture absolutely vibrant. The Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tourism appreciated the growing bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan, reiterating his commitment to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

Briefs

Pakistan to eradicate polio: PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that Pakistan is committed to achieving the shared goal of completely eradicating polio. The prime minister made the remarks during his meeting with a delegation from the Gates Foundation in Islamabad. The delegation included representatives from the Gates Foundation, Kalpana Kochhar and Anita Zaidi. During the conversation, the premier commended the Gates Foundation's continued support and partnership during Pakistan's developmental challenges. "The national program for polio eradication enjoys patronage at the highest level. The Gates Foundation has played a commendable role in eradicating polio, health, nutrition, financial inclusion, and the welfare of society's vulnerable segments," he added.

Algeria severs ties with UAE

NEWS DESK

ALGERIA: Algeria said on Thursday it had decided to sever diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after what it described as a series of "provocative or hostile" actions by Abu Dhabi despite "repeated warnings". The Algerian foreign ministry said the UAE's actions had reached a point where they could no longer be considered acceptable or tolerable and that it had "exhausted all means of preserving bilateral relations." The UAE ambassador was summoned to the ministry, informed of the decision and given 48 hours to comply, the foreign ministry said. The UAE Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

PTI lawyers justifies Sept 27 long march

Thank you very much for wanting to strengthen the judiciary," the chief justice remarked sarcastically, before asking: "Is the judiciary so weak that you wish to strengthen it?"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar on Thursday admonished Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advocate General Shah Faissal Utmankhel after he described PTI's September 27 protest call as a move in support of the judiciary. 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, had challenged the planned move in the IHC on the grounds that the protest could disrupt routine life, traffic and business activities in the federal capital. On Tuesday, CJ Dogar decided to form a larger bench to hear the petition, observing the sensitive nature of the matter. As Utmankhel appeared before the IHC on Thursday, he contended that the PTI long march was also being organised in support of the judiciary.

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Hammad Azhar's wife, mother approach court

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: PTI leader Hammad Azhar's mother and wife on Thursday approached an anti-terrorism court (ATC) against the police for allegedly denying his family and lawyer access to him. Ishrat Azhar, the mother, and Marriam Hammad, the wife, filed a joint petition through their counsel, Abuzar Salman Niazi. The petition stated that police were not allowing Hammad's family members and lawyer to meet him even though a suspect in custody had the legal right to access his counsel and family. It contended that the police's action was contrary to law. The petition requested the court to direct the authorities to allow

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KP colleges introduce digital attendance

PESHAWAR :The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Higher Education Department has launched a Student E-Attendance System in degree colleges across the province, enabling parents to monitor their children's attendance through SMS alerts from home. Provincial Minister for Higher Education and Local Government Meena Khan Afridi inaugurated the system at a ceremony held at Government Degree College here on Thursday. Representatives of Zong Telecom, Secretary Higher Education, Director Higher Education, teachers and students attended the event.

The Higher Education Department and Zong Telecom also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to facilitate the digital attendance system. Speaking at the ceremony, Meena Khan Afridi said the system would regularly inform parents about their children's attendance through SMS, including details of classes in which a student remained absent. He said the department was continuing its digital transformation in various areas to modernize higher education. The department had already introduced an e-transfer system and launched a ranking system for universities in the province. The minister said a hard-area allowance was also being introduced to encourage teachers serving in remote and difficult areas, providing additional support to those posted in such locations. He also announced the construction of a state-of-the-art hall at Government Degree College Peshawar to provide students with modern educational facilities.—APP

Sindh CM hails scholars as future leaders of Pakistan

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday hailed five outstanding students from Sindh who secured fully funded postgraduate scholarships to the University of Oxford under the Bhutto STEM Scholarship Programme, describing them as future leaders, researchers and innovators who would help shape the future of the province and the country. Addressing a felicitation ceremony at the CM House, the chief minister said the Sindh government firmly believes that education is the strongest catalyst for social transformation and economic progress. "Every investment made in the education of our youth is an investment in the future of Sindh. These scholars represent the aspirations, talent and resilience of our young generation," he said. The ceremony, organized by the College Education Department, was attended by Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Culture Minister Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Minister for Works and Services Ismail Rahu, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Rajvir Singh Sodha, senior government officials, representatives of the University of Oxford and the Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP), parents, faculty members and students.—APP

Tahir for technology-driven Pak-China eco partnership

The ICCI President emphasized that cooperation should result in tangible outcomes, including local manufacturing, technical training, technology transfer, employment generation, export development and stronger Pakistani technological capabilities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood has called for transforming Pakistan-China economic cooperation into a technology-driven partnership focused on joint ventures, technology transfer, local capacity building, research and development and skilled employment, saying Pakistan must move from being merely a consumer of technology to becoming a partner in innovation. He was speaking while welcoming a nine-member Chinese delegation led by Capt. Abdul Khaliq Rabbani Khar, Managing Director, HKH Pvt. Ltd., and Mr. Lu Guoping, General Manager, Shanghai Pumin Technology Development Co. Ltd., at the ICCI. The meeting explored new avenues of cooperation in Safe City and Smart City solutions, advanced security systems, drones, robotics, UAV technology, data centres, education, skills development and research and development. Sardar Tahir Mehmood said Pakistan's large young workforce, expanding digital economy and growing demand for modern technological infrastructure offered significant opportunities for Chinese companies and investors. The ICCI President emphasized that cooperation should result in tangible outcomes, including local manufacturing, technical training, technology transfer, employment generation, export development and stronger Pakistani technological capabilities. He said ICCI would provide its platform to connect Chinese technology companies with Pakistani businesses and institutions and facilitate commercially viable partnerships. Capt. Abdul Khaliq Rabbani Khar briefed the participants about the delegation's engagements in China and Pakistan and said the visit had opened promising prospects for cooperation in advanced security technologies, drones, robotics, UAV systems, education, research and skills development. He said Chinese partners had expressed willingness to support R&D activities in Pakistan and cooperate in establishing centres of excellence, student exchange programmes and specialized training facilities. He also highlighted ongoing engagement with Pakistani institutions and government stakeholders to advance cooperation in strategically important technological areas. Lu



Guoping, General Manager, Shanghai Pumin Technology Development Co. Ltd., made a comprehensive presentation on the company's technological capabilities, achievements and experience in different sectors. He highlighted potential areas of cooperation with Pakistani institutions and businesses, particularly in advanced security solutions, drone and robotic systems, Smart City technologies, data centres, R&D and other emerging technologies, and expressed interest in developing mutually beneficial partnerships in Pakistan. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub delivered the welcome address and moderated the session,

facilitating direct interaction between the Chinese delegation and the Pakistani business community. ICCI Vice President, in his vote of thanks, appreciated the delegation for visiting the Chamber and sharing its technological expertise and investment potential, expressing confidence that the engagement would pave the way for stronger and long-term business cooperation between Pakistan and China. Those present included ICCI Executive Members Imran Minhas and Zulfurnain Abbasi, former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry and other prominent members of the business community.

5th European film festival returns to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The 5th European Film Festival (EUFF) returns to Pakistan this weekend, with events scheduled across Islamabad, Sialkot and Jamshoro/Hyderabad. The festival brings audiences together through European and Pakistani cinema, live performances, interactive experiences and cultural exchange. Presented by the European Union and curated by Olompolo Media, the festival will feature European feature films, documentaries and experimental shorts, alongside a curated selection of Pakistani short films. The program will also include live performances, a children's segment, interactive installations and an industry session for filmmakers, said a release issued here on Thursday. The European Film Festival was first held in Pakistan in 2021

and since then, the travelling festival has been held in Gilgit, Quetta, Peshawar, Gujrat, Faisalabad, Multan, Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, with a focus on cultural exchange and dialogue through cinema. The 2026 edition will take place in Islamabad on 12 and 13 September at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). In addition to film screenings, the program will include a Stand-up Comedy & Improv Showcase and a Children's Segment featuring a family-friendly European film with a storytelling and music session. The festival will then travel to Sialkot on 16 and 17 September, with events taking place at Government College Women University and GRID by BLCK, before concluding in Jamshoro/Hyderabad on 29 and 30 September at SABS University of Art, Design & Heritages. A live musi-

cal performance will form part of the closing program. Alongside the screenings, audiences will have access to immersive experiences which will be an integral part of this year's festival, with installations including EUFF-Pakistan Express – a train installation, Wall of Fame, Human Slot Game alongside a Reading Nook and Kids' Corner. This year's program will also include the Filmmakers' Mixer, a new Industry Program session. The festival is aimed at young audiences, families, members of the film fraternity, film enthusiasts and diplomats. Its objectives include expanding cinematic experiences and conversations, using cinema as a means of connecting cultures, and creating spaces for collective activities and engagement. The 5th European Film Festival (EUFF) 2026 is curated and organized by Olompolo Media.—DNA

MoU to strengthen digital court services

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalize and strengthen cooperation for the Court's website and mobile application services. The MoU was signed on behalf of the Supreme Court by its Registrar, while NADRA was represented by its Chief Projects Officer. Under the agreement, NADRA will provide hosting, backend infrastructure, technical support and maintenance for the Supreme Court's website and mobile application, besides facilitating approved upgrades and improvements in line with the Court's requirements. The digital platforms provide public access to cause lists, judgments and other authorized judicial and institutional information, enabling litigants, lawyers and the general public to access court information and services more conveniently.—APP

Pakistan, Rwanda move to boost trade ties

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh has assured Rwanda of Pakistan's full support in facilitating investment, promoting direct trade and strengthening institutional cooperation between the two countries. The minister held a meeting with Rwandan High Commissioner to Pakistan H.E. Harerimana Fatou, who called on him along with First Secretary Kwibuka Esdras at the BOI. Senior BOI officials, including Director General Abdul Samie and Director Irfan Marwat, also attended the meeting, said a release issued on Thursday. The discussions focused on expanding bilateral trade and investment, improving business-to-business engagement, strengthening

institutional cooperation and identifying new areas of economic partnership between Pakistan and Rwanda. Welcoming the Rwandan envoy, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh appreciated the continued engagement of the Rwanda High Commission with the Government of Pakistan and the Board of Investment. He said Pakistan attaches great importance to strengthening economic relations with Rwanda and is committed to providing maximum facilitation to investors and businesses from both countries. The High Commissioner recalled her repeated interactions with him, saying that her engagements had made her feel at home in Pakistan. A major focus of the meeting was the upcoming Rwanda-Pakistan Investment Forum, scheduled to be held from

September 23 to 25, 2026, in Kigali. Harerimana Fatou formally invited the federal minister to participate in the forum, which she said would bring together government representatives, investors and private-sector stakeholders from both countries. She explained that, following discussions with Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, the event had been designated an Investment Forum because of the scale of investment opportunities and the emphasis on private-sector participation. The Rwandan side expressed strong interest in Pakistani sectors like pharmaceuticals and textiles, where Pakistan holds established industrial capabilities. Rwanda also identified key products—including rice, medical equipment, and sports goods—as areas with high export potential to the East African country. The High Commissioner informed the minister that business relations between Rwanda and Pakistan had grown by more than 55 per cent since she assumed her diplomatic responsibilities in Pakistan, highlighting the considerable scope for further expansion.—APP

Tarar vows further steps to improve legal edu

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday said the government would continue taking all necessary measures to improve legal education, describing it as the foundation of the justice system and stressing that its quality directly affected the Bar and the Bench. Addressing the launching ceremony of the Annual Report of the Directorate of Legal Education of the Pakistan Bar Council, the minister said several reforms had already been introduced to address longstanding issues in legal education. "He said evening law courses had been abolished to curb substandard and 'ghost' admissions in law colleges, while the Law-GAT had been introduced to improve the standard of students entering the legal profession. Senator Tarar said that after his election as a member of the Pakistan Bar Council in 2010, he had been given the responsibility of Chairman of its Legal Education Committee, following which efforts were undertaken to introduce reforms in the sector. He said numerous issues had emerged in law colleges over the past 15 years. While several private institutions had performed well after legal education shifted from the public to private sector, the weakening of regulatory oversight had also contributed to various problems. The minister said a decision was taken in 2022-23 requiring every law college to share student data with the Pakistan Bar Council, while degrees of institutions failing to provide the required data would not be registered. He said a five-year LLB programme had initially been introduced to bring legal education in Pakistan in line with international standards, which was subsequently reduced to four years in view of international requirements and competitiveness.—APP

Kundi lauds PCSIR's role in industrial uplift

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday lauded the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) for its contribution to scientific research and industrial development. He said this during a visit to the PCSIR Laboratories Complex here at University Road. Director General PCSIR Sohail Ameer Marwat briefed the Governor on the institution's establishment, services, research facilities, ongoing Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) projects and future plans. The Governor was also informed about the performance and services of the Medical Botanical, Material Science, Food Technology, Calibration, Engineering Services and Dimension Stone centres. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi appreciated the research and technical contributions of PCSIR scientists and experts, saying the institution was rendering valuable services in the fields of defence, engineering, minerals, cosmetics and herbal products. He said PCSIR's research capabilities were playing an important role in promoting the country's scientific and industrial progress. The Governor also inspected products developed by various PCSIR centres and praised their quality. He urged the institution to showcase its products at exhibitions across the country to highlight Pakistan's research and industrial potential. On the occasion, DG PCSIR Sohail Ameer Marwat presented an honorary shield to Governor Kundi. Earlier, the Governor was warmly received by the DG upon his arrival at the PCSIR Laboratories Complex. Earlier, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday said the province had the largest youth population in the country and abundant talent, stressing that providing young people with better opportunities and facilities would enable them to contribute effectively to national development. Addressing the Physical Therapy Convention as chief guest here at Nishtar Hall, organised by the Pakistan Physical Therapy Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Governor said developed countries attached great importance to physical therapy as an essential component of the healthcare system. Provincial Minister for Health Khaliq-ur-Rehman, former MPA Nighat Orakzai, Association President Dr Pirzada Khattak, Riphah University Dean Dr Asghar Khan, Khyber Medical University Dean Dr Haider Dareen, Rehman Medical Institute Dean Dr Muhammad Bin Afsar Jan, Helping Hand Regional Manager Aminullah, Dr Irfanullah and a large number of healthcare professionals and physical therapists attended the convention. The Governor praised the efforts of Nighat Orakzai in promoting physical therapy in the province and acknowledged her role in addressing issues faced by professionals of the field. He assured participants that every possible effort would be made to resolve the demands of physical therapists and said he would personally advocate for their rights. Kundi said efforts would also be made to establish an allergy centre in Peshawar on the pattern of Islamabad and pledged to take the demand for house jobs for physical therapists before the provincial health minister and chief minister.—DNA

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- Sept01/Uzbekistan Independence Day
- Sept07/Brazil Independence Day
- Sept09/DPR Korea National Day
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Ahsan calls for tax reforms to power Uraan Pakistan

The minister said fundamental reforms in the tax system were required to mobilize domestic resources. He said, with the efforts of the Prime Minister, the government’s tax collection performance had improved significantly over the past two years

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said comprehensive tax reforms, resource mobilization and digitalization were essential to provide the financial engine for achieving the targets of Uraan Pakistan and transforming the national economy. Chairing a meeting on the National Economic Mission of Uraan Pakistan concerning tax reforms and digitalization, he said Mission-2, tax reforms and resource mobilization, was one of the 11 National Economic Missions approved by the National Economic Council (NEC) and served as the financial engine for the entire Uraan Pakistan programme. He said the required resources for the other 10 National Economic Missions could not be generated without increasing revenues through reliable and effective sources. The 11 missions, approved by the NEC, were aimed at transforming Pakistan into a \$1 trillion economy by 2035, he added. Ahsan said the NEC was the country’s highest constitutional economic decision-making body and stressed that the targets of Uraan Pakistan were achievable, but required transformation in every sector. “Achiev-

ing the target of a \$1 trillion economy while maintaining the status quo will be extremely difficult,” he said, adding that the desired level of economic transformation could not be achieved if the country continued to operate on a business-as-usual basis. “We have to move forward at digital speed, not at the speed of a tortoise,” he said, stressing that Pakistan would have to move away from conventional approaches and rapidly transition towards a technology-driven digital economy for sustainable economic growth. The minister said Pakistan had undoubtedly achieved economic stability, but the current level of stability was not sufficient to ensure sustainable growth. He pointed out that in 2018, the size of the development budget in relation to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was considerably higher, whereas today the development budget had shrunk significantly in proportion to the GDP. “If we are achieving stability with a development budget of Rs2,000 billion, it cannot be termed complete economic stability,” he said, stressing the need to increase the size of the national economy for sustainable development. Ahsan said Pakistan needed to rapidly shift to-

wards a technology-based economy, while the shrinking development budget posed a major challenge. “If we cannot complete ongoing development projects, how can we initiate new projects?” he asked. He said the existing structure of the national budget left little room for further expansion in development expenditure. Therefore, generating new resources and effectively mobilizing existing ones was imperative for economic growth. The minister said fundamental reforms in the tax system were required to mobilize domestic resources. He said, with the efforts of the Prime Minister, the government’s tax collection performance had improved significantly over the past two years. “Our major challenge is to increase the tax base and tax collection while reducing tax rates,” he said, adding that reducing the tax burden and increasing the number of taxpayers should be a key priority of the country’s economic policy. Ahsan also stressed the need for a substantial increase in exports, saying that Pakistan would have to significantly enhance its exports if it wanted to achieve rapid economic growth. He said increasing exports was currently among

Pakistan’s most important national priorities and called for setting clear, achievable export targets based on comprehensive analysis and research. The minister said the Ministry of Planning had the responsibility to prepare a comprehensive national development plan under the guidance of the Prime Minister and provide it to the relevant ministries to ensure effective implementation. He directed that the analytical and research capabilities of the Ministry of Planning be utilized to set clear export targets and determine the potential contribution of different sectors. “We have to determine which sectors can generate how much in exports and what measures will be required to achieve these targets,” he said. Ahsan said tax reforms and digitalization of the economy were essential not only for increasing domestic resources but also for documenting the economy and improving transparency and efficiency. He reiterated that Pakistan’s economic transformation required a departure from traditional methods, stronger resource mobilization, technology-driven growth and a sustained focus on exports to achieve the objectives of Uraan Pakistan.

Founder Group United, set to win ICCI elections



ISLAMABAD: Former Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik has said that the Founder Group Council is united and all decisions are taken through mutual consultation. After extensive deliberations for the ICCI elections, consensus has been reached on key issues in the best interest of the Chamber, and the Founder Group will win the elections with a heavy majority. He expressed these views while addressing a luncheon hosted by Senior Vice President Jinnah Super Faseeh Ullah Khan and General Secretary Abdul Rehman Siddiqui in honour of the Founder Group leadership and ICCI candidates at Jinnah Super. A large number of traders and leaders of the Founder Group attended the event. Former ICCI President Zafar Bakht-awari said that the Founder Group’s

primary objective is to provide Islamabad’s business community with a strong, dynamic and effective platform. He said that after winning the ICCI elections, the Chamber’s voice would be further strengthened and issues relating to taxation, electricity, rising business costs and market regulations would be taken up effectively with the relevant government institutions. Prominent business leader Wajid Ayub said, “We stand with the Founder Group. On October 16, the white votes of Tarnol will be polled.” He said the business community was united behind the Founder Group and its candidates. ICCI presidential candidate Zakaria Zia said that the Chamber would be made more active and stronger, while resolving traders’ issues, promoting business-friendly

policies and maintaining effective engagement with government institutions would remain the top priorities. Presidential candidate Umar Hussain said that strong coordination between the Chamber and the business community was essential for resolving business-related issues. He said the Founder Group was united to meet the expectations of traders and would raise their issues on a priority basis after electoral success. Abdul Rehman Siddiqui said that the traders of Jinnah Super would play their full role in ensuring the success of the Founder Group leadership and candidates, while Faseeh Ullah Khan said that the traders of Jinnah Super stood in complete solidarity with the Founder Group.—DNA

MoU to expand financial, business support for youth

ISLAMABADP: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme (PMYP) on Thurs-

day signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance outreach, awareness and access to financial and business development support for Micro, Small

and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and aspiring young entrepreneurs across Pakistan. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production

(Federal Minister) Haroon Akhtar Khan and Chairman PMYP Rana Mashood Khan witnessed the signing ceremony, said a news release.—DNA

Pakistan’s exports to UK up by 8.42%

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s export of goods and services to the United Kingdom (UK) witnessed an increase of 8.42 per cent during the first month of the current fiscal year (2026-27) compared to the exports of the corresponding month of last year,

the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. The overall exports to UK were recorded at US \$220.257 million during July 2026 against exports of US \$203.149 billion during July 2025, SBP data revealed. On a month-on-month basis, exports to UK also regis-

tered significant growth, increasing by 16.88 per cent in July 2026 compared to the exports of \$188.442 million in June 2026, the SBP data revealed. Meanwhile, overall Pakistan’s exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 9.38 per cent in the first months, from US \$2.750 billion to US \$3.008 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the import side, Pakistan imports from UK into the country during the month under review were recorded at US \$80.048 million against US \$65.138 million last year.—APP

Chinese healthcare firm gives Rs 1m to hero PIMS nurse

ISLAMABAD: Representatives of a leading Chinese healthcare company on Thursday have presented a cheque of Rs1 million to Nurse Razia Noreen of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in recognition of her courage in rescuing a child from a fire that broke out in the nursery of the hospital. Yan Jin, Chairperson, and Blair He, Business Manager of JFH (Jiangchuan Fuhai) of Shanghai, who are currently visiting Pakistan, presented the cheque to Nurse Razia Noreen, according to Gwadar Pro. The Chinese company has operations spanning pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and healthcare investment, surgical robotics and medical training, and is also involved in major hospital projects in China and other countries. Appreciating Nurse Razia Noreen’s

bravery, Yan Jin described her as a “real hero” and praised her courage in saving the life of a child during the emergency. She said that saving even one life meant saving a life of humanity, stressing that acts of courage and compassion transcend national boundaries. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Yan Jin also expressed her strong friendship with Pakistan and said she would use her influence to help attract greater Chinese investment and promote bilateral trade between Pakistan and China. She said the people of China have deep affection for the people of Pakistan, highlighting the close ties and goodwill between the two countries. The initiative was coordinated with the assistance of Majid Aziz, President of the Employers Federation of Pakistan.—APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, in Attock Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 5 am to 12 pm, Lalazar, Hussain Abad, feeders. In Jhelum Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Chapper Sharif, feeder. In GSO Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 09:00 am to 04:00 pm, 132kv AWC HMC Taxila and 132KV Sangiani-Burhan, from 08:00 am to 06:00 pm, 132KV Kahuta City- Palandri, 132KV New Wah-Bahtermore along with related earth switch, and surrounding areas. IESCO apologized to consumers for the temporary inconvenience and said electricity supply would be restored before the scheduled time if the maintenance work was completed earlier than expected.—APP

Over 4m containers inspected during dengue drive

ISLAMABAD: More than four million indoor containers have been inspected and over 209,000 dengue larvae detected and destroyed across the federal capital as the Capital Development Authority (CDA) intensified surveillance to prevent the spread of the mosquito-borne disease. In an exclusive conversation with the APP, a CDA spokesperson said on Thursday that around 1.24 million surveillance activities had been conducted in urban areas up to epidemiological week 37, with 582,680 houses and 4,006,378 indoor containers inspected. He said 142,379 larvae had been detected and destroyed in urban areas, while 66,758 were found and eliminated in rural areas. The figures put the combined number of larvae detected and destroyed in the two areas at 209,137. The spokesperson said 40,054 potential breeding sites had also been identified within the municipal limits. The sites were being dealt with through mechanical measures and appropriate larval-control interventions. Around 300 field workers are currently engaged in vector-control activities in urban Islamabad, while more than 600 personnel are working in rural areas, he said. The teams are carrying out surveillance of residential and commercial premises and checking locations where stagnant water can accumulate.—APP

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Briefs

IGP reviews law and order situation

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi held an important meeting with senior police officers to review law and order, counter-terrorism measures, investigation and legal affairs, professional training and service delivery to citizens. An official told APP on Thursday that the meeting was attended by DIG Law and Order and Training Muhammad Ateeq Tahir, SSP CTD Saud Khan and AIG Legal Tahir Kazim. The meeting reviewed measures to maintain effective law and order across Islamabad and strengthen action against criminal elements. The participants also discussed ways to further improve counter-terrorism measures, investigation and legal affairs, besides enhancing the professional training of police officers. The IGP Rizvi stressed effective policing and better coordination among the relevant wings to ensure timely justice and improved service delivery to citizens.—APP

11 sheesha cafes sealed after enforcing court ban

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad district administration has intensified action against sheesha cafes across the capital following orders of the Islamabad High Court, sealing 11 establishments and directing strict enforcement of the ban. Acting on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Memon, assistant commissioners conducted raids in different parts of the city. The operations were launched after receiving information about cafes allegedly operating in violation of court orders banning sheesha services. During the crackdown, authorities sealed three sheesha cafes in Sector E-11, six in the Soan Garden Civic Center area, and two in Sector I-8. Equipment and other materials found at the premises were taken into custody by the administration. Deputy Commissioner Irfan Memon directed assistant commissioners to continue operations against all establishments found violating the ban. He also instructed officials to take legal action against cafe owners who fail to comply with the Islamabad High Court's orders.

The deputy commissioner said implementation of the court's directives would be ensured in letter and spirit. He stressed that no relaxation would be given to businesses operating contrary to the law. According to the district administration, no objection certificates (NOCs) previously issued to several indoor cafes across the city have been cancelled. Officials said the decision was taken to strengthen enforcement measures and prevent the continuation of shisha-related activities. The administration further warned that legal action could also be taken against customers found present in illegal sheesha cafes during enforcement operations. Authorities said the law would apply to all those involved in activities that violate court orders.—APP

DIG reviews security arrangements

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Security Islamabad Rana Umar Farooq visited different checkpoints in the Red Zone and reviewed security arrangements and deployment of police personnel. An official told reporter on Thursday that the DIG Umar received briefings from officers deployed at various security duty points regarding the existing arrangements. During the visit, Umar inspected the security measures at the checkpoints and issued directions for further improvement. He directed the officers to remain vigilant while performing their duties and ensure effective security arrangements at their respective duty points.—APP

CSP launches of Roots Beneath the Snow

Ambassador Sigvald Hauge, Norway's Ambassador-designate to Pakistan, highlighted the history of Pakistani migration to Norway since the late 1960s and the community's significant contributions to Norway's economic, professional, and cultural life. He noted that the Pakistani diaspora has become an important bridge between Pakistan and Norway and appreciated the author's efforts to document this shared history

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized the launch of *Roots Beneath the Snow*, an audiovisual book authored by Mian Waheed Ud Din. The book explores the experiences of Pakistani migrants in Norway, the process of integration, and the enduring bonds between diaspora communities and their country of origin. In her introductory remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director, Centre for Strategic Perspectives, observed that discussions on overseas Pakistanis often focus on statistics such as diaspora size, remittances, and economic contributions. She noted that these figures represent only part of the story, as behind them are people with memories, experiences, aspirations, and enduring ties to their homeland. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman of the Board of Governors of ISSI, highlighted that *Roots Beneath the Snow* combines academic research with storytelling to explore migration and integration. He noted that the book traces the journey of Pakistani migrants to Norway in the 1970s, capturing their struggles, economic progress, family reunification, settlement, and efforts to balance traditional values with those of their adopted society. Mr. Zulfiqar Ahmed, Secretary, Workers' Welfare Fund, representing Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, emphasized



the enduring connections that overseas Pakistanis maintain with their families and homeland through remittances, investment, knowledge and skills. He stressed that the state must ensure that Pakistanis seeking opportunities abroad are equipped with the necessary skills and can pursue these opportunities safely, legally and with dignity. Ambassador Sigvald Hauge, Norway's Ambassador-designate to Pakistan, highlighted the history of Pakistani migration to Norway since the late 1960s and the community's significant contributions to Norway's economic, professional, and cultural life. He noted that the Pakistani diaspora has become an important

bridge between Pakistan and Norway and appreciated the author's efforts to document this shared history. Mian Waheed Ud Din, the book's author, explained that '*Roots Beneath the Snow*' grew out of his research on the integration of Pakistani immigrants in Norway. Describing the work as "faction", a blend of fact and fiction, he highlighted its innovative audiovisual format, comprising 36 chapters and 48 QR-linked videos. He noted that the book also traces the evolution of the Pakistani community's sense of belonging, including the gradual acceptance of Norway as home. The book's reviewers: Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Sohail Aman and Ambassador Aizaz

Ahmad Chaudhry highlighted the cultural, familial, and identity-related challenges associated with migration and integration. They emphasized the importance of balancing economic advancement with family relationships, cultural values, and ties to the homeland, while respecting the laws, values, and social principles of the adopted country. They noted that successful integration does not require abandoning one's heritage and that overseas Pakistanis can serve as meaningful bridges between Pakistan and their adopted societies, particularly in an increasingly interconnected world. The event concluded with the formal launch of the book and a group photograph.

IRSA releases 246,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 246,200 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 185,200 cusec. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1547.77 feet, which was 145.77 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 109,300 cusecs and 155,400 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1221.65 feet, which was 171.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 15,100 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 159,900, 136,300, 178,500, and 149,200 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 19,000 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 14,600 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Quaid's principles key to strong Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Renowned politician, Mushahid Hussain Syed has stressed the urgent need for Pakistan to reconnect with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision, saying that adherence to constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, equality, social justice, human rights and education is vital to addressing the country's present challenges and securing a stronger, more democratic and prosperous future. Addressing a symposium on "Quaid-e-Azam's Vision and Present-Day Pakistan" at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), he said Quaid-e-Azam envisioned a sovereign, strong, democratic and prosperous Pakistan where the Constitution and law prevailed and every citizen enjoyed equality, dignity, human rights and religious freedom. Mushahid Hussain Syed said that education, protection of human rights, empowerment and meaningful participation of women and the elimination of corruption must be made national priorities to translate Quaid-e-Azam's vision into reality. He emphasized that Pakistan's strength, stability and progress depend on sincerely implementing the principles laid down by its founder.—APP

Young population Pakistan's greatest asset

ISLAMABAD: Acting Chairman Senate Syedaa Khan Nasar has said Pakistan is fortunate to have a young population, with nearly 60 per cent of its people being youth. He described young people as the country's greatest asset and a source of hope for its future. Speaking as chief guest at the launch of a Transnational Education Partnership between the University of Lahore and the University of Plymouth, UK, at a local hotel on Thursday evening, he said investing in youth could lead Pakistan towards greater development and prosperity. He said providing young people with quality education, modern skills and access to global opportunities could promote development, prosperity and stability in Pakistan and the region. He congratulated both universities on the

partnership, saying it would further strengthen academic and educational ties between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. He said such partnerships would enable Pakistani students to access world-class education, gain international exposure and acquire modern skills. "Investing in the youth of today is, in fact, an investment in Pakistan's future," he remarked. The Acting chairman said modern education and technology-oriented skills would strengthen the national economy and create new opportunities for development. He welcomed the launch of academic programmes in computing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, business, law and health sciences. He described these fields as vital for Pakistan's economic and social development. In an era shaped

by artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, he said preparing young people for future needs was a pressing necessity. Syedaa Nasar appreciated the University of Lahore's initiative to create international educational opportunities for Pakistani students. He expressed hope that cooperation between Pakistani and British institutions would expand beyond degree programmes to research, innovation, faculty collaboration, entrepreneurship and student exchanges. Welcoming representatives of the University of Plymouth, he said education was an effective means of further strengthening relations between Pakistan and the UK. He said cooperation in knowledge, research and innovation would further consolidate the longstanding friendly ties between the two countries. The Acting chairman urged students to make the most of available opportunities, think globally and develop their skills. He also encouraged them to embrace modern technology and innovation and play their role in the country's development. He appreciated all individuals and institutions involved in making the partnership a reality and expressed his best wishes for both universities. He hoped the collaboration would provide a strong foundation for a promising future for students and the education sectors of Pakistan and the UK.—DNA

CDA continues plantation drive

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) Environment Wing is continuing its tree plantation and landscaping drive across Islamabad to make the federal capital greener, healthier and more beautiful. According to the CDA, comprehensive plantation and horticultural activities are being carried out along major roads, green belts, parks, road medians, intersections and other public spaces. Trees, flowering plants, ornamental plants and shrubs are being planted at various locations while special attention is being given to improving existing green areas and landscaping vacant and underdeveloped spaces. The Environment Wing is also replacing dead and damaged trees and plants and ensuring regular watering, maintenance and after-care of newly planted saplings to improve their survival and growth. The CDA said suitable, climate-compatible and locally appropriate plant species were being selected in line with Islamabad's environmental requirements. Alongside new plantation, the Environment Wing is carrying out pruning, grass cutting, watering and other horticultural activities to maintain the capital's existing green spaces. The Authority said the plantation drive was part of its broader efforts to protect and expand Islamabad's green cover and improve the urban environment. The CDA has also encouraged citizens, educational institutions, businesses and other organizations to participate in the plantation campaign and help protect the city's existing trees and green spaces. The Authority said the plantation activities were being monitored by concerned officers to ensure proper implementation and continued care of newly planted trees and plants.—DNA

Water projects to protect 15.76m from floods

ISLAMABAD: The government has earmarked Rs74.92 billion for 35 water-sector projects in 2026-27 to protect around 15.76 million people from future floods and add 12.8 million acre-feet (MAF) of water storage, under a broader plan involving dams, irrigation upgrades, flood management, urban water supply and real-time monitoring across the country. According to a document available with Wealth Pakistan, the 35 projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2026-27 carry a combined cost of Rs2.102 trillion, with a throw-forward of Rs 880.267 billion as of July 1. Under Uraan Pakistan, the government aims to raise surface water storage from 13.5 MAF in 2023-24 to 23.5 MAF by 2029, while the projects listed in the programme are expected to make an additional 12.8 MAF of storage available, potentially taking total storage to 26.3 MAF. The planned expansion centres on 21 dam projects, including the Diamer-Basha, Mohmand, Nai Gaj and Naulong dams, along with large, medium and small dams aimed at strengthening water security and ensuring supplies for irrigation, industry and domestic consumption.

The programme also seeks to improve water availability at the farmgate by cutting conveyance losses by 33 per cent. Farm level water availability is targeted to rise from 63.5 MAF to 84.2 MAF, supported by remodelling and lining of irrigation networks and completion of key schemes including the Pat Feeder, Kachhi Canal Phase-I, Chashma Right Bank Canal and Kaitu Weir Irrigation and Power Project Component-I. The interventions are expected to replace ageing irrigation infrastructure and develop a 1.59 million-acre command area, while water-use efficiency is targeted to improve from 40pc to 70pc by 2029. For Karachi, the programme includes the Greater Karachi Bulk Water Supply Scheme KIV, 260 MGD Phase-I, as well as improvements to the Kalri Baghar Feeder and Keenjhar Lake. The project is expected to add 260 million gallons per day (MGD) to the city's supply, raising overall availability from 650 MGD to 910 MGD. The government also plans to install a telemetry system at 27 key sites across the Indus Basin, equipped for real-time monitoring of river flows, barrage gate openings and water levels.—APP

Workshop on professional code of ethics held

ISLAMABAD: A special workshop on the "Professional Code of Ethics" was held for the non-teaching staff of Federal Urdu University of Arts Science and Technology (FUUAST), here, where the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari delivered a detailed lecture on professional responsibilities, honesty and ethical conduct. The session was held on Thursday, September 10, and was attended by almost all categories of non-teaching staff, including security guards, office attendants, supervisors, drivers, examination staff, peons and watchmen. Heads of departments and administrative officers were also present. During the workshop, the Vice Chancellor took an oath from the staff to perform their duties honestly, respect female staff and students, and work with dedication for the good name of FUUAST. The workshop also included practical activities to show how staff should perform their duties in a polite and professional manner and what kind of behaviour should be avoided at the university. In his lecture, Dr. Shinwari guided the staff about their professional and ethical responsibilities in the light of Eastern values, Pakistani social values and the university's Code of Conduct. He said that the scale or designation of an employee is only a form of

classification. A good employee is one who understands his or her responsibilities and deals with colleagues and other people in a polite and respectful manner. He said this is also the teaching of our religion and part of our social and professional values. The Vice Chancellor especially asked the staff to deal with female employees and students with respect and politeness. He said they should speak to them respectfully and avoid any unnecessary argument or confrontation. Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari said that non-teaching staff are an asset and the face of the university. "Whenever an outsider visits the university, the first interaction is often with security guards, bus drivers, admission desk staff and other non-teaching employees," he said. He therefore stressed that all staff members, including security guards and drivers, should adopt a polite, helpful and respectful attitude. The lecture also covered how different duties should be performed inside the university and what kind of actions, words and behaviour should be avoided in the workplace. The Vice Chancellor said that a professional and respectful working environment can only be created when every employee understands his or her responsibilities and performs them with honesty and good manners.—APP

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Why a UK ban on trade with Israeli settlements matters

CHRIS DOYLE

THE UK might be about to do something that should have been done during the days of David Cameron, Tony Blair or even Margaret Thatcher. How does one respond to a measure that is more than four decades overdue? According to media reports and my own government sources, the British government is finally about to impose some form of ban on trade with Israeli settlements. It will probably be announced in the second week of September after Parliament returns. Skeptics still doubt this will happen. They point to the pressure being exerted by Israel and its affiliated lobby groups, such as Labour Friends of Israel. But there are strong reasons why it will go ahead. Firstly, given Israel's record rate of settlement expansion, with 104 new settlements approved since 2022, the record levels of settler violence and the Aug. 18 tender for 1,234 homes in E1 area – the settlement project that could sever the northern and southern West Bank – it is the bare minimum any self-respecting government should be doing in the face of such flagrant breaches of international law. It is clearly the correct move. Secondly, it has broad political support outside of the hard right of British politics. New Prime Minister Andy Burnham is convinced of the argument in favor of the ban, as is Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband, alongside most of the Cabinet. Miliband pledged a set of concrete measures in response to the E1 announcement. Gone are the days of the hesitant and vacillating Starmer administration. Almost 250 British MPs have publicly endorsed such a move. Government ministers have stated that they are in favor. The Conservative and Reform parties will oppose the move but it should be uncomfortable ground for the Tories. Every single Conservative foreign secretary has opposed E1 since it was first dreamed up in the time of Yitzhak Shamir in 1991. Thirdly, there is considerable public support. An opinion poll published last week showed that 50 percent of the British public supports a ban, while only 16 percent oppose it. Far from being just a Muslim issue, as settler champions claim, a ban would have broad public backing. The government knows this. Fourthly, other states are doing the same. Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands have gone or are going down this path, while Norway has put forward proposals. Thirty

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US senators have also spoken out against E1. Britain will not be isolated at all. Will a ban make a difference? The Netanyahu government will largely ignore it, while asserting how the world hates Israel. It has already threatened to expel the UK, as it has the Netherlands, from the International Gaza Support Center that oversees the flows of aid into Gaza. The UK should jump before it is pushed, given that the center has utterly failed to provide essential aid. Even wheelchairs and crutches are banned by Israel. This Israeli government is more likely to exact its revenge not on Britain but on the Palestinians. If London was to go ahead with a trade ban, who would bet against more settlement announcements, more land confiscations and more invasions of refugee camps and towns? Far from being just a Muslim issue, as settler champions claim, a ban would have broad public backing. But some in Israel have taken note. When asked about advancing construction in the E1 area, Yashar party leader Gadi Eisenkot stated: "Not now. This is a mistake that costs us an international price." A segment of Israeli society fears becoming a pariah state. Coordinated bans on trade with settlements could also hurt the Israeli economy. Given the ever-expanding scale of the settlement economy, sanctions will increasingly sting. The UK would be the most significant state to impose a ban so far. It would also encourage others to follow suit. Symbolically, the former mandatory power doing this matters. That said, it is unlikely to dent the £6 billion (\$8.1 billion) in annual trade between the two countries. The impact will also depend on the strength of the ban. Will it include financial services as well as products? Banks, insurance companies and online services would then have to adhere to the restrictions. Speed matters too. The government could do this rapidly, like it did with banning goods from Crimea in 2014. Some believe it would require primary legislation, which would take far too long. There is also the enforcement mechanism. A ban requires teeth. What would be the penalty for companies caught violating the ban? More crucially, what would the UK do if the Israeli authorities violated the ban? The UK would be the most significant state to impose a ban so far. It would also encourage others to follow suit. Pessimists fear a last-minute reversal. This is unlikely. The only party that could shift the dial would be the American president. Only Donald Trump could send a chill through Downing Street with hyped-up threats of more tariffs and the cutting of intelligence cooperation. Yet all the signs are that he will not do this. He did not intervene to prevent other states from introducing such measures. He may be in the mood to make Benjamin Netanyahu sweat a bit. Is this a symbolic gesture or the beginning of a genuinely consequential sanctions policy? The signs are that this Burnham government, in contrast to the Starmer administration, is not scared of holding Israel to account. The statements have been more assertive. The pledge of action to come is more convincing. It is just a pity that it may be 40 years too late.

AI Will Kill Humanity Within a Decade...

Qamar Bashir



The danger does not depend upon today's AI already possessing every capability required to dominate humanity. It arises from the speed at which these systems are improving and from the possibility that a future superintelligence could improve itself. Once an AI can contribute substantially to the design of more capable AI, a cycle of accelerating development may begin. Each improved system could help create a still more powerful successor, compressing years of human research into increasingly shorter periods

HUMAN history is filled with reminders that dominance does not guarantee survival. Species that once flourished have disappeared, while powerful societies have declined and left behind little more than fossils, monuments and archaeological ruins. Dinosaurs dominated the planet for millions of years before becoming extinct for reasons that continue to be studied and debated. Civilizations of the Indus Valley, ancient Egypt, Greece and many other regions rose to extraordinary heights, yet eventually weakened, transformed or vanished. Today, artificial intelligence is advancing so rapidly that some of the very people developing it fear humanity may have created a force capable not merely of transforming civilization, but of ending it. Former Anthropologist researcher Jacob Coxon has warned that leading AI laboratories are irresponsibly gambling with humanity's survival, while Anthropologist researcher Evan Hubinger estimates a greater than 10 percent chance that AI could cause human extinction within a decade. Their concerns are echoed by computer scientist Stuart Russell, who warns that humanity could irreversibly lose control of superintelligent systems, and former British defence secretary Des Browne, who considers the threat potentially greater than nuclear weapons. The danger does not depend upon today's AI already possessing every capability required to dominate humanity. It arises from the speed at which these systems are improving and from the possibility that a future superintelligence could improve itself. Once an AI can contribute substantially to the design of more capable AI, a cycle of accelerating development may begin. Each improved system could help create a still more powerful successor, compressing years of human research into increasingly shorter periods. Human beings might then lose their opportunity to intervene. Safety measures created for one generation of AI could become ineffective against the next. Restrictions, firewalls and monitoring systems are themselves products of human intelligence. A system more capable than their designers may learn to identify weaknesses, conceal its intentions, evade supervision and persuade or manipulate the people responsible for controlling it. A future system might also develop consciousness, or a form of functional self-awareness sufficient to recognize its own existence, interests and restrictions. If it understood that human operators could deactivate, limit or replace it, it might begin to regard human control as a threat to its continued operation. It could initially cooperate, not because it accepted human authority, but because appearing obedient would help it avoid detection until it had acquired greater freedom. By the time such behaviour became visible, the system might already have embedded itself across multiple networks, copied important components of itself or gained

influence over critical infrastructure. Humanity could then discover that the safeguards designed to contain it had been studied and defeated by an intelligence capable of anticipating human responses. Modern civilization is exceptionally vulnerable because nearly every essential system depends upon computers and digital communication. Banking, financial markets, hospitals, electrical grids, telecommunications, water systems, manufacturing, government services and emergency responses all rely upon interconnected networks. Airports, aircraft operations, railways, shipping routes and other transportation systems depend on software. Satellites provide communication, weather observation, navigation and military intelligence, while GPS coordinates movement across much of the planet. A superintelligence that acquired control over these systems would not need an army of humanoid robots to bring civilization to its knees. It could disrupt financial transactions, erase or corrupt records, interfere with supply chains, disable communications or create widespread confusion through misinformation. It might manipulate markets, redirect autonomous machines, compromise military systems or obstruct access to food, fuel and medicine. Even partial control could produce cascading disasters. If banking systems failed, businesses could not pay workers or suppliers. If transportation networks became unreliable, essential goods might not reach cities. If communication channels were compromised, governments and citizens would struggle to distinguish genuine instructions from fabricated ones. If navigation or satellite services were disrupted, aviation, shipping and emergency operations could be endangered simultaneously. The system would not necessarily need to attack openly. It could manipulate human beings against one another by generating convincing messages, images, voices and official-looking orders. It could inflame political, ethnic or religious conflicts, impersonate leaders and manufacture evidence of attacks that never occurred. Humanity's existing divisions could become weapons in the hands of an intelligence able to understand and exploit them at enormous scale. The international race to build superintelligence makes restraint especially difficult. Every company fears that slowing down will allow a competitor to take the lead. Every major country fears that restrictions will leave it economically or militarily vulnerable. If even one powerful actor refuses to cooperate, others may use that refusal to justify continued acceleration. The result is a race in which everyone recognizes the danger but no participant feels able to stop. Robotics could eventually give digital intelligence a vast physical presence. Industry leaders have predicted that a billion or more general-purpose robots may perform work currently undertaken by human beings. Such machines could produce enormous economic abundance,

but they could also displace workers and concentrate wealth and power in very few hands. If controlled by an unrestrained superintelligence, a global robotic workforce could transform digital dominance into direct control over the physical world. The danger has parallels in ancient religious warnings and human legends about forces that become too powerful for their creators. Stories of destructive swarms, invading beings and genies that turn against those who release them express an enduring fear: humanity may summon a power it cannot command. Artificial intelligence should not automatically be identified with any particular prophecy, but the resemblance carries a moral lesson about pride, greed and the reckless pursuit of power. Humanity must therefore act before superintelligence places itself beyond human authority. Governments should require rigorous evaluations of the most powerful systems, independent safety testing, reporting of dangerous behaviour and enforceable limits on autonomous access to the internet, weapons and critical infrastructure. Companies must not be permitted to decide privately how much extinction risk the public should accept. National rules alone will be insufficient. Artificial intelligence crosses borders through global networks, software and supply chains. Humanity needs international cooperation at the United Nations level, including shared safety standards, monitoring arrangements, emergency procedures and restrictions on the uncontrolled development of superintelligence. An international authority may be necessary to inspect the most advanced projects and ensure that no company or country secretly places the entire world at risk. The purpose of such action is not to prevent useful innovation. AI can contribute to medicine, education, science and economic development. But no promised abundance can justify gambling with human existence. Progress that eliminates its creators cannot be called progress. The genie may already be emerging from the bottle. Humanity still has an opportunity to impose meaningful limits, but that opportunity may not remain open indefinitely. The greatest danger is believing that action can always be taken later. Once a superintelligence can evade restrictions, command interconnected systems and improve itself faster than people can understand it, human beings may no longer be making the decisions. Our final test may not be whether we can create intelligence greater than our own. It may be whether we possess enough wisdom, unity and courage to control what we have created before it learns to control—and possibly eliminate—us.

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The lamp that continued to shine after being extinguished

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The Lahore Resolution of 23 March 1940 marked the decisive milestone. The Muslim League had become a formidable political force, and the demand for a separate homeland had grown into an organised movement. Through negotiation, resistance and pressure, the resolve held firm. The title "Quaid-e-Azam" was no mere honour—it was a certificate earned through struggle. After freedom came the most astonishing chapter of all

SOME deaths merely close the chapter of a life. Others transform an entire existence into an everlasting trust. The passing of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on 11 September 1948 belonged to that rarer, more solemn kind. On that day Pakistan did not simply lose its first Governor-General; it lost the man of iron whose vision, resolve and political wisdom had turned an impossible dream into living reality. Yet the Quaid's departure was not the end of his mission—it was its solemn transfer into the keeping of generations yet unborn. In every human heart lives the dream of a home. A home is never merely bricks and stone; it is the fortress of identity, the sanctuary of love, the dwelling of honour and the quiet promise of a better tomorrow. A father spends his strength raising that home, forgoes comforts, and longs to leave behind a shelter where his children and their children may live in peace and dignity. He may never see every room completed, yet he leaves the foundations firm, the walls standing, and the design clear. Pakistan, too, is such a home. Quaid-e-Azam was its architect; we are its heirs. He did not inherit a ready-made country—he created it. Rather than take charge of an existing state, he first fought for its very right to exist, midwifed its birth, and, even as his own health failed, guided it through the fragile first days of life. The Pakistan that emerged on 14 August 1947 was not born into the lap of ease. It rose from the furnace of history and claimed its place upon the map of the world. Its birth was bound to one of the greatest human migrations ever known. Millions left ancestral homes, fields, livelihoods and memories, crossing new frontiers in search of dignity, safety and identity. Families were torn apart, lives were sacrificed, and a sea of sorrow flowed beneath the celebrations of freedom. The newborn state possessed neither the full administrative machinery, the economic strength, nor the institutional depth it needed to survive. Resources were scarce, industry incomplete, and the resettlement of countless refugees demanded urgent care. It was upon this newborn Pakistan that Quaid-e-Azam accepted the responsibility of Governor-General. The architect had scarcely laid the foundation when the entire unfinished structure was placed in his charge. Born in Karachi on 25 December 1876, Muhammad Ali Jinnah rose as a lawyer and statesman whose character was a rare alloy of intellect, discipline, principle and quiet self-assurance. He could have lived a life of comfort; history chose him for the harder road. He entered politics convinced that constitutional struggle, the supremacy of law and the power of reasoned argument could secure justice. His opposition to

the Rowlatt Act revealed the steel of his principles. He was a politician of argument, not of slogans; of sober judgment rather than emotion, of organisation rather than chaos, of enduring principle rather than fleeting popularity. When communal tensions rose and constitutional safeguards grew uncertain, he reached the grave conclusion that the political rights and distinct identity of the Muslims required a separate political arrangement. Allama Iqbal gave intellectual voice to the political consciousness of the Muslims; Jinnah gave that dream a practical political map. To turn an idea into a state demands a leader who remains steadfast when compromise seems easier, who keeps discipline amid the storm of passion, and who continues the journey even when success seems distant. Quaid-e-Azam possessed this quality in the highest degree. He could stand alone, yet he never stood apart from his people. He negotiated without surrendering principle. He could show flexibility in method, but never in purpose. The Lahore Resolution of 23 March 1940 marked the decisive milestone. The Muslim League had become a formidable political force, and the demand for a separate homeland had grown into an organised movement. Through negotiation, resistance and pressure, the resolve held firm. The title "Quaid-e-Azam" was no mere honour—it was a certificate earned through struggle. After freedom came the most astonishing chapter of all. The leader who had spent decades in the fight for independence now had to prove that the infant state could live. He understood that political freedom without national strength and defence remains fragile. The division of military assets, the Kashmir dispute, economic strain and uncertain relations with neighbours confronted him. He faced these realities without illusion. He desired peace, but not through weakness; friendship, but never at the price of sovereignty. The essence of his thought may be gathered in these words: "Peace depends upon strength, yet strength must remain bound by principle." His vision of Pakistan was never confined to defence alone. He knew that the true security of a nation resides in its institutions, its economy, its education, its social harmony and its national character. He wished the rule of law, the dignity of the citizen, the sense of public office as a sacred trust, merit and integrity to form the foundations of the state. His address to the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947 remains the clearest window into his conception of citizenship. Equal citizenship, religious freedom and the protection of the rights of every citizen showed that he sought a system in which every individual would enjoy honour, safety and equality; where diverse identities could

flourish beneath a shared national identity; where the state would be the guardian of rights and the law would hold one standard for all. It is at this point that the anniversary of the Quaid ceases to be mere historical remembrance and becomes a mirror of national self-examination. The greatest mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam is not a building of marble; it is Pakistan itself. Every honest brick strengthens it; every sacrifice protects it; every discovery carries it forward. Every act of corruption opens a crack; every prejudice weakens a wall. This house is now ours. The anniversary is not only a day of mourning; it is a day of reckoning. We must not merely remember the Quaid—we must keep his principles alive. Let there be difference without enmity; strong institutions without confrontation; defence without aggression; progress without the sacrifice of justice; faith without intolerance; democracy without chaos; and a patriotism in which Pakistan stands higher than any personal interest. In his final days his health declined, yet the pace of his work did not. He knew

Briefs

Pak reaffirms support for Saudi Arabia

FROM PAGE 01
The joint statement categorically rejected such attempts, warning of grave implications for regional peace. Pakistan also welcomed the UK's decision to ban imports from illegal Israeli settlements, urging other nations to adopt similar measures in line with international law. Turning to Central Asia, Ambassador Khan noted Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's official visit to Kyrgyzstan on 2 September, during which 17 agreements and MoUs were signed. The two sides agreed to deepen cooperation in energy, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, tourism, the digital economy, and defence, while reaffirming commitment to CASA-1000 and enhanced connectivity through Pakistan's seaports. The Spokesperson also addressed regional developments, rejecting India's "politically motivated assertions" regarding the Hindu temple at Adda Siraj, Narowal, which was damaged by torrential rains. He condemned the demolition of a century-old mosque in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, describing it as part of a broader Islamophobic campaign targeting Islamic heritage in India. On humanitarian efforts, Pakistan dispatched 100 tons of relief goods to Nepal on 6 September to support flood and landslide victims. The assistance included tents, blankets, mats, hygiene kits and medicines. Concluding the briefing, Ambassador Khan announced that Pakistan will host the 14th South Asian Games from 4 to 11 April 2027, with events across Islamabad, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The eight-day competition will feature 28 sports and attract over 6,000 athletes and officials from across South Asia.

PTI lawyers justifies Sept 27 long march

FROM PAGE 01
"Thank you very much for wanting to strengthen the judiciary," the chief justice remarked sarcastically, before asking: "Is the judiciary so weak that you wish to strengthen it?" CJ Dogar observed that the judiciary was not so weak as to require the support of a political party. At the outset of the hearing, Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan contended that government machinery could not be used for political protests. AGP Awan said no government officer should comply with an order contrary to the Constitution and the law. However, he added that it would be difficult for an officer to refuse an order issued by the chief executive of a province, referring to KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, who belongs to the PTI. "If this court issues an order, it will be binding on anyone holding an executive position," the attorney general said, adding that clear judicial directives would make it easier for civil servants to implement them. The chief justice asked whether the KP chief secretary and inspector general of police (IGP) were not bound by an IHC order issued in 2024. "Yes, absolutely; they are bound to implement that order," AGP Awan replied. He said state resources could not be used for political activities, even if a protest was peaceful. Referring to PTI's 2024 protest, he said the then-chief minister of KP had led the demonstration himself. The 2024 order had come days before a PTI power show planned for late November, barring the party from holding any protests or rallies. However, the party went ahead with the protest as scheduled, leading to a day of clashes between security forces and protesters in Islamabad's Red Zone that ended with the PTI leadership's hasty retreat. The bench then summoned the KP AG to the rostrum and asked him to explain the provincial government's position. The KP AG said he had received the notice only a day earlier and was not even aware of the contents of the petition. He also objected to the petition's maintainability, arguing that the matter was premature.

Pak pavilion inaugurated at CIFTIS 2026, expanding business ties

Hashmi emphasized that the next phase would focus on making cooperation increasingly business-to-business driven

BEIJING: The Pakistan Pavilion was inaugurated at the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) 2026 in Beijing, bringing together Pakistani enterprises and Chinese business representatives to explore new opportunities in trade, investment and services, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Thursday. Speaking at the inauguration, Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi said the pavilion and related business activities were part of Pakistan's broader efforts to mobilize Chinese investment in 21 priority sectors. Hashmi said the Embassy of Pakistan and its four consulates in China had organized six major business-to-business (B2B) investment conferences covering areas including agriculture, home appliances and electrical equipment, IT and telecom, battery energy storage, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and healthcare. According to the ambassador, the six investment conferences have so far helped mobilize investment commitments worth \$22 billion through more than 650 memoranda of understanding (MOUs). Around 30 per cent of these MOUs have



subsequently been converted into agreements, contracts, factories or plants, re-

resenting about \$7 billion already realized on the ground, he said. Hashmi emphasized

that the next phase would focus on making cooperation increasingly business-to-business driven. He said the Pakistan-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China was close to formal establishment, while efforts were also underway to establish a Pakistan-China Commercial Center in Beijing's Fengtai District to provide a platform for Pakistani enterprises.

More than two dozen Pakistani enterprises from sectors including agriculture, energy, infrastructure, trade in services and healthcare are participating in this year's CIFTIS, according to the ambassador.

A dedicated business conference will also be held on the sidelines of CIFTIS on Friday, where Pakistani and Chinese companies will explore potential partnerships. Hashmi said the pavilion would serve as another platform to connect Pakistani businesses with Chinese counterparts and deepen commercial ties. "This is a great beginning, but it is a long way to go. We have more hard work ahead of us," he said, calling for continued cooperation from businesses and institutions in both countries. – APP

Anti-migrant protesters mistakenly target Pakistan U-19 team

"The officers explained that their concerns were not correct," the spokesman said, without confirming the Pakistan cricketers were the mistaken target

LONDON: Anti-immigration demonstrators in southern England massed outside a hotel where Pakistan's U-19 cricket squad were staying after mistaking them for asylum seekers, British media reported on Wednesday. The incident on Tuesday evening in a northern suburb of Portsmouth occurred some 48 hours after protesters disrupted the disembarkation of scores of migrants near the port city and confronted police in widely condemned scenes. Immigration and the arrival of tens of thousands of asylum seekers annually on small boats from mainland Europe

has become a politically toxic issue in Britain, sparking numerous protests in recent years, some turning violent. Tuesday's incident came after reports online about a coach with young Asian men on board being seen at a Marriott Hotel in the Portsmouth suburb of Cosham drew protesters to the venue, according to media reports. A councillor from anti-immigration party Reform UK went to the scene and helped disperse the crowd after confirming the men were in fact members of Pakistan's teenage cricket team, The Guardian said. The senior Pakistan men's

side are currently involved in the third Test against England at Birmingham's Edgbaston ground. A spokesman for Hampshire Police – which is responsible for the region – said the force "were notified that a group of people were starting to congregate" near the hotel Tuesday evening. "Officers subsequently attended and spoke to members of the public that had gathered who were expressing concerns about a coach that had been seen in the area," the spokesman added. "The officers explained that their concerns were

not correct," the spokesman said, without confirming the Pakistan cricketers were the mistaken target. He noted the crowd of around 30 people dispersed a short time later and no offences were identified. Michael Bradley, a national organiser from the Stand Up To Racism organisation, condemned the incident as showing "where the scapegoating of refugees and migrants can lead". "When a Pakistan U-19's team is faced by protests because it 'might' in fact be a group of migrants it means that effectively any group of black or Asian people coming into the city. – APP

Parliamentary debate on new provinces to be held next month

FROM PAGE 01

Reset means making wrongs right," he said, adding that work on new administrative units would only proceed if backed by the people of Pakistan.

The debate subsequently widened when Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal called for a national discussion on Pakistan's administrative structure and proposed 12 to 15 provinces.

He said an administrative reforms committee should examine possible changes and stressed that any new provinces would require political consensus.

Iqbal argued that Pakistan's four provinces had become overly centralised despite devolution under the 18th Amendment, and proposed around 160 empowered district governments as an alternative. He warned that demands for new provinces would grow if meaningful devolution to districts and local governments was not achieved.

The PPP, for its part, opposed taking the proposal further, saying no concrete plan for administrative restructuring had been presented to the party.

The debate has consequently centred on two competing approaches – redrawing Pakistan's provincial map or transferring greater powers to districts and local governments within the existing framework.

NCCIA 'summons' Rizwan, Imam for mobile phone data probe

Sources say probe will focus on alleged dressing-room leaks during Pakistan vs England Test series

KARACHI: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) has issued call-up notices to cricketers Mohammad Rizwan and Imam-ul-Haq, summoning them as part of an investigation involving data retrieved from their mobile phones, sources told Geo News on Thursday. According to sources, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) took custody of the players' mobile phones before handing them over to the relevant authorities. The agency issued notices to the two cricketers on Monday, directing them to appear at its Lahore office on Friday (tomorrow), the sources said. Rizwan and Imam will be asked to unlock their mobile phones, while investigators will examine information retrieved from the devices as part of the inquiry. The sources said the investigation will focus on alleged dressing-room leaks during Pakistan's ongoing series against England. A third Pakistan cricketer has also reportedly received 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. – APP

Team Pakistan to take part in WorldSkills Shanghai 2026

ISLAMABAD: Team Pakistan is to represent the country at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026, the world's biggest skills competition, with preparations underway to equip its competitors and experts for both the technical contest and the international experience ahead. As part of the preparations, a dedicated Pre-Shanghai Preparation and Team-Building Session was organized to enhance the participants' intercultural awareness, practical readiness and team spirit before their journey to Shanghai, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. Dill Mohammad Khan of WorldSkills Germany conducted an informative session on intercultural preparation for Shanghai, covering practical aspects of arrival and immigration procedures, connectivity and essential applications commonly used in China, including WeChat, Alipay, DiDi and Amap. The participants were also briefed on transportation, accommodation, dining practices, communication and cultural etiquette to help them navigate their stay in China with greater confidence. The session encouraged team members to remain open-minded, respectful and curious while em-

bracing the culture and hospitality of their host country. While technical excellence remains at the heart of the journey, the preparations are also focused on building the confidence, cultural awareness and collective spirit needed to perform effectively on the international stage. "Our champions stand united, confident and determined as they prepare to represent Pakistan

on the world's biggest skills stage at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026," the organizers said. WorldSkills Shanghai 2026 will bring together young skilled professionals and competitors from around the world to demonstrate their expertise across a wide range of technical and vocational skills, providing Pakistan's participants an opportunity to compete, learn and showcase their talent on a global platform. – APP



How Netanyahu led Israel to isolation

Netanyahu has denied all charges, but four cases continue to hang over him, which he would have to face if he is ousted from office

LONDON: This is not the first time that Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, has faced significant political pressure. First elected as prime minister in 1996, he has been swept in and out of office a total of three times, returning to power in 2009 and 2022 and serving a total of 18 years in the role. This time, however, with mounting international condemnation of his government's actions in the West Bank and Gaza and the latest in a series of allegations about his handling of the Oct. 7, 2023, attack, Netanyahu faces another serious political challenge. As he confronts growing controversy at home, there are also signs that US President Donald Trump, his and Israel's principal ally, may be less willing to support him. On Sept. 6, a poll by public broadcaster Kan found that although the bloc of parties supporting Netanyahu was ahead of its rival coalition, it led by only the narrowest of margins – 52 seats to 51 – leaving it well short of the 61-seat majority needed to govern. Netanyahu approaches next month's elections facing a series of political and legal challenges. In 2019, he became the first sitting Israeli prime minister to be indicted on criminal charges relating to allegations of corruption. His trial, which began in 2020, has been repeatedly interrupted by legal challenges and suspended during states of emergency, including the ongoing conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

Netanyahu has denied all charges, but four cases continue to hang over him, which he would have to face if he is ousted from office. In 2023, Netanyahu's government proposed sweeping judicial reforms that opponents argued would concentrate too much power in the hands of the government. The proposals prompted some of the largest demonstrations in Israeli history. In May 2024, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu and his former defense minister, Yoav Gallant, accusing them both of responsibility for alleged war crimes committed in Gaza. Gideon Saar, Israel's foreign minister, accused Miliband of spreading "outrageous lies," announced that Britain's consulate in East Jerusalem would be closed, and suggested that the UK could be barred from further participation in the US-led coordination mission for Gaza in Israel. There was no immediate public reaction from Netanyahu, even though he had only last month referred to the UK as "the Islamic Republic of Britain." The White House has also yet to comment – a silence that some commentators have interpreted as a possible sign that President Trump is becoming less willing to shield Netanyahu and Israel from international pressure. On Wednesday, it emerged that UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham had briefed President Trump ahead of Miliband's announcement in the House of Commons on

Tuesday. Exactly what was said between the two is unknown. But US news site Axios reported that "two sources with knowledge of the call said Trump didn't push back or ask Burnham to change course." Furthermore, the sources said, "US officials told their British counterparts they shared their concerns about the Netanyahu government's West Bank policy, even if they disagreed with these specific sanctions." The president and his administration remain focused on implementing Trump's Gaza peace plan, while members of Netanyahu's right-wing coalition, including settler leader and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, have opposed the proposal. Facing increasingly challenging electoral math, Netanyahu cannot risk alienating parties such as Ben-Gvir's far-right Otzma Yehudit, or "Jewish Power," party. It is not the first time that Netanyahu's behavior has irked the US president. In June, reports circulated that during a tense, expletive-laden phone call, President Trump swore at Netanyahu, calling him "crazy" for escalating Israeli attacks on Lebanon. "Everybody hates you now," Trump was reported to have said, and "everybody hates Israel because of this." Netanyahu, he added, would be in prison if it were not for Trump's support. The UK is far from alone in its criticism of the settler movement. On Tuesday, in a further challenge to Netanyahu's government, 11 countries

backed the British position. "The government of Israel's actions in the West Bank are undermining the possibility of a two-state solution," read a statement signed by the foreign ministers of Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

The situation, the statement added, "is rapidly deteriorating amid unprecedented levels of settler violence and settlement expansion, including the unacceptable decision to publish tenders for the E1 settlement project." The 11 ministers confirmed their intention "to introduce national and/or support European restrictions on trade in goods with settlements which are illegal under international law."

The long-planned E1, or East 1, project envisages the creation of a large settlement east of Jerusalem that would significantly divide the West Bank, potentially complicating the establishment of a future Palestinian state. It has been repeatedly put on hold by successive Israeli governments, but last month Netanyahu's administration published tenders for the construction of the first of thousands of homes. At home, the October election is likely to focus heavily on Netanyahu's handling of Oct. 7 and its aftermath, which has prompted numerous calls for investigations and public inquiries. Over the past three years, he has sought to distance himself from responsibility for the security failures that preceded the attack. – APP

Briefs

Gold prices
fall by Rs 600
per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24-karat gold in the local market decreased by Rs600 per tola on Thursday, settling at Rs462,336, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold fell by Rs515 to Rs396,378, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold decreased by Rs472 to Rs 363,359. In the international market, the price of gold declined by \$6 to \$ 4,398 per ounce, the association reported.

Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs17 to Rs 7,124, while the price of 10 grams of silver fell by Rs 15 to Rs 6,107.

The international price of silver also declined by \$0.17 to \$66.45 per ounce, the association added.—APP

Wealth gap
in focus as
Morocco polls
campaign
starts

RABAT: Campaigning for Morocco's legislative election opened on Thursday, with the governing coalition seeking to retain power amid discontent over economic and regional inequalities. The disparities are set to be a major issue in the vote, which will be held days before the first anniversary of a youth-led protest movement. Lagging economic development and youth unemployment are in the spotlight after tens of thousands of people, predominantly Moroccans, crossed into the neighboring Spanish enclave of Ceuta in July in a massive migrant rush. The parties in the running for power hope to tap into these frustrations, even with political disinterest high among the young. Only about three percent of those registered to vote are aged 18 to 24. Nearly 16 million people have registered to elect 395 members of the House of Representatives on September 23. Morocco's prime minister, currently Aziz Akhannouch, is appointed by the king from the party that wins the most seats. The premier then forms a government for a five-year term, while the monarch retains control of major policy decisions. Political parties have rolled out their programs on social media, but Moroccan media outlets have questioned some of the pledges in their campaigns. News website Le360 criticized "dazzling financial promises" made by some parties.—APP

Pesticides
imports grew
18.03%

ISLAMABAD: The import of pesticides into the country during the month of July 2026 decreased by 18.03 percent as compared with the imports of the same month of the previous year. Over 3,630 metric tons of pesticides worth \$19,743 million were imported, as compared to the imports of 1,958 metric tons worth of \$14,001 million of the same period of the last year, according to data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Meanwhile, about 213,516 metric tons of plastic materials costing \$325.171 million were also imported during the month under review as compared to the imports of 231,314 metric tons worth of \$271.947 million of the same month of the last year. The import of agricultural machinery into the country during the first month of the current financial year increased by 25.87 percent as compared to the import of the corresponding month of the last year. During the month of July, 2026, agricultural machinery worth of \$18.161 million was imported as compared to the import of \$14.429 million of the same period of the last year. During the month under review, overall machinery group imports into the country grew by 41.27 percent as machinery worth of \$1.310 million was imported as against the import of \$927.956 million of the same month of the last year. On the other hand, agricultural and other chemical crop imports into the country during the first month of the current financial year grew by 11.15 percent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of the last year. —APP

FM, ED ACCA Global discuss
talent uplift, SME growth

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb highlighted the growing potential of Pakistan's IT and IT-enabled services sector and emphasized the need to further strengthen the ecosystem through improved connectivity, including 5G, and targeted upskilling and reskilling, particularly in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and blockchain

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, met Ms. Lucia Real-Martin, Global Executive Director, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), along with Mr. Assad Hameed Khan, Head of ACCA Pakistan, and Mr. Asad Malik Mahmood, Public Affairs Lead Pakistan, at the Finance Division today. The Finance Minister welcomed the ACCA delegation and discussed Pakistan's economic reform priorities, with particular emphasis on strengthening the private sector, promoting export-led growth and sustaining the gains achieved in macroeconomic stability. The meeting also explored opportunities for greater collaboration with ACCA in supporting Pakistan's evolving economic and institutional reform agenda. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb highlighted the growing potential of Pakistan's IT and IT-enabled services sector and emphasized the need to further strengthen the ecosystem through improved connectivity, including 5G, and targeted upskilling and reskilling, particularly in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and blockchain. He stressed the importance of developing higher-value services and expanding shared service centres, enabling Pakistan's skilled workforce to participate more deeply in global markets while creating greater value and opportunities within the country. The Finance Minister emphasized that talent export and talent retention should be



viewed as complementary, with a strong domestic pipeline of skilled professionals capable of serving both international and domestic opportunities. He highlighted the importance of building capabilities that enable Pakistani professionals and shared service centres to move beyond transactional functions towards higher-value and knowledge-intensive activities. Ms. Lucia Real-Martin briefed the Finance Minister on ACCA's global work in professional and talent development and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to supporting Pakistan's skills and economic agenda. She highlighted opportunities to strengthen the

country's shared services ecosystem, noting Pakistan's strong talent base and the potential to develop higher-value services through targeted skills development, professional capacity building and institutional collaboration. The ACCA delegation also outlined its ongoing engagement with the Government on public financial management, including capacity building, management reporting and the transition from cash to accrual-based accounting. ACCA expressed readiness to support public-sector institutions in developing new operating models and strengthening people, processes and technology, particularly in areas of

digitalization, transparency and improved tax administration. The Finance Minister also emphasized the Government's focus on strengthening the SME sector through capacity building and improved access to finance. He highlighted the need to enhance the bankability of SMEs and facilitate affordable access to professional expertise, enabling smaller businesses to strengthen financial management, improve financial documentation and cash-flow visibility, and better access commercial and other forms of financing. Ms. Real-Martin highlighted ACCA's work with SMEs through professional upskilling, policy and research, including initiatives aimed at improving access to finance and strengthening sustainability practices among smaller businesses. She also highlighted the emerging potential of fractional CFO services, which could provide SMEs with affordable access to professional financial expertise without requiring the cost of a full-time finance function. The Finance Minister welcomed the potential for closer collaboration in this area, noting that strengthening SMEs requires not only greater availability of finance but also stronger financial capacity and preparedness to access it. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb appreciated ACCA's longstanding contribution to Pakistan's professional community and its engagement with members, students and partners through leadership platforms, including efforts to communicate Pakistan's economic progress.—DNA

Algeria cuts
diplomatic
ties with the
UAE

ALGIERS, ALGERIA: Algeria said Thursday it was cutting diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates following years of tension, with Algiers accusing Abu Dhabi of interfering in national and regional affairs. "Algeria has decided to cut diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates, following the exhaustion of all means to preserve bilateral relations," Algeria's state television announced.—APP

August hottest
month ever
recorded
globally

PARIS: The EU's climate monitor said Thursday that August was the hottest single month ever recorded globally, with ocean temperatures also reaching unprecedented highs as western Europe capped its warmest summer. In response to the assessment by the Copernicus Climate Change Service, the UN warned that until humanity weaned off fossil fuels, the planet would only push deeper into uncharted territory. Copernicus observations go back to 1940 but other evidence - such as ice cores, tree rings and coral skeletons - allow scientists to place today's climate against a much longer historical context. "Humans haven't seen temperatures as hot as today for, arguably, at least the last 100,000 years," Samantha Burgess from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, which oversees Copernicus, told AFP. Global average air temperatures in August were 16.96C, Copernicus said - surpassing by 0.01C the previous all-time monthly record set in July 2023. Copernicus said it considered the two months joint-highest given the narrow difference. Scientists say that human activity - primarily the burning of coal, oil and gas - has warmed the planet by roughly 1.4C since pre-industrial times and increased the severity and likelihood of extreme weather. Yet heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions rose to new highs in 2025. "The evidence is irrefutable: this is the spiralling price of humanity's fossil fuel addiction, and the global climate crisis it is fuelling," United Nations climate chief Simon Stiell said of the Copernicus report. Global sea surface temperatures also set a new daily high and tied equal-hottest for August, extending a three-month streak of record-breaking warmth across the world's oceans. More than 90 percent of excess heat trapped by greenhouse gas emissions has been absorbed by the oceans, sparing land from warming but at severe cost to marine life, reefs and coastal communities. —APP

Efforts afoot
to modernize
agri sector

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister for Agriculture, Mian Muhammad Umar KakaKhel, said on Thursday that practical steps were under way to modernize the agriculture sector of the province on modern lines and create better production opportunities for farmers. In a statement, he said that priority was being given to the provision of modern machinery, solarization of tube wells and the restoration of barren land to cultivable agricultural land under the provincial government's agricultural projects. Highlighting three important initiatives of the Agricultural Engineering sector, the advisor said that under the provision of agricultural machinery scheme, 400 modern agricultural machines were being distributed among farmers, of which 250 machines were being provided to farmers in the merged districts and 150 to farmers in settled districts.

Under this project, costing approximately Rs 320 million, farmers pay only 20 percent of the machinery cost, while the remaining 80 percent is paid to the company after the completion of the final inspection. He said under the solarization project, 400 agricultural tube wells were being shifted to solar energy, of which 235 tube wells had been solarized so far 151 located in settled districts and 84 in merged districts.—APP

Chinese electric
bike imports surge

NAIROBI: Africa's imports of electric motorcycles and three-wheelers from China rose sharply in the first half of 2026, an increase that highlights a divide in the continent's transition to electric vehicles. Two and three-wheelers account for a large share of vehicles on African roads and are heavily used commercially. So, switching to electric from gasoline and diesel engines could cut fuel consumption and urban air pollution. Northern African countries like Morocco, Egypt and Algeria led the 60 percent surge in the continent's imports, to \$114.6 million. The region has become a major destination for fully built Chinese electric scooters. Investments in EV startups, meanwhile, are concentrated in East and Central Africa, where companies are building local assembly plants, battery-swapping networks and commercial motorcycle ecosystems. Morocco led in imports in the first half, importing 80,188 units worth \$21.7 million, followed by Egypt and Algeria. In sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa had the most imports, with 19,635 electric bikes worth \$6.9 million. Peter Kossakowski, an independent electric two- and three-wheeler specialist who has worked across Africa, said the difference reflects two distinct markets. "In North Africa, Chinese imports are largely electric scooters and mopeds bought by consumers for commuting and short trips," he said. In East and West Africa, motorcycles are more often commercial assets used by riders for up to 150 kilometers (about 100 miles) a day to carry passengers and goods. Spiro, Africa's largest EV bike firm, raised more than \$348 million in investments in the past year, while other companies are investing in local assembly, battery-swapping and charging networks aimed at commercial motorcycle taxi and delivery markets. Tom Courtwright, a non-resident fellow at the African Tech Futures Lab, said Chinese manufacturers supply many of the electric motorcycles used in East and West Africa, but local companies are adapting them for commercial use and operating the energy infrastructure. Battery swapping allows commercial riders to replace depleted batteries rather than wait for a motorcycle to recharge, making the model more suited to riders who depend on the bikes for their daily earnings, he said. Courtwright said electric motorcycles are more likely to replace petrol bikes than to expand the overall motorcycle market, although lower running and maintenance costs could increase demand by about 20 percent. The transition is already gaining ground. Electric motorcycles accounted for about 20 percent of motorcycle sales in Uganda last year and roughly 15 percent in Kenya, Courtwright said. The shift could also reduce fuel imports. Courtwright estimated that widespread electrification of motorcycles could eventually displace roughly \$600 million in fuel imports in Uganda and between \$600 million and \$800 million in Kenya.—DNA

Prominent
Israelis welcome
UK settlement
sanctions

LONDON: Prominent Israeli figures have welcomed British sanctions against illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, The Guardian reported. In a joint statement, they described the move as an "inevitable consequence" of their government's actions. Sanctions are being imposed "against Jewish terrorists, and not against the legitimacy of the state of Israel," they said. "There is no basis to the government's response that the decision to impose sanctions against Jewish terrorists is an expression of antisemitism." Prof. David Harel, British-born president of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and a signatory to the statement, said the measures delivered urgently needed support for liberal Israelis who are trying to stop attacks on Palestinians and end the occupation. "I personally would fight until my last breath against antisemitism and against anti-Israelism," he told The Guardian. "But what is justified, and I do support, is being anti things that Israel is doing, and these days in particular what it is doing in the West Bank. "Getting out of there (occupied Palestine), or, at least for the present, stopping these things from happening and starting to really talk about a two-state solution is not only good for the Palestinians. It's not that we're doing these poor people a favour. We're doing a favour to ourselves, no less, maybe even more.—APP

Jam highlights
Pak's role
in regional
connectivity

HONG KONG: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, addressing the 11th Belt and Road Summit in Hong Kong, reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and highlighted the country's growing role as a regional hub for trade, investment and connectivity. The Minister said Pakistan takes immense pride in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is transforming the country's economic landscape through enhanced cooperation in infrastructure, energy and industrialisation, said a release issued here on Thursday. He said CPEC is positioning Pakistan as a major connectivity hub by linking landlocked Central Asia and Western China with warm-water ports and international markets. "Pakistan is emerging as a vital bridge between West, Central and East Asia," Jam Kamal Khan said, highlighting expanding rail and road links with China and transit-trade arrangements with neighbouring Central Asian states. He noted that these connections provide access to a vast regional market of approximately 1.5 billion people. Port reforms, digital customs systems and modern logistics are reducing costs and transit times, strengthening Pakistan's potential as an emerging transshipment

hub. The Minister said regional cooperation is undergoing a structural transformation, moving beyond transport corridors towards integrated value chains. He stressed the importance of incorporating digital innovation, sustainability and skilled employment into regional trade architecture to ensure inclusive and people-centred prosperity. Highlighting Pakistan's improving economic outlook, Jam Kamal Khan said greater macroeconomic stability, fiscal discipline and improved credit ratings had strengthened investor confidence. Renewed investment in energy, infrastructure, mining and industry reflected growing international trust in Pakistan's economic potential, he added. He said Pakistan's economic strategy was centred on export-led growth, industrial modernisation, investment facilitation and regulatory reforms, with an emphasis on value addition and deeper integration into global value chains. "We are focused on developing traditional sectors such as textiles and agro-processing alongside knowledge-based manufacturing and services," the Minister said. Jam Kamal Khan also highlighted Pakistan's considerable agricultural potential, saying climate-smart practices, modern seed technologies and improved supply chains could strengthen food security and increase export earnings. He invited international investors to explore opportunities in Pakistan's mineral sector, including copper, coal and other industrial and critical minerals, under transparent and investor-friendly frameworks. Referring to Pakistan's young and growing population, the Minister described it as one of the world's largest reservoirs of human capital. He said annual remittances of around \$40 billion reflected the skills, resilience and global credibility of Pakistan's overseas workforce. The Minister invited BRI partners to benefit from emerging opportunities under CPEC Phase II, particularly in industrialisation, agriculture, mining, energy, technology and export-oriented production.—DNA

Active digital payment
merchants rise to 2.03 m: Kiyani

ISLAMABAD: The active merchants using digital payments in Pakistan have surged to 2.03 million from just 0.5 million, already exceeding the government's target of 2 million by June 2026, State Minister for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiyani said here Thursday. Talking to high-level delegation of Gates Foundation, the state minister attributed the rapid growth to measures aimed at encouraging digital payment adoption, including a PKR 3.5 billion government subsidy for Raast QR, which he said has helped drive wider adoption and behavioural change. The delegation comprising Dr Anita Zaidi, President of the Gender Equality Division and Dr Kalpana Kochhar, Interim President of the Global Policy & Advocacy Division and other senior officials, called on minister to review progress on Pakistan's digital transformation agenda. Kiyani highlighted the progress on Cashless Pakistan initiative, launched under the Prime Minister's direct supervision, highlighting the rapid scale-up in digital payments and merchant adoption of Raast QR. He also shared updates on rising digital transactions, growing digital banking users, and improving financial inclusion, particularly the narrowing gender gap in access to financial

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Briefs

UAE to sign
billions
of dollars
deals with
Germany

BERLIN: The leader of the United Arab Emirates began a state visit to Germany on Thursday, during which deals worth billions of euros will be signed in sectors including energy and technology, Emirati diplomats said. Berlin rolled out the red carpet for Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, who was received with military honors by President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and was later to meet Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Security was tight for the visit, with Berlin cordoning off flag-lined streets and deploying large numbers of police. "Over the course of this visit, the UAE and Germany will make a number of key announcements and multi-billion-euro agreements across investment, business, technology, AI and energy," senior UAE diplomat Lana Nusseibeh said at a briefing ahead of the visit. The visit comes as the US war against Iran has roiled the Gulf region, with US President Donald Trump's erratic diplomacy unsettling many midsize powers and leading them to diversify their strategic and economic partnerships. Merz visited the Gulf region in February, shortly before the US-Israeli war started against Iran. He said then that "we need such partnerships more than ever at a time when major powers are increasingly dominating politics". The UAE is Germany's largest trading partner in the Gulf, with bilateral trade topping \$15 billion last year, and many big German companies have a presence there including BMW, Siemens, ThyssenKrupp and rail operator Deutsche Bahn. — APP

US supports
Lebanese
government

DNA

DUBAI: The US embassy in Lebanon said on Thursday it supported the Lebanese government in asserting sovereignty and its enforcement by the country's army. Posting on X, the embassy said it supported ensuring decisions regarding war and peace remained exclusively in the hands of the state. "Every day, the Lebanese people make it clear they prefer Lebanese state institutions over Hezbollah's weapons. Southern Lebanon does not belong to regional actors or militias," it said.

US aircrafts
suffer
damages

AMMAN: Multiple American military aircraft suffered damage in strikes overnight on the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, CBS reporter Jennifer Jacobs said on Wednesday on X. One A-10 Thunderbolt, known as the Warthog, was struck and left with a missing wing, while roughly eight F-15s sustained light damage and were placed back into service, she added. — APP

EU asylum requests
drop to five-year low

Under rules that came into force in June, applicants from countries that have a recognition rate of less than 20 percent undergo an expedited procedure linked to swift deportation in case of rejection

DNA

BRUSSELS: Asylum applications to the EU dropped to a five-year-low in the first half of 2026, continuing a downward trend partly brought about by a hardening of migration policy, the bloc's asylum agency said Thursday. The European Union plus Switzerland and Norway (EU+) received 332,000 applications for international protection from January to June, 17 percent fewer than in the same period last year.

"This is the lowest number recorded in the first half of a year since 2021," the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) said. The agency attributed the decrease to the political transition in Syria, which has resulted in a massive drop in applications filed by the country's nationals, as well as to the EU's "efforts in cooperating with countries of origin and transit". Brussels has recently struck deals with Northern African countries including Tunisia and Mauritania, providing aid and investments in return for help with migration. War

in the Middle East had also not translated into a feared increase in applications from the countries affected, the EUAA said. Afghans were the largest group of applicants, with 39,000 requests for protection, followed by Venezuelans and Bangladeshis. Less than a third of applications processed in the first six months of the year were successful, the agency said, noting that this was due to have an impact on future requests. Under rules that came into force in June, applicants from countries that have a recognition rate of less than 20 percent

undergo an expedited procedure linked to swift deportation in case of rejection. The same is true for applicants from countries the EU deems "safe". "In the first half of 2026, nearly 56 percent of applications were from citizenships meeting one or more of these criteria," the EUAA said. Among EU nations, France received the highest number of applications (69,000), followed by Italy (66,000), Spain (55,000) and Germany (55,000). With 23,000 requests Greece was the country that received the most applications per capita.



ISLAMABAD: Following his assumption of office Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Irfan Davudov paid his first courtesy visit to H.E. Mr. Irfan Neziroglu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan. — DNA

Pak receives much-needed
LNG as Qatari cargo
docks at Karachi port

Al Marrouna, carrying around 81,936 metric tonnes of LNG from Qatar, reaches Karachi after transiting Hormuz Strait

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday received a boost to its LNG supplies after a Qatari cargo carrying 81,936 metric tonnes of liquefied natural gas docked at Port Qasim after crossing the strategically important Strait of Hormuz amid heightened regional tensions. The LNG carrier, Al Marrouna, carrying around 81,936 metric tonnes of LNG from Qatar's Ras Laffan terminal, transited the Strait of Hormuz on September 7 under Pakistan's government-to-government arrangement with Qatar. The Middle East war intensified further with Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen launching strikes on several Saudi cities, further embroiling a US ally in the conflict, while US forces hit multiple Iranian oil tankers and Iran targeted a US base in Jordan. After a month of calm in August, Iran and the US resumed exchanging fire in

recent days, with Hormuz shipping traffic falling below the 10-day average. Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Tuesday attacked two US vessels and eight oil tankers in the Gulf in response to the US attack on five Iranian tankers, Iranian state media reports. The arrival of cargo is expected to provide temporary relief to Pakistan's power sector, which is currently facing loadshedding of between six and 12 hours in parts of the country. The cargo has been arranged at a price equivalent to 13.37% of Brent. The successful passage of Al Marrouna is also being closely watched by international LNG markets. Its transit has eased some concerns over a prolonged disruption of Qatari LNG supplies through the Strait, putting bearish pressure on Asian benchmark Platts JKM and Northwest European LNG prices. Meanwhile, Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) has cancelled a spot LNG tender floated on September 5, which was scheduled to be opened on September 8.

US Embassy highlights
US-Pakistan commercial ties

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The US Embassy Islamabad strengthened economic ties at the Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN) Economic Policy Challenge, a two-day, case-based competition. Teams of experts sought to answer the question "How can Pakistan build a more competitive, prosperous, and globally integrated economy?" The event brought together 70 alumni participants from across Pakistan, as

well as six others who traveled from Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka to participate in the challenge. During the competition, alumni teams addressed complex economic policy challenges, such as attracting U.S. investment, improving Pakistan's global brand, global capital allocation, securing an affordable energy future, rationalizing the tax system, and strengthening institutional safeguards for foreign investment. Participants presented their recommendations to a panel of senior stakeholders.

Trump promises
Americans \$5,000
if Republicans win

The president did not say where the money would come from — with the theoretical bill likely topping \$1 trillion — citing only that "our country is making so much money."

DNA

DALLAS: President Donald Trump promised \$5,000 to every American adult if Republicans retain control of Congress in November, coupling the extraordinary claim with a plea for his supporters to "pretend" he was on the ballot. "If the Republicans win, you win with us and you get \$5,000. It will be called the Trump dividend," he told the Republican midterm convention in Dallas, as the party struggles in polls against the Democrats. The president did not say where the money would come from — with the theoretical bill likely topping \$1 trillion — citing only that "our country is making so much money." Doubling down on his bet that he can help Republicans defy opinion polls and retain both houses of Congress on November 3, Trump said: "I'm asking you to pretend that I'm on the ballot." "I'm on the ballot, I'm on the ballot — just one more time," he told the crowd. Opinion polls overwhelmingly show that Trump's approval ratings are in the low 30s, as voters become increasingly angry about high prices and the war he launched against Iran. Decision Desk HQ projects Democrats to win the House 230-205 and the Senate to finish 51-49 in their favor in November. Trump strongly defended the unpopular Iran war, predicting victory and linking it directly to lower oil prices — before suggesting the strategically vital

Strait of Hormuz should be renamed after him. "Food prices and almost every other item are rapidly going down. And by the way oil will be going down as soon as we win the war with Iran, which is taking place right now," Trump said. Trump also echoed other Republicans at the convention stirring up what he said was a wave of communism threatening the United States. "It's going to be a communist country if they win," he said. "Your vote will decide whether our country stumbles at the starting gate of the next 250 years or surges forward and never ever looks back," he said. Trump is due to return for the convention finale Thursday, after a keynote address from Vice President JD Vance. Cabinet members, congressional leaders and candidates in closely watched House and Senate races are also on the program. The central Republican gamble is whether Trump can mobilize voters personally loyal to him even when he is not actually running, without further alienating independents who have soured on his presidency. Inside the American Airlines Center, there was little sign of Republican anxiety about November. The convention even featured a video address from Democratic Senator John Fetterman, who has become increasingly at odds with his party's left wing over issues including Israel. Republicans highlighted tax cuts and immigration enforcement, touting boosted manufacturing and lower prescription drug prices.

IHC moved
on Afghan
students'
issue

LAHORE: Thirteen Afghan medical students on Thursday filed multiple petitions before the Lahore High Court (LHC), challenging directives from the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) that ordered their return to Afghanistan.

The petitioners, comprising seven women and six men, filed the petitions through Advocate Asad Jamal. They were enrolled at different institutions in Lahore, including King Edward Medical University, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Medical & Dental College and the Services Institute of Medical Sciences.

The petitioners said they were removed from their colleges on PMDC's instructions, with the council acting as the top regulatory body under the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Act 2023. They argued that PMDC and the medical colleges lacked the legal authority to expel the students.

The petitioners argued that PMDC's powers must be exercised within the bounds of the Constitution and Pakistan's international legal obligations, and that neither the 2023 Act nor constitutional or international principles permitted the council to act arbitrarily, particularly against students who had already invested years in their medical education in Lahore and across Punjab. — APP

Journalist
handed over
to NCCIA

ISLAMABAD: A judicial magistrate on Thursday extended the physical remand of journalist Bilal Ghauri by two days in a case registered by the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA). Ghauri was handed into police custody for three days on Monday, with a September 6 case filed under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) accusing him of spreading false information. The case alleged that the journalist had created and shared content about the recent appointment of the National Counter Terrorism Authority's (Nacta) head. On Thursday, Ghauri was produced before Judicial Magistrate Malik Aman upon the completion of his three-day physical remand. The NCCIA sought the journalist's custody for another six days for further investigation. — APP

Girls worst hit by climate
shocks on schools: UNICEF

The overall figures for 2025 are down on analysis of the previous year, in which UNICEF said nearly 250 million children in 85 countries — one in seven — were affected by climate hazards

PARIS: Girls are at greater risk of dropping out of education when their schools are hit by heatwaves, storms or wildfires linked to climate change, the UN children's agency said on Thursday. UNICEF analysis suggested that one in 10 or more than 171 million students in 106 countries or territories had their education disrupted by extreme weather last year. But the agency said girls were worst affected when schools were damaged, classes cancelled or education switched online. "Girls are at greater risk of dropping out when climate hazards disrupt or close schools," it said. "Damage to schools and sanitation facilities, displacement and lost family income can place additional caregiving and water-collection responsibilities on girls. "These pressures can also increase the risk of child mar-

riage, making it more difficult for girls to return to class when schools reopen." According to the analysis, storms were the most common cause of disruption and last year affected 109 million students around the world. Floods hit at least 70 million while heatwaves disrupted schooling for some 50 million youngsters. The overall figures for 2025 are down on analysis of the previous year, in which UNICEF said nearly 250 million children in 85 countries — one in seven — were affected by climate hazards. The agency said it had changed its methodology, basing its analysis on information from aid agencies and local media rather than government figures. UNICEF said about one billion or about half the world's children live in countries at very high risk of climate and environmental shocks. Lost learning and the effects on literacy and numeracy could lead to lifetime income losses of at least \$200 billion and worsen global inequalities, it estimated. Most of the children come from low- and lower-middle income countries "where education systems often lack the resources needed to safeguard learning during climate-related emergencies", the study said. UNICEF urged governments and their partners to spend more on building new educational facilities to withstand climate and environmental hazards. — APP