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Detailed News On Page-08

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Minister Abbasi offers services to businessmen

Detailed News On Page-07



Students' facilitation

PM Shehbaz launches scheme to distribute 500,000 Chromebooks

500,000 Chromebooks to be distributed to students in two years, says prime minister at launching ceremony



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday launched the Prime Minister's Youth Chromebook Scheme, under which 500,000 refurbished Chromebooks and accompanying internet devices will be distributed to talented students across Pakistan over the next two years. The launch ceremony, held in Islamabad, also saw the prime minister personally hand over laptops, MiFi devices, and bags to high-performing Grade 9 students from public schools as well as students enrolled in religious seminaries. Speaking at the event, PM Shehbaz described Pakistan's students as the country's real and most valuable asset.

He said the nation was beginning a new journey aimed at empowering its youth and expanding their access to modern education and technology. "In the past, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz distributed 600,000 laptops in 10 years. Now, 500,000 Chromebooks will be distributed in two years," he stated. He emphasized that talent, hard work, and academic ability must not be restricted by wealth or poverty, and that selection under the scheme would be based solely on merit. The prime minister highlighted the need to equip young people with the knowledge and skills required to meet contemporary challenges and compete globally. He noted that the Chromebooks, which run on Google's Chrome OS and are well-suited for online learning, research, and digital assignments, would help students access e-libraries, attend remote classes, and continue their education from home. Officials confirmed that each recipient will also receive a MiFi internet device and a bag. According to Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, each internet connection is expected to benefit up to five family members, potentially extending digital access to an estimated 2.5 million people nationwide. Prior to the prime minister's address, Rana Mashhood said the Tokyo Technology Care Foundation, led by Rashid Minhas, had taken practical steps through a partnership with the government to provide these digital facilities to 500,000 Pakistani students. He added that overseas Pakistanis had regained confidence in the incumbent government and were keen to contribute to the country's development. Mashhood further noted that the prime minister had taken concrete measures to empower young people and ensure equal opportunities.

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Iran says border with Pak open

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran has said its border with Pakistan remains open and there are currently no restrictions on the export of Iranian goods, including liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), to the country. Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam issued the clarification amid reports concerning the closure of the Iranian border, saying Tehran had imposed no restrictions on exports to Pakistan. "Iran's borders with all its neighbouring countries remain open," the envoy said in a statement on X. "Under the prevailing circumstances, it would be neither logical nor in the interests of either side for Iran to close its borders to its immediate neighbours, particularly brotherly Pakistan," he added. Moghadam, however, pointed towards changes in Pakistan's E-Form procedure for imports from Iran, saying they had created a situation in which traders were "effectively and literally unable to dispatch cargo from Iran to Pakistan". He said consultations with the Pakistani side were currently underway to address

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ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar meeting the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Jiang Zaidong, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. – DNA

Ambassador Zaidong meets Dar

Pakistan, China review CPEC progress and regional developments

Pakistan and China continue to maintain close diplomatic engagement, reflecting the strength and depth of their longstanding strategic partnership

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar met with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Jiang Zaidong, in Islamabad on Sunday to review bilateral cooperation and discuss regional developments. During the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Dar appreciated the continued progress in the Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. He highlighted the importance of ongoing collaboration under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as well as cooperation in connectivity, trade and

investment, agricultural modernization, and people-to-people exchanges. The foreign minister underscored the significance of sustained high-level interactions between the two countries to further advance the Pakistan-China Community of Shared Future in the New Era. The two sides also exchanged views on regional developments and reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in promoting sustainable peace, stability, and prosperity across the region. Pakistan and China continue to maintain close diplomatic engagement, reflecting the strength and depth of their longstanding strategic partnership.

Key militant commander killed in Balochistan IBO

Killed Fitna al-Khawarij terrorist had Rs2.5 million bounty on his head, say security sources

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: Security forces killed a key militant commander during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Balochistan's Qila Saifullah district, security sources said on Sunday. The killed terrorist was identified as Adil Shah, alias Darvesh, who was affiliated with Fitna al-Khawarij terrorist group since December 2020, according to security sources. Security sources said that Shah had been overseeing the terrorist outfit's financial affairs since 2024, adding that he also helped provide accommodation to non-local mili-

tants in Zhob, Sherani and Shaban districts. The killed militant commander was involved in attacks on security forces and kidnapping for ransom during 2022 and 2023, the sources said. The sources further said that 19 cases had been registered against the militant commander in anti-terrorism courts, while a bounty of Rs2.5 million had also been announced for information leading to his capture. The operation was part of security forces' operations in Balochistan under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna 3, security sources said. Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in cross-border terrorist incidents, particularly in

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Briefs

Shadab steals victory for Pak in ODI

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Shadab Khan smashed his maiden ODI century and forged a match-winning 89-run partnership with Haris Rauf for the last wicket to propel Pakistan to a thrilling one-wicket victory over England in the ODI tri-series clash at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday. Chasing 242, the Green Shirts reached the target in 47.1 overs, with Shadab remaining unbeaten on 113 to secure Pakistan's place in the final. Pakistan's innings got off to a disastrous start when Gus Atkinson dismissed Fakhar Zaman for 10 off 18 balls in the fifth over.

Middle East tensions

Iran: resumption of war would not change its stances

An April 8 ceasefire between Iran and the United States put an end to the most intense fighting, apart from sporadic exchanges of fire in and around the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a key route for global energy supplies

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that a potential resumption of war with Israel and the United States would not change his country's positions. The remarks come amid mounting US and Israeli threats of renewed attacks on Iran, as President Donald Trump said on Friday that Washington "may do another little Epic Fury," referring to the US-Israeli campaign on Iran that began on February 28. "Recently, there has been talk of a new war, but I am already thinking about the post-war period.

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'Houthis have combined the tools of all terrorist organizations'

NEWS DESK

SANAA: The head of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, affirmed that the targeting of civilian airports and residential neighborhoods by the Houthi militia and depriving their inhabitants of water, food, and medicine reveals the nature of

Continued on Page 06

Six terrorists killed, 2 soldiers martyred

Weapons, ammunition recovered from terrorists during operation in Zarkani area

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed six terrorists while two soldiers were martyred during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Dera Ismail Khan district, the military's media wing said. The operation was conducted in the general area of Zarkani on October 24 following reports about the presence of terrorists belonging to the "Indian proxy, Fitna Al Khwarij", the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. "Owing to meticulous conduct of operation by security forces, six Indian-sponsored khwarij were sent to hell," the ISPR said. However, an intense exchange of fire also resulted in the martyrdom of 36-year-old Naik Ghulam Murtaza, a resident of Gujrat district, and 30-year-old Sepoy Taseer Ahmed, a resident of Talagang district. The ISPR said the two soldiers "fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifices and embraced shahadat". Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the slain terrorists, according to the military's media wing. It said the terrorists had been actively involved in numerous attacks against security forces and law enforcement agencies, as well as the killing of civilians. A sanitisation operation was underway to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area, the statement added. The ISPR said the counterterrorism campaign under the "Azm-e-Istehkam" vision, as approved by the Federal Apex Committee on the National Action Plan, would continue "at full pace" to eliminate foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism. "Such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further reinforce our unwavering commitment of safeguarding our nation at all costs," it added.

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Briefs

Human trafficker nab after 16 years

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad Zone has arrested a proclaimed offender wanted for the past 16 years in a human trafficking case, following a special operation launched on the directions of the Director FIA Islamabad Zone.

An FIA official told on Sunday that the suspect, identified as Noor Ahmed, was arrested from Mandi Bahaudin by a team of the FIA Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Rawalpindi.

He said the suspect was wanted in FIR No. 243/2010 for allegedly facilitating the illegal movement of citizens to Greece through Iran and Turkey using human smuggling routes.

The official said the Deputy Director Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Rawalpindi had formed a special team on the directions of the Director FIA Islamabad Zone to arrest proclaimed offenders. The team was led by Inspector Zahid Bhatti and included Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Rafiq and Head Constable Waq. He said the team traced and arrested the suspect, who had remained at large for 16 years.—APP

Action planned against unauthorized ultrasound reporting

ISLAMABAD: Healthcare regulatory bodies are set to take action against unauthorized ultrasound reporting to ensure compliance with professional qualification requirements and protect patient safety, sources said.

According to sources, concerns have been raised over MBBS doctors obtaining short-term certificate courses or informal training in ultrasonography and subsequently using the title Sonologist to issue formal ultrasound reports.

Sources said the concerned bodies were considering measures to ensure that diagnostic ultrasound reporting was conducted by appropriately qualified radiologists holding recognized postgraduate qualifications, subject to applicable registration and regulatory requirements.

The qualifications cited in an official document include FCPS, MD, MCPS and DMRD in Radiology, with recognition by the relevant regulatory authorities being a key requirement.

The authorities are also expected to advise MBBS practitioners to remain within their authorized scope of practice and refrain from issuing formal diagnostic reports without the required qualifications and approval.

Sources said the regulatory bodies would also emphasize that professionals from medical, nursing and allied health fields must observe their legally permitted scope of practice and avoid independent ultrasound reporting without the requisite authorisation.—APP

Action against unauthorized pharmacy programmes

ISLAMABAD: The Pharmacy Council of Pakistan (PCP) has decided to take strict action against unauthorized pharmacy programmes and introduced a fast-track mechanism to address public complaints and protect students' interests.

According to official sources, the decision was taken by the Council's Complaint Grievance Committee, to address institutional complaints and improve the quality of pharmacy education. They said that the Council is issuing show-cause notices to colleges operating pharmacy programmes without the required no-objection certificate (NOC). It will also issue a public advisory cautioning students against seeking admission to unauthorized programmes. Institutions found to have admitted students beyond their approved intake, or facing complaints about shortages of teaching faculty and inadequate laboratory facilities, have been directed to submit written explanations within one week.

They said that the Council assured that appropriate confidentiality would be maintained during the proceedings.—APP

Rotary, ICCI, YCP host World Polio Day 2026 Seminar

ICCI President Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia, who attended as Chief Guest, emphasized the need for intensified and sustained efforts to eradicate polio, appreciating the contributions of all stakeholders, particularly Rotary, towards this national cause

ISLAMABAD: Rotary Club Islamabad Metropolitan (RCIM), in collaboration with the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Youth Catalyst Pakistan (YCP), organized a World Polio Day 2026 Recognition and Advocacy Seminar at Munawar Mughal Hall, ICCI to honour frontline polio workers and strengthen collective efforts towards a polio-free Pakistan. The event brought together over 100 frontline polio workers, UNICEF social mobilizers, Rotarians, ICCI members, and representatives of partner organizations.

ICCI President Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia, who attended as Chief Guest, emphasized the need for intensified and sustained efforts to eradicate polio, appreciating the contributions of all stakeholders, particularly Rotary, towards this national cause.

Expressing concern over the polio situation in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where four cases had been reported, he stressed the importance of continued vigilance, effective coordination, and comprehensive vaccination campaigns to protect children from the crippling disease. Highlighting the invaluable services of frontline vaccination teams, the ICCI President distributed certificates of appreciation among polio workers in recognition of their dedication and commitment. He reaffirmed the business community's support for initiatives aimed at safeguarding children's health and achieving the national goal of polio eradication.

RCIM President Mian Shaikat Masud delivered the welcome address, thanking ICCI for its valuable collection and support in organizing the seminar. RCIM



Polio Chair Mrs. Tayyaba Gul, who moderated the proceedings, highlighted Rotary's commitment to polio eradication in Islamabad and Rawalpindi during 2026, including support for immunization centers, frontline workers, and community engagement initiatives.

Dr. Israr ul Haq, representing the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), briefed participants on Pakistan's polio situation, reporting seven cases in 2026. He emphasized the need for sustained efforts, effective coordination, and continued vigilance to achieve eradication. A UNICEF

presentation underscored the importance of Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC), engagement with religious leaders, and addressing misconceptions contributing to vaccine hesitancy through targeted community outreach.

Dr. Nida Ali, representing the World Health Organization (WHO), outlined WHO's role in supporting Pakistan's polio eradication programme and acknowledged the contributions of Rotary, ICCI, YCP, and frontline vaccination teams. Past District Governor Masoor Sheikh also shared his insights, emphasizing the importance of collective

action and community participation in eliminating polio.

Ms. Sadaf Asim Abbasi, representing the ICCI Executive Committee, thanked the participants and organizers and reaffirmed the importance of continued collaboration to achieve a polio-free Islamabad and Pakistan. The seminar was also attended by Admiral @ Shahid Qureshi, Majid Qureshi, Ms. Aml, ICCI Executive Committee members, senior members, and business community representatives, who reiterated their support for sustained efforts to eradicate polio from the country.—DNA

Kashmir Chowk closed to traffic until further orders

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has announced the closure of Kashmir Chowk to traffic from Sunday until further orders due to construction work on the Kashmir Chowk underpass, advising motorists to use alternative routes to avoid inconvenience.

According to ITP traffic diversions have been introduced to facilitate motorists travelling towards Bhara Kahu, Rawal Dam Chowk and other areas of the federal capital.

Motorists travelling from Rawal Dam towards Bhara Kahu have been advised to use the loop connecting to Sringer Highway, take a U-turn at Margalla Hill and continue towards Bhara Kahu.

Similarly, traffic coming from Aabpara towards Kashmir Chowk can proceed along Sringer Highway towards Korang Wala Chowk and take the Naal U-turn to return towards Rawal Dam Chowk.

Commuters travelling from the Red Zone, Serena Hotel and Aabpara towards Rawal Dam Chowk can use the SP City Office to access Sringer Highway.

The ITP advised citizens to allow an additional 20 to 25 minutes for their journeys as traffic flow could be affected due to the diversions.—APP

Govt imposes ban on new nursing institutions

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has imposed a six-month moratorium on the establishment of new nursing and midwifery institutions, official sources said.

The Pakistan Nursing and Midwifery Council (PNMC) has formally notified federal and provincial governments of the temporary restriction.

According to sources, the decision aims to enable the council to clear a backlog of pending cases and streamline its regulatory processes.

During the moratorium, the PNMC will neither accept nor process new applications for proposed nursing and midwifery institutions. However, applications already submitted will continue to be processed, sources said.

They added that the council would consider new applications only after the six-month period expires and approval is obtained from the competent authority.—APP

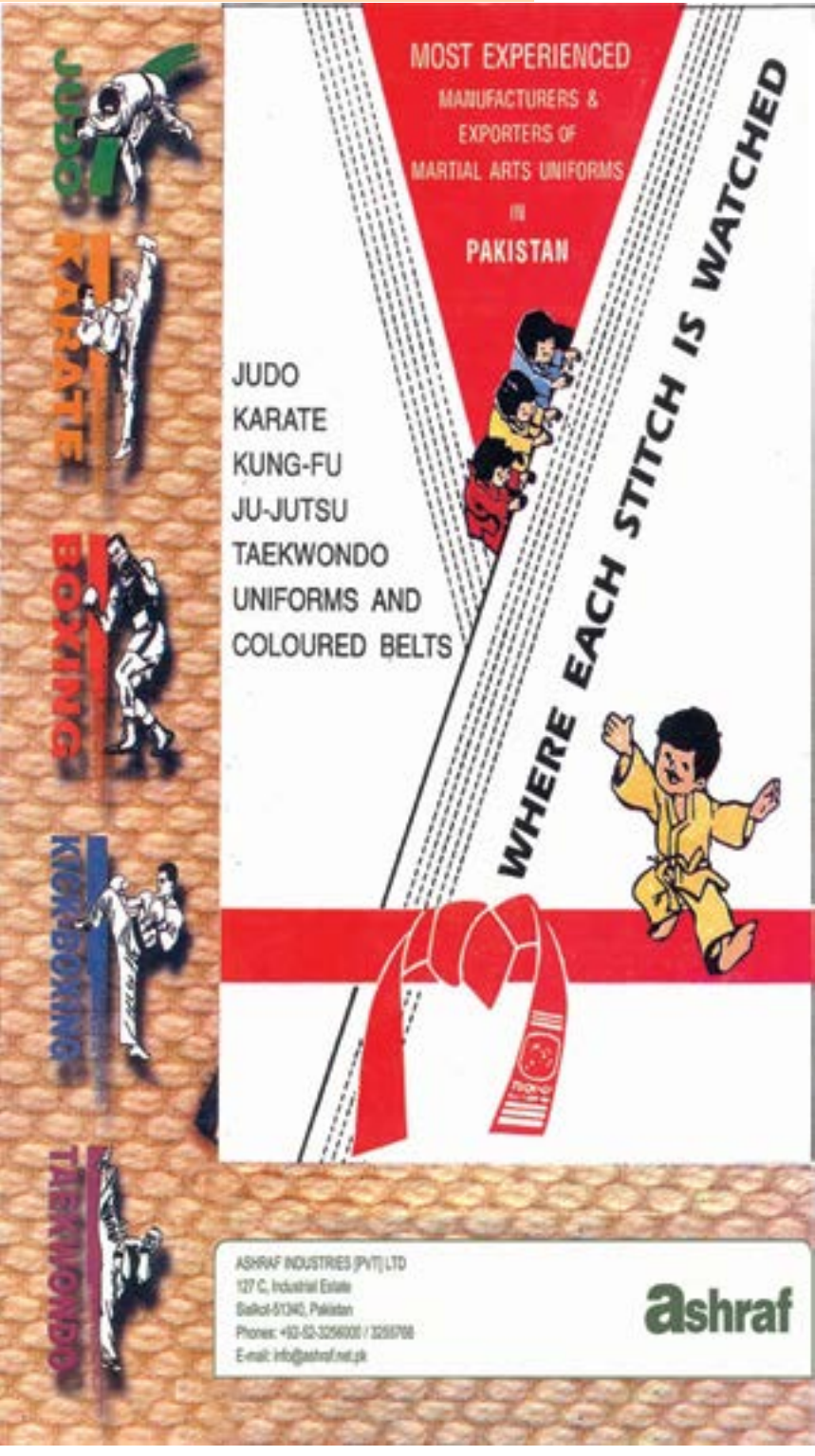
Islamabad hosts second International Silk Road Festival

ISLAMABAD: The second International Silk Road Festival 2026 began in Islamabad on Saturday, bringing together diplomats, tourism officials and business representatives to highlight Pakistan's tourism potential and promote international cooperation. The two-day event is being organized by Silk Road Enterprises in collaboration with the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, the Prime Minister's National Coordinator for Tourism was the chief guest at the opening ceremony. PTDC Managing Director Attab-ur-Rehman Rana, along with diplomats, tourism officials and other distinguished guests also attended the event. Addressing the ceremony, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan highlighted the importance of tourism, cultural diplomacy and regional connectivity. He said international festivals provide an opportunity to showcase Pakistan's cultural heritage, natural beauty and investment opportunities to the world.

He also stressed the need for cooperation between the public and private sectors to promote tourism, strengthen commercial ties and encourage people-to-people contacts.

PTDC Managing Director praised the organizers, provincial tourism departments, foreign embassies and private-sector partners for their role in arranging the festival. He said the historic Silk Road had connected different civilisations and nations for centuries, serving as an important link for cultural and commercial exchange. He reaffirmed the PTDC's commitment to promoting Pakistan as an international tourist destination.

The festival aims to strengthen cultural and economic links among countries connected to the historic Silk Road and create opportunities for tourism, trade and investment.—DNA



When Conflict Becomes an Electoral Asset

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

DEMOCRACY is meant to be a contest of performance. Governments seek re-election by presenting their achievements, while opposition parties challenge their record and offer alternative policies. Voters are expected to judge them on matters that shape everyday life: employment, inflation, education, healthcare and the quality of public institutions. Yet this democratic ideal is often overshadowed by a more expedient political calculation. When domestic performance becomes difficult to defend, political leaders increasingly turn to external threats to shift public attention from governance to national security. The appeal of this strategy is straightforward. Economic difficulties, administrative failures and unfulfilled promises demand explanations; an external adversary offers a simpler narrative. By portraying the nation as threatened, leaders can mobilise patriotic sentiment, consolidate support and recast criticism as a question of national loyalty. The danger is that confrontation becomes politically rewarding, while restraint is portrayed as weakness.

India provides a revealing example of how national security can shape electoral discourse. During the 2019 general election, the Pulwama attack and India's subsequent air strikes at Balakot featured prominently in political debate. The Bharatiya Janata Party presented its response to terrorism as evidence of decisive leadership, while opposition parties questioned aspects of the government's claims and the political use of military action. The episode illustrated how a security crisis could become a defining feature of an election campaign.

In the wider debate surrounding India-Pakistan tensions, allegations and counter-allegations frequently intensify public anger. The more immediate concern is how such episodes influence political judgement. When inflammatory rhetoric displaces investigation and diplomacy, a crisis can become difficult to contain. In a region where both countries possess nuclear weapons, retaliatory pressures and the fear of appearing weak can narrow the space for rational decision-making. Political leaders may benefit from projecting resolve, but the consequences of miscalculation extend far beyond the electoral arena.

Israel presents another example of the intersection between security policy and political survival. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long placed Iran's nuclear programme and regional influence at the centre of his security narrative. The war in Gaza following the Hamas-led attacks of October 7, 2023, and the subsequent regional escalation have further intensified debate over the relationship between military strategy, domestic politics and public opinion.

In a climate dominated by security emergencies, questions about the conduct of war, the protection of civilians and the prospects for a political settlement can struggle to receive sustained attention. A government's record must therefore be judged not only by the threats it identifies, but also by the consequences of its decisions. When the language of existential danger dominates public life, po-



Qamar Bashir

Macgregor's warning about Gulf vulnerability extends beyond American bases to oil installations and desalination plants. Even partial damage to such facilities could impose severe costs on countries whose energy exports, urban water supplies and commercial confidence depend on stability. The prolonged export disruption combined with infrastructure damage could strain revenues, employment and investment in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf economies. Hosting American forces offers protection but can also expose host countries to retaliation during a regional war. The economic chain reaches much further

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

Pakistan's interest is also commercial and strategic. Its defence industry has long sought markets beyond the traditional reliance on a narrow group of buyers. The JF-17 Thunder, developed with China, and Pakistan's growing electronics and unmanned-systems sectors are being presented as alternatives for states that want capability without excessive dependence on Western or Russian...

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One War Devours Another

That distinction matters on the ground. Israel's military presence in southern Lebanon extends its security footprint, while American expansion entrenches its hold over the West Bank. In Gaza, extensive military control and demands from far-right coalition partners for full annexation threaten permanent dispossession. These ambitions advance while Washington carries growing responsibilities against Iran. Israeli operations in Syria and tensions with Turkey widen the potential field of confrontation. My assessment is that American protection can encourage further Israeli risk-taking, leaving Washington to contain the consequences. A commitment presented as defending an ally can gradually become responsibility for managing several connected conflicts. The military price is already substantial. CSIS and the International Institute for Strategic Studies describe depleted stocks of advanced interceptors and strike missiles, with replenishment taking years. Weapons expended against Iran or in regional defence cannot be continuously protect other theatres. Today's campaign therefore mortgages part of America's future readiness.

Macgregor's warning about Gulf vulnerability extends beyond American bases to oil installations and desalination plants. Even partial damage to such facilities could impose severe costs on countries whose energy exports, urban water supplies and commercial confidence depend on stability. The prolonged export disruption combined with infrastructure damage could strain revenues, employment and investment in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf economies. Hosting American forces offers protection but can also expose host countries to retaliation during a regional war. The economic chain reaches much further. Macgregor highlights fertilizer, sulfur and sulfuric acid as overlooked channels of strategic leverage. Shortages of these commodities could severely impact fertilizer production and industrial processes, including some forms of metal extraction and refining. Shortages can therefore spread from shipping lanes to farms, factories and mineral supply chains. The food-security danger is already receiving international attention. Reuters reported on October 14 that a UN official warned of a potential crisis in parts of Asia and Africa unless fertilizer shipments through the Red Sea resumed. Missing a planting season can reduce later harvests. A military confrontation can thus impose hunger on populations far removed from its battlefields.

American households pay through transport, agricultural and production costs. Reuters reported average diesel prices of \$6.28 a gallon when Trump announced the Russian supply agreement earlier this month. Higher fuel costs spread across the economy. Iran's leverage lies partly in making continued confrontation expensive enough to become a domestic political liability. Ukraine is caught in this collision of priorities. Reuters has documented tensions over Ukrainian attacks on Russian energy infrastructure, sanctions relief and interruptions to American support. Kyiv's effort to weaken Russia's war economy

Pakistan's Syrian Opening

SYRIA'S search for a new military patron has unexpectedly turned towards Islamabad. According to a report published by the Lebanese news portal Al-Modon on October 10, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa asked Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to encourage Pakistan to speed up weapons deliveries and to allow Damascus to procure arms directly from Pakistan. The claim has not been independently confirmed by Islamabad or Damascus, but it fits a wider pattern: Syria's transitional government is looking beyond its old dependencies, and Pakistan is being courted as a possible partner in that effort. For Damascus, the appeal is difficult to understand. Syria's armed forces were built for decades around Russian equipment and, more recently, relied heavily on Iranian-linked militias. Both sources of support are now politically and practically uncertain. A government seeking to rebuild a national army after years of war wants hardware that is affordable, adaptable and free of the end-use restrictions that often accompany Western arms sales. Pakistani systems, produced domestically and marketed as cost-effective and modular, offer one such option. Syrian analysts quoted in regional reporting describe Pakistan as a potential "sovereign buffer" for Damascus: a Muslim-majority nuclear state with an established defence industry, experience in counterinsurgency and a long record of dealing with sanctions and strategic isolation. Whether Pakistan wishes to accept that role is another matter. But the very fact that Damascus sees Islamabad in these terms marks a significant shift in the region's diplomatic geography.

The reported Saudi mediation follows a series of high-level contacts. Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani visited Islamabad on August 19 and 20, the first visit by a Syrian foreign minister in 19 years and the first since the formation of Syria's new government. Pakistan's Foreign Office said the two sides reaffirmed their "longstanding brotherly ties", agreed to revive institutional mechanisms and discussed cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The symbolism was considerable. Mr al-Shaibani met Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the conference secretary, and the Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir. That range

of meetings suggests that Syria was not in Islamabad merely to discuss trade delegations or cultural exchanges. Defence cooperation, regional security and the future political order in the Levant were inevitably part of the conversation. Pakistan, for its part, reaffirmed support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and reiterated its position on the Golan Heights. Damascus publicly welcomed the visit, with Syrian state media presenting it as the beginning of a deeper strategic relationship. Islamabad's language was more measured, but the direction was clear: Pakistan is willing to re-engage with Syria at a moment when the country's political future remains unsettled. These contacts did not occur in isolation. On August 7, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, a trilateral framework under which an armed attack on one party would be treated as an attack on all. The agreement established political and military mechanisms for coordination among three states that share concerns about regional instability, Iranian missile threats and the erosion of traditional security guarantees. Syria sits close to the centre of that equation. Turkey has long sought influence over Syria's post-war security arrangements, particularly along its border. Saudi Arabia has an interest in preventing further Iranian entrenchment and in shaping a stable Arab order. Pakistan brings military experience, defence production and a relationship with China that gives it an additional strategic weight. If Riyadh, Ankara and Islamabad coordinate their approach to Damascus, Syria could gain access to a wider set of partners than it has in the past. That does not necessarily mean a formal military alliance. It may begin with training, technical assistance, border security, counter-drug systems and limited equipment sales. But even modest cooperation can alter perceptions of power in a region where symbolism often carries strategic consequences.

Pakistan's interest is also commercial and strategic. Its defence industry has long sought markets beyond the traditional reliance on a narrow group of buyers. The JF-17 Thunder, developed with China, and Pakistan's growing electronics and unmanned-systems sectors are being presented as alternatives for states that want capability without excessive dependence on Western or Russian suppliers. Syria, howev-

litical responsibility and the search for peace risk being pushed to the margins. The United States offers a different but equally instructive perspective. Its interventions in Iraq in 2003, Afghanistan and Libya in 2011 arose from distinct circumstances, yet they demonstrate how governments can build public support for military action by presenting it as essential to national security or international order. Iraq remains a particularly sobering example. Claims concerning weapons of mass destruction helped justify the invasion, but the alleged stockpiles were not found. The resulting instability and human suffering exposed the dangers of allowing official assurances and public fear to overwhelm independent scrutiny. History also shows that external confrontation does not invariably rescue governments facing domestic difficulties. Argentina's military junta invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982 amid economic troubles and declining legitimacy. The invasion initially stirred nationalist enthusiasm, but military defeat further weakened the regime and contributed to its eventual collapse. The episode demonstrated that patriotic mobilisation may temporarily divert attention from domestic grievances, but it cannot indefinitely compensate for failures of leadership. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 coincided with a marked rise in public support for President Vladimir Putin, illustrating the political appeal of nationalist mobilisation. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, however, has carried devastating human costs and far-reaching economic and strategic consequences. Turkey, too, illustrates how governments can avoid difficult questions about military activity by presenting it as essential to national security. These cases differ in their circumstances, but each demonstrates the importance of examining the domestic political effects of decisions taken in the name of national security. The underlying problem is not that every external crisis is manufactured or every military operation politically motivated. It is that security rhetoric can provide governments with a convenient means of avoiding difficult questions about their performance. When citizens are repeatedly told that the nation faces an existential enemy, concerns about unemployment, rising prices, public services and institutional integrity can appear secondary. Yet these are precisely the issues on which democratic governments should be held accountable. For Pakistan and India, the stakes are particularly high. Both countries face pressing economic and social challenges that require sustained attention, investment and regional cooperation. A political culture in which hostility becomes an electoral necessity diverts resources from human development and perpetuates mistrust between neighbouring societies. Neither country benefits when confrontation repeatedly overshadows the welfare of its people. The measure of statesmanship lies not simply in denouncing adversaries or demonstrating military strength, but in protecting national interests while serving room for dialogue. Political leaders must distinguish between the demands of national security and the attractions of electoral advantage. The ability to exercise restraint, pursue diplomacy and accept public scrutiny is as important to responsible leadership as the capacity to respond to threats. A leader may gain a temporary electoral advantage by invoking an existential enemy, but no nation can sustain a policy of lasting prosperity and peace by leaning on fear. The real test is whether governments can improve citizens' lives, strengthen institutions and safeguard national interests without allowing confrontation to become an end in itself. When conflict becomes an electoral asset, the political gains may be short-lived, but the human, economic and strategic costs can endure for generations.

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

er, is not an easy market. Its economy is damaged, its institutions are fragile and its security environment remains volatile. Any arms transfer would carry reputational, financial and diplomatic risks. Pakistan would need to consider the reaction of the United States, Israel, Gulf partners and its own domestic public opinion. It would also need to avoid becoming entangled in Syria's internal rivalries or in a broader confrontation with Israel. There is a further complication. Pakistan's closeness to China means that any expansion of its defence footprint in Syria could be read in Washington and Tel Aviv as an extension of Chinese influence. Islamabad may see itself as an independent actor pursuing commercial opportunities and a Muslim-world solidarity, but others may see a new node in a wider strategic network.

At home, the debate is likely to be sharper. Pakistan faces inflation, fiscal pressure, political uncertainty and serious security challenges along its western border. Committing scarce diplomatic and military resources to Syria may appear, to many citizens, like an unnecessary adventure. The Mecca agreement was justified as collective deterrence; involvement in Syria's reconstruction would require a far more detailed national rationale. Yet disengagement has its own costs. If Pakistan remains absent, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt or other regional actors will shape Syria's future without it. Islamabad's traditional strength has been to maintain relationships across rival camps without becoming captive to any one of them. A careful, conditional opening to Damascus could preserve that flexibility. The central question, therefore, is not whether Syria wants Pakistani weapons. It almost certainly does. The question is whether Pakistan can engage without overcommitting: whether it can sell capability, offer training and support sovereignty without inheriting Syria's conflicts. If handled with restraint, Pakistan's engagement could give it influence in a region where it has long been underrepresented. If handled carelessly, it could turn a promising diplomatic opening into another burdensome foreign commitment. For Islamabad, the Syrian door is opening. The task now is to walk through it without losing sight of Pakistan's own limits.

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Briefs

PM Shehbaz launches scheme to distribute...

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He highlighted the role of Danish schools, which have enabled deserving students to pursue quality education and advance their prospects. PM Shehbaz reiterated that at least 27 Danish schools are being built across the country. These institutions aim to offer excellent facilities—including smart boards, digital libraries, residential arrangements, and meals—entirely free of charge so that no child is denied education due to financial constraints. He stressed that education should remain a top priority for any government and that all necessary resources must be directed toward the development of the nation's children. "Education is a jewel; regardless of where you are from, it will always make you distinguished in society," he remarked. Eligibility under the scheme is being managed through the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) portal. For educational boards in Punjab, Sindh, Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan, top-performing Grade 9 (SSC-I) students from government and public schools based on the 2026 annual examinations are eligible. Students from Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan boards can include both Grade 9 and Grade 10 high achievers. Registered religious seminary (madrasa) students are also included, with roughly one in every five devices allocated to them.

Iran: resumption of war would...

FROM PAGE 01
Whether there is war or not, our policies remain the same," said Araghchi during a televised event in Tehran. "They have already done so twice and we will see the results. If they want to try again, they know they will achieve no different outcome from those of the past." An April 8 ceasefire between Iran and the United States put an end to the most intense fighting, apart from sporadic exchanges of fire in and around the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a key route for global energy supplies. These military flare-ups have lulled in recent weeks. Iran has claimed control over the Strait since the outbreak of the war and has regularly targeted vessels that attempt crossing without its authorization — moves strongly opposed by Washington and countries in the region. In response, the US has been maintaining a naval counter-blockade on Iranian ports. In June, Iran agreed with the United States to a memorandum of understanding laying out a pathway to a permanent settlement of the conflict, only for the deal to later unravel as each side accused the other of violating it.

'Houthi have combined...

FROM PAGE 01
this organization, which makes the lives of civilians, the interests of the people, and the security of the region tools for blackmail. He also affirmed that the Houthis are determined to deal with it outside the requirements of this danger gives it the time and ability to commit more crimes. Al-Halmi called on all countries to take a unified stand against the Houthis. He pointed out that the Houthi militias have combined the tools of all terrorist organizations and have surpassed them in the use of modern weapons. He said the Houthis have combined the tools of all terrorist organizations and have surpassed them in the use of modern weapons. He said the Houthis have combined the tools of all terrorist organizations and have surpassed them in the use of modern weapons.

Serena Hotels celebrates sporting excellence at Serena Polo Cup 2026

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, under its Sports Diplomacy Initiative and its continued commitment to promoting community engagement through sports, hosted the much-anticipated Serena Polo Cup 2026 at the Islamabad Club Polo Grounds.

The event was attended by members of the diplomatic community, government officials, corporate leaders, media representatives, and polo enthusiasts, bringing together distinguished guests for a celebration of sporting excellence, friendly competition, and international camaraderie.

The final match of the Serena Polo Cup 2026 featured an exciting contest between Team HN and Team Asean. Both teams displayed great skill and teamwork, keeping the audience excited throughout the match. Following an intense contest across four chukkers, Team Asean emerged victorious with a score of 10, securing the prestigious Serena Polo Cup 2026 title.

Serena Hotels extended its congratulations to both teams for their outstanding performance and sportsmanship. The tournament reaffirmed Serena Hotels' commitment to encouraging athletic excellence and strengthening community ties through sports. Beyond polo, Serena Hotels continues to support a range of sporting disciplines across Pakistan, including tennis, squash, golf, and women's cricket, as part of its efforts to promote youth engagement, gender equality, and national pride while strengthening bonds within local and international communities.

Scores:

Serena Challenge Polo Cup 2026 (Final)

HN vs Asean

HN scored 6.5 goals.



Asean scored 10 goals.
HN vs Asean
HN scored 6.5 goals.

Eulogio-04 goals
Maiman Baloch-02 goals
Haider Aasad-02 goals

Abdullah Faisal-02 goals
HN Team: 10

Haider Naseem-01
Ibrahim Khalil-02
Syed M Turab Rizvi: 01

Saqib Khakwani: 02
Handicap: 1/2
Total: 6.5

Pakistani artist wins Cultural Exchange Award at Int'l contest

SHANGHAI: A cross-cultural design blending Pakistani and Chinese folk traditions has earned international recognition in Shanghai, highlighting the role of creative collaboration in fostering people-to-people exchanges. Hira Ali, a Pakistani artist, received a Cultural Exchange Award at the 4th ISFS Award of the International Folk Gifts Innovative Design Contest for her work "Folk Hues: Kalash and Jinshan Color Fusion," China Economic Net (CEN) reported. The contest, hosted by the Shanghai Fashion and Accessories Society, held its final evaluation meeting on October 19 at Donghua University. Her tutor, Wu Pengxiao from Shanghai University, received an Excellent Tutor Award. The competition, themed "Algorithm," used baseball caps, scarves, T-shirts, and socks as design carriers, encouraging domestic and international students at Chinese universities to explore and interpret folk cultural elements from around the world. Through their designs, participants were invited to express the fashion essence of diverse local folk cultures and jointly build a more inclusive, green and intelligent future. Hira Ali's award-winning design fuses Pakistani Kalash elements with Shanghai Jinshan Farmer Paintings. The Kalash, a small indigenous people of Pakistan's Chitral region, retain ancient folk beliefs, Kalasha language and distinctive embroidered dress, and their Suri Jagek astro-nomical practice was inscribed by UNESCO in 2018 as an intangible heritage in need of urgent preservation.

Celebrated for their bold compositions and vibrant colors, the Jinshan Farmer Paintings, which emerged in Shanghai's Jinshan district in the late 1950s, gained international recognition after an exhibition at the National Art Museum of China in 1980, and are now recognized as Shanghai's municipal intangible cultural heritage. — APP

PSB Honours Rizwan Aftab Ahmed for Sports Development

OUR CORRESPONDENT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Director General Yawar Hussain has honoured Dr. Rizwan Aftab Ahmed, CEO of ACTIVIT and Director of National Hospital, in recognition of his contributions to sports development and athlete welfare in Pakistan. During a meeting, the DG PSB appreciated Dr. Rizwan's support for athletes through sponsorships, medical and nutritional assistance, and collaboration with sports organisations. ACTIVIT recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Director of the PSB Coaches' Centre Lahore to promote sports development, athlete support and joint initiatives. The DG PSB also acknowledged ACTIVIT's sponsorship of Independence Day celebrations at the centre in August 2026. The meeting highlighted the importance of private-sector participation in strengthening sports and supporting athletes competing at national and international levels. Dr. Rizwan's contributions span multiple disciplines, including assistance to athletes affiliated with national sports federations. Dr. Rizwan has also expressed interest in sponsoring an international bodybuilding competition organised by the Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation under the proposed title ACTIVIT Fitness Challenge, aimed at promoting fitness and providing athletes with opportunities to compete internationally. In recognition of his contributions, Dr. Rizwan was presented with a commemorative shield and a banner of excellence by the DG PSB and the Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation.

Iran says border with Pak...

FROM PAGE 01
the issue. The Iranian envoy also said that, according to reports, several hundred trucks carrying LPG had crossed the Kandahar border into Gahd on the Pakistani side. However, the trucks had remained there for several weeks without being unloaded or cleared, he said. Moghadam said the situation was further complicating the movement of goods and the smooth flow of bilateral trade.

Key militant commander killed...

FROM PAGE 01
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021, Pakistan recorded its highest monthly number of militant attacks in 12 years during September 2026. Islamabad has reportedly urged Kabul to prevent its territory from being used by militant organisations to carry out attacks inside Pakistan. Pakistan maintains that the Afghan Taliban regime has failed to take effective action against groups responsible for attacks on Pakistani security forces and civilians.

GDA launches plantation project with drip irrigation

GWADAR: The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has launched a plantation project with drip irrigation at Marine Drive Circle. The project, aimed at promoting greenery and conserving water, involves planting flowering plants and trees at Asiri Circle to improve the roundabout's appearance. Gwadar Pro reported. GDA Environmental Officer and Horticulturist Hamid Dashti said the project includes irrigation and maintenance measures intended to support healthy plant growth over time. He said the drip irrigation system would deliver water directly to plants according to their needs, helping conserve water and support their growth. — APP

Briefs

Resilient housing to address growing challenges

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Programme Manager (DPM) UN-Habitat Pakistan Hamid Mumtaz Khan has said that Pakistan needs affordable, adequate and climate-resilient housing solutions to address its growing housing deficit, rapid urbanization and recurring natural disasters. In an interview with APP, he said that rapid and often unplanned urbanization was contributing to the expansion of informal settlements and slums, while recurring disasters had further intensified the country's housing challenges, with millions of houses affected since the 2005 earthquake. Addressing the growing housing crisis required a comprehensive approach that focused not only on increasing housing supply but also on ensuring affordability, adequate basic services and the resilience of existing and future homes, he added. Khan emphasized the need for affordable and incremental housing solutions, access to serviced land, appropriate financing mechanisms and the upgrading of existing informal settlements through meaningful participation. He said adequate housing must provide access to safe drinking water, sanitation, essential services and a secure living environment, particularly for low-income communities. Highlighting the importance of disaster-resilient construction, he said resilience should be incorporated into housing planning, design and construction to protect communities against earthquakes, floods and the growing impacts of climate change. — APP

He further highlighted the development of a dedicated freight corridor, stating that the number of freight trains would be increased from nine to 14 by January 2027 to expand freight operations and enhance the country's cargo business. Earlier, in his welcome address, Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi attended the event as the chief guest. RCCI President Noshervan Khalil Khan and Patron-in-Chief Sohail Al-Tarazi warmly received the minister upon his arrival. Addressing the gathering, Federal Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi offered Pakistan Railways' cargo and freight services for the transportation of poultry feed across the country. He emphasized that improved freight facilities could support the poultry sector by facilitating the movement of essential supplies and strengthening logistics for the industry. The minister stated that Pakistan Railways had achieved its highest-ever annual revenue of Rs115 billion during the fiscal year 2025-26. Expressing optimism about the future, he said a revenue target of Rs160 billion had been set for the next fiscal year and expressed confidence that it would be achieved.

Protesters clash with police over India dam project bordering China

NEW DELHI: Indian protesters angry over a proposed Himalayan megadam, intended to counter an upstream Chinese hydropower project, have clashed with police and torched buildings, officials said.

The violence in northeastern Arunachal Pradesh state erupted late on Friday during protests against the proposed 11,200-megawatt Siang Multipurpose Project of state-run hydropower company NHPC. Chief Minister Pena Khandu told reporters on Saturday, "The mob destroyed a lot of properties, police personnel were injured by stones thrown by the protesters, the NHPC office was vandalized, several elected representatives' homes were ransacked," Khandu told reporters.

Around 400 police personnel were injured by stones thrown by protesters, who also vandalized the NHPC's offices. Police fired tear gas canisters to disperse the crowd. Khandu urged opponents of the project to engage with the government. "Question us, have dialogue with us, instead of violence," Khandu said. India says the proposed dam is needed to counter China's \$167-billion Yaxia project, a likely record-breaking hydropower scheme upstream in Tibet.

New Delhi fears the Chinese project could affect water flows downstream, and says the proposed Indian dam would create a vast reservoir to store water and help maintain flows into the Brahmaputra river. — APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Sardar and Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Dr. Ahmad bin Mohannad Al-Sayed co-chaired the second meeting of the Pakistan-Qatar Joint Task Force (JTF) on Trade and Investment in Doha, and reviewed progress on bilateral economic cooperation and explore new opportunities for trade, investment and industrial partnerships. Representatives of relevant Pakistani ministries participated virtually, while the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), serving as the Secretariat of the Joint Task Force, coordinated the proceedings from Pakistan, said a news release issued here on Sunday. Both sides reviewed progress since the inaugural meeting in April 2026 and discussed measures to strengthen bilateral trade, facilitate investment and advance cooperation across priority economic sectors. During the meeting, Pakistan emphasized the importance of the early signing of the Pakistan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Free Trade Agreement and sought Qatar's continued support in expediting the remaining formalities. Pakistan affirmed the meeting that it had already completed its domestic approval process and forwarded the approved agreement text to the GCC Secretariat on December 31, 2025. The Pakistani side also raised the issue of restrictions on exports of bone-meat to Qatar and requested their early resolution, highlighting that a comprehensive technical dossier addressing animal health and food safety requirements had already been shared with the relevant Qatari authorities. In the agriculture and food security sector, Pakistan highlighted the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and Qatar's Hassad Food for the supply of Pakistani rice under a government-to-government arrangement. The proposed agreement has been submitted to the Federal Cabinet for approval. Pakistan invited Qatari investment in modern agriculture, grain storage facilities, silos, cold storage, integrated cold-chain infrastructure and advanced farming technologies. Opportunities for developing sustainable food supply arrangements to strengthen food security in both countries were also discussed. Highlighting Pakistan's industrial potential, the Pakistani side presented investment opportunities in the automobile sector, particularly New Energy Vehicles (NEVs). — APP

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RCCI celebrates world egg day 2026

Hanif offers freight services to transport poultry feed

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RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), in collaboration with SB Eggs, celebrated World Egg Day 2026 at Chamber House, Rawalpindi, to promote nutritional awareness and highlight the importance of eggs as an affordable and nutritious source of protein.

Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi attended the event as the chief guest. RCCI President Noshervan Khalil Khan and Patron-in-Chief Sohail Al-Tarazi warmly received the minister upon his arrival. Addressing the gathering, Federal Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi offered Pakistan Railways' cargo and freight services for the transportation of poultry feed across the country. He emphasized that improved freight facilities could support the poultry sector by facilitating the movement of essential supplies and strengthening logistics for the industry. The minister stated that Pakistan Railways had achieved its highest-ever annual revenue of Rs115 billion during the fiscal year 2025-26. Expressing optimism about the future, he said a revenue target of Rs160 billion had been set for the next fiscal year and expressed confidence that it would be achieved.

He further highlighted the development of a dedicated freight corridor, stating that the number of freight trains would be increased from nine to 14 by January 2027 to expand freight operations and enhance the country's cargo business. Earlier, in his welcome address, RCCI President Noshervan Khalil Khan highlighted the vital role of the poultry sector in promoting food security, improving nutrition, and ensuring access to affordable protein. He emphasized that eggs and poultry products are essential components of a balanced diet, particularly for the healthy growth and development of children. The RCCI president appreciated SB Eggs for collaborating with the Chamber to pro-

mote nutritional awareness and engage young students through educational and creative activities. He also underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation between the business community and relevant stakeholders to support the growth and sustainability of the poultry industry.

The event featured a cooking competition alongside painting and poster competitions for school students. These activities provided young participants with an opportunity to demonstrate their creativity while learning about the nutritional value of eggs and the importance of healthy eating habits.

success, he hoped that approximately 150,000 people would visit the event, which would play a significant role in projecting Islamabad and Pakistan as attractive destinations for tourism, culture, sports and investment. He stressed that greater international visibility was essential to attract foreign visitors and demonstrate Pakistan's capacity to host vibrant cultural, musical, sporting and tourism-related events. He proposed engaging Pakistan's diplomatic missions abroad to invite international content creators to the festival, enabling them to showcase Pakistan's tourism attractions and cultural richness to global audiences. ICCI President Mohammad Zakria Akbar Zia said Pakistan possessed exceptional tourism potential extending far beyond Islamabad, particularly in the country's northern areas, including Swat, Chitral, Gilgit and Skardu. He emphasized the need to improve air connectivity, tourism infrastructure and international outreach to attract more foreign tourists, particularly from Arab countries. The ICCI President emphasized that translating this potential into tangible economic benefits required improved facilities, professional management, sustainable tourism practices and stronger public-private partnerships. He said the business community could play a vital role in developing tourism infrastructure, attracting investment and promoting Pakistan as a competitive international destination. Highlighting the close relationship between tourism and trade, Mohammad Zia said exhibitions, conferences and festivals could generate significant business opportunities by bringing investors, entrepreneurs, tourists and business communities together. He termed "Trade through Travel" an effective approach to strengthening commercial relations, promoting investment and expanding economic cooperation. ICCI Senior Vice President Mohammad Ashfaq Hussain Chatha said tourism was not merely a recreational activity but a dynamic economic sector capable of generating employment, attracting investment, promoting entrepreneurship and contributing to sustainable economic growth. — DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Tourism Sardar Yasar Ilyas Khan has announced that the 2nd Pakistan Tourism, Sports & Festival Festival 2026 will be held from November 6 to 8 at Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. The event, bringing together tourism, sports, culture, adventure, food, crafts, family entertainment and public engagement under one platform. He made this announcement while addressing a ceremony at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ICCI and the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) to jointly promote and ensure the successful organization of the festival. The three-day festival will feature a wide range of activities, including paragliding, rock climbing, tent pegging, a vintage car show, hot air balloons, cultural performances, family entertainment, traditional crafts and food stalls, offering visitors a vibrant celebration of Pakistan's cultural diversity, tourism potential and recreational attractions. Sardar Yasar Ilyas Khan said that reviving tourism was a collective responsibility and a powerful means of replacing disappointment with happiness, hope and economic opportunities. He emphasized the need for all stakeholders to take ownership of the initiative to help build an economically prosperous and stable Pakistan for future generations. Expressing confidence in the festival's

success, he hoped that approximately 150,000 people would visit the event, which would play a significant role in projecting Islamabad and Pakistan as attractive destinations for tourism, culture, sports and investment. He stressed that greater international visibility was essential to attract foreign visitors and demonstrate Pakistan's capacity to host vibrant cultural, musical, sporting and tourism-related events. He proposed engaging Pakistan's diplomatic missions abroad to invite international content creators to the festival, enabling them to showcase Pakistan's tourism attractions and cultural richness to global audiences. ICCI President Mohammad Zakria Akbar Zia said Pakistan possessed exceptional tourism potential extending far beyond Islamabad, particularly in the country's northern areas, including Swat, Chitral, Gilgit and Skardu. He emphasized the need to improve air connectivity, tourism infrastructure and international outreach to attract more foreign tourists, particularly from Arab countries. The ICCI President emphasized that translating this potential into tangible economic benefits required improved facilities, professional management, sustainable tourism practices and stronger public-private partnerships. He said the business community could play a vital role in developing tourism infrastructure, attracting investment and promoting Pakistan as a competitive international destination. Highlighting the close relationship between tourism and trade, Mohammad Zia said exhibitions, conferences and festivals could generate significant business opportunities by bringing investors, entrepreneurs, tourists and business communities together. He termed "Trade through Travel" an effective approach to strengthening commercial relations, promoting investment and expanding economic cooperation. ICCI Senior Vice President Mohammad Ashfaq Hussain Chatha said tourism was not merely a recreational activity but a dynamic economic sector capable of generating employment, attracting investment, promoting entrepreneurship and contributing to sustainable economic growth. — DNA

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Briefs

President
Zardari
greet
Austria

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has extended warm felicitations to the President and the people of the Republic of Austria on the occasion of Austria's National Day. In his letter to Austrian President Dr Alexander Van der Bellen, President Zardari conveyed his best wishes for the President's good health and happiness and for the continued progress, prosperity and well-being of the Austrian people. President Zardari said that Pakistan and Austria enjoy longstanding and cordial relations founded on mutual respect, goodwill and a shared commitment to peace, stability and international cooperation.

He noted that the two countries maintain constructive engagement at bilateral and multilateral levels, reflecting their common desire to strengthen friendly relations and promote mutually beneficial cooperation. The President expressed confidence that the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Austria would continue to grow stronger, opening new avenues for cooperation in areas of mutual interest and bringing the two peoples closer together.

Police made
1,314 arrests
in France's
protests:
government

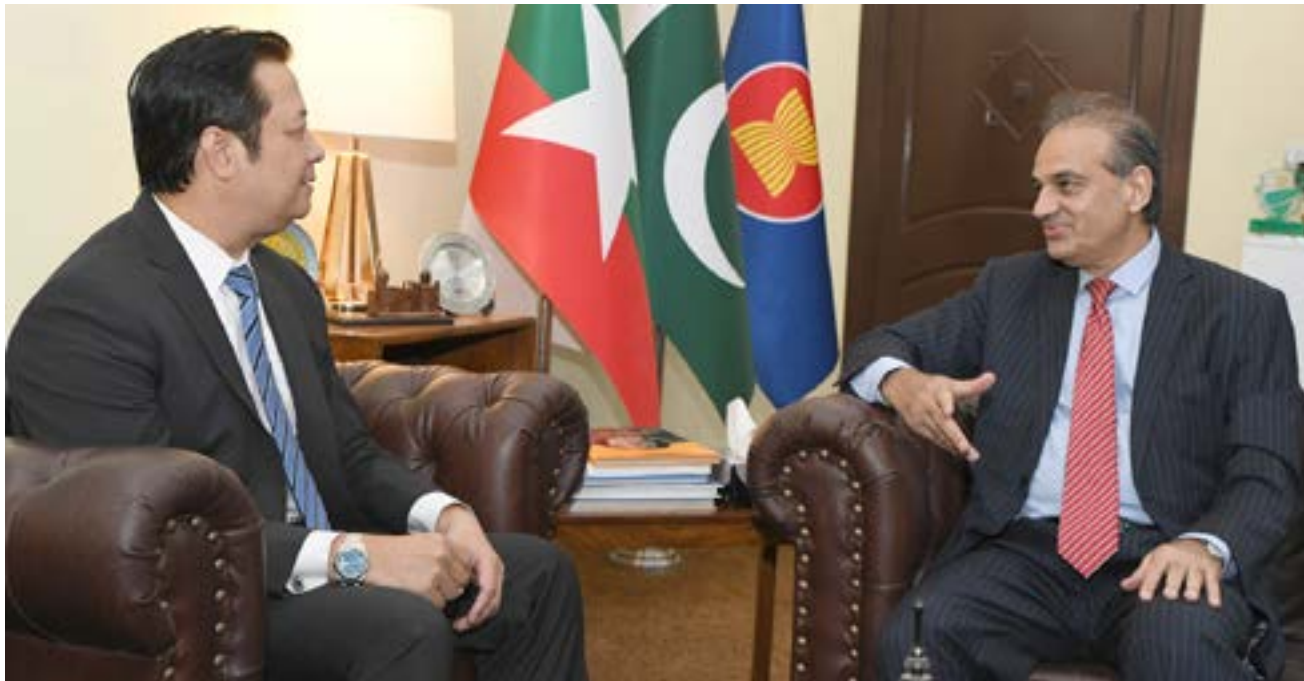
PARIS: Police arrested 1,314 people in weekend protests across France, the interior ministry said Sunday, adding that 53 officers were hurt in clashes.

The arrests occurred as violence broke out on the margins of mass demonstrations in major cities on Saturday over the high cost of living. It was the second consecutive weekend of unrest in France, which is heading to presidential elections in April and May to choose a successor to Emmanuel Macron, who is reaching his two-term limit. The interior ministry said police responded to 75 fires during Saturday's protests, adding that 24 shops were looted. "Several investigations have been opened," it said in a statement, without giving details. It said that the rest of Saturday night, after the clashes had died down, was "calm."

The ministry statement on Sunday did not say how many protesters were hurt. Late Saturday, Interior Minister Laurent Nunez spoke of two serious injuries among protesters: one in Toulouse and one in Clermont-Ferrand. The Toulouse prefecture, which reports to the interior ministry, told AFP that a 20-year-old man was seriously hurt with a wound to his hand. A street medic who tended demonstrators told AFP, on condition of anonymity, that the man had "several fingers" blown off his right hand. The prefecture covering Clermont-Ferrand said a man there also had a hand hurt, but did not suffer the loss of any fingers. - APP

ASEAN, Pakistan relations
poised to grow further: envoy

Ambassador of Myanmar Wunna Han talks to daily Islamabad POST.
The first part was published on October 20, 2026



ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Wunna Han has underscored Myanmar's appreciation

of Pakistan's engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). He noted that Pakistan's role as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN and its active participation in the ASEAN Regional Fo-

rum have contributed positively to regional cooperation. Myanmar, he stated, supports Pakistan's efforts to deepen ties with ASEAN under its "Vision East Asia" initiative. Highlighting Myanmar's unique geo-

graphic position, the ambassador described the country as a natural bridge linking South Asia and Southeast Asia. He emphasized that enhanced cooperation between Pakistan and ASEAN could generate opportunities in areas such as trade, counterterrorism, disaster management, climate resilience, and human resource development.

When asked about his message to various segments of Pakistani society, Ambassador Wunna Han encouraged businesses to look beyond traditional markets and explore the vast potential of Southeast Asia. He emphasized that investments in business-to-business relationships today could generate significant long-term rewards.

For students and academics, he called for stronger educational exchanges, collaborative research projects, and diplomatic training programs. Greater understanding of each other's cultures, histories, and languages, he suggested, would establish a durable foundation for future cooperation.

To policymakers, the ambassador urged continued dialogue and collaboration in areas such as trade facilitation, religious tourism, and institutional partnerships. He stressed that both countries can make meaningful contributions to regional peace, stability, and economic prosperity by working together in regional and global forums. Reflecting on his personal experience in Pakistan, Ambassador Wunna Han expressed deep appreciation for the hospitality and warmth of the Pakistani people. He described his tenure in the country as both professionally productive and personally rewarding. Islamabad, he observed, is among the world's most beautiful and green capital cities, while Pakistan's rich historical heritage continues to leave a lasting impression on visitors from Myanmar.

Particularly significant to him are the renowned Gandhara civilization sites in Taxila and Swat, which hold special cultural and spiritual importance for many Myanmar citizens. He also praised Pakistan's vibrant cultural traditions, diverse cuisine, and resilient national spirit. Concluding the interview on a positive note, Ambassador Wunna Han reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening understanding and cooperation between Myanmar and Pakistan. Expressing confidence in the future of bilateral relations, he emphasized that the shared history, mutual respect, and common interests of both nations provide a strong foundation for expanded partnership in the years ahead.

Obama blasts
Trump's
'chaos and
cruelty'

DNA

WASHINGTON: Former US president Barack Obama delivered scathing criticisms of his successor, Donald Trump, at rallies Saturday in Ohio and Michigan to support Democratic candidates ahead of the November 3 midterm elections.

Democrats are attempting to wrest back control of one or both chambers of the US Congress, which are currently controlled by Trump's Republican party. The former president retains considerable popularity among the Democratic base, which he is keen to leverage to support his Democratic Party's candidates. In both states, the 65-year-old former president blamed the Trump administration for the rising cost of living, a top voter concern amid soaring fuel prices. "The current president chose to make a series of bad decisions," Obama said in Ohio, where he rallied in support of former Democratic senator Sherrod Brown. "Most importantly, he decided to start an unnecessary war that nobody asked for." "After two years of chaos and cruelty and corruption and incompetence, the likes of which we have not seen in the modern era, you get a chance to say, 'Enough is enough,'" Obama declared in Cleveland.

Russians
injured in
drone attack

MOSCOW: A drone attack on Russia's Perm region damaged an industrial facility, injuring five of its workers, regional governor Dmitry Makhonin said on Sunday. Emergency services were at the scene and that the injured people received the necessary medical help, he said on the state-backed MAX messaging app without providing further detail on the nature of the damage. - APP

Protesters clash with
police over India dam
project bordering China

India says the proposed dam is needed to counter China's \$167-billion Yaxia project, a likely record-breaking hydropower scheme upstream in Tibet

NEW DELHI: Indian protesters angry over a proposed Himalayan mega-dam, intended to counter an upstream Chinese hydropower project, have clashed with police and torched buildings, officials said. The violence in northeastern Arunachal Pradesh state erupted late on Friday during protests against the proposed 11,200-megawatt Siang Multipurpose Project of state-run hydropower company NHPC, Chief Minister Pema Khandu told reporters on Saturday. "The mob destroyed a lot of properties, police station, the NHPC office was vandalized, several elected representatives' homes were ransacked," Khandu told reporters. Around 40 police personnel were injured by stones thrown by protesters, who also vandalized the NHPC's offices. Police fired tear gas canisters to disperse the crowd. Khandu urged opponents of the project to engage with the government. "Question us, have dialogue with us, instead of violence," Khandu said. India says the proposed dam is needed to counter China's \$167-billion Yaxia project, a likely record-breaking hydropower scheme upstream in Tibet. New Delhi fears the Chinese project could

affect water flows downstream, and says the proposed Indian dam would create a vast reservoir to store water and help maintain flows into the Brahmaputra river. Beijing has said its project will have no "negative impact" downstream. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet. India says the state is an integral part of its territory. India's proposed dam, which would be by far its largest hydropower project, has drawn fierce opposition from local communities who fear the loss of their homes and land. The project underscores tensions between the two most populous countries, which share a disputed Himalayan border patrolled by tens of thousands of troops. India's foreign ministry said on Friday the two sides remained in regular contact to manage border tensions, after a top Indian border police official Shatruejt Kapur reported "face offs" between Indian and Chinese forces. "The situation in the India-China border areas gets disturbed from time to time when Chinese forces diverge from established patrolling patterns," foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters in New Delhi. - APP

Thousands rally against
Netanyahu ahead of vote

Israeli opposition leaders attend rally as latest KAN poll projects neither bloc will be able to secure parliamentary majority

TEL AVIV: Thousands of people rallied in Tel Aviv on Saturday against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, three days before a general election widely viewed as a referendum on his leadership.

The demonstration was organised by the October Council, a group founded by families of people killed or taken hostage during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. The group is demanding accountability for the security failures that allowed the attack to take place.

Israeli media reported that leaders of the four main opposition parties attended the rally, including former military chief Gadi Eisenkot, who is challenging Netanyahu and received a warm welcome from the crowd.

"Three days before the election, we will hold the culminating event marking three years of struggle to uncover the truth, demand accountability, and establish a state commission of inquiry," the October Council said on X

ahead of the demonstration. The latest opinion polls published before a blackout on political polling took effect late on Friday showed that neither bloc was projected to win a majority in Israel's 120-seat parliament.

A poll published by public broadcaster KAN projected 52 seats for Eisenkot's bloc and 50 for Netanyahu's, with the remaining seats going to parties outside the two blocs, including Arab parties. "Israel has never been in a situation as it is now," she added. Ahead of the demonstration, the October Council had alerted law enforcement to possible "provocations" by pro-government agitators.

Israeli police said on Saturday evening that they had arrested a suspect for assaulting the security team of a public figure in Tel Aviv. Israeli media identified the target as former prime minister and opposition leader Naftali Bennett. The rally followed years of campaigning by Israeli civil society groups and opposition parties for an independent commission of inquiry into the security failures surrounding the October 7 attack. Netanyahu's government has refused to establish such a commission, of the kind Israel has commonly set up to investigate major national failures. Instead, it has proposed a political commission whose members would be appointed equally by the governing coalition and opposition lawmakers. - APP

LAUNCH OF
Prime Minister's
youth
Chromebook Scheme
Prime Minister's Youth Programme

5000000

ریفر بشڈ کروم بُکس
بیگ اور مائی فائی ڈیوائسز
ہمع ایک سال کیلئے فری انٹرنیٹ

آزاد جموں و کشمیر اور گلگت بلتستان سمیت
چاروں صوبوں کے سرکاری سکولوں اور مدارس میں زیر تعلیم
اعلیٰ کارکردگی کے ساتھ نویں جماعت پاس کرنیوالے طلباء و طالبات کیلئے

وزیراعظم کے ڈیجیٹل پاکستان وژن
کی تکمیل کی جانب عملی اقدام
سٹوڈنٹس کیلئے 5 لاکھ مائی فائی ڈیوائسز
25 لاکھ پاکستانیوں کی انٹرنیٹ تک رسائی

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Prime Minister's
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