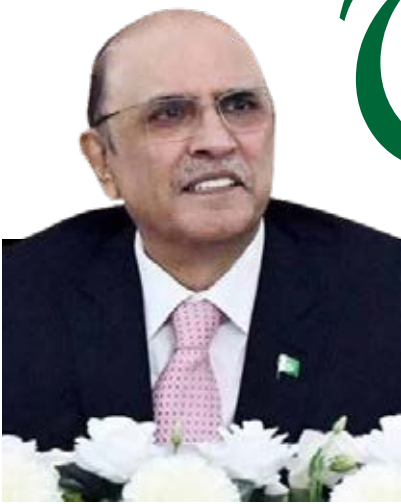




Daily

The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول
ہم سے سونے پر کیا کہا ہم سے بچنے نے
بیان کیا ان سے عید اللہ نے ان سے ناسخ نے
بیان کیا اور ان سے عبد اللہ بن عمر رضی اللہ
عہما نے بیان کیا کہ نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم
نے فرمایا تمہارے سامنے ہی میرا خوش ہو گا
وہ اکثر لے جتا ہر پیر اور از حاکم کے درمیان
فاصلہ ہے۔
(صحیح بخاری: حدیث نمبر 6577)
Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited

President Zardari stresses stronger partnership with UN on climate resilience

President Zardari stresses stronger UN partnership on development and climate resilience President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasised further strengthening Pakistan's partnership with the United Nations, particularly in sustainable development, climate change, poverty alleviation, education and social protection.



DPM Dar discusses bilateral engagement with Iran envoy

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has said dialogue and diplomacy remain the only effective means of addressing outstanding issues and achieving lasting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. He was talking to Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam, who called on him in Islamabad today. Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further deepening engagement with Iran in key priority areas.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Safar 29, Thursday, August 13, 2026



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Daily Spokesman Vol: 20, Issue: 114 Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

International Youth Day Ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the International Youth Day Ceremony on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

PM launches National Youth Employment Policy, pledges equal education opportunities

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the government's commitment to equipping Pakistan's youth with modern technological and skill-based education, speaking at a ceremony marking International Youth Day. He formally launched the "First National Youth Employment Policy," aimed at addressing the country's youth bulge by creating job opportuni-

ties, with a 35 percent quota for women in the labour force and a 10 percent annual quota for young startups to ensure inclusivity and innovation.

Emphasizing that the world is now driven by AI, IT and technology, the prime minister said Pakistan must incorporate the latest knowledge in these fields to compete with developed nations. He stressed equal educational opportunities for talented and deserving students, invoking

Quaid-e-Azam's vision, and highlighted the expansion of Danish schools nationwide to serve deprived and far-flung areas.

He announced that a Danish University is being established in Islamabad, set to begin academic sessions next year as a tech-focused institution. He also noted that 700,000 laptops have already been distributed to students on merit, with 250,000 Chromebooks to be awarded this year, and that 1,000 agri-grad-

uates were sent to China for technology training, with more batches planned for AI and IT education.

Minister for Power Sardar Ahmad Khan Leghari said the policy would support innovative ideas in the power sector through a new national employment digital platform, offering Rs 30 million in annual awards and Rs 1 billion allocated over three years for adopting such innovations.

Chairman of the PM Youth

Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, credited the Danish education system and Punjab endowment fund as major achievements under the prime minister's leadership.

The ceremony, attended by ministers, parliamentarians, diplomats, teachers and students, concluded with the prime minister distributing awards to accomplished young achievers and urging youth to actively build their future.

Chinese Envoy Highlights CPEC's \$25.9 Billion Investment, People-Centred Cooperation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zedong said CPEC has attracted over \$25.9 billion in direct investment and created more than 260,000 jobs, calling it a major driver of Pakistan's socio-economic development. Speaking at a briefing on "Xi Jinping's Thought on Party Building," organised by the Chinese Embassy and the Institute of Regional Studies, he noted CPEC has added 8,000+ megawatts of power capacity, 510 km of highways and 886 km of transmission infrastructure.

Jiang said President Xi has prioritized Pakistan's development and stressed that CPEC's benefits should reach all regions and citizens. Drawing parallels with



China's poverty alleviation campaign—involving Xi's 50-plus field visits and millions of cadres—he said Xi's people-first philosophy should guide China-Pakistan cooperation.

On bilateral economic ties, Jiang cited Faisalabad Industrial Park, where 39 Chinese firms operate profitably, including five ceramic companies paying \$20 million annually in taxes and employing over 5,000 locals.

He affirmed China's readiness to collaborate on major and small-scale welfare projects, highlighting growing inter-party exchanges, including an MoU, the CPEC political party consultation mechanism, and the China-Pakistan Political Parties Forum, to sustain bilateral friendship for future generations.

Norway's Foreign Affairs Minister due in Pakistan today

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: At the invitation of the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Mr Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, will undertake an official visit to Pakistan on 13-14 August 2026, the first such visit by a Norwegian Foreign Minister

in a decade.

During the visit, the DPM/FM and the Norwegian Foreign Minister will hold delegation-level talks covering the full spectrum of Pakistan-Norway relations. The two sides will discuss avenues for further expanding bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade and investment, climate change, renewable energy, education and people-

to-people contacts. They will also exchange views on important regional and international developments.

The visit builds on sustained high-level engagement between the two countries, including telephone conversations between the two Foreign Ministers in March and April 2026, and the visit of Norway's State Secretary, Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, to



Islamabad in May 2026.

The visit will provide an opportunity to further strengthen the longstanding

and cordial relations between Pakistan and Norway and to explore new areas of mutually beneficial cooperation.

Pakistan condemns deadly Houthi attack on Red Sea vessel, confirms three nationals killed



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar has strongly condemned a Houthi attack on a Tanzania-flagged commercial vessel, _Tihamah_, in the Red Sea that killed three Pakistani nationals and one Indonesian, and injured others including one Pakistani.

In a statement on X, Dar said targeting non-combatant commercial ships threatens innocent lives, freedom of navigation, and maritime security, and constitutes a violation of international law. He offered heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased

Pakistanis.

Dar confirmed that Pakistan is in contact with Saudi authorities and Yemen's internationally recognized government to get more details. He directed the Pakistani Embassy in Riyadh to coordinate for the repatriation of the bodies and to ensure the injured Pakistani receives full medical support.

He said the government is closely monitoring the situation and reiterated that attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea pose a serious threat to maritime safety. Pakistan called for the protection of innocent lives and international shipping.

Balochistan blast, security operation kill 18 terrorists

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Eighteen terrorists were killed in separate incidents in Balochistan's Surab district on Wednesday after an explosives-laden vehicle detonated during preparations for a terrorist attack, followed by a security operation against fleeing militants, according to the military's media wing.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the blast occurred on August 12 when militants affiliated with Fitna Hindustan were loading explosives into a vehicle.

Eight terrorists were killed and several others injured in the explosion, the ISPR said.

It added that further explosions occurred after other explosives stored at the site detonated, killing three civilians from the surrounding area.

Following the incident, secu-

rity forces and Balochistan Police launched a joint clearance operation to track down the fleeing militants and their facilitators.

The ISPR said security forces detected the movement of the fleeing militants and killed 10 of them in an effective operation.

The latest action brought the total number of militants killed in the incidents to 18, it said.

Two Pakistan Army personnel were also injured during an intense exchange of fire, according to the statement. A sanitisation operation was underway to eliminate any remaining militants and secure the area, the ISPR said. It added that law enforcement agencies were continuing counterterrorism operations under the govt's Azm-e-Istehkam vision, approved by the federal Apex Committee under the National Action Plan.

Political tensions rise in AJK's Haveli amid election dispute, vehicles vandalised

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Political tensions escalated in Azad Jammu and Kashmir's LA-17 Haveli constituency after several vehicles parked along a roadside were allegedly vandalised in Hotar village amid an election dispute.

Local sources said vehicle windows were smashed and passports and cash belonging to some individuals were reportedly taken. The incident allegedly occurred outside the residence of Zahid Hashmi, a senior PPP leader and president of the International Kashmir Peace Forum Europe, with workers affiliated with PML-N and an independent candidate accused of attacking those present. Some damaged vehicles reportedly belonged to

overseas Pakistanis who had travelled from Saudi Arabia specifically to vote.

Police have launched an investigation, with authorities saying action would be taken against anyone found responsible based on evidence. Conflicting claims about the incident continue to emerge.

Tensions in LA-17 Haveli had already been high after the District Returning Officer declared PPP candidate Faisal Muntaz Rathore the winner via Form 27 notification on Wednesday, following which alleged attacks on PPP workers by PML-N supporters were reported.

Residents have called on authorities to take impartial action to restore law and order. PML-N has denied any involvement in the Hotar incident or other related attacks.

Minister Wajeeha Qamar Meets 75 Trainees from Balochistan at IRM

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajeeha Qamar, visited IRM's head office in Islamabad and interacted with 75 young women trainees from Balochistan participating in the RISE Project.

The RISE Project is funded by the Government of Balochistan, executed by BRSP, and implemented by IRM as the training partner. Its goal is to equip young women with practical, market-oriented skills for employment, self-employment, and sustainable livelihoods.

The 75 trainees from Gwadar, Panjgur, and Kech are undergoing a 2-month residential training in Beautician and Cosmetology at IRM. The program combines technical training, practical exposure, and personal development to build professional skills, confidence, and pathways to economic independence.

During the interactive session, trainees shared their experiences and plans to use their skills in their commu-



nities. The Minister encouraged them to leverage the opportunity for dignity and empowerment, and to become role models for other women. She also praised the collaboration between the Government of Balochistan, BRSP,

and IRM for creating opportunities in underserved areas, calling investment in young women an investment in families and the country's future.

BRSP CEO Dr. Tahir Rasheed highlighted the provincial government's

commitment to skills and livelihoods for women. IRM CEO Dr. Roomi S. Hayat reaffirmed IRM's commitment to translating training into real economic opportunities, noting the multiplier effect of empowering women.

Boat rally in Arabian Sea

KARACHI: People and supporters of the Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) attend a boat rally in Arabian Sea ahead of 79th Independence Day celebration with patriotic zeal.



Photo: Online

Muzaffarabad Adorned in Green and White as Independence Day Preparations Reach Final Stage

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir – Preparations for Pakistan's Independence Day celebrations in the capital have reached their peak, with a festive and patriotic atmosphere across the city.

Government buildings, major roads, markets, and central intersections have been decorated with national flags, bunting, and colourful lights. Public and private buildings are adorned with Pakistan's green and white flags. Special arrangements have been made at multiple locations for flag-hoisting ceremonies. Markets and commercial



centres have also been beautifully decorated for the occasion.

The city is filled with patriotic songs and national flags, reflecting strong national spirit. Citizens, especially

children and youth, are showing great enthusiasm. Various programmes are being arranged at different locations across Muzaffarabad.

At the government level, events will

include flag-hoisting ceremonies, the national anthem, milli naghmas, and cultural programmes. The central ceremony, organized by the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, will be held at High Court Ground and attended by senior civil and military leadership.

Special prayers will be offered for Pakistan's security, development, prosperity, and stability. As in previous years, the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir are celebrating with great fervor. The fluttering green and white flags across Muzaffarabad symbolize the enduring love, commitment, and strong bond of the people of Pakistan and AJK with their homeland.

JKDFP calls to observe India's Independence Day as "Black Day"

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: JKDFP Spokesman Advocate Arshad Iqbal urged Kashmiris to observe India's Independence Day as a "Black Day" to highlight the struggle for self-determination.

He stated that no nation can be subjugated through force, arrests, home demolitions, or military repression. The Kashmiri people's decades-long demand for their inalienable right to self-determination cannot be suppressed by coercion.

Iqbal recalled Pandit Nehru's commitments to Kashmiris and said the Jammu Kashmir dispute is internationally recognized and must be resolved per UN resolutions and Kashmiri aspirations. He called on India to abandon force and create conditions for Kashmiris to freely decide their future democratically.

He appealed to the UN and international community to help achieve a peaceful, just resolution. Clarifying, he said the protest is not against Indian people but to draw global attention to Kashmiri rights.

JKDFP urged Kashmiris worldwide to peacefully protest with black flags on August 15, sending the message that Kashmiris will never surrender their right to self-determination.

Mirpur leaders finalize August 14 Plans to celebrate with Kashmir-Pakistan Solidarity



Bureau Report

MIRPUR: A delegation of local government representatives met Deputy Commissioner Chaudhry Sajid Aslam to discuss Independence Day arrangements, law and order, national unity, and the enduring Kashmir-Pakistan bond.

Participants reaffirmed their resolve to celebrate August 14 with enthusiasm, unity, and harmony, and to convey a strong message of solidarity with Pakistan while praying for its security and prosperity.

The Deputy Commissioner said the relationship between Kashmir and Pakistan is rooted in shared history, emotions, and devotion, not just geography. He stressed that Mirpuris have shown unwavering commitment to Pakistan and urged the younger generation to learn about the freedom movement and sacrifices made for Pakistan. He called Pakistan's security and progress a shared responsibility.

Paying tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces, he praised their sacrifices and national unity under Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir.

He directed departments to finalize flag-hoisting, security, cleanliness, and traffic arrangements. He urged citizens to promote brotherhood, tolerance, and public service, saying Mirpur must send a message of love for Pakistan and national unity.

AJK Public Service Commission Inducts Seven New Members in Islamabad Ceremony

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission, Major General (Retd.) Hidayat-ur-Rehman, administered the oath to seven newly appointed members of the Commission at Jammu Kashmir House, Islamabad.

Those who took the oath included Munir Hussain Chaudhry (Retd.), former Secretary; Dr. Liaqat Hussain (Retd.), former SMBR; Muhammad Zahid Khan (Retd.), former Secretary; Dr. Abdul Quddus Khan (Retd.), Professor; Dr. Abdul Hameed (Retd.), Vice Chancellor; Ms. Madhat Shehzad (Retd.), Additional Chief Secretary; and Dr. Muhammad Saleem (Retd.), Medical Specialist.

Secretary Services Chaudhry Imtiaz read out the notification regarding the appointment of the new members on the occasion.

Ziauddin University's Dialogue Explores Jinnah's Vision for Emerging Leaders



NewsDesk

KARACHI: Ziauddin University hosted a special edition of ZU Dialogues titled _"Jinnah's Vision of Pakistan: Lessons for Young Leaders"_ to reconnect youth with Quaid-e-Azam's principles.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shaikh, Vice Chancellor, said education, integrity, women's empowerment, economic stability, and freedom of religion were central to Jinnah's vision. He urged young people to adopt determination, independent thinking, and honesty, noting that hard work, sound decisions, and trust are key to leadership. He also recalled Sir Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad's close association with Jinnah and his 1942 telegram to Churchill affirming the demand for Pakistan as non-negotiable.

Prof. Dr. Syed Jaffer Ahmed highlighted Jinnah's commitment to constitutional politics, democracy, and minority rights. He said Jinnah envisioned a modern democratic state where citizens are equal regardless of religion, creed, or color.

Teacher Critically Injured by Falling Ceiling Plaster in Sujawal School

Kamran Khamiso Khowaja

SUJAWAL: In a disturbing incident on Wednesday morning, a teacher of Government Boys High School, Begna Mori, within Taluka Jati of District Sujawal, was injured when cement plaster from the staff room fell on him.

According to the Senior Head Master of the School, Aziz Allah Dino Khowaja, Junior Elementary School Teacher Fayyaz Zaur was present in the staff room, working on an official assignment, when the roof plaster fell on his head, leaving him critically injured. "As the blood started oozing from his head, we took him to Basic Health Unit Begna Mori for treatment," said the Senior Head Master, adding that after treatment, the condition of the teacher had become stable.

NATIONAL BANK OF PAKISTAN INVITATION TO E-BID

National Bank of Pakistan, invites electronic bids from the original contractors, registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Income Tax and Provincial Tax Department for:

1. PROCUREMENT OF 02KVA UPS FOR DIFFERENT NBP BRANCHES ACROSS PAKISTAN.
2. PROCUREMENT OF 03KVA UPS FOR DIFFERENT NBP BRANCHES ACROSS PAKISTAN.
3. PROCUREMENT OF 06KVA UPS FOR DIFFERENT NBP BRANCHES ACROSS PAKISTAN.

Bidding documents, containing detail terms and conditions, etc. are available electronically and can be downloaded from National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) website www.nbp.com.pk/TENDER as well as from E-PADS-PPRA web site www.epads.gov.pk.

The electronic bids must be submitted by using E-PADS 2.0 on or before **September 02, 2026, at 11:00 AM**. Manual bids shall not be accepted. Electronic Bids will be opened on the same day at 11:30 AM in presence of Procurement Committee and bidders who opt to participate at the following venue:

Office of SVP/Wing Head, Engineering Wing (South), Engineering Division, LCMG, 3rd Floor, National Bank of Pakistan, Head Office Building, I.I Chundrigar Road, Karachi.

Note:

1. Original Bid Security Instrument MUST BE submitted to the Office of the Departmental Head Tender, Procurement Division, LCMG, 3rd Floor, NBP Head Office Building, I.I Chundrigar Road, Karachi before the online submission deadline of the bid; otherwise, respective bid will not be opened.
2. Notification of the GRC constituted in terms of Rule-48 of PPRA rules, 2004 is provided on E-PADS at <https://epads.gov.pk> and on <https://www.nbp.com.pk>.
3. In case of any technical difficulty in using E-PADS, prospective bidders may contact PPRA Team, Director MIS Room No. 109, 1st Floor, FBC building Sector G-5/2, Islamabad. Contact Number 051-111-137-237.

**Department Head(O) Tender
Procurement Division
LCMG, National Bank of Pakistan
3rd Floor, Head Office Building, Karachi
Tel. 021-38902590**

**Divisional Head (A)
Procurement Division
LCMG, National Bank of Pakistan
3rd Floor, Head Office Building, Karachi
Tel. 021-38902435**

PID (N) - 486/26

Islamabad
30° – 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	3:56 am
Zohr	12:13 pm
Asr	5:00 pm
Maghrib	6:58 pm
Isha	8:29 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 16
Motorway Police	9266044
Motorway Police	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Inquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service	
E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8,	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	9266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249

Matnsaz Launches on Android for a Modern Urdu Typing Experience

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: 12th August 2026 – Matnsaz, the Urdu keyboard, is now officially available on Android, expanding its reach to millions more users after its initial iOS launch.

Developed after years of research, Matnsaz was built to rethink Urdu typing by designing the keyboard around the Urdu script itself, instead of relying on English-based layouts. The goal is to make typing faster, more intuitive, and suited for users who have never used computers in English.

The Android version was developed with Lahore-based Tintash, reflecting Matnsaz's commitment to building Urdu tech in Pakistan with local expertise. The app underwent extensive user testing before launch.

Beyond the keyboard, Matnsaz is growing open-source infrastructure to support developers and researchers in the Urdu tech ecosystem.

Since launch, Matnsaz has gained national and international recognition, featuring in TIME Magazine, Rest of World, Translator Magazine and talks at Harvard, Stanford, NYU, Indus Valley, University of Reading, Lahore Biennale and more.

US Chargé d'Affaires commends CM Maryam for women-focused projects, lauds holding of Basant festival in Lahore

Bureau Report

LAHORE: US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker called on CM Punjab on Wednesday. The meeting discussed the promotion of education, security and investment in Punjab.

Baker paid tribute to CM Maryam Nawaz for her projects aimed at women's empowerment. The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in areas including security, artificial intelligence (AI), digital assets and energy. It was also agreed to engage US experts to help Punjab deal with floods and smog.

The proposal to hold a Punjab-US Business and Investment Forum in Lahore was also reviewed. Baker appreciated the holding of the Basant festival in Lahore and lauded the Punjab government's measures for ensuring a safe Basant.

"I like Pakistan very much, particularly the people of Punjab and Lahore, who are very lively," the US Chargé d'Affaires said.

Speaking on the occasion, CM Maryam Nawaz said the Basant festival would be further expanded next year. "We are taking legal measures to empower women in Punjab," she said, adding that the provincial government was formulating policies for development and addressing environmental challenges.

She said around one million overseas Pakistanis from Punjab living in the United States were a valuable asset for the country. "Advance measures during the monsoon and the establishment of district WASAs have made it possible to drain rainwater quickly," she said.

She said an electric scooter scheme and electrobus service had been launched to facilitate women's mobility in Punjab.

"Interest-free loans are being provided for small businesses to help women move towards financial independence. The Direct Pink Button and Virtual Police Station are pioneering initiatives for women's protection," she said.



Patriotism

ISLAMABAD: A boy rides his bicycle decorated with national flag in connection with 79th Independence Day celebrations.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

WHO & Pakistan Strengthen Flood Preparedness for 1.8 Million People

Spokesman Report

The World Health Organization (WHO) joined the Government of Pakistan, provincial authorities, and partners at a National Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Conference in Islamabad to strengthen long-term readiness for climate-driven floods and other hazards.

Under the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, the conference focused on short- and long-term preparedness, health sector coordination, timely data sharing, resource optimization, and uninterrupted essential health services for the most vulner-



able. The health sector is now ready to activate the Monsoon and Flood Contingency Plan 2026 to assist 1.8 million people in high-risk areas this year.

The event was organized by the Ministry and supported by WHO, UNFPA, IOM, UNICEF, IRC, and Save the Children.

Federal Minister of State

for Health Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath noted Pakistan's high vulnerability, with an estimated 60 million people affected by climate-related hazards along the Indus River belt. The World Risk Report 2024 ranks Pakistan among the 10 most climate-vulnerable countries, while the Global Climate Index 2026 places it among the 15 most affected by extreme weather from 1995–2024.

WHO Pakistan Representative Dr. Luo Dapeng emphasized that investing in preparedness and science-based emergency response saves lives and is more cost-effective than late interventions.

Two Virtual University Students Among Pakistan's Top 10 for PM Awards 2026

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Two students of Virtual University of Pakistan have been named among the Top 10 recipients of the Prime Minister's Awards 2026, showcasing the impact of online education.

Uzair Wasif, a BS Computer Science graduate, built his education into an international technology venture. Meranai Mcsud, a BBA graduate from Waziristan, turned her journey into a successful entrepreneurial career. Their stories highlight how students from outside traditional educational hubs can reach the national stage.

Their selection also spotlights Virtual University, which has over 200,000 active students in 52 countries. The university's model proves that geography is not a barrier to quality higher education.

Rector Prof. Dr. Arshad Saleem Bhatti (S. I., T. I.) called the achievement a source of pride, stating that student success reflects the university's mission of accessible education.

The awards send a clear message: talent can come from anywhere, and with access to education, it can achieve national recognition.

All Facilities Being Ensured for Applicants Visiting Passport Office, Says Haider Ali Baral

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Haider Ali Baral, Assistant Director / Officer In-Charge of the Regional Passport Office, has said that providing better, transparent, and timely services to passport applicants is the office's top priority.

He told the media that necessary arrangements have been made to facilitate and guide citizens on procedures and required documents for new passports, renewals, and other related services. The aim is to ensure each stage of the process is completed in an organized and timely manner so applicants do not face inconvenience.

Baral stressed that staff must treat every citizen politely and responsibly. Within available resources, all possible steps are being taken to minimize waiting times and difficulties.

He appealed to the public to bring all required documents and follow the prescribed procedure to expedite their work. He added that complaints are being addressed on priority, and genuine grievances will not be ignored. The office is striving to provide residents of Toba Tek Singh with passport services in a dignified and convenient environment.



Rs62 million development plan proposed for Kalash Valleys

ISLAMABAD: A package of 13 community-level development schemes has been proposed for the Kalash Valleys of Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for fiscal year 2026–27, targeting tourism facilities, cultural heritage, drinking water, sanitation, energy and community infrastructure.

According to the proposed Community Physical Infrastructure Works plan for FY2026–27, a copy of which is available with Wealth Pakistan, the schemes have a stated total cost of Rs62.023 million and are spread across villages in Rumbur, Birir, Bumburat, Jinjiret and Dobazh valleys.

The largest single proposed investment is the construction and strengthening of a tourist facilitation centre at Dubash Post in Dobazh, estimated at Rs20.358 million.

Heritage preservation also features prominently in the proposed programme. An allocation of Rs7.252 million has been proposed for rehabilitation of Gram Heritage Trail in Rumbur, aimed at improving community access to religious sites through walkway widening, stairs, railings and stone pitching.

Another Rs6.226 million has been proposed for conservation, rehabilitation and sanitation of Kalasha-era heritage and graveyard at Ginjiret Koh in Jinjiret.

The program also includes smaller interventions designed to preserve local cultural assets. Restoration and establishment of cultural stores alongside Jastakhan have been proposed at Balankuru village in Rumbur for Rs1 million and at Grambet Gole in Birir for Rs500,000.

Community religious infrastructure is also part of the package. Architectural and cultural rehabilitation of community mosques in Jaw Kuru village in Birir for Rs1 million, Bumburat for Rs1.5 million, and Rumbur for Rs1 million has been proposed.

Basic civic facilities account for another important component of the proposed investment. A scheme costing Rs6.299 million is planned for provision and improvement of a funeral place at Brun in Bumburat.

Two drinking-water projects have also been included. A Rs4.139 million safe drinking-water supply scheme has been proposed at Sheikhhandeh, covering Ustoi to Mikingjal, while another Rs3.742 million scheme is planned at Krakal in Bumburat.

The proposed works also include Rs8.010 million for a sanitation and sewerage system in Sheikhhandeh to strengthen basic community infrastructure.

Hazrat Mian Mir's Teachings Beacon of Tolerance, Peace: Auqaf Secretary

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab Dr Ehsan Bhutta has said the teachings of Hazrat Sheikh Mian Mir Qadri (RA) provide a timeless message of tolerance, compassion, fraternity, humility and service to humanity, which can help counter intolerance, extremism, sectarianism and social polarisation.

He expressed these views while inaugurating the 403rd Annual Ghusle-Mubarak ceremony at the sacred shrine of Hazrat Mian Mir (RA). Senior government officials and a large number of devotees attended the ceremony.

Dr Bhutta and other officials performed chadar-poshi, participated in the ceremonial washing with sandalwood and rosewater, showered flower



petals and offered prayers for Pakistan's peace, security, prosperity, unity and stability.

He said Hazrat Mian Mir (RA) was among the great spiritual figures of the Subcontinent whose life reflected

love, humility, piety, religious values and compassion for humanity. He stressed that his teachings transcended sectarian and social boundaries and promoted universal brotherhood and peace.

Dr Bhutta said the Auqaf Department was implementing measures under the Punjab government's vision to upgrade, beautify and preserve shrines across the province while improving facilities for pilgrims.

He said special arrangements for security, clean drinking water, sanitation, lighting, medical assistance, parking and visitor guidance had been ensured for devotees attending the ceremony.

He added that historic shrines were being developed as centres of spirituality, knowledge, peace, humanitarian service and interfaith harmony.

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Daily The Spokesman available only on annual subscription

A Fragrant Victory for Pakistan's Agricultural Heritage

The Federal Court of Australia's dismissal of India's appeal in the Basmati word mark case is more than a legal footnote—it is a vindication of a principle Pakistan has defended for years: that Basmati rice belongs to a shared heritage, not to any single nation's exclusive claim.

For decades, India's Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has pursued an aggressive strategy of seeking exclusive rights over the Basmati name in international markets, from the European Union to Australia. This latest ruling, upholding the earlier decision of the Australian Registrar of Trade Marks, firmly rejects that approach. The Court's reasoning is sound and, frankly, self-evident to anyone familiar with the geography and history of Basmati cultivation: the aromatic, long-grain rice has been grown for centuries across the fertile plains straddling both Pakistan and India, particularly in Punjab. No trademark registration, however cleverly worded, can erase that shared botanical and cultural lineage.

What makes this outcome significant is not merely that Pakistan "won" a legal contest, but that it reaffirms a broader truth about geographical indications: authenticity cannot be monopolised. Basmati is not a brand invented by a corporation; it is a product of soil, climate and generations of farming tradition. Allowing one country to claim exclusive naming rights would have set a troubling precedent, potentially locking Pakistani growers, millers and exporters out of lucrative markets for a rice variety they have cultivated and traded for generations.

The Ministry of Commerce deserves credit for its sustained, coordinated engagement on this front. Trade disputes of this nature are rarely won through rhetoric alone; they require patient legal strategy, technical expertise and consistent diplomatic follow-through across multiple jurisdictions. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan's acknowledgement of the officials and stakeholders involved reflects an institutional effort that should be sustained rather than treated as a one-off success.

Yet this victory should also serve as a reminder that vigilance cannot lapse. Pakistan must continue to proactively register and protect Basmati's geographical indication status in other key export markets, rather than responding reactively when challenges arise. Strengthening quality control, certification standards and traceability for genuine Pakistani Basmati will further reinforce the country's legal and commercial standing.

Ultimately, this ruling protects more than trademark technicalities—it protects the livelihoods of thousands of farmers and exporters who depend on Basmati's untarnished reputation. It is a reminder that heritage, when properly defended, remains a powerful economic asset.

Trump's 'Little Excursion' That Could Reshape the World

The Iran war has transformed two strategic waterways into instruments of economic warfare, threatening energy security, household incomes, global commerce and the existing geopolitical order.

President Donald Trump once characterized the United States' military involvement in Iran as a "little excursion." Yet the conflict that began on February 28, 2026, has expanded far beyond the battlefields of Iran, Israel and the Persian Gulf. It now threatens the movement of oil, gas, diesel, fertilizers, food and commercial goods across shipping routes responsible for more than one-quarter of the world's seaborne oil trade.

The war's most consequential front may not be on land or in the air. It is developing at sea—particularly around the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, two waterways linking the Persian Gulf and Red Sea to Asian and European markets.

These waterways are critical arteries of the global economy. Before the war, approximately 21.6 million barrels of petroleum liquids passed through Hormuz daily. That fell to 4.9 million barrels a day during the second quarter of 2026—a decline of 77 percent. Hormuz also normally carries about 20 percent of worldwide LNG trade, including approximately 10 billion cubic feet per day from Qatar and the UAE.

By August 11, daily traffic through

Hormuz had reportedly fallen to only six vessels, compared with a prewar norm of approximately 130 to 140. Bab el-Mandeb, connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, simultaneously came under pressure from Houthi attacks. In one August incident, a missile strike killed four crew members and two rescuers, demonstrating that the shipping threat was no longer theoretical.

When Hormuz became unsafe, Saudi Arabia redirected crude through its five-million-barrel-per-day East-West pipeline to Yanbu on the Red Sea. The UAE also possesses a 1.8-million-barrel-per-day pipeline to Fujairah. However, the EIA estimates that only about 2.6 million barrels of unused bypass capacity is readily available—barely one-eighth of normal Hormuz traffic.

If Bab el-Mandeb also becomes severely restricted, tankers departing Yanbu for Asia must travel around the Cape of Good Hope. A voyage from Yanbu to Taiwan normally takes approximately 19 days; circumnavigating Africa can add nearly one month and about \$2.5 million to a tanker's operating costs. War-risk insurance premiums around Bab el-Mandeb have previously increased from about 0.07 percent to between 0.5 and 0.7 percent of a vessel's value.

The Iran war is therefore no longer merely a military confrontation among Iran, the United States and Israel. It has become an international economic crisis. The EIA estimated that regional production shutdowns reached 5.5 million barrels per day in July—more than 5 percent of global consumption—while inventories declined by an average of 4.2 million barrels daily during the second quarter.

A prolonged disruption produces a negative supply shock. Oil is relatively inexpensive to extract in Saudi Arabia: historical median production costs were approximately \$5.40 per barrel. But extraction is only one component of the retail price. Refining, transportation, storage, financing, insurance, security and taxation determine what households ultimately pay.

When shipping routes become longer and more dangerous, every stage becomes more expensive. Analysts have estimated that a major Red Sea disruption could push crude above \$115–\$120 per barrel. Oil then transmits the shock to gasoline, diesel, aviation fuel, electricity and petrochemicals. Agriculture is also exposed because diesel powers machinery and trucks, while natural gas is the principal feedstock for nitrogen fertilizer.

The world contains numerous stra-

tegic passages, including the Bosphorus, Malacca Strait, Danish Straits, Panama Canal and Suez Canal. Some artificial canals already levy formal fees: Panama Canal transit-slot auctions reportedly reached an average of \$1.1 million in August 2026 amid congestion. Natural international straits, however, operate under a different legal framework.

Nevertheless, wars frequently create precedents through power before law. Compulsory escorts, security charges, negotiated passage payments and war-risk premiums could produce much the same economic result as a formal toll. An insurance charge of 0.5 percent on a tanker valued at \$100 million alone amounts to \$500,000 for a single voyage.

If armed control over international waterways becomes normalized, commerce could shift from protected navigation towards a fragmented system in which regional powers impose political or financial conditions. Since maritime transport carries more than 80 percent of global merchandise trade by volume, even relatively small recurring charges would accumulate across food, energy and manufactured goods.

The danger is compounded by disruption elsewhere. Ukrainian attacks on Russian refineries have threatened another major source of petroleum products, while Russia historically accounted for approximately 11 percent of internationally traded diesel. Houthi activity

Continued on Page 7



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

The Black Sea Tragedy: When Innocence Becomes a Target

War is brutal, but even in its cruelty there are boundaries—lines drawn by humanity, morality, and international law. When those lines are crossed, the consequences reverberate far beyond the battlefield. The recent Ukrainian missile strike on a crowded beach at a Russian Black Sea resort, killing six civilians including three children and wounding forty more, is one such moment. Seventeen of the wounded had to be hospitalized, their lives forever scarred by an act that cannot be justified under any pretext.

Civilians as Collateral—or Deliberate Targets?

The tragedy is not merely about numbers. It is about families shattered, children robbed of futures, and a community traumatized in a place meant for leisure and respite. Beaches are sanctuaries where laughter mingles with the sound of waves, where innocence thrives. To turn such a setting into a killing ground is not only a violation of the laws of war but an assault on the very essence of humanity.

International humanitarian law is unequivocal: civilians must never be deliberately targeted. Yet this strike, far from a battlefield, demonstrates a chilling disregard for those principles. It raises the question—was this an accident of war, or a calculated act meant to instill fear among ordinary Russians?

As Mahatma Gandhi once reminded the world: "You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty." To deliberately target civilians is to poison that ocean, to corrode the very foundation of human dignity.

The Silence of Western Media

Equally disturbing is the silence—or selective coverage—of Western media. In the United States and Europe, where narratives are carefully curated, the deaths of Russian civilians rarely make headlines. The corruptions of selective reporting reduce human tragedy to geopolitical convenience. When Ukrainian civilians suffer, the world rightly mourns. But when Russian children are killed on a beach, the story is buried, dismissed, or distorted.

This double standard corrodes the very foundations of journalism. Truth must be impartial, and human suffering must not be weighed against political sympathies. To ignore the deaths of innocents because they are Russian is to dehumanize them, and to betray the universal values of compassion and justice.

The Human Cost
Behind the statistics are faces and names. Parents clutching lifeless children, survivors with wounds that will never heal, and a community grappling with trauma. The beach, once a symbol of joy, is now a scarred reminder of vulnerability. These victims were not soldiers, not combatants, not participants in the war—they were simply people seeking respite from conflict.

The emotional resonance of this tragedy cannot be overstated. It is a reminder that war, when stripped of its rhetoric, is always about human lives. And when civilians are deliberately targeted, it ceases to be war—it becomes terror.

The Geopolitical Undercurrents

Ukraine's leadership has often framed its actions as defensive, aimed at resisting Russian aggression. Yet strikes like this blur the line between defence and vengeance. They risk undermining Ukraine's moral standing, eroding sympathy abroad, and fuelling narratives that

portray Kyiv as reckless rather than resilient.

Moreover, such actions play into the hands of those who argue that Ukraine is acting at the behest of Western powers, willing to escalate the conflict in ways that hurt Russia not only militarily but psychologically. If the intent was to send a message, the message received is one of cruelty, not courage.

Condemnation and Accountability

The international community must condemn such acts unequivocally. To remain silent is to tacitly endorse the targeting of civilians. Accountability must not be selective. If war crimes are to be prosecuted, they must be prosecuted regardless of the perpetrator's alliances. Justice cannot be partisan.

The deaths of three children on a beach demand more than muted outrage. They demand recognition, accountability, and a reaffirmation of the principle that civilians are sacrosanct.

Conclusion: Humanity Must Prevail

The Black Sea tragedy is a stark reminder of the fragility of life in times of war. It is a call to conscience for journalists, policymakers, and ordinary citizens alike. To condemn the deliberate targeting of civilians is not to take sides—it is to take a stand for humanity.

Ukraine's strike on a crowded beach has left scars that will not fade. It has robbed families of loved ones, children of futures, and communities of peace. And it has exposed the hypocrisy of a media landscape that chooses which tragedies to amplify and which to ignore.

In the end, war will be judged not by victories or defeats, but by the lives lost and the humanity preserved. The Black Sea tragedy reminds us that when innocence becomes a target, we all lose.

The writer is a retired Group Captain of PAF. He is a columnist, analyst and TV talk show host, who has authored 16 books on current affairs, including ten on China

Pakistan's Independence Day: Celebrating Sovereignty and Strength

On August 14, 2026, Pakistan celebrates Independence Day with an unusually powerful sense of pride, sovereignty, strength, relief, and triumph, combining traditional displays of green-and-white flags, patriotic songs, anthems, fireworks, and crescent-and-star decorations with a deeper celebration of national resilience, unity, and global standing. The past year is seen as having transformed Pakistan from a country facing internal and external challenges into a formidable regional power whose sovereignty and interests command respect. The main source of this confidence is Marka Huq, regarded as a decisive Pakistani victory over India across military, diplomatic, economic, and strategic spheres, demonstrated through sophisticated strategy, advanced technology, effective air defenses, maritime control, disciplined military operations, rigorous training, and unwavering national resolve. The victory has become a symbol of national resurgence and has supposedly reshaped Pakistan's international image, with global media and governments reassessing its strategic depth, military capabilities, diplomatic influence, and role as a regional powerhouse, making it an increasingly important voice in regional and global security affairs.

Pakistan's enhanced standing was further strengthened during the devastating US-Iran conflict, when it emerged as a crucial mediator rather than a belligerent as the region faced the threat of a wider war, global energy disruption, and catastrophic instability. Pakistan's diplomats and intelligence agencies used established

relationships with Tehran and Washington to facilitate communication, back-channel negotiations, and de-escalation, ultimately helping both sides step away from a potentially disastrous conflict; the achievement was celebrated internationally as evidence of Pakistan's strategic foresight, diplomatic ability, and commitment to peace and stability, while also reinforcing its reputation as a responsible global power. This success triggered increased international interest

in defense partnerships with Pakistan, including technology sharing, joint military exercises, and co-production of advanced weapons, as countries across the Far East, Middle East, and Africa sought access to its military expertise, defense industry, and professional armed forces, turning Pakistan into a regional hub for defense cooperation

and strengthening its deterrence and security. Most significantly, the Makkah mutual defense agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye became a major source of patriotic and emotional celebration, representing a new axis of Muslim unity and strategic cooperation. Signed in Makkah, the pact is viewed not merely as a military arrangement but as a political, ideological, and mutual-defense commitment among three influential Muslim nations, deeply resonating with Pakistanis because of their long-standing ties and affection toward Saudi Arabia as custodian of Islam's holiest sites and Türkiye as a historic brother and modern Islamic power, while reinforcing the belief that Pakistan belongs to a powerful coalition committed to shared values, aspirations, and the defense of the Muslim Ummah.

Continued on Page 7

Hamdard Shura Karachi Discusses Role of Film, Theatre in Social Reform

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Hamdard Shura Karachi held a meeting at The Arena, Bahria Town Tower, on the theme “Film, Theatre and Drama: Effective Tools for Social Reform,” with Hamdard Foundation Pakistan President Sadia Rashid and Director Syed Muhammad Ahsan in attendance. Gen (r) Moinuddin Haider presided over the session.

Guest speaker Dr Muhammad Irfan Aziz, Head of Mass Communication at Federal Urdu University, said freedom of expression was essential for intellectual development, creativity and collective awareness. He noted that Pakistan had over 40 media-related laws, but their implementation remained inadequate.



He said film, television, theatre and other entertainment forms could influence public thinking, highlight social problems and encourage dialogue. He regretted that inappropriate cultural

and political policies had weakened Pakistan's cinema and theatre industries, affecting creative expression. Dr Aziz stressed that writers, filmmakers, dramatists and actors needed adequate freedom to address social issues, saying meaningful reform required dialogue, questions and creative expression rather than censorship. Dr Khalida Ghaus called for Pakistani dramas to portray women as capable, resilient and empowered. Commodore (r) Sadeed Anwar Malik said film and drama could communicate intellectual and moral ideas more effectively than lectures and leave lasting impressions on audiences. Other Shura members also shared their views on the role of creative arts in shaping society.

Russia and COMSTECH Explore New Avenues for Scientific and Academic Cooperation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador Albert P. Khorev received a delegation from the Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMSTECH), headed by its Coordinator General, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary.

The meeting focused on opportunities to further develop cooperation between COMSTECH and Russia in its capacity as an OIC Observer State. Dr. Iqbal Choudhary highlighted the fruitful cooperation with Kazan Federal University and the Russian Association of Earthquake Engineering and Protection against Natural and Man-Made Hazards.

The sides noted significant potential for expanding academic exchanges,

including by strengthening inter-university ties, promoting scholarship programs, and advancing joint fundamental research. They stressed the importance of expediting the implementation of initiatives agreed upon at the first meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between COMSTECH and the Russian Federation in the fields of science, technology and higher education, held on the sidelines of the International Economic Forum “Russia – Islamic World: KazanForum” in Kazan on May 13, 2026.

Ambassador Khorev reaffirmed Russia's commitment to further expanding multifaceted dialogue with the OIC and Muslim countries, including Pakistan. The interlocutors noted that cooperation with COMSTECH also contributes to strengthening bilateral Russia-Pakistan relations. They agreed to maintain regular contacts and provide all possible support for the implementation of joint projects.



AIOU, Pakistan Japan Business Forum Sign MoU to Boost University-Industry Ties

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and the Pakistan Japan Business Forum have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen university-industry linkages, covering education, skills development, professional training, industrial research, internships and employment opportunities. The agreement was signed by Forum Chairman Murtaza Mandviwalla and AIOU Registrar Raja Umar Younis.

The MoU aims to help students learn Japanese, acquire technical and vocational skills, and access practical training, internships and jobs. Both sides will also collaborate on business and industrial research to enhance youth's professional capabilities, and jointly prepare a skilled workforce aligned with the needs of Japanese companies operating in Pakistan.



Mandviwalla said stronger educational and industrial cooperation could further deepen Pakistan-Japan relations, calling it essential to develop youth skills matching Japanese industry requirements. He expressed hope the partnership would help young people gain modern skills, industry connections and employment opportunities.

Registrar Raja Umar Younis said AIOU, with its vast student outreach, remains committed to equipping graduates with contemporary professional skills. He noted that the Japan Pakistan Advancement Center already promotes Japanese language, culture and industrial linkages, and said the new partnership would strengthen these efforts.

The signing ceremony was attended by Dean Prof. Dr. Syed Amir Shah, Dr. Tariq Cheema, Syed Behram Shah, Tahir Habib Cheema, Director QEC Dr. Saima Nasir, and other university officials.

First Pakistan Transparency Report Launched to Benchmark Governance, Public Trust

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mishal Pakistan on Wednesday launched the State of Transparency in Pakistan Report 2026, the country's first nationally representative assessment of governance based on citizens' experiences, perceptions and expectations.

The report introduces the TARL Framework—Transparency, Accountability, Rule of Law and Legitimacy—and draws on a nationwide survey of 2,000 respondents across all provinces. Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, supplemented by expert consultations and institutional analysis.

Mishal Pakistan officials said the report provides an evidence-based baseline for policymaking, institutional reforms and public dialogue. It also announces the Pakistan Transparency Index (PTI), which will annually measure governance performance, citizen trust and reform progress.

The findings show strong social trust, with 63 percent of respondents trusting people they know personally. The Armed Forces recorded the highest institutional trust, with 82 percent recognising their role in protecting Pakistan's frontiers. Digital governance emerged as a major area of optimism, with 54 percent believing Pakistan is moving towards a digital future and 52 percent saying e-government services are improving public service delivery.

The report also identified challenges, including limited public awareness of regulatory appeals mechanisms and excessive paperwork faced by businesses.

Mishal Pakistan said the report would serve as an annual national benchmark to promote transparency, accountability, institutional legitimacy and evidence-based governance reforms.



PRCS Calls on Youth to Champion Humanity, Responsible Information



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) observed International Youth Day and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Day 2026 with a ceremony titled “Youth as Advocates for a Better Tomorrow” at its National Headquarters.

PRCS Chairperson Farzana Naek highlighted the vital role of youth in promoting humanity, protecting dignity and supporting vulnerable communities. Referring to the Red Million Initiative, she said PRCS was strengthening its volunteer network by equipping young people with knowledge, skills and training to respond to emergencies.

She urged youth to become responsible advocates of humanity online and in their communities, particularly by verifying information before sharing it and countering harmful information.

IFRC Head of Delegation Andreas von Weissenberg said misinformation and other harmful information could undermine humanitarian assistance, erode public trust and threaten social cohesion and the safety of humanitarian workers.

The ceremony featured an interactive session on IHL, documentaries on the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and presentations by youth volunteers on misinformation during crises.

Certificates were awarded to Youth Mentorship Programme graduates, while shields recognized PRCS Youth Clubs and outstanding volunteers. Special recognition was given to Imran Shah for his services to the Restoring Family Links Programme at the Pak-Afghan Chaman border.

Colombia quake death toll rises to 188

ASTANA: The death toll from Monday's 7.4-magnitude earthquake in western Colombia has risen to 188, with 1,677 others injured, the Colombian Association of Capital Cities, or AsocapitalesOf the total, the latest tally included 95 deaths and 997 injuries reported in the city of Cali, while Pereira reported 79 deaths and 278 injuries.

Asocapitales said it has launched a system to report and search for missing persons as rescue and damage assessment work continues.

Earlier, Qazinform reported the Kazakh president extends condolences to Colombian counterpart after the deadly quake.

D-8 Launches Inaugural Youth Bridges Programme in Istanbul

Marking International Youth Day, the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) Secretariat hosted the first “D-8 Youth Bridges Programme” at its Istanbul headquarters, bringing together university students from D-8 Member States studying in Türkiye.

The platform connected youth with experts from international organizations, business leaders and innovation specialists, focusing on AI, future skills, entrepreneurship and regional cooperation. Secretary-General Ambassador Sohail Mahmood outlined D-8's vision and stressed that “the future must be built with the youth,” calling for greater investment in young people's digital and entrepreneurial capabilities so they can lead, not just adapt to, transformation.

Representatives from partner institutions including UNDP's IICPSD, ICYF, MÜSIAD Genç, TOBB, Bilşim Vadisi and SESRIC shared insights on AI-enabled entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystems and youth trends. An



interactive session let students discuss AI's impact on jobs, startup opportunities and market access with the Secretary-General and experts.

The programme builds on D-8's youth-focused summits in Bangladesh (2021) and Cairo (2024), along with prior declarations, and supports UN Sustainable Development Goals



on education, decent work, innovation and partnerships. Organized with D-8 member states' diplomatic missions

in Türkiye, the event concluded with certificate distribution, a group photo and a networking reception.

 Bull & Bears

PSX 100-Share

Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
180,311.21	179,846.68
Day's High	Day's Low
180,901.26	179,920.10
Index Value	Change
20,539,220,485	+ 464.53
Percentage	Time
+0.26%	12 Aug, 2026 4:30 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,833.15	− 11.04
Percentage	Time
−0.10%	12 Aug, 4:35 pm GMT + 1
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
53,819.65	+ 27.80
Percentage	Time
+0.052%	12 Aug, 1:35 pm GMT-4
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
67,524.06	+ 553.84
Percentage	Time
+0.83%	12 Aug, 3:45 pm GMT+9
Open Market Forex Rates	

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	194.81	198.15
Bahrain Dinar	735.25	745.35
Canadian Dollar	198.75	202.50
China Yuan	38.15	38.90
Danish Krone	42.75	43.35
Euro	320.50	324.25
Hong Kong Dollar	34.99	35.99
Indian Rupee	2.75	3.20
Japanese Yen	1.7339	1.8337
Kuwaiti Dinar	883.65	893.70
Malaysian Ringgit	67.05	68.25
NewZealand \$	162.60	165.78
Norwegians Krone	28.15	28.50
Omani Riyal	719.90	730.25
Qatari Riyal	75.15	76.15
Saudi Riyal	74.00	74.80
Singapore Dollar	215.45	221.47
Swedish Korona	28.40	28.90
Swiss Franc	343.16	347.93
Thai Bhat	8.55	9.15
U.A.E Dirham	76.15	77.15
UK Pound Sterling	375.36	378.65
US Dollar	278.60	278.75

*Spotify Introduces
a New Label for
AI-Generated Artist
Identities*

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Spotify is introducing a new label for AI-generated artist identities, called "AI Personas." The label is designed to give listeners more transparency when an artist profile presents an AI-generated, human-like identity rather than a real person. The new label marks another step in Spotify's broader commitment to building trust and authenticity between artists and fans, ensuring listeners can have confidence in who they are listening to on the platform.

True artist-fan connection can only be built on a foundation of trust and authenticity. In music, that means listeners need to be able to trust that the artist behind the music is who they say they are. That is more essential than ever in the age of generative AI.

This year, Artist Identity & Trust has been made one of Spotify's top priorities, with the launch of Verified by Spotify, SongDNA, AI Credits, and Artist Profile Protection. Starting mid-September, listeners will begin to see an AI Persona badge on some artist profiles. The badge signals to listeners that an artist's identity may be AI-generated and does not represent a real person. Alongside artist profiles that self-disclose as AI Personas, Spotify will also start applying badges to relevant profiles.

*Gold price rises
Rs4,200 per tola*

ISLAMABAD: The price of gold in the country witnessed an upward trend on Wednesday, with the price of 24-karat gold increasing by Rs4,200 per tola to Rs463,936, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

The price of 24-karat gold of 10 grams increased by Rs3,601 to Rs397,750, while the price of 22-karat gold of 10 grams rose by Rs3,301 to Rs364,617. In the international market, gold was quoted at \$4,415 per ounce, showing an increase of \$42. Meanwhile, the price of silver also witnessed an increase, with 24-karat silver rising by Rs146 per tola to Rs7,111.

SECP Establishes Shariah-Compliant Brokerage Segment, Approves 33 Islamic Windows

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), in a major breakthrough, has succeeded in establishing a dedicated Shariah-compliant brokerage segment in the capital market, with 33 brokerage houses now operating dedicated Shariah-compliant windows, collectively representing around 52% of total traded volume at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX). In addition, two other dedicated brokers are offering complete range of Islamic brokerage services.

Under the dedicated framework, Islamic brokerage services will operate with clear segregation of client funds and defined Shariah governance requirements.

The framework enables investors to directly access Shariah-compliant shares, Sukuk and Islamic Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) through dedicated Islamic brokerage windows. Investor funds will be maintained through Islamic banking channels, while trading will be restricted to securities screened and approved as Shariah compliant. Islamic brokers and windows will not undertake interest-based financing or non-Shariah-compliant leveraged or speculative transactions.



The initiative significantly expands investment opportunities for investors seeking Riba-

free options. Currently, 308 of 535 listed securities are Shariah compliant, representing around 65% of PSX's market capitalization, reflecting the growing demand and significant potential for Riba-free investment. Dedicated Islamic brokerage services will further expand access and attract new investors to the capital market and provide investors with a broad universe of Islamic investment opportunities.

The SECP had introduced the framework through amendments to the Securities Brokers (Licensing and Operations) Regulations, 2016, allowing brokerage houses to offer Islamic financial services through dedicated Islamic windows, separate subsidiaries or full conversion to Shariah-compliant operations. The framework also requires appropriate Shariah oversight and compliance with applicable PSX, CDC and NCCPL requirements.

Chairman SECP Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu said, "The development of Shariah-compliant brokerage services is an important step towards the Government's objective of a Riba-free economy. By providing investors with transparent and credible Shariah-compliant investment options, we aim to broaden participation in the capital market and accelerate the transition towards an Islamic financial system."

Preparation of Independence Day

ISLAMABAD: Crescents and stars hanging on a local mall in connection with 79th Independence Day celebrations.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

PSW and Board of Revenue Sindh Sign Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Digital Collection of Sindh Stamp Duty

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Pakistan Single Window (PSW) signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Board of Revenue Sindh (BoRS), formalizing arrangements for the digital collection of Sindh Stamp Duty through the PSW platform. The SLA was signed by Mr. Naveed Abbas Memon, Chief Domain Officer PSW, and Mr. Nazir Ahmed Qureshi, Member RS&EP Board of Revenue Sindh. Senior officials from the BoRS and PSW also attended the signing ceremony held in Karachi. The signing ceremony was graced by Mr. Khalid Haider Shah, Senior Member, Board of Revenue.

The agreement marks the transition of the existing electronic stamp duty collection arrangement from Pakistan Revenue Automation Limited (PRAL) to PSW, with the service now being supported through PSW's modern digital infrastructure. A key feature of the new arrangement is the provision of a dedicated interface for the Board



of Revenue Sindh, enabling the department to monitor stamp duty collections in real time and carry out daily and monthly reconciliation of collections against govern-

ment receipts. This will provide the BoRS with greater visibility over collections and strengthen the efficiency of revenue reconciliation.

Khushhali Microfinance Bank Celebrates 26th Anniversary

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Khushhali Microfinance Bank celebrated its 26th Anniversary with a cake-cutting ceremony held at its Corporate Office. The ceremony was led by Aameer Karachiwalla, President & CEO, Khushhali Microfinance Bank, along with the Bank's senior leadership and Heads of Departments.

The ceremony was attended by Saleem Akhtar Bhatti, Group Head Finance & CFO ; Muhammad Aftab Alam, Group Head & Chief Business Officer; Ali Imran Bokhari, Group Head & Chief Risk Officer; Khawaja Shoaib Hassan, Chief SAM; Aqeel Ahmed, Chief Compliance Officer; Farhad Zulfiqar Ali, Chief Human Resources Officer; Muhammad Mustqim Rao, Chief Banking Services; Tariq Mahmood, Chief Internal Auditor, and other Heads of Departments.

The celebration marked 26 years of Khushhali's journey of financial inclusion, empowerment and sustainable growth, while recognizing the collective efforts of its employees and leadership in advancing the Bank's mission.

6 Pakistani Exhibitors Ready to Participate at Texworld & Apparel Sourcing Paris 2026

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Texworld & Apparel Sourcing Paris, Europe's premier trade fair for the textile and apparel industries, returns this September with a strong focus on innovation, quality, and global sourcing. Held twice a year in Paris, the fair will take place from 31 August to 01 September 2026 at Paris Le Bourget.

The 59th edition of Texworld & Apparel Sourcing Paris will bring together around 1,300 manufac-

turers from approximately 35 countries, offering professional buyers a comprehensive sourcing platform with a wide range of fabrics, apparel, accessories, and innovative textile solutions.

The exhibition will feature a strong international presence, with Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Turkey, Myanmar, South Korea, Japan, and Italy among the key markets represented at the fair, alongside manufacturers and suppliers from other major production centres around the world.



Pakistan Pavilion at Texworld & Apparel Sourcing Paris 2025

Nearly One in Five Pakistani Employees Report IT Mistakes Due to Cybersecurity Knowledge Gaps: Kaspersky

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Nearly one in five Pakistani employees surveyed admitted making IT-related mistakes due to a lack of cybersecurity knowledge, highlighting the need for continuous workplace cybersecurity training, according to a Kaspersky survey. The survey, titled "Cybersecurity in the Workplace: Employee Knowledge and Behavior," found that 18.5 percent of respondents in Pakistan attributed IT mistakes to insufficient cybersecurity awareness. Other factors included

being in a hurry (20.5 percent), tiredness or stress (16 percent), excessive notifications (16 percent) and oversight (15 percent).

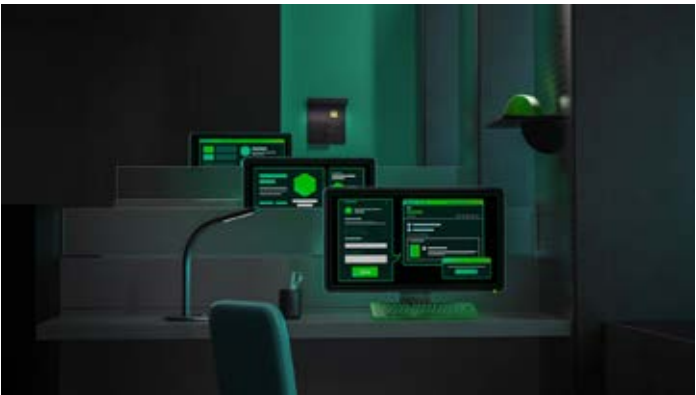
The survey also highlighted digital clutter in workplaces. Around 37 percent of respondents reported having 10 to 20 desktop icons, while 36.5 percent had even more. About 30 percent kept more than 10 browser tabs open simultaneously.

Kaspersky said digital fatigue and information overload could reduce concentration and increase vulnerability to social engineering and cyber

threats.

Senior Security Consultant for META at Kaspersky Brandon Muller stressed that simplifying digital environments should be considered a cybersecurity measure.

Kaspersky recommended regular digital clean-ups, limiting notifications, closing unnecessary browser tabs, uninstalling unused applications and conducting continuous employee cybersecurity training. It also urged organizations to establish clear cybersecurity policies and deploy comprehensive protection solutions.



Chairman Senate Calls Maternal, Child Health Investment ‘Foundation’ of Pakistan’s Future

Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani said the health and well-being of mothers and children is fundamental to national development, stressing that investment in maternal, newborn and child health is an investment in Pakistan’s human capital and future.

Addressing the launch of the National Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Social and Behaviour Change Communication Campaign as Chief Guest, Gillani congratulated the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and UNICEF Pakistan, and thanked development partners, healthcare professionals, academia and civil society for their contributions.

He said healthy mothers and children form the foundation of strong families and a resilient Pakistan, noting progress in key indicators—infant mortality has declined to 47 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality to 186 per 100,000 live births—though significant challenges remain in ensuring affordable, quality care.

The campaign promotes three key behaviours: timely antenatal care, skilled birth attendance and essential newborn care. “The right information, delivered at the right time, can save lives,” Gillani said, adding that awareness must be



paired with quality services, trained health workers and effective referral systems. He highlighted the Benazir Nashonuma Programme’s role in supporting mothers and children during the critical first 1,000 days of life.

Gillani stressed Parliament’s role in

strengthening health policy and legislation, particularly for women and children in remote, underserved and crisis-affected areas, and called for coordinated efforts among all stakeholders.

“When we protect our mothers and give our children a healthy start, we invest in

the health, strength and future of Pakistan,” he said.

The ceremony was attended by Federal Minister Syed Mustufa Kamal, UNICEF Representative Pernille Ironside, and senior officials, development partners and civil society representatives.

PPPW Reaffirms Commitment to Jinnah’s Pakistan, 1973 Constitution and Democracy



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: On the eve of Independence Day, PPP Workers (PPPW) leaders including Dr. Safdar Ali Abbasi, Naheed Khan, Fayyaz Ali Khan, Advocate Amjad Ali Baloch, Kunwar Zahid and Rai Kaizer reaffirmed their commitment to Pakistan, democracy, constitutional supremacy, civilian authority and fundamental rights.

They said 14 August is a reminder of the sacrifices of the Pakistan Movement led by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who envisioned a Pakistan based on equality, justice and equal citizenship. His 11 August 1947 address remains a guiding principle.

The leaders stressed their loyalty to the 1973 Constitution, adopted unanimously under Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and enforced on 14 August 1973. It established the parliamentary system and guaranteed rights. They recalled Bhutto’s principle “Taqat ka Sarchashma Awam Hain” and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto’s struggle for democracy and sovereignty.

Expressing concern over shrinking democratic space, they said national unity requires justice, democracy, provincial harmony and respect for the people’s mandate, not force. They urged state institutions to uphold the Constitution, strengthen Parliament, protect rights and ensure provincial autonomy.

Their message: “Pakistan Zindabad. Awam Zindabad. Jamhooriyat Paindabad.”

Pakistan Cricket National Championship Cup 2026

Fakhar Zaman 76-Ball Match-Winning and Fastest Century Lights Up Opening Day of National Champions Cup

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Fakhar Zaman struck his 20th List-A century off just 76 balls to help PCB Greens overhaul the 277-run target in 49 overs with five wickets in the bag against PCB Whites in the opening match of the AL Batal presents University of Lahore National Champions Cup 2026-27 here at the Multan Cricket Stadium on Tuesday.

Left handed opener Fakhar became the sixth Pakistan batter to rack up 20 or more List A tons joining Babar Azam (31), Khurram Manzoor (27), Saeed Anwar (26), Salman Butt (24) and Kamran Akmal (21) on the list. It was also his second fastest century in the format besides his 63-ball ton against New Zealand in the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023.

PCB Greens got off to a fine start in the chase as Fakhar and Sameer Minhas put on a 90-run opening stand in 14 overs. Khushdil Shah drew the first blood for Whites as he bowled Sameer for 24 off 33 including two fours. Fakhar brought up his half-century off 39 balls before taking another 37 for his second fifty.

Fakhar did much of the scoring in the



second wicket stand of 67 off 56 balls as Omair bin Yousuf departed for eight off 19 in the 24th over. Greens’ dashing opener brought up his ton with a four and a double against Ali Raza in the 21st over.

Shahnawaz Dahani brought an end to Fakhar’s rampaging 123 off 104 balls involving 18 fours and two sixes in the 29th over. Saad Baig (22, 28b, 3x4s) and debutant Farhan Yousuf (38, 44b, 4x4s, 1x6) were the other two wickets to fall. Farhan made his List-A debut memorable by smashing Shahnawaz Dahani for a hat-trick of fours in the 33rd over.

Skipper Shadab Khan (34 not out, 45b, 3x4s) and Faheem Ashraf (11 not

out, 21b, 1x4) saw off the game by the end of the penultimate over after Farhan had fallen in the 43rd.

Leg-spinner Saad Masood was the pick of Greens’ bowlers with figures of two for 30 in seven overs.

Earlier, half-centuries from Shahzaib Khan, Hasan Nawaz and Khushdil Shah led Pakistan Whites to a decent total. Shahzaib top-scored with 76 off 88 – his sixth List-A fifty – as he stitched a valuable third-wicket stand of 78 with Usman Khan (34, 52b, 2x4s, 1x6) after Whites had lost skipper Saim Ayub and Mohsin Riaz early.

Saim was run out in the fifth over for 14 off 18 via a throw from Farhan,



while Mohsin was caught and bowled by Mohammad Salman Mirza for one. Usman fell to Mehran Mumtaz in the 24th over just as the partnership was heading towards the three-figure mark.

No.5 Hasan Nawaz and No.6 Khushdil Shah both came together when Shahzaib’ stay at the crease was cut short by Naseem Shah, who castled him from round the wicket, bringing an end to the 44-run fourth-wicket stand.

Hasan and Khushdil remained at the wicket for 80 balls and gathered 77 runs. Whites reached the 200-run mark with Khushdil hitting a boundary in the 40th over. At this juncture, Whites looked poised for a 300-run total with two set

batters but PCB Greens pacers made a comeback.

Faheem Ashraf first removed Hasan for 56 off 61 inclusive of one four and two sixes as Whites lost four for 35 in the last 40 balls. Naseem got rid of Khushdil (51, 44b, 2x4s, 3x6s) in the 45th over and then returned to bag the wicket of Saad Masood in the 47th.

Haris Rauf remained unbeaten for 11 off nine having hit one six. Naseem finished with three for 46 in nine overs. Faheem accounted for Mohammad Wasim Jnr in the last over of the innings to return figures of two fo 35 in seven overs. Salman and Mehran had a wicket each to their name.

Scores in brief

Match 1–Pakistan Greens beat Pakistan Whites by five wickets at Multan Cricket Stadium

Pakistan Whites 276-8, 50 overs (Shahzaib Khan 76, Hasan Nawaz 56, Khushdil Shah 51, Usman Khan 34; Naseem Shah 3-46, Faheem Ashraf 2-35)

Pakistan Greens 277-5, 49 overs (Fakhar Zaman 123, Farhan Yousuf 38, Shadab Khan 34 not out, Sameer Minhas 24, Saad Baig 22; Saad Masood 2-30)

Player of the match – Fakhar Zaman (Pakistan Greens)

Tournament schedule: (All matches at Multan Cricket Stadium; All matches to begin at 3pm)

11 August – Pakistan Greens beat Pakistan Whites by five wickets

12 August – Pakistan Blues v Pakistan Gold

13 August – Pakistan Blues v Pakistan Whites

14 August – Pakistan Gold v Pakistan Greens

15 August – Pakistan Blues v Pakistan Greens

16 August – Pakistan Gold v Pakistan Whites

Trump’s ‘Little Excursion’ That Could Reshape the World

Continued from Page 4

now threatens the Red Sea as the Iran conflict restricts the Persian Gulf, causing previously separate energy crises to reinforce one another.

Strategic reserves can temporarily soften shortages, but they cannot replace continuous production. The United States consumes approximately 20 million barrels of petroleum daily; consequently, even 300 million barrels in the Stra-

tegic Petroleum Reserve would equal only about 15 days of total national consumption, although the reserve is designed to supplement rather than replace commercial supply.

Even after a ceasefire, tanker operators will not instantly return. Insurers will demand evidence of sustained security, while damaged ports, pipelines and refineries may take months or years to repair. The EIA expects around 600,000 barrels per day of regional produc-

tion to remain offline through 2027, demonstrating how the economic damage can outlast the fighting.

Paradoxically, this crisis could accelerate a positive transformation. Countries dependent on imported oil will increasingly treat that dependence as a national-security vulnerability. Global investment in the electricity sector was already projected at \$1.5 trillion in 2025—50 percent more than spending on bringing oil, gas

and coal to market.

Governments may intensify investment in solar, wind, hydroelectricity, nuclear power, batteries and public transportation. Solar investment alone reached an estimated \$450 billion in 2025, while power-storage spending approached \$66 billion. Pakistan’s import of approximately 19 gigawatts of solar panels in 2024 illustrates how quickly energy insecurity can encourage decentralized alternatives.

Electric vehicles could gain momentum for economic as well as environmental reasons. EVs displaced approximately 1.3 million barrels of oil per day in 2024, and the IEA projects displacement exceeding five million barrels daily by 2030. Yet aviation, shipping, heavy trucking and petrochemical production will remain dependent on liquid fuels for years.

Trump’s “little excursion” may therefore have initiated a chain reaction extending beyond its

original objectives. Hormuz traffic has already fallen by more than three-quarters, 5.5 million barrels of production were shut in during July, and rerouting can add a month and millions of dollars to individual voyages.

The deepest legacy of the Iran war may not be measured by territory captured or weapons destroyed. It may be measured by a world more suspicious of imported energy, more protective of strategic waterways and more determined to reduce its

dependence on oil.

What began as a limited military excursion could ultimately change the world economically, financially, technologically and geopolitically—and its consequences may endure long after the war itself has ended.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Michigan, USA

Pakistan’s Independence Day: Celebrating Sovereignty and Strength

Continued from Page 4

The Makkah agreement is a massive good news for Pakistan, a strategic development that has doubled the pride of the people on this momentous 14th of August. The terms of the agreement, which include joint military planning, intelligence sharing, combined military exercises, and a pledge to come to each other’s aid in the event of an attack on any of the signatory nations, provide an unparalleled sense of security and collective strength. For the common Pakistani, this agreement is a tangible manifestation of the country’s rising stature, proof that its leadership

is respected and that its military power is a source of confidence for its allies. It has woven a powerful narrative of Islamic solidarity in defense of shared interests, countering the narratives of division and discord that have sometimes plagued the Muslim world. This development has filled the hearts of the people with immense happiness, as they see their country not just as a strong nation in its own right but as the central pillar of a new and powerful trilateral alliance that can reshape the security dynamics of the region. The atmosphere on the streets of Pakistan today is not just one of historical remembrance but of future-oriented hope, as the

people feel a profound sense of belonging to a nation that is a key architect of a new world order, one where its voice is powerful, its alliances are strong, and its future is bright.

At the heart of this national pride and the source of the people’s immense satisfaction is the Pakistan Army, an institution that has once again proven itself to be the guardian of the nation’s security and sovereignty. The people of Pakistan love their army, a relationship that is deeply embedded in the national psyche and historical experience, and this year, their love and admiration have reached a fever pitch. The army’s

performance in Marka Huq, its professionalism, its bravery, and its strategic brilliance have made it the toast of the nation, a source of immense comfort and pride. The citizens see the men in uniform not just as soldiers but as the protectors of their homes, their families, and their national identity. This affection and trust are palpable in the countless tributes, the patriotic songs dedicated to the armed forces, and the immense respect shown to military personnel on the streets. The army’s success has given the people a sense of safety and security that allows them to dream bigger and to work harder, confident that their armed forces

stand as an impenetrable shield against any external threat. The people feel a deep and personal connection to the army, celebrating its successes as their own, and their happiness is doubled this year because they see the army’s achievements as a reflection of the nation’s collective strength and unity.

As the sun sets on this historic Independence Day, the people of Pakistan are not just celebrating a date on the calendar; they are celebrating a renewed national spirit, a collective resolve that has been galvanized by the trials and triumphs of the past year. The sense of unity that was so essential for the victory

in Marka Huq has not dissipated; instead, it has been reinforced and deepened, becoming the bedrock of the nation’s new, confident self-image. On this solemn and joyous occasion, the people of Pakistan pledge, with their hands on their hearts, to continue the same unity, the same unwavering resolve, and the same patriotic fervor that carried them through the challenges of the previous year. They promise to stand behind their armed forces, to support their leadership, and to contribute their own efforts, in whatever capacity, to the monumental task of nation-building. The journey ahead is long, and the

challenges are many, including economic development, social cohesion, and climate change, but the people are now imbued with a newfound sense of purpose and confidence. They understand that their collective strength, their resilience, and their unwavering love for their country are the most powerful weapons in their arsenal. This Independence Day is a reaffirmation of that faith, a collective promise to build upon the gains of the past and to work tirelessly to make Pakistan an even more strong, prosperous, and respected nation on the world stage, a beacon of hope and strength for generations to come.

Presenting the Credentials

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari receiving the credentials of Ambassadors-designate of the Republic of Korea Mr. Han Sungho and Italy Mr. Ugo Ciarlatani at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

President receives credentials from ambassadors-designate of Italy and Korea

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: President receives credentials from ambassadors-designate of Italy and Republic of Korea at Aiwan-e-Sadr today.

While talking to Ambassador-designate of Italy Ugo Ciarlatani the President expressed confidence that his tenure would contribute to further strengthening Pakistan-Italy relations. He noted the steady growth in bilateral ties, particularly in trade and investment, with bilateral trade having surpassed the US\$1 billion mark, and welcomed the signing of the agreement on abolition of visa requirements for diplomatic passport holders.

During his meeting with Ambassadors-designate of the Republic of Korea Han Sungho, the President said Pakistan attaches great importance to its multidimensional relationship with the Republic of Korea. He expressed Pakistan's desire to further expand trade and investment ties, noting the ongoing negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, and welcomed cooperation in climate change, development and defence.

The President expressed the hope that cooperation between the two countries in areas including shipbuilding, technology and economic development would continue to grow. Senator Saleem Mandviwalla and Secretary Foreign Affairs were also present during the meeting.

Finance Minister, Belarusian Energy Minister Discuss Avenues to Deepen Economic Cooperation

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting with H. E. Mr. Denis Moroz, Minister of Energy of the Republic of Belarus, who called on the Minister along with a high-level delegation, to discuss bilateral economic relations, trade and investment and avenues for further strengthening economic cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus.

The Finance Minister welcomed the Belarusian delegation and noted the longstanding engagement between the two countries. He highlighted the importance of expanding commercial ties and investment flows to support the growing scope of economic cooperation.



The Finance Minister also underscored the importance of continued engagement and emphasized the need to broaden consultations to support economic engagement between the two countries. The two sides discussed the broader agenda of Pakistan-Belarus cooperation, including industrial cooperation, agriculture, education, culture and other areas. The Belarusian side highlighted ongoing efforts to advance cooperation in these sectors. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb reaffirmed

Pakistan's commitment to working closely with Belarusian counterparts to translate the ongoing engagement into concrete outcomes and further strengthen cooperation across areas of mutual interest.

H. E. Mr. Denis Moroz appreciated the Finance Minister's support and expressed confidence that continued coordination between the relevant institutions of both countries would further facilitate bilateral trade, investment and economic cooperation.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, along with the members of the Belarusian delegation, including Mr. Andrei Metelitsa, Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus to Pakistan; Mr. Viktor Shchetko, First Deputy Minister of Industry; Mr. Andrei Prokopenchuk, Director of Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus; and Mr. Viktor Nikitin, National Bank of the Republic of Belarus. Senior officials from the Finance Division were also present.

Belarus Energy Minister Calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Belarusian Minister for Energy H. E. Mr. Denis Maroz called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House during his official visit to Pakistan.

The Prime Minister welcomed the delegation and conveyed greetings to President Alexander Lukashenko. He recalled President Lukashenko's visit to Islamabad in November 2024 and his own visit to Belarus in April 2025, noting that both visits strengthened bilateral ties.

PM Shehbaz expressed satisfaction over the 9th Session of the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) held in Islamabad. The JMC reviewed cooperation in trade, industry, agriculture, banking, labour, transport, and energy. Both sides expressed confidence that JMC outcomes would bring tangible benefits and further consolidate the Pakistan-Belarus partnership.

Minister Maroz thanked the PM for the warm welcome and conveyed Belarusian leadership's regards. He briefed the PM on JMC progress. Both reaffirmed commitment to

deepen coordination and materialize cooperation across all agreed sectors.



Pakistan, Belarus Agree to Expand Agricultural Trade, Investment and Technology Cooperation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and Belarusian Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Yakovchits Aleksander on Wednesday agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in agriculture, food security, trade, investment and agricultural technology.

During a meeting in Islamabad, both sides agreed to encourage participation of Pakistani and Belarusian enterprises in agricultural exhibitions and trade fairs to promote products and develop business partnerships.

They also agreed to facilitate online business-to-business sessions



covering seafood, citrus fruits, mangoes, fruit puree, vegetables,

seeds and dairy products, besides reciprocal visits by agriculture-related business and trade delegations.

The two sides discussed cooperation in fish farming and agreed to exchange knowledge, technology and best practices. They also welcomed greater cooperation in seed trade and mutual exports of seeds.

Pakistan proposed establishing a universal agricultural machinery testing centre at the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) with Belarusian technical and financial support. A detailed assessment will be conducted, while technical expert exchange visits are planned by the end of 2026.

Both countries also agreed to enhance cooperation between plant quarantine organizations to strengthen phytosanitary systems and facilitate safe agricultural trade.

Pakistan welcomes possible expansion of Makkah agreement

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday welcomed the possibility of additional countries joining the Makkah Agreement, describing the pact as purely defensive and aimed at promoting regional peace and stability.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said the agreement provides that an attack on one participating country would be considered an attack on all members. He termed the August 7 Makkah Summit a significant development in relations among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye.

Andrabi said Pakistan had played an important role in finalising the agreement and welcomed the participation of additional countries. He rejected negative interpretations of the pact and stressed that Islamabad remained committed to regional peace and diplomacy.

The spokesperson said Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had held discussions with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait and Bahrain. Bahrain's foreign minister expressed his intention to visit Pakistan and congratulated Islamabad on the Makkah Agreement.

PAC Reviews CDA Audit & Passport Department Postings

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), chaired by Shahida Akhtar Ali, reviewed audit reports of various departments.

CDA Financials: Audit officials revealed the Capital Development Authority has not maintained financial statements since its inception in 1960 and lacks an opening balance sheet. PAC had directed CDA to finalize it in 2014.

CDA Chairman said statements for the last five years are being prepared. PAC member Munaza Hassan criticized the Deputy CFO for being unaware of basic facts, calling it "a tragedy" that KPMG is

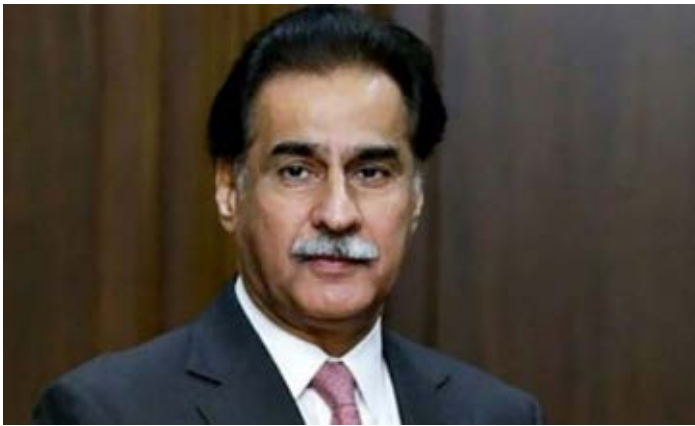
working on tasks the official doesn't know about.

Passport & Immigration Postings: DG Passports Muhammad Ali Randhawa briefed PAC on officers posted abroad for over 3 years. Audit noted this violates rules requiring recall after 3 years.

Hina Rabbani Khar said extended tenures are against rules. DG stated a policy change prevented recalls and the Ministry asked for a new policy. PAC directed that extended officers be recalled until a policy is made, and warned audit objections will be raised on related expenses.

DG assured strict compliance and promised a detailed report every 21 days.

Ayaz expresses sorrow over passing of former Chinese Premier



ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the passing of former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji.

He conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the leadership and people of China on the demise of the former Premier, saying that Pakistan has lost a true and steadfast friend.

The Speaker has said that his thoughts and sympathies are with the bereaved family during this difficult hour and that he shared their

grief and sorrow.

Expressing solidarity with Chinese President Xi Jinping and the people of China, Ayaz Sadiq said that the valuable services rendered by former Premier Zhu Rongji towards strengthening the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China would always be remembered and cherished.

He prayed for eternal peace for the departed soul and courage for the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss.