

PM Shehbaz invites Norwegian investment in oil & gas sector, calls for enhanced bilateral trade

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday invited Norwegian companies to invest in Pakistan's oil and gas exploration sector, while calling for enhanced bilateral trade between the two nations.

During a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Norway, Espen Barth Eide, here at the Prime Minister House, PM Shehbaz welcomed the visiting dignitary and expressed satisfaction over the warm and cordial ties between Pakistan and Norway, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

He appreciated Norway's bilateral cooperation with Pakistan, particularly in the areas of education, skilled labour, climate



ISLAMABAD: The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, H.E Mr Espen Barth Eide calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Iran to act 'more aggressively' in 'possible future war', says Iranian general

PEAK POINT

IRAN: Iran's Brigadier General Rasoul Sanaei-Rad said on Thursday that Iran will act more aggressively in the future, Al Jazeera reported, citing the Fars news agency.

"We stood firm in the recent war and, God willing, we will stand firmer and more aggressively in a possible future war," Sanaei-Rad said, who currently serves as political adviser in the office of the supreme leader.

While not openly mentioning the US, he said Iran's "enemy" was aiming to create internal divisions through economic pressure, but that its plan did not succeed.

Iran's Araghchi says US has long miscalculated war, Strait of Hormuz due to intelligence failures

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Thursday said that the US had 'long miscalculated due to intelligence failures. Case in point: The war on Iran'.

He added that they were making an even bigger miscalculation "on the Strait of Hormuz."

"Worse than fake news is fake intelligence. Be careful." The U.S. has long miscalculated due to intelligence failures. Case in point.

AJK police claim JAAC 'abducted' 8 highway police personnel on election duty

PEAK POINT

M U Z A F - FARABAD: Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) police said on Thursday that eight highway police personnel on election duty had been "abducted" by the proscribed Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC). Addressing a televised press conference, police spokesperson Khawar Ali Shaukat alleged that the JAAC attacked security forces deputed on election duty in the region. "Eight highway police officials on election duty were abducted," he said as state media shared a collage of the officials' pictures. "The personnel are in the custody of JAAC and have been subjected to brutal abuse," he said. He said that the "miscreants also threatened the families of the personnel that they would be martyred if their demands were not met".

He said that recent events showed that the JAAC was not a peaceful group, but a violent one intent on challenging the state's writ and weakening institutions.

"I want to make it clear that the state was not in weak. The state has always shown restraint," he said, adding that violent acts for the sake of rights.

High-profile terrorist commander killed in Bannu IBO: DPO

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: A highly wanted terrorist commander was killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted by the Bannu police and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), the district police confirmed on Thursday.

Bannu's District Police Officer (DPO) Captain (ret'd) Muhammad Furqan Bilal confirmed the terrorist's killing. The DPO confirmed that the terrorist was identified as a high-profile commander, Naser Muhammad alias Geadhar, who carried a Rs6 million bounty on his head. According to a state,

SC fixes pleas seeking meeting with Imran for hearing on Aug 18

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday fixed pleas, seeking medical treatment and meetings with incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan, for hearing on August 18.

A three-member bench, headed by Justice Shahid Waheed and comprising Justice Naem Afghan and Justice Ishaq Ibrahim, will hear the pleas.

The Registrar's Office has issued notices to all relevant parties and their counsels.

Khan, who has been in jail since August 2023, faces several cases ranging from corruption to terrorism, following his ouster from power through the opposition's no-confidence motion in April 2022.

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia will form political and military mechanisms under a defence pact, Ankara says

three countries' defence ministers, foreign ministers, and military chiefs.

It added that the joint military exercises were also being planned under the pact, while cooperation could include joint production and technology sharing in the defence industry.

The remarks come a day after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that he hoped more countries

expected Egypt to join the pact "in the next stage", telling the Anadolu state news agency only "a few technical issues" stood in the way.

Egypt has not commented on the agreement nor on the remarks by Fidan, who will visit Cairo on Thursday and Friday.

Kuwait, Bahrain and Somalia are among the countries that have welcomed it. Iran's comments also took a rather positive tone, stressing its stance of pursuing "security mechanisms based on cooperation between regional countries".

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif affirmed that the defence pact was "entirely for defensive purposes", and not for any aggression.



not limited to the three countries," the Turkish leader told the London-based Asharq Al-Awsat daily. "Rather, we aspire for it to grow, and perhaps appropriate conditions will emerge one day for all countries of the region to gather under its umbrella."

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Saturday said Türkiye

SPORTS

Ali, Abbas take three each as Pakistan begin England Test preparations



PEAK POINT

DUBAI: Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Abbas claimed three wickets apiece before Pakistan reached 44 without loss at stumps on the opening day of their three-day warm-up match against a Professional County Club Select XI on Thursday.

The hosts were bowled out for 305, with Saif Zaib top-scoring with 65. Matt Fisher remained unbeaten on 62, Caleb Falconer made 59 and Tom Haines struck 51. Ali returned figures of 3-23, while Abbas took 3-37 as Pakistan used the fixture to prepare for the first Test against England, beginning at Headingley on Aug. 19.

Pakistan opener Imran-ul-Haq and Azan Awaiz then safely negotiated the closing stages, finishing unbeaten on 26 and 15 respectively. Pakistan ended the day 261 runs behind.

England opener Emilio Gay endured a difficult start, dismissed without scoring after facing 12 deliveries. Abbas removed him in the third over when he edged to Salman Ali Agha at second slip.

Abbas struck again by having James Rew caught behind for four before Haines counterattacked, racing to his half-century from 30 balls. His innings ended when

Mohammad Ali trapped him lbw. Falconer and Zaib then steadied the Select XI with a 110-run partnership, although both benefited from missed chances.

Falconer was dropped at first slip on 29 off Ubaid Shah, while Zaib survived a possible stumping opportunity on 18 against Sajid Khan.

Zaib reached his half-century before Falconer followed him to the landmark off the next delivery. Zaib was later caught on the boundary off Khuram Shahzad for 65.

Abbas dismissed Falconer for 59, while Ali removed Luc

Benkenstein for 12 and Noah Thain for a duck as the hosts slipped to 217 for seven by tea.

Aamer Jamal dismissed Charlie Tear for seven before Fisher and James Sales added 55 for the ninth wicket. Sales was eventually removed by Ali Usman, while Fisher went on to complete an unbeaten half-century.

Khuram Shahzad wrapped up the innings when Shoaib Bashir was caught behind without scoring.

Pakistan faced one scare during their reply when Imran, on 14, edged Nathan Gilchrist but was dropped at first slip by Gay.

Pakistan duo Aisam, Aqeel advance to ITF Masters semi-finals



MOHSINI ALI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan continued their impressive run at the ITF Masters World Individual Championships, advancing to the semifinals of the Men's 45+ Doubles after a thrilling victory over the dangerous Spanish pairing of Francisco Javier Martinez Baena and Pedro Nieto Orellana.

In a dramatic quarterfinal played on Court 1 at the famous Jamar Tennis Center, the Pakistani duo prevailed 6-7, 7-6, [10-2] in front of a sizeable gathering of tennis enthusiasts. Aisam and Aqeel appeared to be heading for defeat after dropping a tightly contested opening set and then falling a break behind in the second. The Spaniards subsequently held two match points, but the experienced Pakistani pair produced their best tennis under pressure, saving both and forcing the set into a tiebreak. After taking the second set 7-6, Aisam and Aqeel completely seized the momentum in the deciding match tiebreak, racing away to a commanding 10-2 victory to seal a memorable comeback and a place in the World Championship semifinals. Overcome in the tournament, the Pakistani pair had earlier the leading Japanese combination of "Hayato Otsubo and "Manabu Tsujimoto in 3 sets, further underlining their strong form in Lisbon.

Shan Masood returns to training before England Test series



PEAK POINT

LONDON: Pakistan have received a major boost ahead of the first Test in England as experienced batter Shan Masood returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Left-handed Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Headingley, Leeds on Aug 19. Injured-batter Aug 19. Shan Masood has returned to training. The three-match series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship from home since 2023, begins at

Iran Cricket delegation visits PCB headquarters

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: A delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran Cricket Association (IRICA) visited the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) headquarters at Gaddafi Stadium here on Thursday.

The Iranian delegation discussed with PCB Chief Operating Officer (COO) Sumair Ahmed Syed and PSL Chief Executive Officer Salman Naseer and discussed promotion and development of cricket in Iran and explored avenues for strengthening bilateral cooperation between PCB and IRICA.

During their visit, the delegation toured Gaddafi Stadium, the Cricket Museum and the National Cricket Academy (NCA), where they reviewed the training and other cricket facilities available at the PCB's premier high-performance centre.

The discussions focused



on a range of areas aimed at supporting the growth of cricket in Iran, including coaching support for Iranian national and junior teams, exchange of coaching knowledge and expertise and opportunities for Pakistani coaches to share their experience and technical skills with Iranian players and teams.

The two sides also discussed cooperation in the development of cricket

infrastructure and the provision of cricket and sporting equipment to support the needs of Iranian cricket at both junior and senior levels.

The PCB and the Iran Cricket Association agreed to explore further opportunities for collaboration, including the exchange of technical knowledge and expertise, with the shared objective of promoting and developing cricket.

Players in action during the National Champions Cup 2026-27 match between Pakistan Blues and Pakistan Whites at Multan Cricket Stadium



Moazam, Rajee crowned champions in ACTIVIT Jashan-e-Azadi Cycling Race 2026

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Moazam Ali and Rajee Shabbir emerged as the men's and women's champions respectively in the ACTIVIT Jashan-e-Azadi Cycling Race 2026, organised to celebrate Pakistan's 79th Independence Day while promoting fitness, healthy living, youth engagement and national unity through sport. The event was jointly organised by ACTIVIT, Unique Group (UGI) and the PCF, bringing together leading cyclists, students and sports enthusiasts in a colourful celebration of patriotism and sportsmanship. Organisers said the initiative aimed to inspire the younger generation to adopt an active lifestyle while strengthening the values of unity, discipline and love for the country. Punjab

Minister for Health Khawaja Imran Nazir and UGI Chairman Abdul Manan Khuram graced the closing ceremony as chief guests, while Moazam Khan Klair, ACTIVIT Ambassador and

sporting activities, saying such initiatives play a vital role in building a healthier and more united Pakistan. In the men's competition, Moazam Ali secured first place, Mansoor Khan finished



General Secretary of the PCF, distributed cash prizes, trophies and medals among the top performers. Addressing the participants, the guests lauded the organisers for promoting cycling and encouraging youth participation in healthy

second and Zahid Ali Imran claimed third position. In the women's category, Rajee Shabbir claimed the title, followed by Kishwar in second place and Alizah in third. Expressing their delight after the race.

Tamgha-e-Imtiaz conferred on Abrar Hussain Tanoli for decade-long Hajj and community services

PEAK POINT

RIYADH: Abrar Hussain Tanoli, a Pakistani financial professional based in Saudi Arabia and a native of Mansehra district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has been honoured with the prestigious Tamgha-e-Imtiaz in recognition of his decade-long services to Pakistani pilgrims and the wider Pakistani community in the Kingdom. Tanoli was among the Pakistani nationals honoured with the prestigious civil award for outstanding social and community services in Saudi Arabia. The award was presented at a special ceremony organised by the Embassy of Pakistan in Riyadh. Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ahmed Farooq, presented the award on behalf of President Asif Ali Zardari, recognising Tanoli's substantial contribution to Hajj volunteerism, community welfare, healthcare initiatives and emergency assistance. Tanoli is a founding member and

Riyadh Coordinator of the Pakistan Hajj Volunteers Group (PHVG), an organisation that has been assisting pilgrims during Hajj since 2011. Over the years, he has played a key role in mobilising, coordinating and training Pakistani volunteers from different parts of Saudi Arabia to facilitate pilgrims during the annual pilgrimage. The volunteers provide assistance to pilgrims in a range of situations, including guiding them to their designated tents, helping wheelchair users, facilitating movement around Hajj facilities and assisting sick and injured pilgrims in performing Tawaaf-e-Ziyarah while receiving treatment at Pakistan Medical Mission facilities. PHVG works in coordination with the Pakistani Hajj Mission, Embassy of Pakistan and relevant Saudi authorities. In 2024, the organisation mobilised and trained more than 1,500 volunteers to serve pilgrims, with their ser-

vices also receiving recognition from Saudi authorities. Speaking at the ceremony, Ambassador Ahmed Farooq highlighted the demanding nature of the volunteers' responsibilities during Hajj. He said the volunteers remain engaged around the clock during the five days of Hajj and continue serving pilgrims despite the challenging weather and extreme heat. He said volunteers assist pilgrims who require medical attention, become separated from their groups or need wheelchairs and other support. Their services, he noted, are not limited to Pakistani pilgrims and are available to anyone who requires assistance. The ambassador said the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah also facilitates the volunteers by providing information about pilgrims requiring assistance, reflecting the importance attached to their services during Hajj. "We are very proud of all three of you for the work that you have done and for



the good way that you have carried out these services," Ambassador Farooq said. For Abrar Tanoli, the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz represents recognition not only of his Hajj volunteerism but also of a broader record of community service spanning more than a decade. Alongside his Hajj-related activities, Tanoli has been involved in organising free medical camps for the Pakistani community in Saudi Arabia in collaboration with the Pakistan Doctors Group and the Embassy of Pakistan. These initiatives have helped provide healthcare services to members of

the community, particularly those requiring support. He is also a founding member of the Al-Bir Group, which provides assistance to Pakistanis facing financial difficulties and other social challenges. Tanoli's community welfare activities became particularly significant during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through PHVG, he participated in efforts to support Pakistani families stranded or facing difficulties during the crisis. Volunteers helped arrange and distribute food, medicines and other essential supplies to families struggling to meet their basic needs. His welfare work has also extended to Pakistan, where he continues to support underprivileged families, deserving individuals and communities facing financial hardship. The recognition has been warmly welcomed by members of the Pakistani community, who described the award as an honour for Tanoli, his family and his native area in

Mansehra. Messages of congratulations have highlighted his services to Pakistani pilgrims and the wider community in Saudi Arabia. The award is also being seen as a recognition of the spirit of volunteerism among overseas Pakistanis who devote their time and resources to serving fellow citizens and pilgrims. Tanoli's journey reflects a sustained commitment to public service alongside his professional career in the financial sector. From assisting Hajj pilgrims and supporting medical camps to providing emergency relief and helping families facing financial difficulties, his community work has remained an important part of his contribution to Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia and at home. The Tamgha-e-Imtiaz therefore marks a significant national recognition of Abrar Hussain Tanoli's long-standing services to pilgrims, community welfare and humanitarian assistance.

ISSI celebrates Pakistan's 80th Independence Day

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) marked Pakistan's 80th Independence Day with an event which paid homage to the vision, leadership and

courage of the founding fathers and to honour the nation's rich history, indomitable spirit, and unshakable resolve. The Institute's senior management, research faculty, staff, and interns participated in the programme, said

a press release issued on Thursday. The events' highlight was a special programme prepared by ISSI's research interns in the form of short documentaries showcasing Pakistan's rich history; the struggle and sacrifices of our

elders for achieving an independent homeland; cultural diversity enriched by different faiths, ethnicities, and languages. The presentations offered a vivid portrayal of Pakistani people's patriotism, resilience, hospitality and commitment to nation

building. In his remarks, Director General ISSI Ambassador Mo'in ul Haque shed light on Pakistan's remarkable journey, reflecting on the country's achievements in the last seven decades. He noted that Pakistan is a blessed country

and its strength lies in its people. He emphasized on the need to strive for excellence and personal and professional growth through discipline, sense of responsibility, honesty and integrity as essential pillars of nation-building.

Opinion & Editorial

Arif Mehmod Khan
Group Editor: 0333-5366814
Samra Athar Kakakhel
Resident Editor
Nadim Tanoli
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-7777874
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

Growth at a crossroads

The government is growing increasingly concerned about the state of the economy due to the impact of the US-Iran war and the stress it is placing on energy prices and international trade. Though official growth targets are not being touched yet, the government has added enough caveats to make them effectively meaningless. The State Bank's biannual monetary policy report says the economy should still grow between 3.5% and 4.5% this year, and that inflation should ease and stabilise on the higher side of the existing full-year estimate. The current account deficit should be below 1% of GDP, the external account should be stable, and foreign exchange reserves should be over \$20 billion at the end of the calendar year. But if even one estimate is off, things will fall apart like a house of cards. While the government has gone to great lengths to factor in the estimated cost of the US-Iran war, with a strong El Niño expected to hit the country, soon, rain alone could devastate the economy. Neither our farmers nor our government is prepared for yet another 'storm-of-the-century'. It is also notable that while the State Bank tries to temper expectations by placing most of the blame on circumstances beyond its control, careful observers know that lax food preparedness.

Democracy and the market

Khurram Husain
EVERY decade in Pakistan's history has seen a moment when a robust defence of democracy as the best form of government for a country like ours is needed. The never-ending struggle for supremacy between the democratic and non-democratic forces make it necessary. One of the key ways in which non-democratic forces advance their argument is to amplify all the bad things that happen under democratic rule, and all the flaws that democratically elected leaders bring to their position. They advance the idea that a more selfless leadership will be better for the country since it will put the national interest above its own. This is the central argument which numerous non-democratic forces have used to try and justify their intervention in politics and governance. But there is a flaw in this premise. No leadership is selfless. Not in the political arena. Every contender for leadership emerges only by harnessing the powers inherent in society. Non-democrats, for example, have had the organised power of their respective institution behind them. And therefore, they have not been able to operate outside the limits set by their own affiliation with the institution that supplied them with the power to rule and to attack other institutions — which cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be seen as selfless actions taken

for the sake of the country. In fact, to use the words of Hamilton in the Federalist Papers — the founding documents of the American system — democracy is predicated on the idea that human beings, or at least those who seek power and thereby become players in the political arena, are "ambitious, vindictive and rapacious". The idea that people (or at least those who enter the arena of politics) are inherently selfish, self-serving, rapacious and ambitious was ingrained in the philosophical traditions from which democracy arose. Hume wrote that, when devising a system of rule, "every man ought to be supposed a knave, and to have no other end, in all his actions, than private interest". Montesquieu asserted that "[c]onstant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it ... it is necessary from the very nature of things that power should be a check to power". Kant took the argument even further, effectively saying that it should be possible to build a system of rule even for a nation of devils, because a rightly arranged constitution forces their selfish inclinations to check one another, producing an outcome identical to what good moral character would have produced. Both democracy and the market are designed to harness the worst motivations of individuals — towards the pursuit of the common good

of all. The list goes on and on. Democracy is premised on the idea that rulers will bring bad motivations to their position, and it works on this premise to build a system where the separation of powers and the accountability and transparency that come with it will work to constrain these motivations, and channel them towards the collective good. This is one foundational element that democracy has in common with the other big idea that emerged at around the same time: the market as the organising principle of economic life. The market also assumes that human motivations are greed and self-interest. When we meet greedy and self-interested people, most of us are usually not impressed. But taken collectively, the idea behind the market was to harness these energies towards the pursuit of the collective good. Both democracy and the market are designed to harness the worst motivations of individuals — towards the pursuit of the common good of all. They aim to do this by pitting these bad motivations against each other and via a scheme of separation of powers where no single branch of government should exercise sway over the entire apparatus of state. Today, if there is any separation of powers left in the country, it is the federal versus the provincial governments.

Pakistan's moment

Durdana Najam
In an unprecedented way, Pakistan has not let hope down in trying to create space for peace between Iran and the United States. At a moment when the region seemed locked in a cycle of suspicion, Pakistan has kept the conversation alive. Since the war erupted after the February assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Islamabad has done far more than issue the customary calls for restraint that middle powers usually content themselves with. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has shuttled to Tehran again and again - most recently to press Iranian officials to accept the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding that Pakistan and Qatar brokered in June. Iran's own Interior Minister, Eskandar Momeni, has reciprocated with visits to Pakistan. Tehran and Washington have repeatedly said that the credit of the mediation between them goes entirely to Pakistan. This is not a new story. Pakistan has played this role before. In 1971, when the United States and China had no direct channel, Pakistan became the bridge. It was Islamabad that facilitated Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing — a moment that changed the architecture of global politics. That episode is not just a historical anecdote; it is part of Pakistan's diplomatic overture. It showed that Pakistan can operate in difficult spaces, and with enough credibility to be trusted by both sides. The same pattern is visible today in the Iran-US context. Pakistan did not enter this space with grand claims. It simply used what it has always had: access, relationships and timing. Iran is a neighbour. The United States is a longstanding partner. Pakistan sits geographically at the hinge of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East — a location that gives it proximity to Iran, familiarity with the Gulf, and historical ties with Washington. This combination gives Pakistan a kind of diplomatic flexibility that few other states possess.

Dar orders intensified diplomatic engagement for release of Pakistani sailors held hostage by Somali pirates



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar directed "stakeholders" on Thursday to maintain close and regular coordination and intensify diplomatic engagement with national and international partners to facilitate the release of 10 Pakistani sailors who have been held hostage by Somali pirates since April. The sailors were among the crew of the MT Honour

25, a Palau-flagged oil tanker that was hijacked by armed pirates off the coast of Puntland, Somalia, on April 21. Besides the 10 Pakistani crew members, the hostages also include seven Indonesians, including the captain, as well as an Indian and a Sri Lankan. During more than three months of their captivity, there has been no progress either in negotiations or the payment of the ransom, said to be around \$3 million, for their recovery. Meanwhile, the Foreign

Office (FO) has been saying that efforts continue for their release and return. In a statement posted on X today, it said Dar chaired a high-level meeting to review Pakistan's "intensified efforts" for the safe release of the sailors. "The DPM/FM directed all relevant stakeholders to maintain close and regular coordination and intensify diplomatic engagement with national and international partners, including the Somali authorities and relevant international organisations, to facilitate the safe release of our citizens," the FO stated.

The FO said the government remained "fully seized" of the situation and that Dar expressed hope that sustained and coordinated engagement would lead to a positive outcome and the seamen's safe return.

It added that DPM Dar also expressed solidarity with the families of the sailors. On August 7, more than 100 days after being taken hostage by Somali pirates,

Ayaz Sadiq felicitates the nation on 79th Independence day

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended his heartfelt felicitations to the entire nation on the occasion of Pakistan's 79th Independence Day. He said that 14th August is a glorious day in the national history of Pakistan. The day grants an opportunity to thank Almighty Allah for the great blessing of freedom, pay tribute to the countless sacrifices made for the creation of Pakistan, and renew our resolve to make the country stronger, prosperous and developed. The Speaker said that the creation of Pakistan was the result of the continuous struggle, determination and unparalleled sacrifices of the Muslims of the subcontinent. The nation's forefathers offered extraordinary sacrifices for the achievement of an



independent homeland. Pakistan stands as a living symbol of the determination, courage, perseverance and sacrifices of its founders. Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that on Independence Day, we must renew our commitment to placing the national interest above personal, political, linguistic and regional differences. He emphasized that national unity, mutual tolerance, democratic continuity, supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law are essential for putting Pakistan on the path of sustainable development.

Aurangzeb calls for framework to expand digital finance, electronic transactions

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday pushed for an enabling regulatory framework to expand electronic transactions and simplify digital access to finance, including easier customer onboarding and stronger data-sharing between banks and capital markets, according to the Ministry of Finance.

During a meeting with Pakistan Digital Authority (PDA) Chairperson Dr Sohail Munir, the two discussed digital transformation, digital finance and the wider use of technology to support economic activity, the ministry posted on X, it said the finance minister emphasised the importance of ensuring that "existing frameworks evolve alongside advancements in digital technology and emerging business models".

The participants discussed the need for an "enabling framework that recognises electronic transactions" and supports the

wider adoption of digital processes across trade and financial activities, it added.

According to the ministry, the meeting also examined opportunities to improve access to finance through "greater use of digital platforms and more efficient processes".

It further said Aurangzeb highlighted the importance of "simplifying customer onboarding, strengthening data-sharing mechanisms and improving interoperability of financial data", including "greater integration between banks and capital markets".

Measures to facilitate wider participation in the capital market through digital platforms and "streamlined account-opening processes" were also discussed, the ministry said.

The minister said stronger integration between banking and capital-market systems could support "greater investor participation and access to investment.

Shaza Fatima seeks technology boost for NDMA

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja visited the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) here at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headquarters on Thursday, where she was briefed on technology driven disaster management, including artificial intelligence based early warning systems, risk assessment and emergency response mechanisms, as part of efforts to strengthen Pakistan's national disaster preparedness and response capacity.

NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik, along with senior officers, received the federal minister at the NDMA headquarters. During the visit, the minister was given a detailed briefing on the functioning of the NEOC and NDMA's modern disaster management framework, which uses advanced technology for early warning, preparedness, risk assessment and emergency response. Officials briefed Ms Shaza Fatima on NDMA's artificial intelligence based systems, including mechanisms for early identification of emerging hazards and development of mitigation.

Freedom, great blessing from Allah Almighty: Aleem Khan

MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Thursday felicitated the nation on the 79th Independence Day, saying the freedom is a great blessing from Allah Almighty and its protection is a collective national responsibility. In his message, he said that the creation of Pakistan was the result of the great struggle, countless sacrifices and unparalleled leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Independence Day provides us with an opportunity to remember the sacrifices of our forefathers and move forward with renewed determination for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. He said that the day of 14th August reminds us to remain committed to the principles of Unity, Faith and



Discipline. Abdul Aleem Khan said that the security of Pakistan's borders is indebted to the sacrifices of the Armed Forces of Pakistan. On Independence Day, we pay tribute to the martyrs, Ghazis and their great families who made immense sacrifices for the defence and security of the motherland. President of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party said that Pakistan is in strong hands and the nation should remain hopeful about its future. Abdul Aleem Khan.

One Nation, One Voice – Pak media journalists forum Int'l virtual conference on Independence Day

WAJiha TAMSEEL MIRZA

ISLAMABAD: On the auspicious occasion of Pakistan's 79th Independence Day, a grand international virtual conference titled "One Nation, One Voice" was organized by Pak Media Journalists Forum International. Forum officials from all over the world, Consul Generals of different countries, Federal and Provincial Ministers, renowned anchor persons, eminent intellectuals and a large number of overseas Pakistanis participated in this webinar with enthusiasm. On the occasion of Independence Day, Forum Chairman Chaudhry Noorul Hassan Gujjar and President Dr. Abdul Rehman



Osama emphasized the importance of national unity and paid tribute to the sacrifices of the Pakistan Army and said that in the current circumstances, the nation has to unite and play its role for the development and stability of the country so that Pakistan can be made a strong and prosperous country. Other speakers who addressed the international virtual conference included Federal.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in a meeting with Chairperson Pakistan Digital Authority, Dr Sohail Munir, at the Finance Division.

Babur's legacy can bridge Uzbekistan, Pakistan, says Uzbek Ambassador

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtaev has said that Mughal Emperor Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur was not only a statesman and military leader but also a poet, writer, thinker and keen observer of nature and society, whose legacy continues to connect Central and South Asia. He was speaking at a roundtable conference titled "Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur: A Shared Civilizational Legacy and a Bridge for Pak-Uzbek Relations," organized by the Baburi Forum here. The ambas-



sador said Babur's literary masterpiece, Baburnama, remains one of the most valuable autobiographical and historical works of the medieval Muslim world, offering an exceptional account of Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. "At the heart of this shared historical narrative stands Zahiruddin Babur, a son of

Andijan, in present-day Uzbekistan, whose extraordinary life connected Central Asia with South Asia in an unprecedented way," he said. The event was attended by Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Farah Naz Akbar, Deputy Chairman of the Babur International Public Foundation Rustam Mammasolev, President of the Baburi Forum Ramzan Mughal, as well as scholars, historians and researchers from Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The ambassador welcomed the delegation of historians and scholars from Uzbekistan and expressed appreciation for their participation

in the gathering, saying such exchanges could further strengthen the cultural and intellectual ties between the two countries. "For Pakistan, Babur and his heritage represent an important part of the country's rich civilizational history. For Uzbekistan, Babur remains an important symbol of our nation's contribution to world history and culture," Tukhtaev said. He stressed that Babur belonged to both nations not merely as a historical personality but as a shared civilizational legacy that continues to connect their peoples. According to him, the legacy of the Baburids left an enduring imprint.

