

Portugal’s travel & tourism sector enters golden era **Newswire**

Lisbon: New data from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reveals Portugal’s Travel & Tourism sector is set to continue growing in 2025, following a landmark year in 2024 that saw the industry surpass all previous peaks across economic contribution, employment, and visitor spending. According to the latest Economic Impact Research **(Page-8)**

UK global talent visa now open — no job offer needed **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Good news for skilled professionals in Pakistan: the United Kingdom has widened its doors for talented individuals who want to build a career in science, tech, arts, or academia — without the hassle of securing a job offer first. British Science **(Page-10)**

Over 15,000 China-Europe freight trains depart from Henan



Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: On June 28, a fully loaded freight train left the China-Europe Railway Express (Zhengzhou) assembly center, marking a significant milestone with over 15,000 China-Europe trains launched from Henan. This "Steel Silk Road", stretching across Eurasia, now operates more than 12 trains daily, cutting the travel time from Central China to the world to just 15 days. In 2013, Henan's first China-Europe freight train, with 41 containers

aboard, departed with the sound of a long whistle, marking a new chapter in the province's opening to the world. Back then, the "steel camel caravan" operated just 13 trips a year, with only one-way export services. After 12 years of rapid growth, the total number of trips surpassed 13,000 by 2024, with 2,705 trips made that year alone. In January 2025, the cargo value for the month exceeded USD 489 million, setting a new record. The China-Europe Railway Express in Henan now operates at a maximum monthly capacity of 545 trips. So far, it has transported over 12.28 million tons of goods, with a cargo value exceeding USD 46.4 billion. Its service network spans more than 40 countries and over 140 cities across Eurasia, forging stable partnerships with more than 8,000 overseas enterprises.



Can Denmark keep the EU green?

Rosie Birchard

Aarhus: The streets of Denmark's second city Aarhus are full of clues that this is a climate-conscious country. Bottle recycling machines greet pedestrians at regular intervals; bike paths are teeming with cyclists in rain or shine — often with kids or cargo in tow; and out in the bay where the Kattegat connects the Baltic and North Seas, turbines help generate more wind power per person than almost any other country in the world. It was here that the Nordic nation chose to launch its six-month stint heading up the EU Council, the body representing the bloc's 27 national governments. And a word that's fallen out of vogue in European policy-making circles made the cut in Denmark's stated priorities: "Green." "There's a lot at stake," Climate and Energy Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen told DW as Denmark's EU presidency kicked off. Gone are the days when climate policies dominated the European Union's agenda; when school climate strikers demonstrating in towns and cities across the bloc prompted policymakers to come up with the so-called Green Deal, dubbed Europe's "man on the moon moment" by the EU Commission back in 2018. Since then, the realities of radically shifting geopolitics have swung like a wrecking ball onto Europe's political consciousness — from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the resulting energy and inflation crisis, to US President Donald Trump's tariffs and mounting existential fears in European industries from car-making to chemicals. Green parties lost out in most countries in last year's European elections after what many analysts dubbed a backlash against green policies. The EU's big promises to slash emissions have already been enshrined in law, allowing the bloc to keep up its claim of climate leadership on the global stage — especially with Washington pulling out of the Paris climate deal. But bit-by-bit, lower-profile elements of Europe's green legislation are coming under fire in debates on how to ease burdens on businesses to help the EU compete with the likes of China and the US. "We support a climate policy driven by innovation, investment, and responsibility — not by radical bans or ideology," leaders of the EU's biggest political grouping, the center-right European People's Party, said in a statement late last month. "We are ambitious, yet pragmatic," they wrote. While those leaders praised a series of red-tape-cutting plans laid out by the EU's executive, climate campaigners have rejected the moves. Recently, Brussels also sparked their ire by shelving draft anti-greenwashing rules. To keep climate action moving, Denmark is finding new ways to frame the argument: By casting the green transition as a key ingredient in Europe's bid to boost its military independence. "Climate change is about defense. Europe's strategic autonomy is threatened, and it's threatened partly because we are so extremely dependent on the import of fossil fuels," Energy Minister Aagaard said — referring to the bloc's past dependence on Russian oil and gas and its new plans to gradually ban their sale. "Bringing Europe into a position where we can produce more of the energy we need, where we get more energy efficient, where we create a strong economies based on decarbonized energy, for me that's also the response," he added. Denmark's center-left-led government has given security top billing in its EU presidency, following on from Poland which held the rotating role for the first half of 2025. The Danish defense ministry has also gone further than most EU states in its national bid to beef up military independence, by extending conscription to women. Still, researchers acknowledge Europe's race to reclaim brings its own challenges for climate policymaking. Emissions linked to military work tend to be top secret, and researcher Jens Mortensen says the search for more critical materials like rare earth metals may "delay or slow down the green transition."



"In the short term defense spending is prioritized, and there will be a concern about what it does to our emissions," Mortensen, a political scientist who lectures on global environmental governance at Copenhagen University, told DW. "But right now we probably have to. That's the feeling in the North: We have to. We feel very exposed." Not all EU governments share the Danes' assessment that going green will equip the EU to better defend itself and compete internationally. The political challenge that lies ahead became evident last week when the European Commission proposed a new legally binding stepping stone on the EU's path to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Under the latest proposals, the EU must cut greenhouse emissions 90% by 2040 compared to 1990 levels. "As European citizens increasingly feel the impact of climate change, they expect Europe to act," Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said recently. However, Italy, Czechia, and Poland have been critical of the bill, which still requires approval from EU states and lawmakers. "Our country is not yet ready to implement such ambitious plans," Poland's environment minister, Paulina Hennig-Kloska, told news channel Polsat last week. "The EU's reduction target must be realistic, and the contributions of individual countries toward achieving it must be varied," she said. Climate campaigners, meanwhile, were disappointed that the draft legislation allows states to include carbon credits gained through investments in environment projects outside Europe in their climate accounting. "Most international offsets aren't worth the paper they're written on and have done nothing to cut emissions. They're also a waste of taxpayers' money," Michael Sicauld-Clyet of the World Wildlife Fund said last week. Researcher Jens Mortensen saw the compromise as a means to an end. "We have to give in on certain issues," he said. "It's controversial, but it was necessary to convince skeptics." Convincing skeptics will be Copenhagen's daily business through the rest of 2025. Asked whether he expected to get Czechia and others on board with emissions-cutting targets, Minister Lars Aagaard said: "Time will show." "I know that there are short-term concerns in a number of European countries that climate change politics can be a challenge to economic development," he added. "But I also think that it's important for all of us to remember that meeting our climate targets is part of what should make Europe competitive in the longer run." Lecturer Jens Mortensen says Denmark can only hope to keep countries talking about climate policies, rather than turning political tides, due to the limits of its role. "It's really about trying to reframe current challenges and the mess we're in to say: 'Don't forget the green transition.' We are aware it's lost its top priority."

Karbala guiding light to stand firm for righteousness: Bilawal Bhutto

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that Youm-e-Ashura reminds us of the eternal struggle between truth and falsehood, justice and tyranny. The supreme sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS), his family and companions at Karbala is a guiding light for all those who rise against oppression and stand firm for righteousness. Chairman of PPP further said that the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (A.S) is not just a chapter in Islamic history it is the soul of our faith, a symbol of courage, sacrifice, and resistance against injustice. Karbala teaches us to never bow before cruelty, no matter how powerful it may seem." He urged the nation to observe Ashura with solemnity, dignity, and respect for all schools of thought, and to carry forward the message of unity and peace



that lies at the heart of the sacrifice of Karbala. "Let us draw strength from the legacy of Hazrat Imam Hussain (A.S) to build a Pakistan free of injustice, sectarianism, and fear," he added.

Pakistan reaffirms alignment with Beijing's goals in regional cooperation

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: Pakistan said this week that China remains a “pillar of regional stability” and a long-standing friend whose development-oriented diplomacy aligns closely with Pakistan’s own strategic and economic priorities. Speaking at a weekly news briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan reiterated Pakistan’s active role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), calling it a platform of immense regional and global significance. Shafqat Ali Khan spotlighted the growing trilateral cooperation among China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, describing it as an integral component of Beijing’s broader

vision for inclusive regional development and economic integration. “The unity between China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan is consistent with China’s agenda of peace, development, and shared prosperity,” Khan said. “These collaborative efforts reflect a broader objective of mutual growth, not rivalry. Pakistan stands firmly with China on all issues of its core national interest, including Tibet, and fully supports its sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Khan described the bilateral engagements between Islamabad, Beijing, and Dhaka as natural extensions of the long-standing ties among the three countries.



Adventurous souls take flight with weekend international travel

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: In Stark's world, Friday nights usually mean going to the airport to get an international flight out of the country and returning on Monday morning ready to head straight to work. The 20-something Shanghai-based tech professional, who prefers to keep his real name private, has proved you don't need to take a gap year or quit your job to travel the world. In recent years, he has spent nearly every weekend traveling to more than 60 countries, some of them multiple times. By using different time zones and tight layovers to his advantage, he recently turned a mid-June weekend into a 42-hour Hawaiian escape without taking a day off work. After a hop from Shanghai to Tokyo and an overnight flight across the Pacific, Stark landed in Honolulu on what was still Friday morning local time. Thanks to Hawaii's 18-hour time difference with Beijing, he was gifted a "second Friday". At sunrise on Saturday, he joined early-bird hikers ascending Diamond Head — one of Honolulu's most iconic volcanic craters. "It's a favorite among hikers," he noted, "and a perfect spot to view the city skyline." That afternoon, Stark booked a small island loop tour. From the golden stretches of Waikiki Beach to the rugged southeastern coastline, the bus made several scenic stops — each lookout revealing dramatic beauty.



Later, he visited Pearl Harbor, where the history of World War II casts a long shadow. Stark, who works overtime to finance his travels, had arrived just in time for ongoing celebrations to mark King Kamehameha Day, one of Hawaii's most important holidays. He joined crowds lining the sidewalks of Honolulu as flower-draped floats and grass-skirted dancers paraded past in celebration of the king who unified the islands. "It was like watching history and festivities dance together," he said. However, by 2 am on Monday, he was back in Shanghai in time to go to work. Professionals like Li Xiaojin, who works at a biopharmaceutical company in Beijing, are also redefining weekend travel. He often jets off to another country after a week's work — sometimes without taking a full day off. "I might leave work just two hours early on Friday, fly to Japan or Thailand, and be back by Monday morning in time to go straight to the office," said Li, aged in his 30s. His travel frequency has soared in recent years, as he got the hang of making the most of his weekends abroad. For him, international weekend trips are about escaping familiarity. "Everything is different from home. The food, the people, the streets. It's that novelty that makes it worthwhile," he said. "Last year, I was going abroad once every one or two months. Now,

I might travel almost every month," he said. His weekend trips take full advantage of the time he has available. "No layovers, no long flights," he said. "Two to three hours is ideal — Thailand, Japan, and Vladivostok (in Russia). That's the limit. Once I took a Friday night flight to Shenyang, stayed overnight, then flew to Nagoya (central Japan). On the way back, I had to transit through Shanghai. Never again." Despite the rapid pace of his weekend outbound trips, Li doesn't stress over planning. "I don't go to a destination with a checklist. I just walk around, eat, and relax. It's about unwinding, not cramming in attractions," he said. His recent getaways included Sri Lanka over Qingming Festival and Uzbekistan during the Labor Day holiday. "I don't really care where I go — wherever it is cheap, I'll fly. If the price and time are right, I'll go," he said matter-of-factly. A rising number of China's young professionals have shown a desire for spending weekends traveling abroad, fueled by budget flights, visa-friendly policies and a yearning for a new experience. Zhao Nan, general manager of the industry development department at the popular aviation service app Umetrip, said weekend outbound travel has seen a clear upward trend in recent years. "Since 2023, with the steady recovery of international flights and increased visa facilitation, demand for short-haul cross-border trips has surged," Zhao said.

Popular departure cities are mainly first-tier and emerging first-tier cities, with travelers placing greater emphasis on travel time — making neighboring Asian countries the preferred choice, he explained. Outbound passenger volume from Friday to Sunday typically exceeds weekday levels, with "Friday evening departure, Sunday night return" becoming the norm, according to Umetrip's big data monitoring. "As international flight routes continue to expand, weekend outbound travel is expected to become increasingly routine, particularly in economically developed regions with well-connected transport hubs," Zhao said. The growing appeal of weekend getaways abroad is evident in Stark's large following on the social media platform Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, where he began sharing his outbound travel experiences a few years ago with his 50,000 fans. His travel philosophy has been to let curiosity lead the way. For instance, part of the reason for his recent trip to Hawaii was to coincide with the local festivals. Stark's obsession with travel began in college, when he started taking rides on the country's slow-moving green trains. "Back then, I didn't really enjoy staying on campus during weekends," he recalled. "Sometimes I'd hop on a cheap train just to get away." When he discovered low-cost red-eye flights, his range widened. His first international weekend trip was to the Philippines, with a round-trip ticket purchased for less than 400 yuan (\$55.80). He didn't ask his parents for money, but juggled schoolwork with freelance programming gigs to fund his getaways. After graduation, Stark maintained a routine of taking a weekend trip every two weeks, which later evolved into weekly travel. He made use of discount airline packages like China Eastern

Airlines' unlimited flight pass, and developed a keen eye for the best budget flights. "My rule is, if a weekend trip's flight costs more than 4,000 yuan, I will pass," he said. After China reopened its borders following the COVID pandemic, Stark resumed his traveling with renewed energy. Since then, he extended his travel range, including visits to Australia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom within one month. Last year alone, he visited 43 countries. Some skeptics describe his travel style as "superficial" or "rush-hour tourism", but Stark shrugs off the criticism. "I don't think travel depth depends on time," he explained. "You can break a long trip into multiple visits. I've been to Paris three times — each trip focused on something different." He once traveled close to the Arctic Circle just to sit inside the world's northernmost McDonald's restaurant for 15 minutes. "For many, it's about experiencing a symbolic location. I didn't need more than that," he said of the trip. He contrasts that with his other experiences, like waiting three hours on a windy hilltop to capture a time-lapse photograph of the sunset at Santorini in Greece. Li, the finance professional, plans to make a short trip to Kuching in Sarawak, Malaysia, this month. "I'll just take one day off — it's a three-day trip," he said. "You only have so many weekends in a year. Why not make the most of them?" "Staying at home over the weekend, time flies by. But if I'm traveling abroad, even just for two days, they will then feel full and long — it stretches the weekend. That's why I love it," he added. Places like Southeast Asia and East Asia are ideal — short flights, easy visas, and low costs. Some round-trip tickets cost him less than 2,000 yuan. "You can't beat that," he said. Zhang Guangyu, associate professor at the School of Tourism, History, and Culture of Southwest Minzu University, considers the rise of such "commando-style cross-border travel" a new form of consumption and a mirror of societal transition. The rapid expansion of international flight networks and streamlined border procedures have made high frequency travel possible, which is unlocking young consumers' spending potential, Zhang said. Explaining the popularity of such high-intensity travel, he believes it is not just a way of exploring the world but a form of social currency. Whether strolling foreign streets or venturing into polar regions, these experiences are easily shared via short videos, reinforcing group identity and trend affiliation, Zhang said. At the same time, under the pressure of fast-paced work and a culture of overachievement, young people can seize control of their limited free time through busy itineraries, treating travel as an emotional antidote and temporary escape from reality, he added. With the arrival of the summer travel peak, many airline companies have increased or rolled out new outbound flights, in response to this shift in travel behavior. Air China plans to optimize capacity and increase the frequency of



direct flights on popular routes such as one connecting Chengdu in southwestern Sichuan province with Singapore. The airline will also launch tailored promotions, including outbound travel voucher packages and special offers for Thailand's Songkran Festival, according to a representative from Air China. Sichuan Airlines will offer additional promotional products for flights departing from Chengdu, such as flexible flight passes. Weekend travelers can expect further incentives, including bonus mileage accumulation and flexible ticket changes and refund policies, aimed at making short-haul international travel more accessible and traveler-friendly, according to an official from Sichuan Airlines. Far from being impulsive, Stark's approach is meticulously calculated. He scans ticket prices, matches travel duration to affordability, and makes real-time adjustments based on seasonal trends. "I usually spend about 50 percent of my income on travel," he said. Despite his passion for travel, he insists that work always comes first. "People assume I slack off, but I've never let travel affect my job performance. I plan around deadlines, work extra hours if needed, and skip trips when necessary," he explained. His work colleagues and managers not only support him, but were the ones who first suggested he start posting his stories online. While maintaining a big fan base, Stark doesn't consider himself a full-time content creator. "Filming is secondary. I always prioritize the experience. For some trips, I don't make them into videos — just written notes," he said. He occasionally receives sponsored travel offers, but most trips remain self-funded. "I prefer it that way. The freedom matters," he said. To those hoping to follow in his footsteps, Stark offers simple advice: "You don't need to travel like me. Just do what excites you. Some people love football, some love skateboarding — I happen to love changes of scenery and motion." He says he doesn't plan to slow down his hectic weekend travel unless the joy fades from it. "As long as I still find meanings in it, I'll keep going," he said.

COMSATS, IBI International Group of China, Pakistan's AGECO ink MoU on EV, green energy, precision agriculture

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: A Tripartite landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Monday afternoon between Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), IBI International Group Co. Ltd., China, and COMSATS Technology Partner AGECO Pvt. Ltd. The signatories agreed to collaborate in four critical areas: Electric Vehicle (EV), Green Energy, Precision Agriculture, Training & Capacity Building with exchange of expertise and transfer of technology. These areas of cooperation are of vital importance in today's global context to address key challenges such as climate change, energy insecurity, food sustainability, and the need for technology-driven solutions. The agreement aligns with and advances the objectives of several UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Ambassador of Turkmenistan,

along with Ambassadors of Jordan, Syria, Morocco, Yemen, Ethiopia, and Diplomats of Iran and Azerbaijan graced the occasion. Among the dignitaries were Chairman IPO Pakistan, Ambassador Amil and IBI's Adviser Ambassador Mo'in ul Haque. Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Nafees Zakaria, paid tribute to Professor Abdus Salam for his vision of COMSATS. The Executive Director underlined COMSATS' commitment to translating scientific knowledge into practical solutions that address real-world challenges. Ambassador Zakaria commended the CEO of AGECO, Engr. Aslam Azad for his indigenously developed EV technology to tackle transport sector emissions. He took pride to mention establishment of Nano Tech Lab and Telehealth Clinics as technology solutions for the member states, as COMSATS achievements. Mr. Ibrahim Munir, Chairman of IBI International Group, highlighted the Group's multi-sectoral expertise, including energy, trade, health, EPC, defense, and smart technology. He especially mentioned IBI's flagship initiative, the Belt and Road Economic and Trade Centre (BRETIC), which serves as a strategic platform to enhance regional connectivity and promote economic cooperation among countries along the Belt and Road Initiative.



Italy to issue 500,000 non-EU work visas over three years



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Marilina Armellin

Newsire
Rome: Italy's government this week agreed to issue 500,000 visas for non-EU workers over the next three years, but a top trade union warned that only structural change would tackle labour shortages.
The government of far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said a total of 497,550 workers would be allowed in over the 2026-2028 period, starting with around 165,000 in 2026. This is up from the 450,000 quota set by Meloni's government for 2023-2025 period -- itself a sharp increase on the 75,700 quota for 2022 and around 70,000 for 2021. Meloni, the leader of the far-right Brothers of Italy party, has sought to reduce the number of undocumented migrants to Italy. But her government has also increased pathways for legal migration for non-EU workers to tackle labour shortages in an ageing country with a sluggish birth rate. The greatest number of visas over the next three years -- some 267,000 -- will be given for seasonal work in the agricultural and tourism sectors. Italy's main agricultural lobby, Coldiretti, welcomed the new visa plan as an "important step forward to ensure the availability of workers in the fields, and with it, food production". But a top official in the CGIL trade union -- Italy's oldest and largest -- said Tuesday



ITALY
Country to issue half million work visas

the new quotas did not address migration dynamics and labour needs. Maria Grazia Gabrielli pointed to the number of applications that were far lower than the available quotas, with the exception of domestic work. In 2023 and 2024, only 7.5-7.8 percent of the quotas actually resulted in a residence permit, she said in a statement, pointing to their ineffectiveness. Gabrielli criticised the government's policy of prioritising applicants from countries who discourage their nationals from illegally migrating to Italy. A 2023 decree allowed preferential quotas from countries, such as those in North Africa, who help Italy fight human traffickers and conduct media campaigns warning of the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean. She called it a system "that takes no account whatsoever of the reasons for migration dynamics and the need for a response that does not focus on punitive logic and rewards for some countries". Italy's foreign worker policy is fraught with loopholes and possibilities for fraud, with criminal gangs exploiting the system and even foreign workers already in Italy applying for visas. The union leader said structural work was needed -- including regularising workers already in Italy -- to help employers struggling to find labour and to try to keep foreign workers out of irregular situations.



Italy to Issue 500,000 Work Visas for Non-EU Nationals Over Next 3 Years



Opinion

What taste does Luckin Coffee bring to US?

Ding Gang

Monday marked an interesting moment in the global coffee scene: Luckin Coffee officially opened its doors in Manhattan, New York. As New Yorkers sip their fruity Luckin lattes, few might realize that the journey of this cup across the Pacific tells a story rich with cultural dialogue and exchange. Coffee is constantly evolving as it travels - it diversifies our beverage choices and fosters a more colorful, multicultural world.

For years, Starbucks' Americanos and lattes have stood as symbols of America's industrial age and consumer culture. When Starbucks first entered China, it was seen as a bold and unlikely experiment. Most Chinese consumers weren't used to the bitterness of black coffee, so Starbucks adjusted, offering sweeter, milkier drinks that slowly trained an entire generation's palate.

As China's coffee market matured, local innovation became the key to success for homegrown brands. In 2024, Chinese coffee consumption reached nearly 300,000 tons, making China the world's fastest-growing

and largest emerging coffee market in just a few years.

Founded in 2017, Luckin is China's fastest-growing coffee chain, with over 24,000 stores across the country. By focusing on flexible product innovation, digital operations and affordability, Luckin has catered to young Chinese consumers with fresh, diverse flavor profiles.

Beyond just coffee, Luckin has revolutionized retail through technology, turning the traditional coffee business into a fully online, data-driven enterprise. Customers can craft their drink orders and pay in seconds, all from a phone app.

Luckin's debut in New York also highlights a bigger picture: The story of coffee is inseparable from the story of globalization.

Coffee's roots in China date back to the 19th century when French missionaries first brought coffee plants to Yunnan Province. After decades of fits and starts, the industry only flourished with China's economic reforms.

At one point, Yunnan produced the vast

majority of China's coffee, but China's approach to coffee cultivation took its own distinctive path. Government-driven poverty alleviation enabled farmers in remote Yunnan to lift themselves out of poverty and invest in specialty coffee. Today, Yunnan coffee is one of China's key exports to the world, with 140,000 tons of beans produced annually on its rich soil and exports reaching nearly 30 countries and regions.

Luckin is one of Yunnan's largest buyers. For instance, its fruit-processing plant in Baoshan alone handles 5,000 tons of fruit per year, supporting 20,000 local farmers. Many of Luckin's signature blends feature Yunnan's distinctive small-bean coffee, valued for its gentle acidity and chocolatey aftertaste.

With releases like "100 percent Yunnan Single Origin," Luckin connects the hard work of farmers from remote villages to the coffee cups of city dwellers.

For Luckin, featuring Yunnan coffee isn't just a geographic decision, it's a natural connection with China's broader development.



Of course, the world isn't short on coffee brands, and Luckin's entry into this competitive field comes with immense challenges.

The US is the world's most mature and developed coffee market. Starbucks alone has over 17,000 domestic stores, and numerous other premium brands have already established a presence in the market. For Luckin, entering such a saturated space will take guts - and serious innovation. But inviting Americans to taste something new and distinctly Chinese is the next logical step in a globalizing drinks market.

The rise of China's coffee industry and the Luckin brand isn't just about catching up. It's about expanding the world's coffee map, bringing fresh perspectives and flavors, and introducing the world to Chinese-style coffee, one cup at a time.

As the global coffee market continues to grow, there's an increasing opportunity for new players and emerging tastes. Starbucks will always have its Vanilla Latte, and Luckin will continue to roll out its unique coconut milk drinks in China. What's truly exciting is how

coffee, now more than ever, serves as a bridge - a place where cultures meet and mix.

The next time a New Yorker picks up a Luckin cup, maybe they'll notice a subtle, lingering finish reminiscent of Yunnan's distinctive teas, connecting two worlds in a single sip.

The write is a senior editor with the People's Daily and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at the Renmin University of China

Who should be blamed for Rafale jets' poor sales?

Global Times

The Associated Press recently cited anonymous sources from the French military claiming that, following the India-Pakistan conflict in May, China "led a charge" to "spread doubts" about French-made Rafale jets and launched a large-scale "disinformation campaign" aimed at undermining the reputation and sales of this "France's flagship fighter." Some French media outlets quickly followed up with reports based on this vague and "unsubstantiated revelation," piecing together a narrative that "Beijing seeks to undermine France's industrial and strategic rise in the Indo-Pacific." This reveals a deep-rooted habit among certain Western circles.

However, this so-called revelation is riddled with logical flaws and contradictions. For example, it claims that the Rafale jet became a target after the India-Pakistan conflict precisely because of its outstanding performance and strong export record - in other words, "we're being attacked because we're excellent." But one can't help but wonder: What exactly about the Rafale's performance during the May conflict was so enviable? Unsurprisingly, this narrative backfired on platforms like X, failing not only to gain support but also triggering widespread mockery from netizens. One British user re-



marked that "when you have shoddy tech all you can rely on is propaganda to sell your wares." A French user added "that's a lot of whining," and the French military should focus on doing what it is supposed to do.

In May, a photo allegedly showing a damaged Rafale fighter jet from the India-Pakistan air conflict garnered global attention. China has never commented on this issue; instead, it has called both India and Pakistan to maintain calm and restraint. It is well known that the Rafale represents the pinnacle of French defense technology and serves as an important symbol of France's presence on the global military stage. Therefore, it's understandable that the French military is highly sensitive about the Rafale's international reputation. If the French military truly feels that the Rafale is facing a "sales crisis," it might need to review the jet's own performance. After all, in the arms market, no one can boost their sales simply by "badmouthing" others.

From a communications perspective, the narrative of the Rafale being "smeared" inevitably brings to mind recent reports about France's defense industry in overseas markets. For example, the Peruvian government confirmed that it has decided to buy 24 JAS 39 Gripen E/F fighter jets from Sweden for \$3.5 billion instead of F-16s from the US or Rafale from France.

Thailand's air force has also recently confirmed its plan to buy Swedish Gripen E/F fighters.

In today's multipolar and diverse world, the international military equipment market is no longer an exclusive domain monopolized by just a few countries. Framing Chinese and French fighter jets in an "either-or" rivalry only exposes the persistent zero-sum mentality of some Westerners.

In fact, whether the Rafale sells or not has nothing to do with China, and the Chinese society doesn't care about it. Tying the gains and losses of the Rafale in specific markets rigidly to China is merely self-dramatization; it is not only an evasion of reality and self-challenges but also a recurring issue of "shifting the blame to China" when faced with problems. Some Westerners' complaints and accusations against China may very well reflect something that they often do: launching large-scale smear campaigns against Chinese-made products to "contain China's rise" and "attempting to undermine its credibility and technological base." Furthermore, this revelation "just happens" to appear during high-level exchanges between China and Europe, raising suspicions about whether someone is deliberately trying to create noise to cause disruption.

For decades, the Chinese government has maintained a cautious and responsible attitude toward military exports, strictly following the three principles of arms exports: conducive to the legitimate self-defense capability of the recipient country; not undermining peace, security and stability of the region concerned and the world as a whole; non-interference in the internal affairs of the recipient country. This stands in stark contrast to the practices of some Western countries that, in order to "open up weapon sales," are even willing to fan the flames and exacerbate tensions in conflict areas. These facts are evident to all. Rather than indulging in the zero-sum logic of "the rise of others must be detrimental to me," some in the West would be better off taking a step back and rationally acknowledging the legitimate progress of emerging countries in the field of military technology, and seriously responding to the international community's calls for peace and tranquility.



The continuous development of China's military power is a natural reflection of its rising comprehensive national strength, which is entirely aimed at safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and developmental interests, and it has never been about competing with anyone.

At the Paris Air Show in June, the appearance of the Chinese J-10CE fighter jet alongside France's Rafale fighter jet sparked intense discussion. Let's see what the spokesperson from the Aviation Industry Corporation of China said: Both aircraft are advanced fighters on the world stage, and hope-

fully all cutting-edge fighter jets from different countries could contribute to safeguarding global peace.

Global Times

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High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri feels proud as Pakistani prosthetic limbs reach victims in Gaza



Covert Report Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week expressed pride as Pakistani prosthetic limbs started reaching victims of

war in Gaza. “A proud moment of compassion: Pakistani-made prosthetic limbs are now reaching victims of war in Gaza, giving hope and mobility to those who need it most,” the envoy said in a post on X, citing the effort by Pakistani company Bioniks. Bioniks uses a smartphone app to take pictures from different angles and create a 3D model for custom prosthetics. CEO Anas Niaz said the social enterprise startup had fit more than 1,000 custom-designed arms inside Pakistan since 2021 - funded through a mix of patient payments, corporate sponsorship, and donations - but this was its first time providing prosthetics to those impacted in conflict. Niaz said each prosthetic arm costs about \$2,500, significantly less than the \$10,000 to \$20,000 for alternatives made in the United States. While Bioniks' arms are less sophisticated than US versions, they provide a high level of functionality for children and their remote process makes them more accessible than options from other countries such



as Turkey and South Korea. Globally, most advanced prosthetics are designed for adults and rarely reach children in war zones, who need lighter limbs and replacements every 12-18 months as they grow.

Pakistan urges decisive action to restore stability in violence-hit Haiti at UNSC's first meeting under its presidency

Celina Ali Islamabad: Voicing deep concern over the escalating gang violence in Haiti, Pakistan this week called on the UN Security Council to act “decisively, collectively, and now” to restore the Caribbean country’s political stability. “The time for half-measures is over,” Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member Council, as he urged support for the Haitian state to reclaim its authority from gangs’ strangleholds. Speaking during a briefing on strife-torn Haiti, he said, “The gangs’ stranglehold has turned Haiti’s streets into battlegrounds; vigilante



killings are on the rise, children are being recruited by armed groups, and the economic collapse and breakdown of basic services subjecting hundreds of thousands of Haitians to live in fear and face acute food shortages.” Wednesday’s formal Council meeting was the first under Pakistan’s presidency for the month of July. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar, who presided over the Security Council meeting, spoke in his national capacity . Pakistan, he said, remains deeply concerned by Haiti’s rapid slide into chaos — marked by rampant gang violence, unchecked vigilantism, and a worsening humanitarian situation. “Haiti’s stability also requires political unity and responsible leadership, that promotes national consensus and charts a common path to recovery within the imperative of a Haitian-led and-owned process,” the Pakistani envoy said. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar expressed support for the commitment of Kenya and the other troop-contributing countries to the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission, and called on the Security Council to ensure that the mission is robust, well-resourced, and effective — while also helping build Haiti’s police, justice, and governance capacity for the long term. “Anything less risks collective failure tomorrow,” he added. “The people of Haiti deserve to live in peace and dignity, free from fear and want,” the Pakistani envoy said, stressing that collective, courageous, and timely action is needed now. “Pakistan stands ready to play its part in forging consensus within the Council ... to help deliver security and hope to the people of Haiti.” At the outset, Miroslav Jenca, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, noted a “sharp erosion of State authority and the rule of law” since his visit in January, with “brutal gang violence” affecting every aspect of public and private life. The capital, Port-au-Prince, was paralyzed by gangs and isolated by ongoing suspension of international commercial flights into Toussaint-Louverture airport, he said. Since then, gangs have only strengthened their foothold, which now affects all communes of the Port-au-Prince



metropolitan area and beyond. He called on the international community to act decisively and urgently or the “total collapse of state presence in the capital could become a very real scenario”. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), echoed that warning. “As gang control expands, the state’s capacity to govern is rapidly shrinking, with social, economic and security implications,” she told the Council, briefing remotely from Vienna. “This erosion of state legitimacy has cascading effects,” Ms.Waly said, with legal commerce becoming paralyzed as gangs control major trade routes, such conditions worsening “already dire levels of food insecurity and humanitarian need.”

Pakistan, Kazakhstan set \$1 billion trade goal amid push for deeper economic ties

Celina Ali Islamabad: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, has said that the current trade volume between Pakistan and Kazakhstan remains far below its true potential, and both sides have now set an ambitious target of boosting bilateral trade to \$1 billion. Speaking to business leaders at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), Ambassador Kistafin called on entrepreneurs from both countries to play a more proactive role in achieving this trade milestone. He highlighted that four Pakistani banks have already established trade channels with Kazakhstan and that daily cargo services are operational through TCS and the National Logistics Cell (NLC). He noted that Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian country with an e-commerce cooperation agreement with Pakistan, urging local businesses to capitalize on this unique advantage. Commending the quality of Pakistani textiles, he requested FCCI President Rehan Naseem Bharara to arrange a trade delegation to Kazakhstan, assuring that business visas would be issued to entrepreneurs based on FCCI recommendations. The ambassador emphasized Kazakhstan’s position as the largest economy in Central Asia and a founding member of the Eurasian Economic Union. He said the country is establishing modern export processing zones to attract foreign investment and that several bilateral trade agreements are under government review. He also revealed that an upcoming visit by the President of Kazakhstan to Pakistan is expected to pave the way for significant developments in bilateral relations. In a symbolic gesture to strengthen city-level cooperation, Ambassador Kistafin proposed declaring Karachi and Almaty as twin financial cities and Shymkent and Faisalabad as twin textile hubs, citing their respective economic profiles. He invit-

ed Pakistani investors to explore Kazakhstan, where energy costs are lower, offering a competitive edge for regional exports. Earlier, FCCI President Rehan Naseem Bharara welcomed the ambassador and underlined the untapped opportunities in trade and tourism between the two nations. He appreciated the Kazakh embassy’s responsiveness in issuing visas based on FCCI’s recommendations, noting that such facilitation is vital for trade growth. Bharara acknowledged that Faisalabad’s textile exports to Kazakhstan remain limited and called for focused efforts to expand them. He also emphasized the need for embassies to provide reliable bilateral trade data and expedite discussions on a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). Proposing concrete steps for engagement, Bharara suggested organizing single-country exhibitions and signing memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between leading business chambers in both countries to formalize economic cooperation. The session also included remarks and questions from prominent FCCI members, including Mian Muhammad Tayyab, Hafiz Shafiq Kashif, Bilal Jameel, and former vice president Bilal Waheed Sheikh. Khawaja Zafar Iqbal also participated in the interactive session. At the conclusion of the visit, FCCI President Rehan Naseem Bharara presented a commemorative chamber shield and collar pin to the ambassador, marking the 50th anniversary of the FCCI. Senior Vice President Qaiser Shams Gucha offered a vote of thanks, and Ambassador Kistafin recorded his remarks in the FCCI Visitor Book.



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto lives on in hearts of people Umar Rehman Malik



Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Umar Rehman Malik said this week that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto lives on in the hearts of the people. "July 5 is a Black Day in Pakistan's history. On this day, democracy was overthrown, and dictatorship imposed. The overthrow of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's first democratically elected Prime Minister, didn't just deprive the nation of a charismatic leader who envisioned a progressive Pakistan but it unleashed intolerance, extremism, sectarianism, and the Kalashnikov culture



that still haunt us today," he said. The PPP leader added: "From the 1973 Constitution to Pakistan's nuclear strength, Bhutto's vision continues to shape and strengthen our future." On July 5, 1977, the PPP's government, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was overthrown by a coup led by Zia-ul-Haq. This event, known as the 1977 Pakistani military coup, resulted in the imposition of martial law and the arrest of Bhutto. The PPP had been in power since 1971, following the 1970 elections and the subsequent secession of East Pakistan.

The coup occurred amidst political turmoil following the 1977 general elections, which were marred by allegations of rigging and widespread protests. The opposition, organized under the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), had accused the PPP of widespread electoral manipulation.

This coup marked a significant turning point in Pakistani politics, leading to a long period of rule under Zia-ul-Haq and deeply impacting the PPP's future. The PPP however, returned to power in 1988 after Zia's death in a plane crash.



GERMANY AND BULGARIA

COVERT

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Germany to deport Syrian criminals, following Austria's lead

Sou-Jie van Brunnersum

Berlin: Germany has announced plans to deport Syrians with criminal records, days after Austria became the first EU country to do so in years. The move marks a shift in European deportation policies. Germany is set to begin deporting Syrians with criminal records, following a similar move by Austria. The decision, announced by the Interior Ministry on Saturday (July 5), comes just days after Austria became the first European country in recent years to deport a Syrian criminal. The ministry confirmed that the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) had been instructed to take action against individuals considered a security risk, including "dangerous Syrian individuals and delinquents."

The ministry emphasized that individuals convicted of serious crimes would lose their asylum protections and could face deportation. German states are actually responsible for removing this protection status, but the government said they would "support" these actions.

A coalition agreement between Chancellor Friedrich Merz's conservatives and the Social Democrats has already set the stage for deportations to Afghanistan and Syria. Efforts are now underway to coordinate with Syrian authorities to facilitate the deportations. Since January, BAMF has initiated more than 3,500 procedures to revoke the asylum status of Syrian nationals, with 57 cases resulting in the actual removal of refugee status so far.

Additionally, around 800 Syrians have voluntarily returned to Syria through a repatriation program. Approximately one million Syrians live in Germany, with many arriving between 2015-2016. The issue of deportations has gained prominence due



to recent deadly attacks in Germany – some carried out by Islamic extremists and others by far-right extremists – intensifying security concerns, and prompting heated debate about Germany's migration policy.

In parallel, Germany has been seeking direct negotiations with the Taliban to facilitate the deportation of convicted Afghan criminals, Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt revealed last week.

However, in response to a journalist's question about this intended policy, Arafat Jamal, a representative from the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, said via video link on July 4: "We urge countries not to forcibly return Afghans."

His comments were echoed by another UN Representative, Ravina Shamdasani, who said, "it is not appropriate to be talking about returning people to Afghanistan at this point," given the continuing reports of human rights violations, including executions and the suppression of women's rights.

In August last year, 28 convicted Afghans were returned to Kabul via indirect negotiations mediated by Qatar. However, since then, no more deportation flights have taken place.

Germany is hoping it can replicate that Afghan flight with Syrian criminals in the near future.

Austria's recent deportation of a Syrian convict marked the first such deportation in 15 years, and also the first following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in December 2024.

Both German and Austrian interior ministers visited Damascus in April to discuss the return of serious criminals and potential Islamist threats.

Dobrindt also pointed to the suspension of asylum procedures for Syrian nationals during the instability following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime. As of May, Germany had 51,736 pending asylum applications from Syrians, with a court ruling confirming that the situation in Syria no longer justified delaying these decisions.

Spectacular marble portrait and untouched grave found at Bulgaria's Heraclea Sintica



Newswire

Sofia: Ongoing rescue excavations at the ancient Roman site of Heraclea Sintica in southwestern Bulgaria continue to deliver extraordinary finds, with recent discoveries spanning from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD.

Archaeologists working along the route of a future Bulgaria-Greece gas pipeline have uncovered a finely carved marble face, a terracotta figurine of the Celtic goddess Epona, and an untouched grave containing seven well-preserved clay vessels. These discoveries come from the Western Necropolis of Heraclea Sintica, near the village of Rupite, where rescue excavations have intensified in recent months due to planned infrastructure development.

The tomb lies nearly four meters below the modern surface, indicating the depth of the necropolis and its long-standing use. With archaeologists expecting further finds, the site continues to be a treasure trove for classical archaeology.

Equally significant is the discovery from May 2025: an untouched grave carved into the rock, which yielded five bowls, a jug, and a clay lamp, all dating from the 2nd to 1st century BC. The exceptional preservation of these vessels offers invaluable insights into ancient burial rituals practiced before Roman dominance.

Professor Vagalinski emphasized the im-

portance of the grave in understanding local funerary customs, describing it as a window into a rarely observed Hellenistic ritual tradition.

Between these two headline discoveries, the necropolis has also revealed a terracotta figure of Celtic goddess Epona, a clay toy, gold jewelry, and a richly adorned double burial of a man and a woman. These finds, dating across several centuries, indicate a prolonged and culturally layered use of the burial ground.

Heraclea Sintica was a prominent Roman and earlier Hellenistic city located near modern-day Petrich, in southwestern Bulgaria, close to the Greek border. It was founded in the 4th century BC, likely by Philip II of Macedon or Alexander the Great, and flourished during Roman rule as a regional administrative center.

The city's strategic location in the Struma River valley made it a key point of trade and cultural exchange between the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Today, Heraclea Sintica is one of Bulgaria's most active archaeological sites, drawing international interest for its well-preserved structures, inscriptions, and artifacts.

Archaeology-themed apparel

The finds at Heraclea Sintica not only expand our understanding of funerary practices across different historical eras but also illustrate the



rich cultural interplay of Thracian, Hellenistic, Celtic, and Roman influences in the region.

From the personal artistry of a marble funerary relief to ritualistic grave goods untouched for over two millennia, each discovery provides another piece in the puzzle of this once-thriving ancient city.

As excavations continue, archaeologists and history enthusiasts alike are urged to follow updates from the site, where history is quite literally being unearthed, layer by layer.

Portugal's travel & tourism sector enters golden era



Newswire
Lisbon: New data from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reveals Portugal's Travel & Tourism sector is set to continue growing in 2025, following a landmark year in 2024 that saw the industry surpass all previous peaks across economic contribution, employment, and visitor spending. According to the latest Economic Impact Research (EIR), developed in collaboration with Oxford Economics, Travel & Tourism in Portugal is forecast to contribute €62.7BN to the national economy this year, representing 21.5% of GDP, and towering above the 2019 peak by nearly 38%. The sector is expected to support 1.2

million jobs across the country; that is close to one in four jobs in Portugal, 200,000 more than at its previous high. International visitor spending is projected to grow to €33.1BN, while domestic spending is forecast to reach €22.9BN, growing by 24.2% and 59.5% on 2019 levels, respectively, reflecting continued strength in both inbound and local demand. These 2025 projections build on an extraordinary performance in 2024, when Portugal's Travel & Tourism sector reached its highest levels on record. Last year, the sector contributed €60.6BN to the economy, equivalent to 21.3% of national GDP, and sup-

ported 1.2 million jobs, equivalent to nearly 23% of total employment. International visitor spending surged to €31.8BN, while domestic tourism contributed €22.2BN, marking all-time highs for both indicators. WTTC's long-term outlook signals even greater potential in the years to come. By 2035, Travel & Tourism in Portugal is projected to contribute more than €74.6BN to GDP, accounting for 22.6% of the national economy. The

sector is expected to support 1.4 million jobs, reinforcing its role as a vital engine of economic opportunity and social development. Spending by international visitors could reach €40.6BN, while domestic spending is forecast to rise to €25.8BN, confirming the sector's central role in Portugal's long-term economic strategy. In 2024, the EU Travel & Tourism sector contributed almost €1.8TN to the region's GDP, representing more

than 10% of the Bloc's economy, and above 2019 levels by almost 6%. The sector's employment grew by 4.7%, year-on-year, to 24.6 million jobs, accounting for one in nine jobs across the region. By the end of 2025, WTTC forecasts that the EU Travel & Tourism sector will reach almost €1.9TN, representing 10.5% of the EU economy. Employment linked to the sector is estimated to total 25.7 million people, or 12% of the regional total.



CM Maryam Nawaz to embark on Japan visit in August



His Excellency Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan hosted the "Pakistan-Japan Human Resources Stakeholders Meeting"

Maryam Nawaz will also attend high-level meetings and meet with prominent business figures and representatives of major companies in Japan. The visit is being seen as a significant step toward boosting investment in Punjab.

It is being expected that the tour will further strengthen economic ties between Pakistan and Japan. Last year in December, Maryam Nawaz had visited China seeking investment opportunities for Punjab. She also held a meeting with high-level delegation of Communist Party of China in Beijing.



Celina Ali
Islamabad: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz will undertake an official visit to Japan in August. According to officials, she will depart for Japan on August 15, and the visit will continue until August 22. During her stay, the Chief Minister is scheduled to hold business meetings and discussions focused on investment opportunities in Punjab. The Punjab Board of Investment has been directed to finalise all necessary preparations for the visit.

Elon Musk revives third party idea after 'One Big Beautiful Bill' passes

Covert Report

Washington: Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk this week weighed in publicly for the first time since the passage of President Donald Trump's signature piece of budget legislation, commonly known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill".

On Friday, Musk took to his social media platform X to once again float the possibility of a third party to rival the two major ones — the Democrats and the Republicans — in United States politics.

"Independence Day is the perfect time to ask if you want independence from the two-party (some would say uniparty) system! Should we create the America Party?" Musk asked his followers, attaching an interactive poll.

Musk has maintained that both major parties have fallen out of step with what he describes as the "80 percent in the middle" — a number he estimates represents the moderates and independents who do not align with either end of the political spectrum.

His desire to form a new party, however, emerged after a public fallout with Trump over the "One Big Beautiful Bill", a sweeping piece of legislation that passed both chambers of Congress on Thursday.

Yet again on Friday, Musk revisited his objections to the bill, albeit indirectly. He shared Senator Rand Paul's critique that the bill "explodes the deficit in the near-term", responding with a re-post and the "100" emoji, signifying his full agreement.

The "One Big Beautiful Bill" has long been a policy priority for Trump, even before he returned to office for a second term on January 20.

His aim was to pass a single piece of legislation that included several key pillars from his agenda, allowing him to proceed with his goals without having to seek multiple approvals from Congress.

But the "One Big Beautiful Bill" has been controversial among Democrats and even some Republicans. The bill would make permanent the 2017 tax cuts from Trump's first term, which critics argue disproportionately benefit the wealthy over middle- to low-income workers.

It also raises the debt ceiling by \$5 trillion and is projected to add \$3.3 trillion to the country's deficit, according to a nonpartisan analysis from the Congressional Budget Office.

Further funding is earmarked to bolster Trump's campaign to crack down on immigration into the US. But to pay for the tax cuts and the spending, the bill includes cuts to critical social services, including Medicaid, a government health insurance programme for low-income households, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps.

Fiscal conservatives opposed the debt increase, while several other Republicans worried about how Medicaid restrictions would affect their constituents.

But in recent weeks, Trump and other Republican leaders rallied many of the holdouts, allowing the bill to pass both chambers of Congress by narrow margins.

Senator Paul of Kentucky was one of only three Republicans in the Senate to vote "no" on the bill. In the aftermath of its final passage on Thursday, he wrote on social media: "This is Washington's MO; short-term politicking over long-term sustainability."

Trump is slated to sign the bill into law in a White House ceremony on Friday.

The debate over the bill, however, proved to be a tipping point for Trump and Musk's relationship. In late May, during his final days as a "special government adviser", Musk appeared on the TV programme CBS Sunday Morning and said he was "disappointed" in the legislation, citing the proposed increase to the budget deficit.

"I think a bill can be big or it can be beautiful," Musk told a CBS journalist.

By May 30, his time in the Trump administration had come to an end, though the two men appeared to part on cordial terms.

But after leaving his government role, Musk escalated his attacks on the "One Big Beautiful Bill", warning it would be disastrous for the US economy.

"I'm sorry, but I just can't stand it anymore. This massive, outrageous, pork-filled Congressional spending bill is a disgusting abomination," Musk wrote on June 3.

Musk went so far as to suggest Trump should be impeached and that he had information about the president's relationship with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, though he did not offer evidence. Those posts have since been deleted.

Trump, meanwhile, accused Musk on social media of going "CRAZY" and seeking to lash out because the bill would peel back government incentives for the production of electric vehicles (EVs).

On June 5, Musk began to muse about launching his own political party. "Is it time to create a new political party in America that actually represents the 80% in the middle?" he wrote.

In follow-up posts, he noted that his followers appeared to agree with him, and he endorsed a commenter's suggestion for the party's potential name.

"America Party" has a nice ring to it. The party that actually represents America!" Musk said.

As the world's richest man and the owner of companies like the carmaker Tesla and the rocket manufacturer SpaceX, Musk has billions of dollars at his disposal: The Bloomberg Billionaires Index estimates his net worth at \$361 bn as of Friday.

But experts warn that third parties have historically struggled to compete in the US's largely two-party system, and that they can even weaken movements they profess to back, by draining votes away from more viable candidates.

Musk's estimate about the "80 percent in the middle" might also be an overstatement. Polls vary as to how many people identify as independent or centrists.

But in January, the research firm Gallup found that an average of 43 percent of American adults identified as independent, matching a record set in 2014. Gallup's statistics also found a decline in the number of American adults saying they were "moderate", with 34 percent embracing the label in 2024.

Still, on Friday, Musk shared his thoughts about how a potential third party could gain sway in the largely bifurcated US political sphere. He said he planned to take advantage of the weak majorities the major parties are able to obtain in Congress.

"One way to execute on this would be to laser-focus on just 2 or 3 Senate seats and 8 to 10 House districts," he wrote.

"Given the razor-thin legislative margins, that would be enough to serve as the deciding vote on contentious laws, ensuring that they serve the true will of the people."



EU publishes Nature Credits Roadmap to boost private investment in nature-positive actions



Celina Ali

Islamabad: This week, the European Commission published a Roadmap towards Nature Credits, outlining a strategic approach to stimulate private investment in nature-positive actions across the EU. The initiative aims to complement public funding by creating market-based incentives to protect and restore nature. It seeks to reward those who actively contribute to ecosystem restoration and conservation (including farmers, foresters, fishers, landowners, and local communities) and to encourage investors to support these efforts. Nature credits are emerging as an innovative mechanism to channel private finance into biodiversity and ecosystem restoration, helping bridge the significant financing gap for achieving EU environmental and climate objectives. The roadmap sets out key steps to establish a credible and effective framework for these credits, including the development of robust methodologies, transparent monitoring systems, and strong governance structures. The EU is already supporting concrete pilot projects under Green Assist to test and refine nature credit models. These include initiatives focused on wetland restoration in France, sustainable forest management in Estonia, and an exploratory project contributing to an inter-



national partnership with Peru, among others. Through these pilots, Green Assist helps stakeholders explore governance arrangements, develop reliable monitoring and verification methods, and design financing strategies that ensure both environmental integrity and financial viability. By supporting these early-stage projects, the advisory initiative aims to build a solid foundation for scaling up nature credit schemes across Europe and beyond, ultimately strengthening the EU's leadership in nature-positive finance.



UK global talent visa now open — no job offer needed



jobs, and a clear route to permanent residency.
Apply for the Visa – Once you have the endorsement, apply to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Processing is about 3 weeks.
Pay the Fees – £524 for endorsement, £192 for the visa, and £624 per year for the health surcharge.
For skilled Pakistanis ready to grow their career abroad, the Global Talent Visa is a unique chance to be part of the UK’s future in innovation and research — without waiting for a company job offer first. Supreme Court Opens Jobs, apply by May 15



British Deputy High Commissioner in Pakistan **Matt Cannell**

Celina Ali
Islamabad: Good news for skilled professionals in Pakistan: the United Kingdom has widened its doors for talented individuals who want to build a career in science, tech, arts, or academia — without the hassle of securing a job offer first.

British Science Minister Lord Patrick Vallance said this week the UK’s Global Talent Visa is designed to attract top brains from around the world. He stressed that while official partnerships matter, true innovation grows through people-to-people collaboration — scientists, re-

searchers, and creatives working together. Unlike a traditional work visa, the Global Talent Visa lets you move to the UK based on your proven talent or leadership potential in your field. It offers flexibility, the freedom to switch



Italy: Leonardo takes a stake in Finland's SSH as European defence M&A inches forward

Covert Report

Helsinki: Italy's Leonardo (LDOF.MI), opens new tab will buy a 24.55% stake in Finland's SSH (SSHIV.HE), opens new tab to expand its cybersecurity business, the companies said on Tuesday, in a sign of some progress in European defence consolidation and cooperation.
The deal will see the Italian aerospace and defence group become SSH's biggest shareholder, highlighting Leonardo's belief that cybersecurity has become essential to the interconnected multi-domain warfare systems it develops.
SSH's chief executive Rami Raulas said the Western defence industry was turning away from national protectionism towards more international cooperation, and that Leonardo's stake was part of that trend.
Raulas said large defence groups had begun to establish joint ventures to share costs and risks in projects such as the new combat jet being developed by Britain's BAE Systems,

Japan's Japan Aircraft Industrial Enhancement and Leonardo.
"The geopolitical situation and concerns over U.S. investments will further promote this 'European for Europeans' thinking," he told Reuters, alluding to U.S. President Donald Trump's view that the U.S. should be less involved in European defence.
Leonardo, which made 18 billion euros (\$21.2 billion) in revenue last year, sees double-digit percentage growth in cybersecurity business in the coming years.
"The digital and cybersecurity portion will be more embedded in (defence) platforms and will be an increasing portion of the global security offering," Leonardo's head of M&A Giuseppe Panizzardi told a conference call, adding it was fundamental for the company to have the core cyber security technology at hand.
The deal, subject to conditions, involves SSH issuing 20 million euros of shares to Leonardo. After completion, SSH's current top investor, Accendo Capital, will hold a 20.87% stake.
The deal is a significant step towards the development of a "Made in Europe" Zero Trust ecosystem, Leonardo said, referring to a cyber security approach, opens new tab in which all users are viewed as potential risks.





Leonardo's Chairman, Stefano Pontecorvo

Pakistan, France sign €12 million grant to improve water, sanitation in Punjab

France to Provide €12 Million Grant to Pakistan



Celina Ali

Islamabad: The Government of Pakistan and the French Development Agency (AFD) this week signed a grant agreement worth €12 million in the Ministry of Economic Affairs for a project aimed at strengthening water and sanitation service delivery across selected urban areas in Punjab.
The agreement was signed by Mr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Mr. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France to Pakistan, and Mr. Vincent Thevenot, Director of AFD in Pakistan.
This is a European Union grant that will be administered by AFD. The signing ceremony was attended by representatives from the European Union and the Government of Punjab.
The transformative initiative is designed to improve the governance, operational performance, and service quality of Water and Sanitation Agencies (WASA) in Lahore and Faisalabad by focusing on three core areas.
At the provincial level, the project will develop and implement regulatory frameworks to strengthen the oversight role of the Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering Department (HUD&PHED).
At the utility level, modern technologies, systems, and business processes will be introduced to enhance operations, service delivery, and financial sustainability.
Additionally, the project will support equipment procurement and digitization to enable data-driven and transparent decision-making within WASAs.
The project marks a significant step forward in



Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Nicolas Galey

Pakistan's efforts to enhance urban water and sanitation infrastructure and improve public service delivery. It also reflects the government's commitment to building strong partnerships with international development partners to address urban development challenges and promote sustainable growth.

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