

Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri highlights Paki-
stan-Indonesia friendship

Jakarta: Pakistani Ambassador to Indonesia
Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week highlighted
Pakistan-Indonesia historically friendly rela-
tions. "Honoured to serve in Indone-
sia, a country with which Pakistan (Page-5)

A nostalgic diesel train ride
through Portugal Newswire

Lisbon: The country's only remaining narrow-gauge
railway line plays host to heritage trains, offering
travellers a chance to travel through the stunning
Vouga Valley in a period locomotive. We're gather-
ing speed as we rumble east from Portugal's coastal
city of Aveiro. Modern apartment
blocks outside the train's open windows (Page-8)

China sees growth in
number of tourist trips and spending

Henan Daily
Zhengzhou: China recorded growth in the
number of tourist trips and tourism spend-
ing in the first half of the year, according
to latest figures unveiled by the Ministry
of Culture and Tourism this week.
The ministry's data show that residents on
the Chinese mainland made about 3.3
billion tourist visits to domestic scenic
spots in the first half of the year and spent

about 3.15 trillion yuan (\$437 billion)
during the period. The two numbers mark
a year-on-year rise of 20.6 percent and
15.2 percent, respectively.
Among these domestic tourism visits,
about 2.45 billion were made by residents
living in urban areas, up 17.5 percent year-
on-year, and 833 million by people living
in the countryside, rising by 30.6 percent
year-on-year.

Urban residents spent 2.6 trillion
yuan on tourism expenses during the
past six months, said the ministry,
rising by 12.5 percent year-on-year.
Tourists from the countryside spent
550 billion yuan during the same
period, with the number rising
by 30.1 percent year-on-year.



Denmark's Ambassador Jakob Linulf
for international support to overcome
Pakistan's climate challenges



Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri credited
Mr Linulf for being a "dedicated
friend of Pakistan" who helped
transform Denmark's climate
diplomacy into real, tangible
outcomes. "Ambassador Linulf
brought Pakistan into Denmark's
climate imagination, not only as a
vulnerable country but also as a
potential regional partner in clean
energy transformation," Dr Suleri
said, and added that the new
project will prioritize inclusive
and strategic action by integrating
voices of youth, women, civil
society, academia, and private
sector in shaping Pakistan's
climate prosperity narrative.
Minister of State for National
Food Security and Research,
Malik Rasheed Ahmed Khan, also
praised the outgoing ambassador
for his exceptional services.
"Denmark's partnership in energy

Celina Ali
Islamabad: The outgoing Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan
Jakob Linulf this week underscored the urgency of climate
action, and suggested that countries like Pakistan, which are
deeply vulnerable to climate disruptions, need not only interna-
tional cooperation but also localized strategies for resilience.
He was speaking at the signing ceremony of landmark Memo-
randum of Understanding (MoU) between Danish Embassy and
SDPI here. The agreement marks the formal launch of a high-
impact project aimed at integrating climate change into Paki-
stan's economic and fiscal planning, said a press release.
Lauding the role of SDPI in leading the climate action of
Pakistan and forwarding Denmark's clean, green vision through
Pakistan's energy transition, the ambassador said that strategic
frameworks such as Climate Prosperity Plans (CPPs) can help
transform climate challenges into pathways of sustainable
growth.
"By learning from Denmark's State of Green model, we aim to
support Pakistan in creating a robust knowledge platform
tailored to its unique needs," he added.
Paying tribute to the outgoing envoy, SDPI Executive Director

and climate change has flourished over the past three years.
Ambassador Jakob has been a powerful advocate of Pakistan's
clean energy transition, and his leadership was crucial in
shaping our early work on carbon markets, climate
finance, and renewable energy," the minister re-
marked.
Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on
Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, credited
Denmark's technical support for Pakistan's emerging role as a
regional leader in climate action. She reiterated that capaci-
ty-building initiatives and technology transfers under
this partnership would continue to serve Pakistan well
beyond the ambassador's tenure.
The MoU, on "Integrating climate change into economic
planning", seeks to establish long-term cooperation in areas of
green growth, climate finance, clean energy, and carbon market
development. As part of this collaboration, Denmark and SDPI
will support the design of policy roadmaps, training pro-
grammes, inclusive dialogues, and a digital platform showcas-
ing successful low-carbon models adaptable to Pakistan.

Aseefa Bhutto distributes
house ownership documents

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari this week distributed
ownership documents of houses among flood-hit women under the
Sindh People's Housing Project at Latif Hall in Peoples University
of Medical and Health Sciences in Nawab Shah.
She said at the ceremony that the initiative was not just about
providing a house, but also about empowering women with rights,
dignity and security.
She gave credit to Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bi-
lawal Bhutto Zardari for his efforts and vision for making this
possible and noted that no other province or party had taken such a
significant step.

She highlighted that the initiative fulfilled the promise made
by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to provide land, shelter and dignity to every
individual.
She congratulated those who received property documents, ex-
pressing hope that this move would secure future of current and
future generations.
She said the initiative aimed to empower women by providing
them with land ownership rights, which would have a significant
impact on their social and economic status.
A large number of houses are being built in flood-hit villages to
accommodate the families rendered shelterless during unprece-
dented rains and floods in 2022.



China's PLA turns 98, celebrates reform achievements

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: The Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution in Beijing has received countless visitors this summer. In the exhibition hall, young children could be seen gathering around a display case containing a rusty bolt-action rifle.

Known as Hanyang Zao, meaning Made-in-Hanyang, this rifle was used in the Nanchang Uprising led by the Communist Party of China (CPC) on Aug 1, 1927, a day now remembered as the founding day of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Over 8,000 km away, meanwhile, China's J-35A stealth fighter was a superstar at the 2025 Paris Air Show. This home-developed Chinese fighter jet manifests the growing combat capabilities and technological prowess of the PLA.

The year 2025 marks the 98th anniversary of the PLA's founding. Just as China's weaponry has seen remarkable evolution over the years, the Chinese military has also continuously strengthened itself by reinforcing the primacy of political guidance and advancing comprehensive reforms. Notably, significant progress has been made in this regard over the past decade.

"Without the unprecedented reinforcement of political work, the great changes that took place in the people's military in the new era wouldn't have been possible," Chinese President Xi Jinping said at a high-level military conference in June 2024.

This meeting took place in Yan'an, Northwest China's Shaanxi province, a city of utmost significance in the history of China's revolution. Before the meeting, Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), led senior military officers to visit the revolutionary relics at Wangjiaping, where the Party's military headquarters were stationed

from August 1937 to March 1947.

At the conference, Xi stressed that political work is always the lifeline of the country's military, the armed forces must always be led by those who are reliable and loyal to the Party, and there must be no place for corruption within the military.

These remarks echoed a similar 2014 meeting in Gutian, Fujian province, where Xi convened a military political work conference amid efforts to sharpen fighting capacity and curb corruption.

Gutian was a historically significant township, where the landmark 1929 meeting was held to establish the Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces, or "the Party commands the gun" in short.

At the conference in 2014, Xi reiterated that this principle shall always be firmly upheld. In the following decade, Xi's thoughts on strengthening the military have been widely carried out, bringing greater unity in thought and firmness in action.

At the same time, corruption is being rooted out, loyalty is being strengthened, and unhealthy practices are being corrected to solidify the foundation for future victories.

Recently, the CMC issued new regulations on strengthening political work, aiming to uphold the military's fine traditions, eliminate the lingering impact of corrupt officers, and restore image.

As observers noted, without strong military capabilities, an army may fall before its enemies; and without firm political commitment, it may collapse from within.

It has been 10 years since China deepened its reforms of national defense and the armed forces. A decade ago, Xi ordered the reorganization of the military administration structure and military command system, and the building of an efficient, modern military capable of succeeding in information-age warfare.

Thanks to this reform initiative, troop numbers were reduced by 300,000. This cut marked a



historic shift, as Army personnel dropped below 50 percent of the total for the first time, non-combat unit staffing was almost halved, and officer numbers fell by 30 percent.

This reform effort also created new front-line combat units -- such as combined arms brigades, air assault brigades and aircraft carrier battle groups.

Military reform has significantly enhanced operational capabilities. The Army has become faster and more effective at fighting in various environments, while the Navy has expanded its defensive reach from near-seas to open oceans. The Air Force has integrated air and space domains, and the Rocket Force has strengthened both its nuclear and conventional deterrents.

Observers said the PLA is now leaner, better

organized and structurally optimized -- fundamentally changing its long-standing land-based warfare force structure. The command chain of the Chinese military has also become increasingly streamlined, while force projection has grown ever more efficient.

Reform efforts remain ongoing. In April 2024, the Information Support Force was established, replacing a previous structure -- a move that underscores the PLA's intensified focus on achieving data dominance.

These efforts will be on full display on Sept. 3, when China holds a military parade to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. Alongside the latest generation of conventional weapons, the parade will feature unmanned

intelligent systems, underwater combat units, cyber and electronic forces, and hypersonic weapons -- highlighting the PLA's growing capacity to harness emerging technologies, adapt to the evolving character of warfare, and prepare to prevail in future conflicts.

The Chinese military has always been a staunch force for upholding world peace, and Chinese troops with UN peacekeeping experience will participate in the parade, Wu Zeke, a senior officer of the CMC Joint Staff Department, told a press conference in June.

"This arrangement not only highlights China's solemn commemoration of the victory in the war, but also demonstrates the country's commitment to fulfilling international obligations and safeguarding world peace," Wu noted.

98th founding anniversary of PLA of China celebrated held at GHQ Rawalpindi

Celina Ali

Rawalpindi: Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir this week stressed that despite evolving strategic dynamics, the friendship between Pakistan and China has remained firm and unwavering. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing, said in a statement that

the army chief made these remarks while attending the 98th founding anniversary celebration of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China held at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi with senior Chinese and Pakistani military officials in attendance.

The chief guest at the ceremony was the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, the ISPR said. The Chinese envoy was joined by China's

Defence Attaché Major General Wang Zhong, other embassy officials and senior officers from Pakistan's army, navy, and air force.

Field Marshal Munir warmly received the Chinese guests and extended congratulations on behalf of the Pakistan Army. In his remarks, he praised the PLA's role in ensuring China's defence and nation-building efforts over nearly a century, the ISPR's statement said.

COAS Munir highlighted that the Pakistan-China strategic relationship exemplifies mutual trust, unwavering support, and shared commitment. "Our friendship with China is unique, time-tested, and exceptionally resilient," the ISPR quoted the army chief as saying.

Highlighting the strength of bilateral military ties, Field Marshal Munir said: "The PLA and Pakistan Army are true brothers-in-arms. Our enduring partnership is central to promoting regional stability and securing our shared strategic interests."

On the occasion, Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong thanked the COAS for hosting the event and acknowledged the sacrifices made by the Pakistan Armed Forces in the fight against terrorism and reaffirmed Beijing's unwavering support and commitment to its strategic partnership with Islamabad.



Karakoram Highway fully restored as Pakistan reopens northern road network



Islamabad: In a major relief for tourists and transporters, Pakistan has successfully restored its northern road network, including the strategic Karakoram Highway (KKH), a vital lifeline under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), following widespread damage caused by recent torrential rains.

The National Highway Authority (NHA) mobilized on an emergency footing, deploying heavy machinery and personnel around the clock to rehabilitate vital routes in Gilgit-Baltistan, Kaghan, Naran, and Skardu. The rapid recovery effort has ensured the full resumption of traffic across all major arteries, particularly the KKH which links Pakistan with China's Xinjiang province.

Despite the scale of destruction caused by landslides and road washouts, the NHA completed over 90 percent of the rehabilitation work within days. Roads such as N-15 through Kaghan and Naran were reopened earlier, facilitating smooth movement of both tourists and freight carriers.

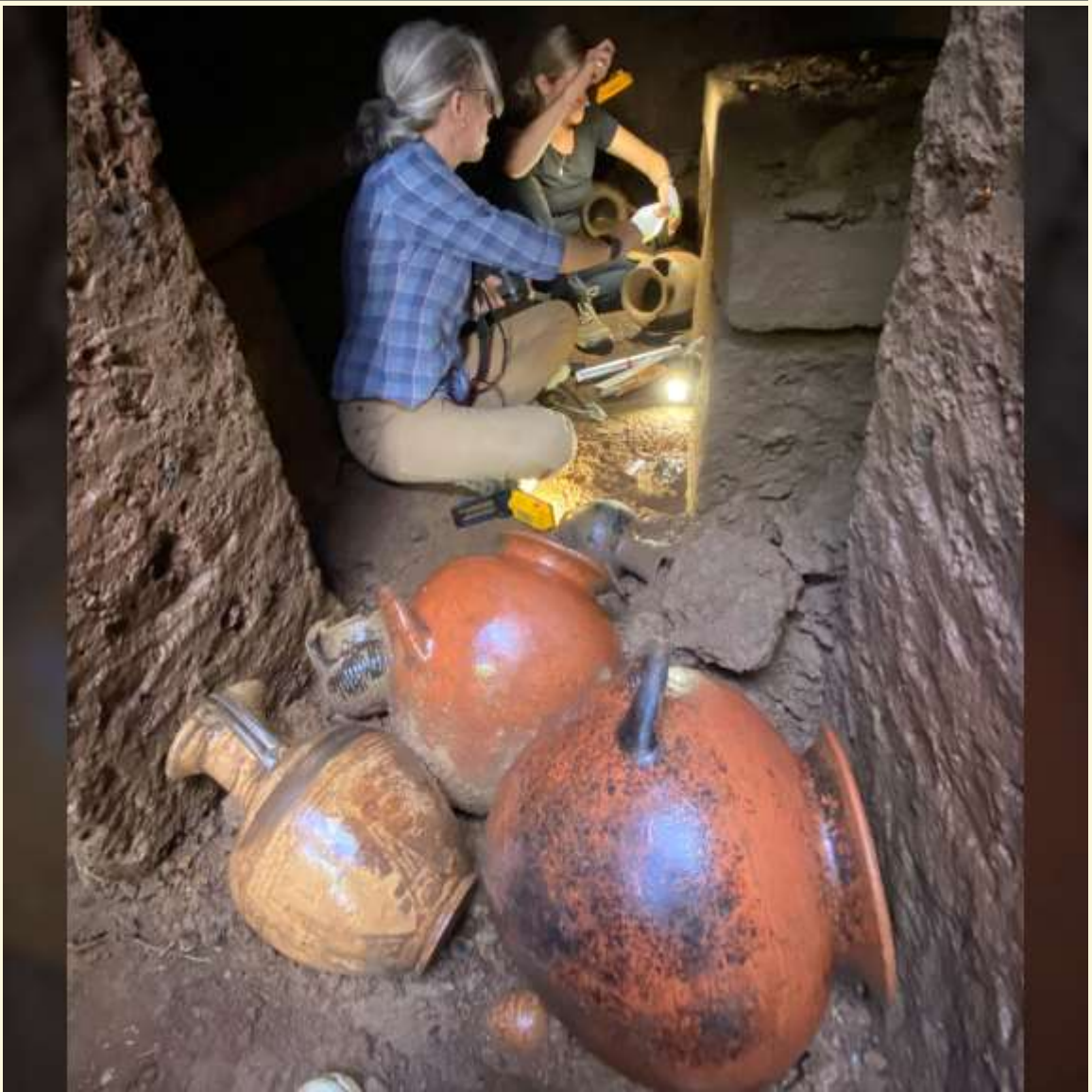
Gwadar Pro



Pristine Etruscan tomb discovered in Italy contains more than 100 untouched artifacts



Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, H.E. Marilina Armellini



Newswire

Rome: A rare untouched tomb from the Etruscans, a civilization that predated the Roman Republic, has been discovered in central Italy. The tomb, carved from stone in the shape of a small house, contains the remains of four individuals lying on stone beds. The remains are surrounded by more than 100 artifacts, including pottery, weapons, bronze ornaments and silver hair accessories. Though many other Etruscan tombs have been excavated in the area, all have been subject to some degree of looting. The pristine tomb, which dates to the seventh century B.C., could offer insight into the Etruscans' burial practices, researchers with the international San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project (SGARP) announced July 15. "This completely sealed burial chamber represents a rare find for Etruscan archaeology," Davide Zori, an archaeologist at Baylor University in Texas, said in a

statement. "In the internal hilly region of central Italy, where the SGARP team works, a preserved chamber tomb of this age has never before been excavated with modern archaeological techniques. It is a unique opportunity for our project to study the beliefs and burial traditions of this fascinating pre-Roman culture." The Etruscan civilization thrived in central Italy in the centuries before the Roman Republic, peaking around the sixth century B.C., before gradually falling to Rome in the Roman-Etruscan Wars. Etruria was officially assimilated into the Roman Empire in the first century B.C. Archaeologists discovered the sealed tomb in the ancient Etruscan town of San Giuliano, about 43 miles (70 kilometers) northwest of Rome, as part of SGARP. Researchers have documented more than 600 Etruscan tombs in the region since the project began in 2016, but the newly described tomb is the only one that has not been looted.

Related: 'Truly extraordinary' ancient offerings, including statues of snakes and a child priest, found submerged in 'healing' spring in Italy "Being part of a project that uncovered an unlooted tomb was extremely surreal," Kendall Peterson, an undergraduate researcher who participated in the excavation, said in the statement. "It is something that archaeologists hope for their entire careers, and it was incredibly emotional to witness not only our professors' reactions but also the pride and excitement of the local community of Barbarano." Preliminary data suggest that the four individuals buried in the tomb are two male-female pairs, but further analysis of the remains could provide additional insights. "The SGARP team has completed the excavation of the tomb, but the study and analysis of the archaeological data yielded by this incredible discovery is just beginning," Zori said in the statement.

Economic integration key to Thailand-Cambodia peace

Ding Gang

When news broke about the recent Thailand-Cambodia border conflict, my thoughts immediately turned to Rong Kluea Market. Covering over 66 acres along the border between Thailand's Sa'Kao Province and Cambodia's Poipet, this commercial hub features thousands of stalls forming a massive trading belt. Back in early 2011, during another border flare-up, my colleagues and I rushed to the scene to report on the events. Even then, cross-border economic integration was already deeply woven into daily life. Today, this market attracts tens of thousands of Thai and Cambodian shoppers daily, functioning as a vital node in the China-Thailand

-Cambodia trade triangle. Despite thriving trade, why couldn't these economic ties prevent conflict? Politics plays a role, indeed, but colonial-era border maps remain the fundamental issue. Border disputes will require time to be fully resolved. However, the fact that a ceasefire was achieved so quickly in this conflict is noteworthy. While international media highlights diplomatic mediation in securing the recent ceasefire, I believe economic integration deserves the spotlight. Think of economic ties as roots that have grown so deeply intertwined that pulling them apart damages both trees. Over the past decade, cross-border trade and investment have exploded,

binding both nations in a web of mutual interest. Trade between Cambodia and Thailand reached \$4.29 billion in 2024, up 15.5 percent from the \$3.71 billion recorded the previous year. The eight official border crossings process tens of thousands of people daily, facilitating the trade of everything from agricultural products to electronics. Labor migration tells another compelling story. According to International Labour Organization data, approximately 650,000 Cambodian workers - both documented and undocumented - work in Thailand. Thailand's hospitality, construction and manufacturing sectors heavily depend on this workforce. When borders close, wages stop, and families suffer immediately. Thai investment in Cambodia has reached nearly \$3.8 billion during 2024, spanning food processing, rubber production and machinery assembly. These businesses employ thousands of Cambodian workers and extend supply chains across both sides of the border.

China has played a catalytic role in this regional integration. Between 2013 and 2023, Chinese investment in Cambodia totaled \$8.29 billion, focusing on infrastructure, manufacturing and real estate. The \$2 billion Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville highway has nearly halved transportation times, dramatically improving logistics efficiency. In border markets, many Chinese companies operate in special economic zones along the border, creating integrated production chains where Chinese goods are processed in Cambodia and exported via Thailand, or vice versa. ASEAN integration initiatives further strengthen these bonds. After establishing the ASEAN Economic Community, tariffs between Thailand and Cambodia gradually decreased. World Bank



statistics show customs clearance times dropped from five hours to three hours, reducing trade costs and boosting cross-border commerce. For border communities, these markets have become central to everyday life. Market vendors, truck drivers, hotel staff and repair shops all need the market to live, which means countless families depend on cross-border trade for survival. During the recent conflict, economic damage was immediate and severe. Thailand estimates losses of \$307.88?million during the first five days of hostilities. When borders closed, transport and tourism revenues plummeted while prices for basic goods spiked. Looking ahead, Thailand-Cambodia trade will continue to grow. Special economic zones and e-commerce will drive further integration. As Belt and Road Initiative projects and ASEAN connectivity deepen, more

infrastructure will bridge these economies. The true driver of peace is this deep economic integration. When livelihoods, supply chains and national development all depend on stability, peace becomes not just desirable but essential. While external mediation can help, sustainable peace requires solid economic foundations - much like two neighboring houses sharing the same electrical system. Cut the power, and both go dark.

The writer 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

How Western media's neglect of Chinese archaeology exposes deeper biases



Ding Gang

In recent years, China has made remarkable archaeological discoveries, from the mysterious bronze artifacts of the Sanxingdui Ruins to the magnificent Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City. These findings have become essential chapters in human history. However, these globally significant achievements consistently receive "selective neglect" in Western mainstream media coverage. Is this a coincidence or systematic discrimination? In July 2025, a groundbreaking study published in the prestigious journal Science Advances provided the first data-driven, rigorous analysis confirming discrimination against Chinese archaeology in Western media reporting. This research, led by scholars from Harvard University and others, systematically analyzed 1,155 archaeology papers published between 2015 and 2020 in seven scientific journals, examining how these studies were

covered across 15 American mainstream media outlets (including CNN, The New York Times, Scientific American and Newsweek). The study's core findings are shocking. Under equal conditions, archaeological papers from Israel/Palestine, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia were approximately three times more likely to receive coverage in American mainstream media compared to those from China. For instance, The New York Times covered Egyptian archaeology 10.59 times more frequently than Chinese findings, while Forbes' coverage disparity reached as high as 43.67 times. Among the 1,155 papers analyzed, archaeological research about China ranked third globally in volume, trailing only the US and the UK. Yet its media exposure consistently remained at the bottom. This quantitative analysis scientifically demolishes the pretense that "cold coverage is merely coincidental." How does such discrimination take shape?

It involves a multi-layered chain that spans academia, media and the audience. Systemic bias extends far beyond media endpoints, permeating the entire pathway from academic discovery to public awareness and profoundly influencing public perception of China. Research from Israel, Britain and Australia receives press release recommendations at rates far exceeding those for China. Under the influence of topic selection mechanisms and editorial networks, archaeological achievements from China and other "non-Western" regions face continuous marginalization. The paper notes that between 2015 and 2020, negative American public perception of China rose from 47 percent to 73 percent, reaching 81 percent by 2024. Mainstream audience interest assumptions and cognitive biases regarding China-related reporting further influence media coverage tendencies, which in turn reinforce these perception biases, creating a hidden yet robust "discrimination cycle." This enormous coverage gap represents what scholars refer to as the "global Matthew effect." Even when archaeological discoveries are equally sensational and academically valuable, findings from China struggle to receive equivalent attention and resources in "Western discourse spaces." American reporting "proximity" isn't geographical but cultural. Israel, Britain and Australia are habitually treated as related civilizations, while China, India and Iran are viewed as distant others. These personnel structure directly influences news selection and language, reinforcing "cultural inertia" filtering, while the exoticization and prejudice of Western mainstream knowledge systems toward the "East" continuously undermine equal dialogue between civilizations. The greatest danger of this structural bias is how global academic and public understanding of "what makes the world what it is" becomes systematically shaped. Chinese archaeological achievements, which have long been hidden in the corners of mainstream narratives, weaken the global influence of Chinese civilization while creating an imbalance and misunderstanding in the worldwide comprehension of early human civilizations, particularly in the severe underrecognition of Chinese

society. Such a lack of recognition clearly affects Western audiences' views of China, creating a media environment conducive to spreading "China threat" narratives. This report makes it clear that, over the past few years, many Western media outlets, experts and others have often lacked a fundamental understanding of China when discussing issues related to the country. They are particularly unfamiliar with Chinese culture and historical traditions. Their judgments and analyses of China often seem entirely nonsensical to Chinese people. Some Western policymakers have never even been to China, yet they still arrogantly comment on the country. China's rise is indeed something new, but it represents the emergence of an Eastern civilization that differs from Western society. To recognize and understand this civilization, one must have a basic understanding of significant archaeological discoveries. If the West cannot seriously learn from this lesson, how can the relationship between China and Western countries foster mutual understanding and equal coexistence? Furthermore, this inevitably influences decision-making regarding China among American and European leadership. How can policymakers make rational, fact-based judgments about



contemporary China's development when they fundamentally misunderstand the developmental trajectory of Chinese civilization? The writer 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

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Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri highlights Pakistan-Indonesia friendship

Covert Report Jakarta: Pakistani Ambassador to Indonesia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week highlighted Pakistan-Indonesia historically friendly relations. “Honoured to serve in Indonesia, a country with which Pakistan shares

deep historical ties. Proud that Pakistan stood firmly with Indonesia during its struggle for independence, raising its voice globally and supporting the Indonesian cause at the UN and beyond,” the envoy who was recently posted to Indonesia said.



Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri is a career diplomat. He joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan on 30 September 1993. Mr Chaudhri has served at key positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad and at Pakistan Missions abroad. Prior to his appointment as Ambassador to Indonesia, he served as the Pakistan's High Commissioner to Australia. He had also served as the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Addition-

al Secretary responsible for Asia Pacific. Mr Chaudhri has earlier served as Director General (Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey), Director General (South Asia & SAARC), Director (India), Deputy Director (South East Asia and the Pacific), Deputy Director (Economic Coordination) and Assistant Director (Personnel) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has also served as Director General (Economic Coordination) at President's Secretariat and Joint Secretary (National Security) at the National Security Division.

He has earlier served at key Pakistani Missions abroad including the Embassy of Pakistan, Washington DC, USA; High Commission for Pakistan, London, United Kingdom; the Consulate General of Pakistan, Dubai, UAE. The envoy said that the two countries have a huge potential to enhance cooperation in various sectors, especially trade. Ambassador Chaudhri expressed the optimism that in the years to come, the two countries will work together to strengthen collaboration.

Marking end of Pakistan's UNSC presidency, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad holds reception

Celina Ali Islamabad: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week hosted a largely attended reception to mark the end of Pakistan's presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of July. Heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the United Nations, senior U.N. officials, prominent citizens and senior journalists participated in the event. Pakistan's former's UN Ambassador, Munir Akram, also attended the reception. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad thanked his counterparts and guests for attending the reception and for their cooperation during Pakistan's presidency of the Council. He also thanked former Ambassador Akram, a well known figure at the UN, for his presence at the gathering. During its presidency, besides other agenda items, Pakistan organized two signature events — an high-level open debate on “Promoting International Peace

and Security through Multilateralism and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes”. At the end of the debate, the 15-member Council unanimously adopted a Pakistan-sponsored resolution calling on member-states to take measures for the effective implementation of the Council's resolutions for peaceful settlement of disputes. The other signature event was a high-level briefing of the Security Council focusing on enhancing cooperation between the UN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) following which a presidential statement was issued. Pakistan also presided over the quarterly open debate of the Council on the “Situation in the Middle East including the Palestinian Question”. The high-level events were presided over by the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Ishaq Dar. Pakistan began its current two-year term as a non-permanent member in January 2025 and will serve through the end of 2026.



Cardiff hosts grand celebration of 'Marka-e-Haq' victory; High Commissioner Dr. Faisal attends as chief guest

Covert Report London: A grand community gathering was held in Cardiff, United Kingdom, to celebrate the symbolic victory in the "Markah-e-Haq" and to express solidarity with the Pakistani Armed Forces and the people of Pakistan. The event was organized by the Pakistani Wales Community and the United Pashtun Society and was attended by a large number of professionals, community leaders, business figures, and members of the Pakistani diaspora in Wales. Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK, Dr Mohammad Faisal, participated as the chief guest, accompanied by his wife Dr Sarah Naeem. Chair-

man of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation, Syed Qamar Raza, was also present. In his address, Dr Faisal thanked the local Pakistani community for the warm welcome and praised their sense of unity and patriotism. He said the strength of the Pakistani nation lies in its unity, and overseas Pakistanis take pride in the professionalism, bravery, and patriotism of the Armed Forces, who overcame a resourceful and larger enemy. Dr Faisal highlighted the nation's collective struggle across all fronts, including the success of Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad. He also lauded the role of Pakistan's diplomats and media in countering hostile propaganda and promoting Pakistan's image as a peace-loving nation capable of giving a resolute response when challenged. The High Commissioner emphasized the importance of second-generation British

Pakistanis staying connected to their cultural roots and spotlighted the achievements of British Pakistani women. He reaffirmed the commitment of the High Commission to provide full consular support to the community. Dr Faisal announced that Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) would resume flights to Manchester from August 16, with plans to expand operations to other UK cities. He added that the Pakistani government and the High Commission are working to facilitate the launch of additional private Pakistani airlines in the UK. Community leaders warmly welcomed Dr Faisal and his delegation, appreciating the High Commission's engagement. They highlighted the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora in Wales and proposed enhanced cooperation in health, education, and agri-tech sectors between Pakistan and Wales.



PPP believes in providing shelter to every citizen:

Umar Rehman Malik



initiative addresses long term recovery, housing rights, and social equity. Today, @AseefaBZ (Aseefa Bhutto Zardari) distributed ownership documents marking a step forward in translating disaster response into sustainable rehabilitation.” Earlier, First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, distributed ownership documents of houses among flood-hit women under the Sindh People’s Housing Project at Latif Hall in Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences.



Abdullah Jan
Islamabad: Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) leader Umar Rehman Malik this week said that the PPP believes in providing shelter to every citizen. “With Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s vision, @SphfOfficial (Sindh People’s Housing Project) is implementing the world’s largest post disaster housing project of 2.1 million homes for families affected by the 2022 floods,” he said in a statement. The PPP leader added: “With a focus on women’s ownership, solar energy, and climate resilient construction, the

She said at the ceremony that the initiative was not just about providing a house, but also about empowering women with rights, dignity and security. She congratulated those who received property documents, expressing hope that this move would secure future of current and future generations. A large number of houses are being built in flood-hit villages to accommodate the families rendered shelter less during unprecedented rains and floods in 2022.



German consulate halts visa services in Karachi for non-EU citizens



Covert Report

Karachi: The German Consul General in Karachi this week announced the immediate suspension of visa services for non-European Union (EU) citizens until further notice. In an official statement issued on X,

the consulate confirmed that the suspension applies to all non-EU applicants, including those with already confirmed visa appointments. The consulate clarified that these appointments have been cancelled and will not be rescheduled.

Affected applicants have been advised to re-register for appointments once the consulate resumes its services. Updates on the situation will be issued as and when available, the consulate said, expressing appreciation for the public's understanding

during the disruption. Earlier this month, Sweden announced the resumption of visa services in Islamabad following the Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan and Sweden, held in Stockholm on July 2. Pakistan travel guide Effective from July 7, Pakistani na-

tionals can apply for a Schengen visa from within Pakistan for visits to Sweden of up to 90 days. The Pakistani delegation to the Bilateral Consultations in Stockholm was led by the Additional Foreign Secretary (Europe), while the Swedish side was headed by the director general for global affairs from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Bulgaria moves to ease hiring of foreign workers in tourism sector



NewsWire

Sofia: Regulatory adjustments aimed at easing the employment of third-country nationals in Bulgaria's tourism industry were discussed during a meeting of the parliamentary Tourism Committee held in Sozopol. The changes, still in the draft phase, are expected to respond to ongoing concerns from employers about bureau-

cratic barriers, particularly during peak tourist seasons. Deputy Prime Minister Grozdan Karadjov announced that the government intends to raise the quotas for seasonal employment of foreign workers. Another focus is to simplify the process for obtaining work permits and to reduce the number of rejections, which industry representatives say

are too frequent and often unjustified. A working group is currently preparing legislative amendments that will be presented to Parliament for a vote. Karadjov emphasized that the current rules impose an unnecessary burden on repeat workers. "If someone is returning to the same employer within a 180-day period, we should simplify the process. There's no need to require renewed criminal background checks if those were already conducted," he explained. He also noted that businesses often have to deal with excessive red tape just to maintain staffing levels. Industry representatives echoed the concerns. Elena Ivanova-Todorovski, hotelier and deputy head of the NGO "Union of Owners Sunny Beach," pointed out that the process is still largely analog and inefficient. "There is no organized system for electronically submitting all the required documents. We end up escorting these foreign workers to the Migration Department in Burgas, to notaries, just to extend their stay. Then we have to go through the same procedure again after

three months," she said. The proposed changes also address residence permits for third-country workers, with the aim of streamlining these procedures as well. The goal, according to

officials and hoteliers alike, is to ensure that the sector can rely on a stable workforce during critical periods without being hampered by outdated or overly restrictive administrative practices.



A nostalgic diesel train ride through Portugal



Newswire

Lisbon: The country's only remaining narrow-gauge railway line plays host to heritage trains, offering travellers a chance to travel through the stunning Vouga Valley in a period locomotive. We're gathering speed as we rumble east from Portugal's coastal city of Aveiro. Modern apartment blocks outside the train's open windows yield to ivy-covered trees, then pastel-hued farmhouses dotted among lush green fields. The refreshing scent of eucalyptus replaces the faint diesel fug in the carriage – resplendent with hardwood benches and drop sash windows – and the conductor sounds the air horn at the townspeople waving from their terraces, gardens and balconies, thrilled to spot us.



excursion that also includes a visit to the artsy city of Águeda. Each summer, locals and travellers alike can climb aboard for a unique railway journey into the past.

Constructed between 1907 and 1914, the Vouga line originally consisted of three branches, extending 96km north to the city of Espinho and 140km east to Viseu, with the town of Sernada do Vouga acting as a central hub.

"This series [CP 9000] of locomotives were working in the mines of Spain, then Portugal bought three or four of them," says driver Pedro Cabelo, who has worked for national rail firm Comboios de Portugal since 2008. "The Vouga line was originally for people to travel between the cities in the interior land."

At 668mm narrower than standard Iberian-gauge railways, the metro-wide tracks that twist and turn through the valley's famous forests and bridges were cheaper and better suited to the winding routes when they were first laid, but eventually became economically unviable due to maintenance costs and limited capacity. Passenger services declined and ceased entirely by 1990.

But starting in 2009, sections of the track were converted into ecotrails for cycling, running and hiking, culminating with the 2023 unveiling of the Ecopista do Val do Vouga, a path/trail that completed the 80km route between the towns of Sernada and Viseu, incorporating oak and pine forests, historic stations, atmospheric tunnels and beautiful bridges.

The Vouga Historical Train debuted in summer 2017 and was an instant hit, running at full capacity during the first season. The tourism initiative was meant to launch with a steam train, but two weeks before the inaugural journey, a deadly wildfire swept through nearby Pedrógio Grande, caused in part by sparks from electrical discharges from high-voltage lines and spread by extreme summer heat. Comboios Portugal didn't want to risk having a coal-fired train on the track, so a diesel train was drafted in for the summer series, with the steam locomotive unveiled in November for the festive edition.

Arriving 45 minutes before my train is due to depart, I find the platform already buzzing. Conductor Cabelo – dressed in a navy uniform and red neckerchief, a nod to steam-era attire – is showing passengers how he drives the train from his perch high up in the locomotive, and families are posing for photos alongside the wooden carriages.

I board along with around 200 eager passengers, marvelling at the splendidly restored heritage train. It consists of two Portuguese carriages from 1908 and 1913, a Belgian carriage from 1908, a German carriage from 1925 and an Italian carriage, all of which once ran on narrow-gauge lines and have since been restored by Comboios de Portugal. Three of the colourful wooden carriages – painted in glossy red, hunter green and royal blue, with mint green interiors and varnished dark wood seats – feature tail verandas open-air platforms that allowed passengers to enjoy the breeze during their journey.

I find a spot on one of them to take in the sweeping views of farmland and the Serra do Areal mountains in the distance. We break occasionally at rural stations so the train's engineer can check the temperature of the wheels to make sure they're not overheating. Our first proper stop is the parish of Macinhata do Vouga, where a 10-piece folk band in regional dress greets us with a jaunty tune. Spanning three generations of the same family, the singers and musicians brandish accordions and ukuleles, while percussion comes courtesy of drums, a triangle and a pair of pinecones rhythmically scraped against each other.

As we descend for a two-hour break, each passenger is handed a pastel de Águeda – a traditional golden-brown pastry stuffed with almond-flavoured filling – and taken on a 30-minute guided tour of the Macinhata do Vouga Railway Museum, located in the station's former coach house.

"All of the locomotives we have here in Macinhata are German," says Bernadette Silva, a volunteer guide who leads our group around the museum. "After the First World War, Germany had a debt to Portugal [that they couldn't pay], so [dictator António de Oliveira] Salazar told them, 'If you don't have money to pay, you pay me with machines.'"

Another carriage, she points out, only has first- and third-class seating, because Salazar – who was prime minister for most of the nearly 50-year right-wing dictatorship that ended in 1974 – is believed to have abolished second-class trains in the 1940s to "simplify" the system, which eventually evolved into the first and second-class structure that remains in place today.

Infirmary and mail trains show how patients and post were once transported, while a curious ceramic statue reveals an ingenious system of platform signage used in the past.

"This is our naughty boy," Silva says at the end of the tour, gesturing to the large figurine of a smiling boy in a blue shirt and no shorts, cheekily poised to urinate. "This same naughty boy was seen at a lot of stations of the Vouga valley, but the colour of his shirt was different in each station." She explained that some people in the rural communities didn't know how to read at the time, so when they "looked out of the window and saw the naughty boy, they knew where they were by the colour of his shirt. It was simple, but it worked!"

Our second and final two-hour stop is in Águeda, where the railway sleepers are painted in rainbow shades and an equally colourful mural on the station wall hints at the city's artistic cache. Launched in 2006, the AgitÁgueda Art Festival was designed to regenerate the area and "colour the city" throughout July with urban artworks, installations and performances. In 2012, hundreds of umbrellas were suspended above the city centre as part of the Umbrella Sky Project, and the installation went viral, inspiring copycat streets all over the world. Now, more than 5,000 umbrellas hang above Águeda every year from July to September. Wandering through the bustling pedestrianised area, I see that this year's colour palette includes blue and green opaque umbrellas and clear plastic ones with yellow flower motifs that bathe the streets in a warm wash of colour.

Back on the train, golden hour has descended on the Vouga Valley and puffy white clouds pepper the early evening sky as we begin the journey back to Aveiro, cheered on once more by rural residents along the way. After this summer series has concluded, the diesel locomotive is set to come back next year. Judging by the enthusiasm of visitors and locals alike, the much-loved Vouguinha will be welcomed whenever it returns.



Japan PM Ishiba unlikely to announce view on WWII soon

Covert Report

Tokyo: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has decided not to announce his view on World War II on Aug. 15, the 80th anniversary of his country's surrender in the war, sources said this week. Ishiba had also considered announcing the view on Sept. 2, the date when Japan signed the surrender document in 1945,

but no such announcement is likely to be made that day, senior officials of the government and Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party said. Ishiba is still seeking an appropriate time to announce his view, which would be based on the results of a review of the war. But some expect that it would be difficult



to make such an announcement, which could intensify calls for his resignation that emerged within the LDP following the party's rout in the July 20 election for

the House of Councillors, the upper chamber of parliament. Japan had issued a prime minister's statement to mark each of the 50th, 60th and

70th anniversaries of the country's surrender in the war. The tradition could be broken by Ishiba.



US, Pakistan strike trade deal to develop oil reserves



Covert Report

Washington: US President Donald Trump this week announced that he had reached an agreement with Pakistan that will see Washington help develop the South Asian nation's oil reserves. "We have just concluded a Deal with the

Country of Pakistan, whereby Pakistan and the United States will work together on developing their massive Oil Reserves," Trump wrote on his social media site Truth Social. Pakistan said the deal will result in lower tariffs on its exports to the US. The country's deputy prime minister and

foreign minister, Ishaq Dar, confirmed the deal in a statement. "Pakistan concludes deal with USA," he wrote on X, without elaborating further. The details of the deal — including the tariff rate agreed upon and the oil reserves Trump was referring to — were not immediately clear.

Trump also made no mention of tariffs in his announcement. "We are in the process of choosing the oil company that will lead this partnership," the president said. In April, Pakistan was facing a potential tariff of 29% from the US, which was later suspended for 90 days to make way

trade negotiations. On Thursday, Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said he had conducted meetings with senior US officials in Washington, and called the deal a "win-win" situation for his country and the US. Aurangzeb is visiting the US capital for the second time in two weeks for what he said was a final-stage negotiation on a tariff deal. "From our perspective, it was always going beyond the immediate trade imperative, and its whole purpose was, and is, that trade and investment have to go hand in hand," he said in a video posted by Pakistan's Finance Ministry. The development between US and Pakistan comes less than a day after Washington slapped a 25% tariff on Islamabad's archival India. The US imposed the tariff and other financial penalties, slated to take effect from August 1, over India's ongoing trade with Russia despite Ukraine sanctions. Trump on Wednesday criticized the Russian and Indian economies, adding that the latter had one of the "highest" tariffs in the world. "I don't care what India does with Russia. They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care. We have done very little business with India, their Tariffs are too high, among the highest in the World," he said. While announcing the oil partnership with Pakistan, the US president also suggested Islamabad could sell oil to New Delhi "some day." "Who knows, maybe they'll be selling Oil to India some day!" Trump wrote.

Biometrics to replace stamps at EU border from October 12



European Union Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Riina Kionka has completed her successful tenure in Islamabad

fingerprints and taking a photo. This record will then be valid for three years and means on later trips border officers will only need to verify a person's biometrics, which the EU hopes will take less time. People with ePassports will also be able to use e-gates. There is no cost for EES registration. For most tourists, digital records will only be held for three years and a day – but for those who overstay the 90-day limit without a visa will have their data held for five years. The system aims to tighten border security but has raised concerns of long queues. The UK government has warned travellers to “be prepared to wait during busy times” when the scheme begins, as the checks will take several minutes to complete. However, the EU has said that, once implemented, the EES will shorten waits at the border by enabling faster checks and allowing passengers to provide their information in advance. Since the UK left the EU, airports at many popular European holiday destinations have seen long queues of British travellers as their passports have required checking and stamping. There have also been long queues at the Eurotunnel, and the new system sparked concerns that waiting times for people travelling to and from France by car would only be exacerbated by the new system. Passengers will be given hand-held devices to register in their cars, while French border checks have been implemented on British soil at the Port of Dover, the Eurotunnel's Folkestone end and



Eurostar's St Pancras terminal. In May, the UK and EU struck a deal which allowed for UK nationals to use EU e-gates – but only after the EES is introduced. “Once the EES is in place, UK nationals will therefore be able to use e-

gates where they are available, provided they are registered in the system,” an EU Commission spokesperson told the BBC at the time. Some European countries, including Germany and Bulgaria, already allow e-gate access for UK citizens.



Newswire
Brussels: Stamps in people's passports will be replaced by biometric checks for people travelling in and out of the EU from October 12, officials confirmed this week. The Entry/Exit System (EES) will replace the current paper checks and will mean passengers from the UK will need to have their fingerprints and faces scanned to cross an EU border. The scheme will be rolled out across member nations over six months, meaning it will not be fully implemented until 10 April 2026. It was due to come into effect last

November but has been beset by technological delays. Under the new system, non-EU citizens, including people from the UK, will need to register their biometric data along with their passport details to enter an EU country. Anyone who refuses to provide the biometric data will be denied entry into the EU. Currently, travellers have to present their passport to a border official to be checked and stamped. The data will be collected at the point of departure – either at an airport, port or train station – where there will be dedicated booths for scanning



UK High Commissioner Jane Marriott meets First Lady Aseefa Bhutto, education, health, women's empowerment discussed



NewsWire Karachi: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott called on First Lady and Member of National Assembly Aseefa Bhutto

education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and youth development. Aseefa Bhutto Zardari appreciated the UK Prime Minister's stance on the situation in Gaza and emphasized the importance of promoting global peace. The conversation also reflected a shared commitment to social development and bilateral co-operation between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. British Deputy High Commissioner Lance Domb and Political Advisor Huda Ikram accompanied High Commissioner Marriott. From the Pakistani side, Sindh Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechuho, MNA Shazia Marri, and MPA Qasim Soomro were also present during the meeting.



Italy: Leonardo to buy Iveco Defense for \$1.95 billion

Covert Report European land defense market, a segment expected to experience sustained growth in the coming years,” Leonardo’s chief executive, Roberto Cingolani, said in a statement. Earlier, Leonardo posted an 11.7 percent rise in first-half revenues to 8.9 billion euros (\$10.1 billion), while confirming its full-year guidance for revenues of approximately 18.6 billion euros (\$21.2 billion).

Rome: Italian defense and aerospace group Leonardo said this week that it would acquire Iveco Defence, a division that makes armored vehicles for military and civil use, for 1.7 billion euros (\$1.95 billion). Leonardo said the deal was expected to close in the first quarter of 2026, subject to regulatory approvals. “This transaction reinforces Leonardo’s position as a reference player in the



Britain and France to develop new generation air-to-air missile



Newswire London: Britain and France will develop a new generation of air-to-air missiles to replace the existing Meteor, the UK Defence Journal reported this week. The new missile will embody the entire technological potential of both countries, and its use will be possible both on sixth-generation aircraft and on existing combat aircraft of both countries. The exact technical characteristics of the missile have not yet been disclosed, but it is said that it should’ve hit targets beyond line of sight, not inferior in effectiveness to the current Meteor missile.

The announced development is part of the new Entente Industrielle program, which focuses on strengthening NATO’s advantage in high-tech air combat. It is also planned to carry out some work within the framework of the joint Integrated Portfolio Management Approach to Weapon. Its tasks will include coordinating the development of a new air-to-air missile, as well as modernizing the existing Meteor.

It is worth noting that Meteor is a unique air-to-air radar missile due to the use of a direct-flow air-jet engine with adjustable air supply, which allows changing engine modes during flight. In parallel, work is underway to improve the homing head. Since the joint program between the UK and Japan on the JNAAM missile ended without results, a new active homing head is being developed in Germany. It is expected that the new GSN will be similar to the one offered by Mitsubishi: with an active phased array antenna, which provides high

protection against enemy electronic warfare and increases the efficiency of detecting low-altitude and small-sized targets. It should be noted that in addition to European countries that have integrated the Meteor missile into their own fighters, such as Typhoon and Rafale, South Korea has also shown great interest, making Meteor the main radar missile of the new KF-21 fighter jet. Earlier, Military reported that in March 2023, South Korea had conducted the first weapons tests on mock-ups of the KF-21 fighter jet. The second KF-21 mock-up launched a Meteor air-to-air guided missile from MBDA.

