

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad urges stronger global action to end conflict-related sexual violence **Celina Ali**
Islamabad: Pakistan this week called for stronger international action to combat conflict-related sexual violence, with Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, urging the Security Council to ensure the full and impartial implementation of its resolutions **(Page-5)**

Jane Marriott backs deeper UK-Pakistan economic partnership as reform agenda gathers pace **Celina Ali**
Islamabad: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott this week reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting Pakistan's economic reform programme, as London and Islamabad agreed to deepen coop- **(Page-10)**

Pak, China celebrate PLA's 99th founding anniversary, reaffirm partnership



Celina Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan and China this week celebrated the 99th founding anniversary of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) with a high-profile ceremony in Islamabad, underscor-



ing the two countries' deepening strategic partnership and growing defence cooperation. Hosted by Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong and Defence Attaché Major General Wang Zhong, the event brought together senior Pakistani civil and military officials, diplomats and members of the diplomatic corps, reflecting the strength of the Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Babar Sidhu attended the ceremony as the chief guest and congratulated the Chinese leadership, the Communist Party of China and the PLA on the occasion of its 99th founding anniversary. Addressing the gathering, the Air Chief described Pakistan-China relations as "time-tested and enduring," saying the partnership has continued to strengthen despite changing regional and global dynamics. He noted that mutual trust, strategic coordination and unwavering support for each other's core interests have made the bilateral relationship one of the world's most resilient strategic partnerships.

He said defence cooperation has become a cornerstone of bilateral ties, contributing significantly to regional peace, collective security and strategic stability. He highlighted the continued expansion of military collaboration through joint exercises, professional exchanges, defence technology cooperation and institutional engagement. Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the partnership, Air Chief Marshal Sidhu said Islamabad looks forward to further expanding defence cooperation while deepening collaboration in economic, technological, industrial and cultural fields. He expressed confidence that the comprehensive strategic partnership would continue promoting peace, stability and shared prosperity across the region.



Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong thanked Pakistan's military leadership for joining the celebrations and reaffirmed Beijing's appreciation for Pakistan's steadfast friendship and strategic support. He said the PLA anniversary commemorates nearly a century of the Chinese armed forces' development while also symbolizing the enduring friendship and strategic trust underpinning China-Pakistan relations. Chinese Defence Attaché Major General Wang

Zhong said military cooperation between the two countries continues to grow steadily, reflecting their shared commitment to safeguarding regional security, strengthening strategic coordination and advancing common development. Established in 1927, the People's Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Communist Party of China and the armed forces of the People's Republic of China. With more than two million active-duty personnel, it is the world's largest standing military force, comprising the Ground Force, Navy, Air Force, Rocket Force and Aerospace Force. The ceremony concluded with both countries reaffirming their commitment to further strengthening defence collaboration, enhancing strategic coordination and advancing the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership that both sides view as an important pillar of regional peace, security and long-term stability. A cake-cutting ceremony and dinner marked the conclusion of the celebrations.



Canada launches compensation fund for victims of dishonest immigration consultants



Newsire
Ottawa: Canada this week introduced a new regulatory framework for immigration consultants that allows clients to seek compensation for financial losses caused by dishonest licensed representatives, strengthening consumer protection and oversight of the country's immigration consulting profession. The new regulations, which came into force on July 15, establish a compensation fund for clients of professionals licensed by the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants (CICC). The fund enables eligible individuals to recover losses resulting from dishonest conduct by licensees committed on or after November 23, 2021, when the CICC officially became Canada's immigration consultant regulator. Under the regulations, dishonest conduct includes knowingly providing false or misleading information, advising clients to submit false information, theft, fraud, misappropriation of client funds and violations of professional liability insurance requirements. To qualify for compensation, applicants must have retained a CICC-licensed immigration consultant or reasonably believed that the consultant had agreed to provide professional services. Clients who voluntarily participated in or contributed to the dishonest conduct are not eligible for compensation. The regulations require the CICC to maintain a dedicated compensation fund separate from its other finances. The College is also empowered to recover compensation payments, along with associated costs and expenses, from consultants found responsible for misconduct. The regulatory overhaul also introduces stronger governance

measures for the CICC, including the establishment of dedicated Discipline, Complaints and Capacity Evaluation Committees to improve professional accountability and public confidence in the immigration consulting sector. In addition, the College will be required to submit an annual report to the federal government detailing the operation of the compensation fund, complaints against licensees, the organization's financial position and membership composition. The new framework also grants Canada's immigration minister the authority to appoint an executive administrator to temporarily assume control of the College in place of its governing board if necessary. The regulations took effect after a 90-day implementation period following their publication in the Canada Gazette on April 16, 2026. They stem from draft regulations first released for public consultation in December 2024. Under Canadian law, individuals who charge fees for immigration advice or representation must be licensed either by a provincial or territorial law society, such as immigration lawyers, or by the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants as Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultants (RCICs) or Regulated International Student Immigration Advisors (RISAs). While Canada's immigration system allows applicants to represent themselves, many choose to seek professional assistance to navigate the country's complex immigration laws and procedures, making stronger oversight of licensed consultants an important safeguard for prospective immigrants.

Natasha vows to champion farmers' rights, praises Bilawal's global diplomacy

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) central leader and Member of the National Assembly Natasha Daultana this week reaffirmed the party's commitment to protecting the rights of farmers and underprivileged communities, saying the PPP will continue pursuing policies aimed at public welfare, democratic stability and national development. Speaking to Covert, Daultana said the PPP has consistently served as the voice of the people and remains committed to addressing the concerns of ordinary citizens through democratic governance and inclusive development. Highlighting the party's leadership, she praised PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his role in enhancing Pakistan's international standing through active diplomacy. She said Bilawal's engagement with the global community during his tenure as foreign minister projected a positive image of Pakistan and contributed to strengthening the country's diplomatic relations. The PPP lawmaker also described party workers as the backbone of the organisation, acknowledging their continued dedication and role in advancing the party's vision and strengthening its grassroots support. She reiterated her resolve to work for the welfare of farmers, labourers and disadvantaged segments of society, emphasizing that safeguarding their rights and improving their livelihoods would remain among her top priorities.



China unveils solid waste pollution control plan for 2026-2030

China Economic Net

Beijing: Six Chinese government departments, including the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the National Development and Reform Commission, have jointly issued a plan to strengthen solid waste pollution prevention and control during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030). By 2030, China aims to achieve notable progress in the treatment of solid waste pollution in key areas, effectively control accumulated waste from previous years, curb widespread illegal dumping and disposal of solid waste, and significantly improve its comprehensive solid waste management capacity, according to the plan. The country also aims to establish an integrated digital supervision network

covering key areas and build a number of "zero-waste cities" by 2030. The plan calls for coordinated efforts to tackle pressing problems and strengthen systematic governance, with a focus on identifying and addressing environmental risks and enhancing oversight across the entire solid waste management chain. It outlines targeted treatment measures for illegal solid waste dumping, waste dumped in karst caves, phosphogypsum storage sites, municipal solid waste landfills and hazardous waste landfills. The plan, additionally, sets requirements for managing industrial and hazardous waste, discarded electrical and electronic products, retired new-energy equipment, and solid waste generated by households and construction and agricultural activities.



Gilgit-Baltistan power push expected to strengthen CPEC connectivity, economic growth

Covert Report

Islamabad: Efforts to eliminate chronic power shortages in Gilgit-Baltistan are expected to reinforce the region's strategic role in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by improving energy security and supporting economic activity along one of the corridor's most vital routes. Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Advocate Amdad Hussain thus week ordered authorities to accelerate the implementation of key power generation and transmission projects being executed under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), stressing that their timely completion was essential to provide a lasting solution to electricity load shedding across the mountainous region. Chairing a high-level review meeting, the Chief Minister assessed progress on the 26 MW Shagarthang Hydropower Project, the 20 MW Hanzal Hydropower Project, the 100 MW Solar Power Project, the 16 MW Naltar Hydropower Project and the Regional Grid Project. He instructed project directors and relevant departments to prepare comprehensive implementation strategies with clearly defined timelines while assuring that the Gilgit-Baltistan government would recommend the timely release of funds by the federal government. Gilgit-Baltistan serves as Pakistan's gateway to China through the Khunjerab Pass and remains a strategically important region for CPEC, making reliable electricity infrastructure critical for supporting local communities, tourism, trade and long-term economic development.

Expressing concern over delays affecting ongoing schemes, the Chief Minister ordered the immediate return of vehicles allocated to PSDP projects that had been seized by district administrations, saying such actions were hampering construction activities and slowing implementation. He also addressed operational challenges arising from shortages of technical personnel, directing authorities to ensure the permanent deployment of trained sub-engineers at all power stations and to conduct full-load testing of every newly completed facility before commissioning. To enhance the region's long-term energy capacity, the Chief Minister said the government would encourage investment in future large-scale power projects through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements while introducing reforms to improve electricity tariffs and the billing system. Regarding the 26 MW Shagarthang Hydropower Project, he instructed the project director to prepare a detailed work plan that takes into account the limited construction season in the region. He also directed the Commissioner Baltistan and the relevant Deputy Commissioner to closely coordinate with project management and ensure tunnel construction continues during the winter months to avoid unnecessary delays. Taking serious notice of the stalled 20 MW Hanzal Hydropower Project, the Chief Minister described it as a project of critical importance for Gilgit and said no

further delays would be tolerated. He announced that a strategy would be finalized in consultation with all stakeholders to resume work without further interruption. Reviewing the 100 MW Solar Power Project, he noted that the initiative had been announced by the Prime Minister of Pakistan to address electricity shortages in Gilgit-Baltistan and said the Prime Minister was personally monitoring its implementation. He directed project authorities to adhere strictly to the approved timelines. The Chief Minister also ordered the Deputy Commissioner Gilgit to clear all outstanding land compensation payments for the 16 MW Naltar Hydropower Project within one week and submit a compliance report, while setting August 31 as the deadline for the project's completion. Expressing satisfaction over the progress of Phase-I of the Regional Grid Project, he instructed authorities to maintain high construction standards for transmission towers and directed deputy commissioners to facilitate timely land acquisition to keep the project on schedule. The accelerated development of power infrastructure is expected to improve electricity supply, support socio-economic development and strengthen the enabling environment for trade, tourism and investment in Gilgit-Baltistan, a region that holds strategic significance for Pakistan's connectivity with China under the broader CPEC framework.



Pakistan's First Donkey Meat Shipment from Gwadar Free Zone Successfully entered Chinese Market

Covert Report

Gwadar : Pakistan's first shipment of donkey meat produced in the Gwadar Free

Zone has officially entered the Chinese market after clearing customs at Tianjin Port on Wednesday, marking a milestone



in bilateral trade under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). "This marks Pakistan's first-ever export of donkey meat to China and the first food product manufactured in Gwadar Free Zone to reach the Chinese market—a truly historic milestone," stated Hangeng, the Chinese company. According to the shipment label, the consignment consists of frozen boneless donkey foreleg meat, packed in 25-kilogram cartons and produced at the Gwadar Free Zone in Balochistan. The product was processed for export under Pakistan's veterinary inspection and certification requirements before entering the Chinese market.



Italy's Kappa FuturFestival cements Turin's place on the global dance music map



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Ugo Ciarlatani



the 1990s, its designs gained popularity among DJs, ravers and underground music communities, establishing a connection that continues to define the festival today. According to Gian Luca Brignone, Partner and Chief Innovation Officer at Kappa FuturFestival, the company's relationship with electronic music began through grassroots engagement with clubs and emerging artists, helping the brand grow alongside Europe's evolving dance music movement. That legacy was evident throughout this year's festival, where fashion proved almost as significant as the performances themselves. Visitors wearing limited-edition Kappa apparel filled the venue, while the industrial architecture of Parco Dora provided a dramatic backdrop for both live performances and social media moments. Beyond entertainment, the festival has become an important contributor to Italy's

cultural economy, boosting tourism, hospitality and the international profile of Turin. The event demonstrates how music festivals can serve as platforms for promoting Italian design, creativity and cultural innovation while attracting visitors from around the world. As competition among Europe's summer festivals continues to intensify, Kappa FuturFestival has distinguished itself by offering a uniquely Italian experience—where internationally renowned DJs, iconic fashion, industrial heritage and contemporary youth culture come together in one of the continent's most distinctive celebrations of electronic music. With another successful edition concluded, the festival has further strengthened Italy's standing as a global destination for creative industries, reinforcing Turin's emergence as one of Europe's leading capitals for music, fashion and cultural tourism.

Covert Report
Turin: Italy has once again demonstrated its growing influence on the global electronic music scene as Kappa FuturFestival attracted more than 125,000 music lovers to Turin, transforming the northern Italian city into one of Europe's premier destina-

ment with the country's globally recognised fashion heritage. Thousands of visitors from across Europe and beyond travelled to Turin, contributing to the city's growing reputation as an international cultural destination. Central to the festival's identity is Kappa,

ing Kappa from a modest sock manufacturer into a global sportswear company during the late 1970s. Kappa helped redefine sports fashion by becoming one of the first brands to place its logo prominently on professional football jerseys, later partnering with clubs including Juventus, AC Milan and FC Barcelona. The brand also achieved worldwide recognition when American sprint legend Carl Lewis wore Kappa apparel while winning four gold medals at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Over time, Kappa expanded beyond sport to become deeply embedded in Europe's electronic music and club culture. During



tions for dance music, fashion and youth culture. Held from July 3 to 5 at the iconic Parco Dora, the festival's 13th edition brought together more than 120 internationally acclaimed artists, including Peggy Gou, Solomun, Four Tet, Armin van Buuren, Skrillex, Michael Bibi and Disclosure, reaffirming Italy's position as a leading host of major cultural and music events. Far more than a traditional electronic music festival, Kappa FuturFestival has evolved into a celebration of Italian creativity, combining world-class entertain-

the iconic Italian sportswear brand whose distinctive "Omini" logo has become one of Europe's most recognisable fashion symbols. Festival-goers embraced the brand through exclusive merchandise collections inspired by Kappa's extensive archive and longstanding connection with music and street culture. The partnership between the festival and the brand reflects a shared history rooted in Turin. One of the festival's founders, Juni Vitale, is the son of Maurizio Vitale, the businessman credited with transform-



The price tag of strategic miscalculations by major powers is always astronomical

Global Times

The renewed US-Iran conflict means that the entire world risks being drawn into a prolonged process of "bleeding out." The price tag of strategic miscalculations by major powers is always astronomical. Hopefully, the US and Iran can resume negotiations as soon as possible and apply the rationality needed to "stop the blood-letting" and put the brakes on the conflict.

Less than a month after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the US and Iran, tensions between the two sides have once again escalated. In the early hours of July 14, Iran time, the US military launched "a third night of strikes" against Iran, while Iran retaliated by targeting US military bases in regional countries. Global oil prices surged in

response, dark clouds once again gathered over the Strait of Hormuz, and the already fragile nerves of global supply chains were dealt another heavy blow. The renewed outbreak of hostilities between the US and Iran is in the interests of neither side involved in the conflict, and it also means that the entire world risks being drawn into a prolonged process of "bleeding out."

The signing of the MoU was hard-won, and it clearly proposes that the US and Iran "declare the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts" and "refrain from the threat or use of force against each other." The two sides also pledge to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs. These provisions embody the spirit of

equality, align with the purposes of the UN Charter, and are consistent with basic norms governing international relations. The international community had widely hoped that the document would help stabilize the situation around the Strait of Hormuz and establish a channel for sustained dialogue. However, the US and Iran have interpreted the MoU differently, with both sides accusing the other of "undermining the agreement." The US even openly described the MoU as merely a "test" and said that "it doesn't mean much," a stance that ultimately triggered a new round of confrontation.

The price tag of strategic miscalculations by major powers is always astronomical. In this conflict, no side can afford to indulge in the illusion of an easy "swift victory."

History has repeatedly shown that military means are never the solution. Responding to violence with violence only deepens hatred and confrontation, trapping all parties in an endless vicious cycle. It took the US 20 years to withdraw from Afghanistan, while the consequences of its involvement in the Iraq war continue to linger eight years later. The escalating military confrontation is creating multiple risks for the US and Iran, the broader Middle East, and the entire world.

The direct consequence of a return to full-scale hostility between the US and Iran would be to deepen the wounds of the global economy. The Strait of Hormuz handles around 20 percent of the world's oil and gas shipments, making it a lifeline for international trade and energy security. As international oil

prices recorded their biggest single-day increase in recent years, costs across global supply chains rose in tandem, casting another shadow over the already fragile global economic recovery. On July 8, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released an update to its World Economic Outlook, projecting that the global economy would grow by 3 percent in 2026, 0.1 percentage point lower than its April forecast. The IMF cited the impact of the conflict in the Middle East as the main reason for the downgrade.

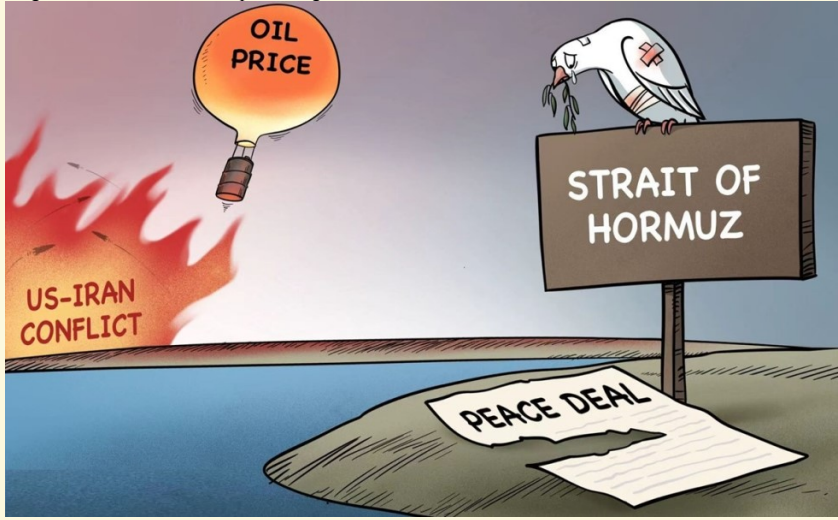
The most immediate and devastating toll of the US-Israel-Iran conflict is its staggering humanitarian cost. According to Iran's Fars News Agency on June 22, 3,519 people have been killed in the recent hostilities involving the US, Israel, and Iran. Data released by Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health on July 7 showed that Israeli attacks on Lebanon have killed 4,320 people since March 2. Any renewed military confrontation between the US and Iran would further amplify the spillover effects of the conflict, making the prospects for peace even dimmer.

The most concerning issue at the moment is not the difficulty in reaching a consensus through negotiations, but rather the complete closure of communication between both sides. The situation has reached a critical juncture between war and peace. At such a moment, all parties must demonstrate the utmost sincerity, remain committed to a political solution, and ensure that the momentum toward a ceasefire and negotiations is not reversed. The US urgently needs to abandon its hegemonic mind-set, acknowledge Iran's legitimate security concerns, and halt military strikes. Iran, for its part, should continue exercising strategic restraint, avoid actions that could escalate tensions, and preserve the necessary space for the resumption of bilateral talks.

China has repeatedly made its position clear at the UN Security Council and through bilateral diplomatic channels. It has successively proposed the five-point initiative with Pakistan and the four-point proposal on promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. The underlying principle has remained consistent: military means cannot resolve disputes; sovereignty equality, dialogue and diplomacy are the only viable paths to resolving conflicts. The US and Iran should resume follow-up negotiations as soon as possible and work toward a comprehensive agreement that is acceptable to both parties, welcomed by regional countries, and supported by the international community. Restoring the security and freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz at the earliest opportunity serves the interests of all parties. Shipping issues should be handled properly in order to address the concerns of the international community. Any unilateral blockade, military intervention, or forced imposition of transit fees would constitute a serious violation of the UN Charter and the fundamental principles of international law, representing a step backward in history.

In recent weeks, countries including Qatar and Pakistan have continued to play mediating roles, reflecting the strong desire and broad consensus for peace across both the region and the wider international community. The world cannot afford any more bloodshed. What the international community expects is a return to dialogue, not another military gamble. Hopefully, the US, Iran, and all relevant regional parties will apply the rationality needed to "stop the bloodletting" and put the brakes on the conflict.

Global Times



China's mid-year report is not only 'scorecard,' but also 'call to action'

Global Times

China's economic and social development miracle has been forged by overcoming adversity. China is not only fully capable of meeting its full-year development targets, but will also continue to provide stability, growth, and hope to a volatile world.

China's gross domestic product (GDP) reached 69.57 trillion yuan in the first half of this year, up 4.7 percent year on year at constant prices. This growth rate is in line with the annual economic growth target, and compared with the same period last year, the GDP increased by 3.6 trillion yuan, marking the largest growth for the same period in the past five years. Especially against the

backdrop of the global economy that's being severely impacted by geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East, it is particularly remarkable and commendable that China, as such a mega-economy, has achieved its goals.

To assess the "inner strength" of a major economy, the first question is whether it can remain composed in the face of sudden shocks. So far this year, the greatest variable in the international landscape has been the geopolitical conflict in the Middle East, which has continued since the end of February. The conflict has driven up oil prices, disrupted markets, and triggered energy supply "red alerts" in many countries. Yet international opinion - including that of many Western media outlets - has reached a broadly similar conclusion: China's domestic energy supply has been among the least affected, while its exports of new energy products

have surged, providing urgently needed resources for countries seeking to accelerate their energy transition amid conflict and turmoil. In addition, as Europe recently experienced extreme heat, Chinese cooling products have been selling like hotcakes in local markets, with some media outlets describing this as China's "cold power." Together with the economic data, these developments paint a three-dimensional picture of the Chinese economy.

China's foreign trade data released on Tuesday are equally noteworthy. In the first half of the year, China's imports grew by 22.1 percent, 8.7 percentage points higher than the export growth rate, contributing more to overall foreign trade growth than exports. China also recorded import growth from more than 150 countries and regions. This fully demonstrates that, as the world's largest manufacturing nation and second-largest consumer market, China possesses a vast market with enormous potential. The more stable China's economy is, the lower the risk of disruptions to global industrial and supply chains. The more open the Chinese market becomes, the more development opportunities it creates for the rest of the world.

Looking at this mid-year economic report, beyond "stability" and "resilience," the traits of "innovation" and "quality" are becoming increasingly prominent, emerging as high-lights of China's high-quality economic development. The contribution rate of new growth drivers exceeds 40 percent, traditional industries are accelerating their transformation and upgrading, the added value of high-tech manufacturing above designated size grew by 13.3 percent year-on-year, and industries related to artificial intelligence (AI) - such as integrated circuit manufacturing and intelligent vehicle equipment manufacturing - all maintained high growth rates above 30 percent. Behind these figures lies the accelerated transition

of new quality productive forces from concept to reality. From smart mobility and AI-assisted healthcare to humanoid robots entering the service sector and AI-powered government services improving people's daily lives, these developments all demonstrate China's commitment to "investing in people" as the core of its economic strategy.

Meanwhile, China's consumer landscape is becoming increasingly diverse and sophisticated. In Shenzhen, "Tech Tours" featuring experiences such as drone demonstrations and autonomous taxi rides are attracting a growing number of international visitors. In Chengdu, the booming "Guzi economy" caters to younger consumers' demand for personalized and trend-driven products. In Dali and Altay, the integration of short dramas with cultural tourism is creating new growth opportunities for both industries. At the same time, the consumption potential of lower-tier markets should not be underestimated, with major retail chains and trendy flagship stores expanding into county-level cities. China recently unveiled its first five-year plan dedicated exclusively to expanding consumption, which places greater emphasis on service consumption in areas such as eldercare, childcare, culture and tourism, and healthcare, opening up broad new prospects for consumption-driven growth.

Admittedly, economic growth moderated in the second quarter. Some Western media outlets have seized on the 4.3 percent growth rate, arguing that it represents a significant slowdown from the 5.0 percent recorded in the first quarter and using it to reinforce a predetermined pessimistic narrative. Yet this trend has been global. According to forecasts by international institutions, nearly all major economies experienced slower growth in the second quarter. More tellingly, while the International Monetary Fund lowered its forecast for global economic growth, it raised its projection for China's growth by 0.2 percentage points to 4.6

percent. One forecast went down while the other went up, and that contrast speaks for itself. At the same time, the moderation in second-quarter growth is also a reminder that China's economy is advancing against strong headwinds, facing considerable challenges and uncertainties. But China's economic miracle has always been forged by overcoming adversity. As long as the country's vast market, comprehensive industrial system, abundant talent pool, and innovation capacity are better integrated, China will achieve its annual development targets and will continue to provide stability, growth, and hope to an increasingly volatile world.

2026 marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan period. The mid-year economic report is not only a "scorecard" but also a call to action. The huge vessel of the Chinese economy has never feared rough seas. Through steady growth, continued opening-up, and sustained innovation, it has consistently offset global uncertainty.

China has every reason to remain confident in its ability to stabilize growth, unlock new drivers of development, and deliver an even stronger performance in the second half of the year while achieving its annual economic and social development goals.

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Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad urges stronger global action to end conflict-related sexual violence

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan this week called for stronger international action to combat conflict-related sexual violence, with Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, urging the Security Council to ensure the full and impartial implementation of its resolutions aimed at protecting women and holding perpetrators accountable. Addressing a high-level debate of the 15-member UN Security Council, Ambassador Asim said the international community must move beyond commitments and ensure that existing mechanisms are implemented consistently across all conflicts without exception. "The true test of this Council's commitment lies in the full, faithful and non-selective implementation of its resolutions, including those on women, peace and security," he told delegates during the session, which was convened by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Council's President for July. The debate focused on the United Nations Secretary-General's latest report on conflict-related sexual violence, presented by Pramila Patten, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. More than 70 national

delegations participated in the discussions. According to the report, the United Nations verified 9,788 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2025 across 21 situations of concern, representing more than double the number recorded the previous year. However, UN officials cautioned that the true scale of the crime is likely far greater, with many cases remaining unreported because of fear, stigma and limited access to support services. In his address, Ambassador Asim described conflict-related sexual violence as one of the gravest consequences of war, saying it devastates individuals, tears apart families, terrorises communities and leaves lasting trauma across generations, including for children born as a result of wartime rape. He emphasised that accountability must remain at the centre of the international response and urged the Security Council to ensure that its listing mechanism, which identifies perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, applies equally to all situations on the Council's agenda. "No situation should be shielded from scrutiny, and no perpetrator should be allowed to treat sexual violence as cost-free," the Pakistani envoy said.

He also called for the more effective use of UN sanctions against persistent offenders where appropriate and advocated justice systems that place victims and survivors at the centre of legal processes through trauma-informed and accessible mechanisms. Ambassador Asim stressed that survivors require comprehensive and timely support extending beyond legal accountability. He said medical treatment, psychosocial care, legal assistance, livelihood opportunities and reparations should form an integral part of international efforts to assist victims. Highlighting the importance of prevention, the Pakistani envoy argued that lasting progress would require strict compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, greater participation of women in peace processes, stronger early warning systems, sustained financial support and responsible arms control measures. He further maintained that addressing the underlying causes of armed conflict—including foreign occupation and the denial of the right to self-determination—remains essential to preventing future violations. The Security Council debate took place 17 years



after the adoption of the landmark UN resolution recognising conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security. The discussion also marked continued efforts by the United Nations to strengthen accountability and improve protection for civilians caught in armed conflicts worldwide.

Pakistan reiterated its support for a victim-centred and impartial international approach, calling on the Security Council to ensure that its resolutions are implemented consistently and without political selectivity in every conflict situation.

Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri highlights Pakistan's expanding role in the \$7 trillion global halal economy



NewsWire
Jakarta: Pakistan is emerging as an important player in the rapidly growing global halal economy, with Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week highlighting the country's vast potential for trade, investment, innovation and strategic partnerships during a panel discussion at the Halal Expo Indonesia.

Addressing policymakers, business leaders, investors and industry experts, the Pakistani envoy said the global halal economy—valued at more than \$7 trillion—offers enormous opportunities for economic cooperation, cross-border investment and sustainable business growth. Ambassador Zahid emphasised that Pakistan is steadily establishing itself as an emerging hub within the global halal ecosystem, supported by

its strong agricultural base, expanding manufacturing sector, internationally recognised halal products and strategic geographical location linking South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. He noted that Pakistan possesses significant untapped potential across a broad range of halal industries, including food processing, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, healthcare products, textiles, leather goods, sports equipment and Islamic finance. The ambassador stressed that closer international collaboration is essential to unlocking the full potential of the halal economy, saying stronger partnerships can help improve market access, promote innovation, strengthen supply chains and encourage greater investment among Muslim-majority countries and global trading partners. He highlighted Pakistan's commitment to creating a business-friendly environment aimed at attracting foreign investment while expanding exports of value-added halal products to international markets. Ambassador Chaudhri also underlined the importance of harmonising halal standards and certification systems to facilitate smoother international trade and enhance consumer confi-

dence, enabling businesses to compete more effectively in the global marketplace. He observed that growing consumer demand for halal-certified products extends well beyond Muslim-majority countries, making the halal economy one of the fastest-growing segments of international commerce. The envoy said Pakistan is well positioned to capitalise on this expanding market through innovation, quality manufacturing and strategic partnerships with regional and international stakeholders. His participation at the Halal Expo Indonesia reflected Pakistan's broader economic diplomacy focused on strengthening trade ties, attracting investment and promoting the country's industrial capabilities in high-growth sectors. The expo brought together government representatives, diplomats, investors and businesses from across the Developing Eight (D-8) member countries and other international markets to explore new opportunities in halal trade, investment and industrial cooperation. Ambassador Chaudhri reaffirmed

Pakistan's commitment to working closely with international partners to build a more integrated global halal ecosystem, expressing confidence that enhanced collaboration would generate new opportunities for businesses, strengthen economic connectivity and contribute to sustainable growth across the halal industry.



D-8 Secretary General Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlights media's role in promoting peace at Azerbaijan's Shusha Global Media Forum

Covert Report
Shusha: D-8 Secretary General Ambassador Sohail Mahmood has underscored the vital role of responsible journalism in promoting peace, restoring public trust and countering misinformation, as he participated in the 4th Shusha Global Media Forum in Azerbaijan alongside leading media professionals, policymakers and academics from around the world. Held on July 13-14 under the theme "The Mission of the Media in Promoting Peace: Restoring Truth and Rebuilding Trust," the international forum brought together 160 prominent media leaders, senior government officials, scholars and communi-

cation experts from more than 50 countries to discuss the rapidly evolving global information landscape. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood described it as a privilege to participate in the high-profile gathering, noting that the forum provided an important platform for exchanging ideas on the challenges and opportunities confronting the global media industry. Discussions focused on the transformative impact of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, the growing challenge of misinformation and disinformation, and the responsibility of media organisations to uphold professional standards while fostering public confidence in an increasingly complex information environment.

The D-8 Secretary General highlighted the importance of credible, ethical and responsible journalism in strengthening dialogue among nations, supporting informed public discourse and contributing to international peace and stability. One of the key highlights of the forum was a three-hour high-level interactive session with President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, during which the Azerbaijani leader shared his country's foreign policy priorities and offered detailed perspectives on major regional and international developments. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood described the session as highly insightful, saying it provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of Azerbaijan's diplomatic outlook and its approach to evolving geopolitical challenges. Following the session, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood met President Aliyev and conveyed his appreciation for Azerbaijan's active contributions to the Developing Eight (D-8) Organization for Economic Cooperation since becoming a full member in 2025. He thanked the Azerbaijani president for his leadership and support in advancing the D-8's objectives of promoting economic cooperation, trade, investment and sustainable development among member states. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood reaffirmed the D-8 Secretariat's commitment to strengthening collaboration with Azerbaijan and other member countries in pursuit of shared economic prosperity, regional



connectivity and international cooperation. The Shusha Global Media Forum has emerged as one of Azerbaijan's leading international platforms for dialogue on media, communication and global affairs, bringing together influential voices from across the world to examine the evolving role of journalism in addressing contemporary geopolitical, technological and societal challenges.

The participation of the D-8 Secretary General reflected the organisation's growing engagement in international discussions on media, diplomacy and global governance, while reinforcing its commitment to fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation among its member states and the wider international community.



Ali Rehman Malik's nine questions to think more clearly

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: In an era dominated by instant opinions, endless information and rapid-fire debates, writer Ali Rehman Malik argues that the quality of our thinking depends less on having the right answers and more on asking the right questions. In a reflective essay titled “Nine Questions That Have Improved My Thinking,” Malik presents what he describes as a practical discipline rather than a philosophical theory—a framework designed to sharpen judgment, encourage intellectual humility and improve decision-making across politics, institutions, organisations and everyday life. Rather than treating answers as permanent truths, Malik suggests that they are often shaped by circumstances, history and context. Questions, by contrast, possess a broader value because they remain relevant across changing situations and can continually test assumptions against reality. At the heart of his approach is a call to distinguish observation from interpretation. He urges readers to begin by asking, “What am I actually observing?” before assigning meaning to events, arguing that careful observation forms the foundation of sound reasoning. Another key principle is intellectual precision. Before accepting or rejecting an argument, he advises identifying exactly what is being claimed. Many disagreements, he suggests, stem not from conflicting views but from people responding to different versions of the same argument. Malik also encourages readers to examine the scope of broad assertions by asking who they apply to and by what standard they should be measured. Defining the



relevant audience and criteria, he argues, often transforms vague statements into more meaningful analysis. Moving beyond surface-level explanations, he advocates looking for the mecha-

nisms that produce visible outcomes. Instead of focusing solely on symptoms, thoughtful inquiry should seek to understand the underlying processes that shape institutions, movements, identities and

social trends. Another recurring theme is the distinction between evidence and representation. Narratives, historical analogies, symbols and conceptual frameworks can help

explain reality, Malik writes, but they should never be mistaken for reality itself. His framework also emphasises intellectual openness. Conclusions should remain subject to revision as new evidence emerges, different perspectives are considered or changing circumstances provide fresh insight. This willingness to update one’s beliefs, he argues, is what prevents critical thinking from becoming rigid ideology. Equally important is understanding function over appearance. Every institution, policy or social practice has both an official purpose and the role it performs in practice, and the two are not always identical. Recognising this distinction allows for a more realistic assessment of how systems actually operate. Malik concludes with what he considers the most important question of all: “Am I willing to update if reality asks me to?” Without that commitment, he argues, the preceding questions lose much of their value. The essay ends on a deliberately modest note. Malik does not present the nine questions as universal truths or personal insights deserving admiration. Their worth, he writes, lies solely in whether they help readers examine the world more carefully. If they fail to do so, they should be discarded. If they succeed, they become practical tools for clearer thinking in an increasingly complex world.

A WORKING DISCIPLINE, NOT A THEORY

Nine Questions That Have Improved My Thinking

Not answers. A way of staying in contact with what's there.

Ali Rehman Malik

Germany approves €13.9 billion in arms exports during first half of 2026

Newsire
Berlin: Germany approved export licences for military equipment and weapons worth approximately €13.9 billion (\$15.9 billion) during the first six months of 2026, with Ukraine remaining the largest recipient as Berlin continued its military support for Kyiv. According to provisional government figures released this week, authorised exports between January and June totalled around €13.87 billion. The package included roughly €9.6 billion in war weapons and about €4.3 billion in other military equipment. Ukraine accounted for approximately €2.5 billion in

approved exports, making it both the biggest overall destination and the leading non-European Union recipient. German authorities said the licences were intended to strengthen Ukraine’s defensive capabilities amid the ongoing conflict with Russia. Israel emerged as the sixth-largest destination for German military exports during the period, receiving approvals worth about €799 million. The German government said that more than 60 percent of the approved exports were connected to a major maritime defence programme, while nearly one-fifth related to bilateral defence industrial cooperation benefiting Germany’s armed forces. The remaining approvals

covered other categories of military equipment. Other major recipients of German defence exports during the first half of the year included the United States, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Estonia and Slovenia. The latest figures underscore Germany’s continued role as one of Europe’s leading defence exporters while reflecting Berlin’s sustained military assistance to Ukraine alongside broader defence cooperation with allied nations.



German Ambassador to Pakistan
H.E. Ina Lepel

Bulgaria withdraws from coalition backing Ukraine, stresses diplomatic solution

Newsire
Sofia: Bulgaria this week announced its withdrawal from the Western-backed voluntary coalition supporting Ukraine, marking a significant shift in the country’s approach to the conflict while reaffirming its commitments to NATO and the European Union. Prime Minister Rumen Radev confirmed the decision after receiving an invitation from French President Emmanuel Macron to attend the coalition’s latest summit, stating that Bulgaria would no longer participate in the initiative. The Bulgarian leader said his government would not be part of efforts involving continued financial and military assistance to Ukraine, arguing that the conflict should be resolved through intensified diplomatic engagement rather than prolonged

military support. He emphasized, however, that Bulgaria remains fully committed to meeting its defence and security obligations within NATO and the EU. The announcement follows a series of policy changes adopted after the country’s April elections that have signalled a departure from previous support measures for Ukraine. Last month, the Bulgarian government suspended further transfers of weapons from its military reserves, saying the country had already made a sufficient contribution and now needed to prioritise its own national security requirements and economic stability. The move reflects an evolving foreign and security policy in Sofia as the government balances alliance commitments with domestic priorities amid the continuing war in Ukraine.



Portugal seeks stronger economic and strategic engagement with Pakistan at high-level talks

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Portugal has signalled its intention to broaden engagement with Pakistan across a wide range of economic and strategic sectors, as senior officials from both countries concluded the fourth round of Pakistan-Portugal Bilateral Political Consultations in Islamabad with a renewed commitment to expanding bilateral cooperation.

The Portuguese delegation was led by Ambassador Helena Malcata, Director-General for Foreign Policy, while Pakistan's delegation was headed by Ambassador Ayesha Ali, Additional Secretary (Europe). The consultations formed part of the two countries' regular diplomatic dialogue aimed at strengthening political, economic and institutional ties. Portugal used the consultations to under-

score its interest in expanding cooperation beyond traditional diplomatic engagement, with discussions focusing on opportunities in trade, investment, labour mobility, agriculture, renewable energy, information technology, education and cultural exchanges. The breadth of the agenda reflected Lisbon's growing interest in enhancing its partnership with Pakistan at a time when



both countries are seeking to diversify economic cooperation and promote greater business-to-business engagement. During the talks, the two sides conducted a comprehensive review of bilateral relations and identified new avenues for collaboration in sectors considered vital for sustainable economic growth and technological development. Trade and investment featured prominently, alongside discussions on facilitating labour mobility and strengthening cooperation in emerging industries such as renewable energy and digital technologies. The consultations also addressed regional and international developments, with both delegations exchanging views on key global issues and discussing closer coordination in multilateral forums, highlighting

a shared commitment to constructive diplomatic engagement. As part of the visit, the Portuguese delegation also called on Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, reaffirming Lisbon's commitment to maintaining regular high-level contacts and strengthening institutional cooperation between the two foreign ministries. The latest consultations underscore Portugal's expanding diplomatic outreach in South Asia and its interest in developing stronger economic and political ties with Pakistan. Officials from both countries reaffirmed their commitment to sustained dialogue, deeper bilateral engagement and practical cooperation across sectors with significant potential for long-term mutual benefit.



Pakistan showcases manufacturing excellence as envoy presents FIFA World Cup 'Trionda' football to US DFC chief

Abida Shaheen

Islamabad: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, has used one of the country's most celebrated export products—the official FIFA World Cup 2026 match ball—to showcase Pakistan's manufacturing capabilities during high-level talks with the head of the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), as both sides explored opportunities to expand bilateral economic cooperation and investment. During a meeting in Washington, Ambassador Sheikh presented Benjamin Black, Chief Executive of the US DFC, with the official FIFA World Cup 2026 match ball, "Trionda," describing the gift as a symbol of Pakistan's internationally recognised sports manufacturing industry and industrial excellence.

The ambassador noted that Pakistan's continued selection as the producer of the tournament's official match ball reflects the country's long-established reputation for manufacturing high-quality sporting goods for the global market. Highlighting Pakistan's export potential, Sheikh said the production of the official FIFA World Cup football represents a source of national pride and demonstrates the country's ability to compete successfully in international manufacturing through quality, craftsmanship and technological capability. Benjamin Black praised the quality and craftsmanship of the Trionda football and reaffirmed the US DFC's commitment to maintaining its partnership with Pakistan in support of the country's socio-economic development and infrastructure

modernisation.

The meeting focused on strengthening the economic dimension of Pakistan-US relations, with both sides reviewing existing cooperation and discussing new investment opportunities in sectors considered vital to Pakistan's long-term growth. According to officials, discussions covered potential collaboration in energy, infrastructure, ports, mining and mineral development, and information technology, alongside ongoing and prospective development projects. Ambassador Sheikh welcomed the DFC's interest in expanding its investment portfolio in Pakistan, stressing that stronger economic engagement would provide a durable foundation for the evolving bilateral relationship between Islamabad and Washington.



He emphasised that sustained commercial cooperation and investment would help reinforce long-term strategic ties while supporting Pakistan's efforts to attract foreign capital and accelerate economic development. To ensure momentum, both sides agreed to designate dedicated focal points for priority projects, enabling closer coordination and faster implementation of mutually beneficial initiatives. The presentation of the Trionda football forms part of Pakistan's broader diplomatic effort to promote its globally recognised sports goods industry. Earlier this month, Ambassador Sheikh also presented the official FIFA World Cup 2026 match ball to World Bank President Ajay Banga, highlighting Pakistan's role as one of the world's leading manufacturers of premium footballs. Named "Trionda," meaning "three waves"

in Spanish, the official match ball commemorates the three host nations of the 2026 FIFA World Cup—the United States, Canada and Mexico. The ball incorporates advanced four-panel construction, an embossed surface for enhanced grip and connected-ball technology featuring a built-in motion sensor designed to assist match officials with real-time decision-making during games. The latest engagement reflects Pakistan's strategy of combining economic diplomacy with the promotion of its internationally competitive manufacturing sectors, using globally recognised products such as the FIFA World Cup football to strengthen partnerships with key international financial institutions and investors while enhancing the country's image as a reliable manufacturing and investment destination.



PAKISTAN ENVOY GIFTS FIFA WORLD CUP FOOTBALL TO US IDFC CHIEF

Strengthening ties through goodwill gestures.

Japan explores deeper development partnership with Hyderabad, eyes cooperation in clean water and renewable energy

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: Japan this week expressed its interest in expanding development cooperation with Hyderabad, focusing on clean water, environmental protection, renewable energy and sustainable urban development, as Acting Consul General of Japan in Karachi Tamura Takahiro held talks with Hyderabad Mayor Kashif Ali Shoro during a visit to the city.

The Japanese delegation, which also included Fatima Hussain, Cultural and Public Affairs Assistant at the Consulate General of Japan in Karachi, paid a courtesy call on the mayor at the Mayor's Secretariat, where they were welcomed with traditional Sindhi hospitality. Mayor Shoro

presented the visiting diplomats with bouquets as well as the iconic Sindhi ajrak and topi, symbolising the cultural heritage of the province.

Senior local government officials, including Deputy Commissioner Zainul Aabideen Memon, Municipal Commissioner Zahoor Ahmed Lakhan, town chairmen and elected representatives, also attended the meeting.

During the discussions, Mayor Shoro outlined Hyderabad's historical significance, cultural heritage and local government framework while briefing the Japanese delegation on the city's ongoing urban development initiatives. He said the municipal administration has priori-

tised addressing long-standing civic challenges, particularly the provision of clean drinking water, improved drainage infrastructure and the rehabilitation of roads. According to the mayor, considerable progress has been achieved over the past year through projects aimed at expanding water supply networks, upgrading sewerage systems and improving road infrastructure to enhance public services for residents.

Acting Consul General Tamura Takahiro highlighted Japan's longstanding development cooperation in Sindh, particularly in the health and energy sectors, and reaffirmed Tokyo's commitment to supporting sustainable development initiatives across the province.

He noted that Japan is keen to broaden its partnership with local authorities and welcomed Hyderabad's ongoing efforts to modernise its urban infrastructure. The Japanese diplomat also identified clean water management, environmental sustainability and solar energy as promising areas for future collaboration.

The meeting reflected the growing emphasis on city-level international partnerships, with both sides exploring opportunities to exchange expertise and strengthen cooperation beyond traditional development assistance.

Officials discussed expanding collaboration in areas including local government administration, education, cultural exchanges, environmen-



tal management, knowledge sharing and sustainable urban planning, recognising these sectors as important for improving the quality of life in rapidly growing urban centres.

The talks concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to strengthening the longstanding friendship between Japan and Pakistan through closer engagement at the municipal level.

Mayor Shoro thanked the Japanese delegation for its continued interest in Hyderabad's development and expressed confidence that enhanced cooperation with Japan would contribute to the city's efforts to build more resilient, environmentally sustainable and citizen-focused urban infrastructure.

The visit underscored Japan's continuing role as one of Pakistan's key development partners, with growing attention being given to sustainable cities, renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure as both countries seek to deepen cooperation at the local level.



EU steps up Venezuela earthquake response with additional €20 million in emergency assistance



Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan H. E. Mr Raimundas Karoblis

EU's response to the disaster, building on the €5 million in life-saving aid approved in late June and the €52 million allocated earlier this year to address the humanitarian consequences of Venezuela's prolonged socio-economic crisis. Commissioner Lahbib is expected to visit Caracas, where she will meet EU-funded humanitarian partners, Venezuelan authorities coordinating emergency operations and members of a European medical team deployed through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Her visit underscores the European Union's commitment to supporting Venezuela during one of its most challenging humanitarian emergencies in recent years. The additional resources will help provide emergency food supplies, safe drinking water, medical assistance, temporary shelter and other essential services for families displaced or severely affected by the earthquakes. EU humanitarian assistance is channelled through United Nations agencies, international humanitarian organisations and local partner organisations to ensure aid reaches vulnerable communities as quickly as possible. Alongside financial support, the European Union has mobilised substantial operational assistance. Under the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge, launched in June, two EU-funded relief flights have already delivered nearly 80 tonnes of essential

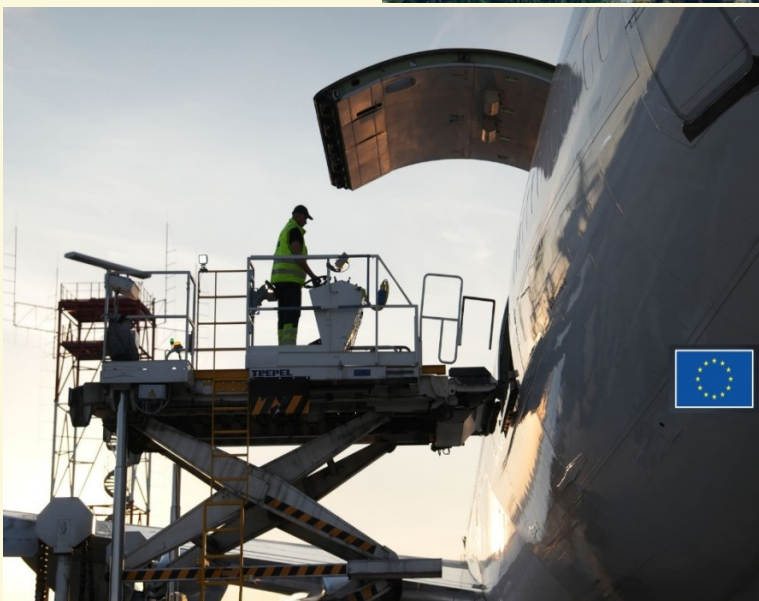


Covert Report
Brussels: The European Union this week announced an additional €20 million in emergency assistance for Venezuela following the devastating earthquakes, reinforcing its humanitarian response as EU Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management Hadja Lahbib travels to the country to demonstrate Europe's continued solidarity

with affected communities. The new package includes €10 million in humanitarian funding to assist the worst-hit populations with urgent relief, while a further €10 million, subject to approval by the EU Budgetary Authority, will support the deployment of search and rescue teams, medical personnel, specialist experts and in-kind emergency assistance. The funding significantly expands the

The EU response was immediate:

- 12 Search and Rescue Teams
- 3 Emergency Medical Team
- 1 Telecommunications module
- 1 Team of medical experts
- 1 Structural engineering team
- 1 EU Civil Protection Team



humanitarian supplies to Venezuela. The EU has also activated its Civil Protection Mechanism, enabling around 750 emergency responders and technical experts from 18 participating countries to assist in relief operations. The deployment includes urban search-and-rescue teams, emergency medical personnel, medicines, temporary shelter materials and a satellite telecommunications platform to strengthen coordination in affected areas. In addition, the EU's Copernicus satellite service has provided emergency mapping to support rescue efforts, damage assessments and humanitarian planning. Ahead of her visit, Commissioner Lahbib reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to standing alongside the Venezuelan people during

the crisis. "Venezuela may be an ocean away, but the Venezuelan people are close to our hearts. From the very first hours after the earthquakes, the European Union has stood with them," she said. She added that the latest funding would help deliver life-saving assistance, including food, clean water, medicines and shelter, while paying tribute to emergency responders working around the clock to rescue survivors and assist affected communities. The expanded assistance reflects the European Union's broader humanitarian strategy of combining financial support, logistical capacity and coordinated international action to respond rapidly to major disasters while supporting long-term recovery and resilience.



Jane Marriott backs deeper UK-Pakistan economic partnership as reform agenda gathers pace

Celina Ali

Islamabad: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott this week reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting Pakistan's economic reform programme, as London and Islamabad agreed to deepen cooperation across investment, economic governance, public finance, health and sustainable development in a

Marriott welcomed Pakistan's recent progress in restoring macroeconomic stability and reiterated Britain's continued backing for the government's reform agenda, signalling London's confidence in Islamabad's efforts to stabilize the economy and create a more attractive environment for international investment. Her remarks come at a time when Pakistan

Finance Minister Aurangzeb emphasized that the government remains committed to further expanding UK-Pakistan economic cooperation through sustained reforms, enhanced investment facilitation and continued engagement with international development partners and investors. He acknowledged Britain's longstanding contribution to Pakistan's economic gov-



fresh push to strengthen their longstanding bilateral partnership. The commitment came during a meeting between Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and High Commissioner Marriott in Islamabad, where both sides agreed to maintain close coordination on issues of mutual interest while expanding economic engagement between the two countries.

is pursuing wide-ranging structural reforms aimed at strengthening fiscal discipline, broadening the tax base, improving governance and encouraging foreign direct investment. The United Kingdom has remained one of Pakistan's most significant development and economic partners, providing technical expertise and institutional support across several critical sectors.

ernance, fiscal reforms, climate resilience, public finance management, healthcare and social development, describing the partnership as an important pillar supporting the country's long-term economic transformation. The minister also praised the United Kingdom's continued technical assistance in population management and public health, highlighting these sectors as essential components of Pakistan's broader devel-



Deputy high commissioner of UK to Pakistan H.E. Matt Cannell

opment strategy. Aurangzeb stressed the need to institutionalize population planning through a coordinated national framework with measura-

ble outcomes, while incorporating international best practices to promote women's education, greater workforce participation and improved public awareness. He said sustained cooperation in these areas would strengthen Pakistan's human development indicators and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable economic growth over the long term. The discussions reflected the expanding scope of UK-Pakistan cooperation beyond traditional development assistance, with increasing focus on reforms, investment, institutional capacity building and sustainable development. Both sides agreed to continue working closely to advance shared economic priorities and reinforce bilateral ties. For the United Kingdom, continued engagement with Pakistan aligns with its broader objective of supporting economic resilience, governance reforms and sustainable development in South Asia, while fostering stronger commercial and investment links with one of the region's largest emerging markets. The meeting underscored the enduring strategic partnership between London and Islamabad, with Jane Marriott reaffirming Britain's commitment to remaining a reliable partner as Pakistan advances its economic reform programme and seeks long-term, sustainable growth.



“It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not.”
Andre Gide

“I am so clever that sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I am saying.”
Oscar Wilde

Italian top court upholds life sentences for family of Pakistani-origin girl murdered over arranged marriage refusal

Newswire

Rome: Italy's highest court this week upheld the murder convictions and life sentences of the parents and relatives of Pakistani-origin teenager Saman Abbas, bringing to a close one of the country's most high-profile "honour killing" cases. The Supreme Court of Cassation, Italy's highest court of appeal, confirmed the life sentences of Abbas' parents, Shabbir Abbas and Nazia Shaheen, along with her cousins, Ijaz Ikram and Nomanul Haq. The court also upheld the 22-year prison sentence handed to her uncle, Danish Hasnain. Saman Abbas, 18, who lived with her family in the northern Italian town of Novellara, was killed in 2021 after refusing an arranged marriage to a cousin in Pakistan, according

to Italian authorities. Investigators said Abbas had opposed her family's plans and had sought protection from Italian social services in 2020. She was placed in a shelter and reported her parents to police before returning home in April 2021. Her disappearance triggered a police investigation after officers visited the family home in May 2021 and found it deserted. Authorities later discovered that her parents had fled to Pakistan without her. Security camera footage recorded days before her disappearance showed five family members leaving the house carrying shovels, a crowbar and a bucket before returning several hours later, evidence that became central to the prosecution's case. Following an international manhunt, both parents were extra-

ditioned from Pakistan to Italy to stand trial. The Supreme Court's ruling makes the convictions final, concluding a lengthy legal process that drew widespread attention in Italy and internationally as a landmark case involving violence linked to forced marriage. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni welcomed the verdict, saying the judicial process had reached its conclusion. She said that while no ruling could restore Abbas' life, those responsible for the "barbaric crime" had now been definitively convicted.



Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan
Ugo Ciarlatani

Pakistan reaffirms commitment to expanding strategic partnership with France

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan this week reaffirmed its commitment to further strengthening its longstanding relationship with France and enhancing cooperation on regional and international issues, as President Asif Ali Zardari extended warm greetings to French President Emmanuel Macron and the people of France on the occasion of Bastille Day. In a message marking France's National Day, President Zardari said Pakistan attached great importance to its enduring friendship and broad-based partnership with France, describing bilateral ties as being rooted in mutual respect, shared democratic values and a common commitment to peace, sustainable development and the principles of international law. The president said relations between Pakistan and France had evolved into a multifaceted partnership encompassing political dialogue, trade and investment, development cooperation, education, culture and collaboration in multilateral forums. He noted that the two countries have maintained regular engagement over the years and continue to work together on a range of bilateral and global issues. Reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to further deepening cooperation, President Zardari said Pakistan looked forward to expanding collaboration with France in areas of mutual interest while strengthening coordination at regional and international forums to address shared challenges and promote global peace and stability. He expressed confidence that the close cooperation between Islamabad and Paris would continue to grow, opening new avenues for mutually beneficial partnerships and fostering stronger people-to-people contacts. He added that enhanced engagement would contribute to greater economic opportunities, sustainable development and the prosperity and well-being of both nations. President Zardari also conveyed his best wishes to President Macron and the French people, expressing hope for France's continued progress and prosperity while reaffirming Pakistan's desire to build on the strong foundations of bilateral relations in the years ahead.

