

Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri felicitates Indonesia on 81st Independence Day Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan's Ambassador to Indonesia, Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, has extended warm felicitations and best wishes to the government and people of Indonesia on the country's 81st Independence Day. In his message, Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri congratulated the brotherly people of Indo (Page-5)

Ukraine seeks bigger tariff-free farm export quotas from EU amid Black Sea disruptions Newswire
Kyiv: Ukraine is seeking to renegotiate and increase the maximum quantities of agricultural products it can export to the European Union without tariffs, with consultations with the European Commission expected to (Page-10)

Pakistan's first lunar rover named Jinnah-1

Set to join China's Chang'e-8 mission



Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan has named its first-ever lunar rover "Jinnah-1", marking a significant milestone in the country's space programme and further deepening its cooperation with China in lunar exploration and scientific research.
The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) announced the official name of the rover at a ceremony in Islamabad this week, saying Jinnah-1 would be launched in 2029 as part of China's Chang'e-8 lunar mission.
The Pakistani rover will travel to the Moon's south pole, a region that has emerged as one of the most important destinations in the global race for lunar exploration because of its challenging terrain and the possibility of finding valuable scientific clues, including indications of water ice.
The mission will provide Pakistan with an important opportunity to participate directly in international lunar exploration while strengthening the country's scientific and technological partnership with China. Suparco said the name "Jinnah-1" was selected from around 4,000 proposals submitted during a nationwide competition. Seven participants proposed the same name, after which the winner was determined through a lucky draw. Tayyab Karim, a 17-year-old from Bahawalnagar, was declared the winner for

proposing the name.
The name is a tribute to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and, according to the Suparco chairman, represents Pakistan's resolve to advance its scientific capabilities and explore new frontiers in space.
The selection of the name also gives the mission a distinct national identity as Pakistan prepares to send an indigenous rover to the lunar surface in cooperation with China.
Jinnah-1 will undertake a range of scientific investigations on the Moon. Suparco said the rover would study plasma and radiation and examine the geology of the lunar surface.
It will also conduct experiments intended to contribute to future lunar research, including studies relevant to the possibility of sustained human activity on the Moon. The lunar south pole has become a major focus of international space programmes because scientists believe permanently shadowed areas in the region may preserve water ice and other volatile materials. Such resources could potentially support future scientific missions and human exploration.

For Pakistan, participation in Chang'e-8 represents an important expansion of its space cooperation with China beyond satellite development and related technologies into planetary and lunar exploration.
Suparco announced its collaboration with China's Chang'e-8 mission in 2024, describing the planned inclusion of Pakistan's indigenous rover as a major milestone for the national space programme.
The partnership places Pakistan among the countries participating in China's broader lunar exploration efforts and offers Pakistani scientists and engineers an opportunity to contribute to scientific research conducted on the Moon.
China's Chang'e programme has progressively expanded the country's capabilities in lunar exploration, including orbiters, landers and sample-return missions. Chang'e-8 is planned as part of the next phase of China's lunar exploration programme and is expected to contribute to research and technology demonstrations around the lunar south pole.
The Pakistani rover's participation comes at a time when the Moon's south pole has become a focal point of competition and cooperation among major space powers.



The United States is also pursuing plans for human exploration of the lunar south pole under its Artemis programme, with NASA targeting 2028 for an astronaut landing in the region through Artemis IV.
China, meanwhile, has outlined ambitions for crewed lunar exploration later in the decade, making the south polar region an increasingly important destination for future international lunar missions.
India has already demonstrated its capability to reach the region. In 2023, its unmanned Chandrayaan-3 mission successfully landed near the lunar south pole, making India the first country to achieve a soft landing in the vicinity of the region.
The achievement followed Russia's failed Luna-25 mission, which crashed into the lunar surface days before India's successful landing, and came four years after India's Chandrayaan-2 lander lost contact during its final descent.
Against this backdrop, Pakistan's decision to send Jinnah-1 to the lunar

south pole through China's Chang'e-8 mission represents a significant step in the country's efforts to expand its presence in space science.
The mission is expected to provide Pakistani researchers with valuable experience in lunar science, remote exploration and the development and operation of planetary exploration technologies.
It could also help develop local expertise in areas including robotics, telecommunications, data analysis, remote sensing and space-based scientific research.
The naming of the rover after Pakistan's founding father adds a symbolic dimension to the mission, linking the country's national identity with its aspirations in science, technology and space exploration.
With Jinnah-1 scheduled to head to the Moon aboard a Chinese mission in 2029, Pakistan-China space cooperation is entering a new phase focused not only on Earth observation and satellite technology but also on exploration beyond Earth's orbit.
The mission is therefore being viewed as both a scientific undertaking and a landmark in Pakistan's growing strategic and technological partnership with China.

Canada on track to fall short of 2026 permanent resident target

Covert Report
Ottawa: Canada appears to be on course to admit fewer permanent residents than planned in 2026, with newly released federal data showing that immigration levels remained below the pace required to meet the government's annual target during the first half of the year.
According to data released by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on August 18, the country admitted 155,800 new permanent residents between January 1 and June 30, 2026.
The figure is 34,200 below the 190,000 admissions that would have been expected by the middle of the year if Canada were progressing evenly towards its annual target of 380,000 permanent residents.
To reach the halfway mark of its 2026 target, Canada would therefore need to admit 224,200 additional permanent residents during the second half of the year.
The figures point to a slower-than-planned pace of permanent resident admissions, although the final outcome will depend on the pace of processing and admissions during the remaining months of the year.
The economic category accounts for the largest share of Canada's permanent resident admissions target.
IRCC reported 89,200 economic-class admissions during the first six months of 2026, compared with an annual target of 239,800.
This left the category about 30,700 admissions behind the pace required to reach its full-year target by the end of June.
The economic category includes several major immigration pathways, including Express Entry, federal business immigration programmes such as the Start-Up Visa, the Provincial Nominee Program, the Atlantic Immigration Program and various federal economic pilot programmes.
The slower pace in this category is particularly significant because economic immigration represents the largest component of Canada's overall permanent resident admissions plan.



Canada has set an annual target of 84,000 permanent resident admissions through the family class in 2026. By June 30, IRCC had recorded 45,100 admissions under the category.
That put family-class admissions approximately 3,100 above the level required to remain on track for the annual target at the midpoint of the year. The family class includes spouses, partners and dependent children sponsored by Canadian citizens or permanent residents, as well as people admitted through the Parents and Grandparents Program.
Admissions of refugees and protected persons also remained below the pace required to meet the government's 2026 objective.
IRCC recorded 17,900 permanent resident admissions under this category by June 30, against an annual target of 49,300.
The category was therefore about 6,750 admissions behind the pace required at the halfway point.
It covers resettled refugees, including government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees, as well as visa-office referred cases. It also includes people already in Canada who have been granted protection by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada or through the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada pre-removal risk assessment process.
The humanitarian and compassionate and other category has the smallest annual target among Canada's major permanent residence categories, at 6,900 admissions for 2026.
IRCC reported 3,600 admissions in this category during the first half of the year, placing it about 150 admissions ahead of the pace needed to meet the annual target.
The category covers humanitarian and compassionate cases, people displaced by international conflicts, crises or natural disasters, and individuals who do not fall within the eligibility requirements of other immigration programmes.
Canada is also implementing two one-time initiatives covering 2026 and 2027 that are separate from its regular permanent residence admissions planning.
Under the initiatives, the government intends to admit 115,000 protected persons and 33,000 in-Canada workers as permanent residents over the two-year period.
For 2026, the targets include 46,000 protected persons and 20,000 in-Canada workers under the In-Canada Workers Initiative.
These programmes could influence the overall pace of permanent resident admissions as the government works through the second half of the year.
The latest figures suggest that Canada faces a substantial admissions gap if it is to reach its headline target of 380,000 new permanent residents in 2026.
With 155,800 permanent residents admitted during the first six months, the government would need to significantly accelerate admissions during the remaining six months to achieve the annual objective.
The uneven performance across immigration categories is also notable. While economic and refugee admissions were behind the required mid-year pace, family-class and humanitarian admissions were broadly on or slightly ahead of schedule.
The second half of 2026 will therefore be critical in determining whether Canada reaches its planned permanent resident intake or ends the year below target.
The figures also highlight the changing balance within Canada's immigration system, as the government seeks to manage economic immigration, family reunification, refugee protection and humanitarian admissions while implementing additional one-time pathways for people already protected or working in the country.

Bilawal Bhutto rules out PPP support for government legislation over unresolved grievances

Celina Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari this week announced that his party would not support legislation proposed by the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)-led government in either the Senate or National Assembly until the PPP's outstanding concerns were addressed, intensifying political tensions between the coalition partners.
Addressing a press conference at Parliament House, Bilawal said the PPP had made a clear decision to withhold support for government legislation until its grievances were resolved.
"Our grievances have not been addressed, which is why no member of my party will vote for their proposed legislation, whether in the Senate or National Assembly," he said.
Bilawal said the government was free to proceed with its legislation if it had sufficient numbers to secure passage without PPP support.
"If they have the numbers to pass their legislation without the support of the PPP, they are free to do so in a democracy," he added.
The PPP chairman also warned that his party would withdraw its political support for the PML-N-led government over its reservations regarding the recent elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).
"My party has decided that there will be no cooperation with the PML-N in coordination and legislation until the reservations are removed," Bilawal said.
He maintained that it would be difficult for the PPP and the PML-N to continue working together if the party's concerns over the electoral process were not addressed. Bilawal said the PML-N had not made sufficient efforts to address the PPP's objections regarding the fairness of the AJK elections.
"We will therefore sit in the opposition in the Kashmir assembly and the PML-N can form the government," he said.
He criticised what he described as the controversial circumstances surrounding the elections and said that in a sensitive region such as Kashmir, the electoral process should have been conducted in a manner that avoided controversy.
"There should have been an election free of controversy," Bilawal said, pointing to concerns raised in constituencies including Bimber and Mirpur and warning that the law and order situation could have deteriorated.
He also alleged that PPP candidates had faced attacks and difficulties during the AJK elections, referring specifically to developments in the Poonch area.
"If the PML-N wanted a controversial government after a controversial election, then congratulations to them," Bilawal said, questioning whether this was the manner in which the PML-N treated its coalition partners.
The PPP chairman stressed that parliament could face serious challenges if political forces failed to uphold its dignity and democratic traditions.
He warned that opposition parties were increasingly distancing themselves from the democratic process and called for a reversal of that trend.
Bilawal urged parliamentary opposition leaders to play a more active role in the functioning of parliament by participating in parliamentary committees and improving communication on proposed legislation.
He argued that strengthening parliament required political consensus rather than the use of coercive tactics.
"If they want to strengthen the institution of parliament, they need to move ahead with political consensus and not through the use of forceful tactics," he said.
Bilawal also reminded the government of the PPP's past role in supporting legislation, constitutional amendments and other parliamentary initiatives, saying the party had also raised objections and criticised aspects of proposed legal changes when necessary.
Responding to questions about former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, Bilawal welcomed his transfer to hospital for medical treatment following the Supreme Court's decision.
He described the development as part of a democratic tradition, stressing the importance of ensuring access to medical treatment.
Bilawal also reiterated the PPP's position regarding the creation of new provinces, saying the party's stance was clear: any such move should be based on consensus and

the wishes of the people concerned.
"The most important thing is that if the people of this province want a consensus, then their opinion should be respected," he said.
Asked whether the government and the establishment were on the same page, Bilawal said they could be, but suggested that there appeared to be an unresolved issue.
He added that if differences existed between the two sides, they would eventually become apparent.
The PPP chairman also spoke about the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission, saying its purpose should be to ensure justice for innocent people while holding those responsible for wrongdoing accountable.
He urged protesters to return home peacefully until such a commission was established.
Earlier in the day, Bilawal held meetings with National Assembly Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Senate Opposition Leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas in the opposition chamber of the National Assembly.
The PPP's decision to withhold support for government legislation marks a significant escalation in tensions within the ruling coalition and places greater pressure on the PML-N government to address its key ally's political concerns, particularly those relating to the AJK elections.



Xi calls for stronger China-Ecuador synergy in development strategies



China Economic Net

Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping on this week emphasized that China and Ecuador should strengthen the synergy of their development strategies and implement the cooperation plan for jointly building the Belt and Road.

The two countries should deliver on cooperation projects in energy, minerals, infrastructure, finance and other sectors, and actively explore cooperation in areas including the digital economy, green development, new energy and artificial intelligence, Xi said when holding talks with President of the Republic of Ecuador Daniel Roy-

Gilchrist Noboa Azin in Beijing.

Noboa is on a state visit to China from Aug. 16 to 23 at the invitation of Xi.

Noting this year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-Ecuador comprehensive strategic partnership, Xi said no matter how the international landscape changes, China has always viewed China-Ecuador relations from a strategic and long-term perspective. China stands ready to work with Ecuador to continuously elevate bilateral relations to new heights and deliver greater benefits to the people of both countries, he said.

Xi said China respects and supports Ecuador in exploring a development path that suits its national conditions. China is willing to intensify exchanges between the two countries across various sectors, including governments, legislatures, and political parties, and enhance experience sharing on governance, he added.

The Chinese president encouraged both sides to continue unlocking the potential of the free trade agreement so that its dividends can benefit more businesses and consumers. He also expressed China's willingness to cooperate with Ecuador in areas such as healthcare, poverty alleviation, disaster prevention and mitigation, in support of Ecuador's national development.

Calling China an important partner and friend of Ecuador, Noboa said bilateral relations have entered a new phase, delivering tangible benefits to the two peoples.

He said Ecuador is willing to deepen political mutual trust with China, supports China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and respects China's position on the Taiwan question.

Noting that Ecuador attaches great importance to cooperation with China, Noboa called on the two sides to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation in economy and trade, finance, minerals, renewable energy, science and technology, culture and other fields. Ecuador will expand its exports to China, and welcomes more Chinese enterprises to invest and operate in Ecuador, which is expected to help improve the well-being of the people and facilitate the development of the country, he added.

The two heads of state exchanged views on the situation in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Xi said China supports Latin American countries in upholding independence and self-reliance, pursuing foreign cooperation based on their national interests, and safeguarding regional peace and stability.

Xi stressed that China has always maintained that the status of the Latin American and Caribbean region as a zone of peace should not be undermined, the course of development and revitalization of Latin American and Caribbean countries should not be disrupted, and the right of Latin American and Caribbean countries to independently choose their cooperation partners should not be interfered with.

Noting Ecuador highly values China's position and role, Noboa said Ecuador is always willing to be a good friend of China on the other side of the Pacific Ocean.

After the talks, the two heads of state attended a signing ceremony for multiple cooperation agreements in areas such as green industry, economic and trade cooperation, the digital economy and people's livelihood.

Prior to the talks in the Great Hall of the People, Xi held a welcome ceremony for Noboa. Xi also hosted a welcome banquet for him in the evening.



Pakistan-China partnership to strengthen smart surveillance, maritime security infrastructure

Newswire

Karachi: Pakistan's efforts to modernise urban public safety systems and strengthen maritime security are set to receive a technological boost through a new partnership between Pakistani Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and maritime solutions provider SI Global Solutions (Pvt) Ltd and China's Jovision Technology Co., Ltd., a Jinan-based global provider of intelligent video surveillance technology.

SI Global Solutions this week signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Jovision Technology to introduce advanced artificial intelligence (AI)-based surveillance systems, intelligent CCTV solutions and modern marine safety equipment in Pakistan, marking another step towards expanding China-Pakistan cooperation in the fields of smart cities, digital security, maritime navigation and technology transfer.

The partnership is expected to support Pakistan's efforts to develop more technologically advanced safe city projects while simultaneously improving safety and navigation infrastructure at the country's ports and harbours, said the Pakistani company in a statement issued here.

Under the agreement, SI Global Solutions will serve as Jovision's exclusive partner in Pakistan for the deployment of AI-powered surveillance solutions in safe city projects. The cooperation will cover intelligent CCTV systems, cloud-based video analytics, full-colour night vision technology and integrated command-and-control platforms designed to strengthen real-time monitoring, public safety and crime prevention.

The collaboration brings a Chinese technology company with expertise in intelligent video surveillance into closer cooperation with a Pakistani company already engaged in safe city consultancy, ICT system integration and maritime navigation solutions.

The agreement reflects the growing role of Chinese technology and engineering solutions in Pakistan's efforts to upgrade critical public infrastructure and adopt smart technologies for urban management and security.

Jovision Technology, based in Jinan, China, has established itself as an international provider of intelligent video surveillance technologies. Its cooperation with SI Global Solutions is expected to provide a channel for introducing advanced AI-enabled security applications into Pakistani cities and public infrastructure.

The Pakistani company has offices in the United States and the United Arab Emirates as well as a presence in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. It has been involved in safe city consultancy and maritime navigation solutions, positioning it to integrate Chinese technologies with local infrastructure and operational requirements.

The partnership also has a significant maritime component, with SI Global Solutions sourcing advanced polyurethane buoys from China for deployment at Pakistani ports.

The company said it was the first in Pakistan to introduce polyurethane buoys, which are designed to provide greater durability and lower maintenance requirements while offering enhanced resistance to severe marine and weather conditions.

The introduction of such equipment could contribute to the modernisation of navigation infrastructure at Pakistani ports, particularly as the country seeks to improve maritime safety and operational efficiency in its growing port and logistics sector.

The China-sourced marine equipment is also intended to comply with standards of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), reflecting the emphasis being placed on internationally recognised technical and safety standards.

A delegation of safe city and maritime experts from SI Global Solutions, led by retired Commander Liaquat Ali of the Pakistan Navy, recently visited China as part of efforts to deepen technical cooperation and examine advanced technologies and equipment.

During the visit, the delegation held technical discussions and attended product demonstrations, helping establish the groundwork for the agreement with Jovision and the sourcing of Chinese marine equipment for Pakistan.

The engagement indicates that the cooperation is moving beyond

conventional trade in equipment towards technical collaboration and the adaptation of advanced Chinese technologies to Pakistan's specific urban and maritime requirements.



For Pakistan, the adoption of AI-based surveillance technologies could provide safe city authorities with greater capacity to monitor large urban areas, identify incidents and respond more efficiently through integrated command-and-control systems.

Cloud-based video analytics can potentially enable authorities to process and analyse large volumes of surveillance footage, while advanced night-vision capabilities can improve monitoring during periods of low visibility.

The maritime side of the cooperation is equally significant. Pakistan has been seeking to improve the safety, efficiency and technological capacity of its ports as maritime trade and logistics assume a greater role in the country's economic development.

Modern navigation aids, including durable marine buoys, are an important component of port and harbour safety, helping vessels navigate designated channels and other maritime areas safely.

The cooperation with Chinese companies therefore has the potential to create a broader technology ecosystem linking urban security, maritime safety, ICT integration and smart infrastructure.

technology to this expanding spectrum of cooperation, with a particular emphasis on AI, intelligent surveillance and advanced navigation equipment.

The initiative could also open opportunities for greater localisation of technology in Pakistan, as local system integrators and engineering companies work with Chinese technology providers to adapt international products to domestic requirements.

The cooperation is particularly relevant to Pakistan's safe city projects, where the integration of surveillance cameras, artificial intelligence, data analytics and command-and-control systems is becoming increasingly important.

Rather than relying solely on conventional CCTV networks, next-generation systems can combine high-resolution imaging with automated analytics and centralised monitoring, allowing authorities to manage increasingly complex urban environments more efficiently.

Similarly, the introduction of modern marine equipment could support Pakistan's efforts to bring port safety infrastructure closer to international standards while reducing maintenance requirements and extending the operational life of equipment exposed to harsh marine conditions.

The partnership thus represents a convergence of two strategic areas, smart urban security and maritime infrastructure, where Pakistan is seeking greater technological capabilities and where Chinese companies have developed substantial expertise.

The agreement is also expected to strengthen commercial and technical links between Pakistani and Chinese technology companies, potentially creating space for further cooperation in AI, surveillance, marine navigation, ICT integration and other smart infrastructure applications.

With Pakistan continuing to expand its safe city initiatives and modernise its ports, cooperation with Chinese technology providers could become an increasingly important element of the country's efforts to build technologically advanced, secure and efficiently managed urban and maritime infrastructure.

Punjab turns to Chinese-linked digital technologies, AI to modernise agriculture

Newswire

Lahore: Punjab is moving to expand the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in agriculture as part of a broader effort to modernise farming practices, strengthen farmer advisory services and improve the early detection of crop diseases.

Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said digitalisation was becoming a key component of the province's agricultural transformation agenda, including through cooperation with China and the adoption of advanced digital models.

He made the remarks while chairing a meeting at the Civil Secretariat in Lahore on Monday afternoon to review proposals for using modern digital technologies, artificial intelligence and advanced digital models to support farmers and improve agricultural services.

Punjab Agriculture Secretary Shakeel Ahmad Mian also attended the meeting.

The meeting was briefed on an advanced mobile application for crops developed by Syngenta Pakistan, with officials examining how digital platforms could be integrated into agricultural advisory services and used to provide farmers with more timely and targeted information.

The minister said digitalisation was no longer an optional component of modern agriculture but an increasingly important tool for

improving productivity, responding to emerging agricultural challenges and delivering services directly to farmers.

He stressed the need to make farmer advisory services more effective and results-oriented by using digital technologies capable of collecting, processing and analysing agricultural information.

The proposed digital applications could help collect data relating to crop growth and other important indicators, creating a more detailed information base for agricultural decision-making.

The move is particularly significant for Punjab, Pakistan's largest agricultural province and a major contributor to the country's food production. Agricultural digitalisation can potentially allow farmers and government institutions to respond more rapidly to crop diseases, changing weather conditions, pest attacks and other threats affecting yields.

Agriculture Secretary Shakeel Ahmad Mian said modern digital technologies could significantly improve the diagnosis of crop diseases by facilitating their timely detection.

He added that digital platforms could enable farmers to receive appropriate guidance at an earlier stage, potentially reducing crop losses and improving the effectiveness of agricultural interventions.

The meeting also discussed the potential role of public-private partnerships in expanding digital agricultural services.

The Punjab government intends to make greater use of modern applications and AI-based technologies to improve the flow of agricultural information to farmers and strengthen the capacity of extension services.

This reflects the wider Pakistan-China push towards technology-based agricultural cooperation, with modern farming techniques, data systems, artificial intelligence and smart agricultural solutions increasingly forming part of the broader economic partnership.

China's own experience with agricultural digitalisation and technology-driven farming provides a potential model for Pakistan as it seeks to improve productivity and modernise its agriculture sector.

For Punjab, the challenge is not simply to introduce individual mobile

applications but to develop an integrated digital agricultural ecosystem in which farmers can access reliable information, government agencies can monitor crop conditions and data can support timely policy decisions.

The use of AI could further expand these capabilities by allowing agricultural information to be analysed at greater speed and scale. Digital tools could eventually support more targeted crop management, disease identification, advisory services and monitoring of agricultural indicators.

The government's emphasis on public-private partnerships is also aimed at bringing together state institutions, technology companies, agricultural businesses and farmers to accelerate the adoption of modern tools.

Officials reviewed several proposals for leveraging advanced AI models in agriculture and providing farmers with information suited to contemporary farming requirements.

The initiative comes as Pakistan seeks to improve agricultural productivity while confronting the need for more efficient use of resources, stronger crop monitoring and better access to technical knowledge.

Greater use of digital platforms could help bridge the information gap between agricultural research, government extension services and farmers in the field.

The meeting therefore highlighted a shift in Punjab's agricultural policy towards technology-driven service delivery, with digital platforms and AI expected to supplement conventional agricultural advisory mechanisms.

By combining digital technologies with agricultural expertise, the province aims to build a more responsive system capable of identifying problems earlier and delivering practical advice directly to farmers.

The broader objective is to make agriculture more data-driven and technologically advanced, while strengthening cooperation with international partners, including China, in areas that can contribute to agricultural modernisation and productivity growth.



ITALY: Lake Como dried up: AI fake fuels viral social media storm



water around the picturesque lakeside town of Bellagio had disappeared at an astonishing rate because of an alleged “geological rupture”. But the dramatic images are entirely fabricated. The footage was generated using artificial intelligence and circulated by a social media account that describes itself as an “AI News” outlet. The account, @naturevsia, carries a warning that its videos are AI-generated, yet the Lake Como footage was subsequently shared by users as genuine news. The reality is markedly different. Satellite imagery captured by the European Sentinel-2 satellite on August 13 clearly shows Lake Como still filled with water across its extensive basin. The lake, whose shoreline stretches for around 170 kilometres, remains a prominent feature of northern Italy’s landscape. Further evidence came from webcam footage recorded on August 14 in Tremezzo, a town on the western shore of the lake. The images showed water levels remaining in place, directly contradicting the dramatic scenes presented in the viral video.

The false claim, however, appears to have gained traction partly because it was built around a genuine environmental issue. Lake Como is experiencing declining water levels amid drought conditions affecting parts of Italy. By August 1, the lake’s water level had reportedly fallen at least 30.2 centimetres below the hydrographic zero, bringing it close to the low levels recorded four years earlier. The falling level is a matter of concern, particularly as prolonged drought can affect waterways, agriculture, ecosystems and tourism. But the situation bears no resemblance to the extraordinary scenario portrayed in the AI-generated footage.

There is also no evidence of any geological rupture causing the lake to drain. Lake Como is one of Europe’s deepest lakes, reaching a maximum depth of approximately 418 metres. A decline in its water level, even amid severe drought, therefore does not mean

the lake is remotely close to disappearing. The episode is nevertheless a striking example of the challenges posed by increasingly sophisticated generative artificial intelligence. Realistic-looking videos can now be produced within minutes and distributed to millions of people, making fabricated events appear remarkably authentic. In this case, the AI-generated images exploited genuine concerns about drought and falling water levels to create a completely false narrative. The truth is far less dramatic but important: Lake Como has not dried up. Its water levels are falling because of drought, but the world-famous lake remains firmly in place.



The viral images may have appeared convincing, but satellite observations and contemporary webcam footage leave little doubt that the spectacular disappearance of Lake Como exists only in an AI-generated video.



Newswire
Rome: Lake Como, one of Italy’s most celebrated natural and tourist landmarks, is still very much intact, despite a viral social media video falsely claiming that the iconic northern Italian

lake has completely dried up. The sensational video, which has amassed more than 600,000 views on X and TikTok, depicts what appears to be a vast landscape of mud and rocks littered with stranded boats. It claims that



When the West is struggling with direction, China's robotics takes another step forward

Global Times

While Western public discourse is still endlessly debating the pros and cons of different robotics paths, China, focused on "running its own affairs well," has already moved ahead. The US and Europe have advantages in foundational algorithms, while Japan and South Korea have accumulated expertise in precision components. China, however, combines large-scale manufacturing capabilities with a vast and diverse range of application scenarios, allowing it to rapidly turn technological prototypes into mass-produced commercial products. This is the core source of competitiveness for China's robotics industry.

On Wednesday, the 2026 World Robot Conference opened in Beijing's Economic-Technological Development Area. On the same day, Unitree Technology listed on the STAR Market, becoming the first humanoid-robot stock on the A-share market. A top-tier industry gathering and a landmark capital-market IPO together mark a

critical window for China's robotics sector as it shifts from research breakthroughs toward scaled deployment. Global artificial intelligence (AI) competition is now pivoting from virtual digital models toward physical-entity intelligence. Whoever succeeds in embedding AI into robotic bodies and achieving large-scale application in manufacturing, logistics, and everyday services will seize the initiative in the next round of industrial transformation.

The conference theme, "Human-Robot Symbiosis, Production Demand Convergence," sends a clear signal. Exhibition halls span the entire value chain, ranging from core components and complete machines to industry solutions and consumer products. Hundreds of Chinese and foreign companies are showcasing their latest offerings, with more than a hundred new products making their debut. The exhibits focus far more on real-world pain points - factory assembly, warehouse logistics, high-risk inspection, elderly care and companion-

ship - pushing robots deeper into China's manufacturing system and realizing "human-machine symbiosis." Robots are no longer mere technological showpieces on exhibition stands; grounded in market demand, they are beginning to enter every sector and every corner of daily life.

Unitree's listing on the opening day of the conference may look coincidental in timing, yet it is, to a significant degree, the inevitable outcome of China's robotics industry advancing on multiple fronts after years of patient accumulation. Globally, the humanoid-robot sector remains stuck in the stage of "impressive prototypes, difficult commercialization." Most companies still rely on successive rounds of private financing for oxygen, lacking scaled shipments, stable revenue, and a public-market valuation benchmark. Capital has largely been underwriting technological visions and industry narratives. Going forward, evaluation of the humanoid-robot industry will no longer rest primarily on prototype demonstrations and fundraising scale, but on real orders, product delivery, and market returns. The entire sector is moving toward pragmatic commercial exploration.



While Western public discourse is still endlessly debating the pros and cons of different robotics paths, China, focused on "running its own affairs well," has already moved ahead. China has the world's most complete and comprehensive industrial system, enabling it to respond quickly to the practical demands of product iteration, cost reduction, and mass production. Unitree Robotics' ability to rapidly iterate complete robots and deliver them at scale owes much to its extensive domestic network of upstream and downstream suppliers. Likewise, the wide range of homegrown products showcased at the World Robot Conference is built on a complete supply chain. The US and Europe have advantages in foundational algorithms, while Japan and South Korea have accumulated expertise in precision components. China, however, combines large-scale manufacturing capabilities with a vast and diverse range of application scenarios, allowing it to rapidly turn technological prototypes into mass-produced commercial products. This is the core source of competitiveness for China's robotics industry.

A complete supply chain and a vast domestic market are further expanding the possibilities for the commercialization of robotics. AI is no longer confined to cloud-

based conversations; through robots as physical carriers, it is making its way into the real economy. On factory floors, robots handle repetitive assembly, precision inspection, and material transportation, helping drive the intelligent transformation of manufacturing. In warehousing and logistics, mobile robots take on sorting and material handling missions, easing labor pressures. In high-risk environments such as power facilities and mines, robots can replace human workers in inspection tasks. In areas related to everyday life, service robots are gradually entering nursing homes and households, playing an increasingly important role in areas such as caregiving and assisted operations.

Even more significantly, the development of China's robotics industry transcends national borders and seeks to benefit people around the world. This year's conference launched the "Global Robot Application Exploration Program," making mass-produced robotic products freely available to outstanding innovation teams worldwide and promoting the sharing of technological achievements globally. China's well developed robotics supply chain not only serves the domestic market but also provides key components to robot manufacturers

around the world. Chinese-made robotic products and solutions are expanding overseas, helping countries advance manufacturing upgrades, emergency response, and public services. As China strengthens its own industry, it is also contributing shared innovation resources to the global development of embodied intelligence through its supply chains, products, and open platforms.

The robotics industry is currently in a transitional phase, moving from pilot applications and demonstrations toward large-scale adoption, and has yet to experience a full-scale boom. Some products still face practical challenges, including high deployment costs and limited versatility. Amid both opportunities and challenges, China's robotics industry is steadily building its capabilities with a pragmatic approach and moving toward large-scale commercialization. We have every reason to wish it well - and every confidence in its future.

Global Times

Three straight months of \$100 billion-plus trade surplus: Is China really 'squeezing' the world?:

Global Times

Currently, China's economy is steadily advancing along the path of high-quality development, even as domestic and international circumstances become increasingly complex. Some Western media, due to misunderstanding or bias, have repeatedly questioned or even distorted China's economic development. Accordingly, the Global Times launches the "Q&A on China's Economy" column to publish opinion pieces to present facts and clarify perceptions.

Recently, some foreign media have seized on China's July trade data, touting its "surging" exports and three consecutive months of surpluses above \$100 billion as proof of a "China squeeze" or "China shock" for the rest of the world. The figures are real, but the conclusion drawn from them is not. In focusing on the headline numbers, they have overlooked the factors behind China's trade surplus.

China's three consecutive months of \$100 billion-plus trade surplus is mainly attributable to a combination of rising export values and falling import costs. On the export side, the prices of China's goods have risen. Since last year, the prices of China's high-value exports have increased significantly.

In the first half of this year, the export value of memory chips surged 113.2 percent year-on-year, while that of solar cells rose 19.6 percent. By weight, however, solar cell export volume fell 1.9 percent.

Therefore, a larger trade surplus in value does not necessarily mean higher export volumes year-on-year, let alone any "squeeze" or "dumping." The international market demand for these high-tech products remains strong, with some even in short supply. The so-called

"export shock" is hardly justified.

On the import side, falling prices for bulk commodities have lowered China's import bill. International oil prices, for instance, recently fell from a peak of \$126 per barrel to below \$80, while the landed cost of imported iron ore dropped by 30 to 70 yuan per ton. Prices for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), chemicals and other commodities have also declined. In other words, the combination of higher prices for high-value exports and lower prices for imported commodities has widened China's trade surplus.

In reality, whether closer trade ties with China are a threat or an opportunity is best judged by those who feel its impact firsthand. Canada is a case in point. In July, Canadian employment "unexpectedly" jumped by 75,100, while the unemployment rate hit a two-year low. Analysts pointed to a sharp recovery in China-Canada trade as one contributing factor. From January to July, British Columbia's exports to China surged 29 percent to more than C\$5.2 billion (\$3.75 billion), helping drive the addition of 32,500 full-time positions in July alone, leading the country in manufacturing growth. By contrast, Ontario, whose auto industry is deeply tied to US-Canada supply chains, saw a sharp decline in full-time employment that month. The contrast shows in concrete terms how trade with China can support jobs and economic stability.

China's quality and affordable goods also help lower living costs for consumers worldwide. China's new energy products are accelerating the global green transition while reducing its costs; its AI and robotics are making intelligent technologies more accessible worldwide. Harvard economist Dani Rodrik wrote on August 10 that the world is no longer suffering from insufficient demand. Trade deficits represent a transfer of purchasing power from surplus countries, he argued, and as China pursues its own technological and commercial advantage, it has also delivered a major global public good. China's trade surplus, he suggested, might therefore be better understood as "enrich-thy-neighbor."

China has never deliberately pursued trade surplus. It has consistently sought more balanced import and export growth and worked toward a more open, balanced and mutually beneficial global trading system. In the first seven months of this year, China's exports grew 14 percent year-on-year, while imports rose 22 percent — an 8-percentage-point gap that reflects the country's efforts to promote more balanced trade.

China is not only the world's largest exporter, but also its second-largest importer, with a trade model characterized by enormous two-way flows. The country imports vast quantities of raw materials, components and intermediate goods from around the world, which are then assembled,

processed and upgraded through China's manufacturing system. Some serve the domestic market, while others are exported to markets worldwide. By integrating production factors from different countries, China's industrial and supply chains help maximize their value, which not only supports China's economic growth, but also keeps global supply chains moving and allows countries around the world to share in the benefits of China's development.

No school of economic thought has ever equated a trade surplus with "taking advantage" and a trade deficit with "losing out." The expansion of China's surplus in goods trade is, to a large extent, a reflection of structural changes in its industrial structure. From the traditional "old trio" of garments, furniture and household appliances, to the "new trio" of photovoltaic products, electric vehicles and lithium batteries, and now to robotics, AI and innovative medicines, China's industries are steadily moving up the value chain, exporting an increasing number of high-value-added products around the globe. The growing share of high-value products means more countries can benefit from technological progress. If some Western countries are truly so concerned about the size of China's trade surplus, they could start by pushing their own countries to sell more high-value products such as lithography machines to China, rather than imposing export controls while simultaneously complaining that trade figures do not go their way.

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Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad reaffirms commitment to multilateralism, peaceful dispute settlement

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan has reaffirmed its enduring commitment to multilateralism and its constructive role in promoting regional and international peace and stability, particularly amid continuing challenges in West Asia. Speaking at Pakistan Day celebrations held at the United Nations Headquarters, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said Pakistanis serving across the UN Secretariat, as well as its specialised agencies, funds and programmes, were making valuable contributions to advancing the work of the United Nations. The Ambassador expressed gratitude to the Pakistan UN Club, particularly its President, Ambassador (Retd) Qazi Shaukat Fareed, and Secretary General Ghulam Ghous, for inviting him to attend the Pakistan Day celebrations. Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar highlighted Pakistan's longstanding commitment to the principles of multilateralism and its constructive contribution towards efforts aimed at strengthening peace and stability at the regional and international levels. He particularly underlined Pakistan's perspective and role in

promoting peace and stability in West Asia, a region facing persistent security and political challenges. The Ambassador also highlighted Pakistan's active contribution to the work of the UN Security Council, stressing the country's efforts to advance initiatives aimed at the peaceful settlement of disputes. He said Pakistan remained committed to working through multilateral institutions and supporting diplomatic and peaceful approaches to resolving conflicts. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar noted that the contributions of Pakistani professionals serving within the UN system reflected the country's continuing engagement with the organisation and its objectives. The Pakistan Day event at UN Headquarters brought together members of the Pakistani community serving within the United Nations system and provided an opportunity to reaffirm Pakistan's role and commitment to international cooperation, multilateralism and the peaceful resolution of disputes.



Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri felicitates Indonesia on 81st Independence Day

Liaquat Ali



Islamabad: Pakistan's Ambassador to Indonesia, Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, has extended warm felicitations and best wishes to the government and people of Indonesia on the country's 81st Independence Day. In his message, Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri congratulated the brotherly people of Indonesia on the national occasion and expressed his hope that the country would continue to prosper and flourish in peace, unity and harmony. "Warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Government and the brotherly people of Indonesia on the 81st Independence Day," the ambassador said. He also conveyed his hopes for Indonesia's continued progress, stability and prosperity, while reaffirming the spirit of friendship between the two countries. "May Indonesia continue to prosper and flourish in peace, unity and harmony," he added, concluding his message with the Indonesian Independence Day greeting: "Selamat Hari Kemerdekaan ke-81, Indonesia!"



Kazakhstan seeks to deepen strategic ties with Pakistan: Foreign Minister



Newswire

Astana: Kazakhstan has expressed its desire to further deepen strategic ties with Pakistan, with a particular focus on expanding cooperation in poli-

tics, trade and economy, transport and logistics, security and coordination at international forums. Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerme Kosherbayev conveyed the message in a statement marking

Pakistan's Independence Day, underscoring the importance his country attaches to its longstanding friendship and strategic partnership with Islamabad. "Kazakhstan highly values its strong friendship and strategic partnership with Pakistan," Kosherbayev said, reaffirming his country's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations across multiple sectors. He said Kazakhstan intended to continue expanding cooperation with Pakistan in the political and economic spheres, while placing particular emphasis on transport and logistics and security cooperation. The Kazakh foreign minister also called for stronger coordination between the two countries within international organisations, reflecting their shared interest in closer multilateral engagement and greater cooperation on regional and global issues. Kosherbayev highlighted what he described as Pakistan's growing diplomatic role on the international stage, praising Islamabad's constructive contribution to addressing international challenges and promoting regional stability. He expressed confidence that continued cooperation between the two countries would further elevate Kazakhstan-Pakistan relations and contribute to the prosperity of their peoples.

"I firmly believe that our joint efforts will continue to help take Kazakhstan-Pakistan relations to a new level and ensure the further prosperity of our peoples," he said. The statement reflects growing interest in strengthening Pakistan's ties with Central Asian states, with Kazakhstan emerging as an important partner in areas including trade, connectivity and regional transport corridors. For Pakistan and Kazakhstan, enhanced transport and logistics cooperation carries particular significance as both countries seek to improve connectivity between South Asia and Central Asia and expand economic links across the wider region. The renewed emphasis on bilateral cooperation also comes as Islamabad and Astana seek to broaden their strategic partnership beyond traditional diplomatic engagement and develop stronger economic and institutional links.



The horizon no longer ends at the windscreen, says Ali Rehman Malik

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: The modern smartphone-driven life has fundamentally altered how people experience uncertainty, attention and even the meaning of “home”, with

In a recent article titled “The Horizon Doesn’t Need to Become Home,” Malik reflects on the growing influence of smartphones, social media and the constant availability of new possibilities,

driving alone at night, with only the road, weather, engine and radio defining the boundaries of his uncertainty.

He argues that such uncertainty, despite its risks, had clear limits. The driver’s world ended at the windscreen, whereas modern life has extended that horizon into the smartphone lying beside people, opening access to “thousands of conversations”, opportunities, comparisons and possible identities. According to Malik, the central change brought by smartphones is not simply greater connectivity but the creation of a state of continuous orientation.

A message may arrive, another person may respond, a social-media post may receive another reaction, an opportunity may emerge or a relationship may change. As a result, he suggests, “nothing quite finishes”, leaving the nervous system with little opportunity to receive the reassuring signal that “this is enough for now.”

Malik particularly examines the modern preoccupation with social-media engagement, arguing that checking who viewed a story is rarely just about knowing who looked at it.

Instead, he says, the question can become a much deeper attempt to determine whether one’s social position has changed, whether a new possibility has opened or whether an opportunity has quietly disappeared.

“The story isn’t only communication,” Malik writes, describing it instead as a form of measurement and a “continual refresh of the possibility horizon.”

The writer then turns to a more intimate observation involving his 21-year-old cat, Hermes, whose behaviour provides him with a contrast to the constant scanning associated with digital life.

Malik describes Hermes lying on the floor with his legs stretched behind him, apparently unconcerned with what might happen next. The cat, he observes, is not

AN ESSAY ON ATTENTION AND ARRIVAL

The Horizon Doesn't Need to Become Home

A cat, a phone, and the signal that says this is enough for now.

Ali Rehman Malik

managing a horizon of possibilities but simply inhabiting a place. That observation leads Malik to distinguish between orientation and habitation. Orientation, he argues, tells people where to go, while habitation represents the place where life is actually lived. The distinction, according to Malik, is increasingly important in an age when every achievement can quickly become another starting point for comparison. A mountain, promotion, relationship, book, house or large social-media following may initially appear as a distant destination. Yet once achieved, it soon becomes ordinary life. “What was once a vista quietly becomes the ground beneath our feet,” he suggests, arguing that the purpose of a horizon was never to remain permanently distant but eventually to become somewhere life could continue. Malik says smartphones have transformed this process by effectively “industrialising vistas”, with every scroll presenting another mountain to climb, another career to pursue, another lifestyle to emulate, another body to compare with and another possible version of oneself. The constant visibility of alternatives, he argues, can make absence feel more significant—not necessarily because there is

more absence, but because comparison rarely reaches a point of rest. As a result, the physical room in which a person is sitting can begin to feel small compared with the endless “elsewhere” available through a screen. Against this backdrop, Malik presents his cat Hermes as a symbol of an alternative relationship with attention. Hermes does not optimise possibilities or seek to refresh the horizon, he writes. Instead, the cat seeks a simple relationship—being stroked on the head. For Malik, that simplicity carries a larger lesson: when something is genuinely enough, attention finally has somewhere to rest. He concludes that the longing many people experience may not necessarily be for the past or for a world without technology. Rather, it may be for a world in which horizons can still become homes. “Life has never actually been lived on the horizon,” Malik argues. “It has always been lived on the ground beneath our feet.” His reflection ultimately presents the modern challenge not as a rejection of ambition, technology or possibility, but as the need to know when to stop orienting toward the next destination and begin inhabiting the life already present.



writer Ali Rehman Malik arguing that the problem of contemporary life is not the existence of horizons but the failure to allow those horizons to become places of habitation.

suggesting that people today are living with a permanently expanding horizon of conversations, opportunities, comparisons and alternative versions of themselves. Malik begins with the image of a man



Germany urges urgent action as humanoid robot race accelerates

Covert Report

Berlin: Germany has called for urgent action to strengthen Europe’s position in the rapidly intensifying global race for humanoid robots, warning that the emerging technology is becoming a strategic battleground in the competition for industrial and technological leadership. The warning came as China’s humanoid robotics sector scored a major milestone with Unitree, one of the country’s leading humanoid robot manufacturers, making a spectacular debut on Shanghai’s Star Market and becoming the first humanoid-robot maker to be listed on mainland China’s stock market. Unitree shares opened at 150.80 yuan, their initial public offering price, before surging to as high as 1,100 yuan during trading. The stock later surrendered part of its gains but still closed at 845 yuan, representing an increase of around 460 per

cent over the IPO price. The dramatic market debut underscored growing investor expectations surrounding China’s robotics industry, which has emerged as one of the most closely watched sectors in the country’s drive to develop advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and physical AI technologies. The development also comes amid an increasingly intense technological rivalry between China and the United States, with robotics, artificial intelligence, semiconductors and other advanced technologies becoming central to the broader competition for industrial supremacy. Against this backdrop, Germany’s engineering industry has urged policymakers to treat humanoid robotics as a strategic priority. Hartmut Rauen, Deputy Executive Director of Germany’s VDMA engineering association, said Germany and Europe needed to build a compre-



hensive industrial value chain capable of producing critical components domestically. “Germany and Europe must establish a comprehensive value chain featuring domestic production of critical components,” Rauen said. The VDMA warned that the world was entering a period of intensified competition over humanoid robotics and physical AI, arguing that the issue should be placed at the highest levels of the political agenda. Humanoid robots are increasingly viewed not simply as experimental machines but as a potentially transformative industrial technology. Their ability to operate in environments designed for humans could allow them to perform tasks across manufacturing, logistics, warehousing, healthcare and other sectors. For Europe, the challenge is particularly significant because leadership in the field will depend not only on developing sophisticated robots but also on securing access to motors, sensors, actuators, batteries, control systems, artificial-intelligence technologies and other critical components. The German warning therefore reflects a broad-

er concern that Europe could become dependent on foreign suppliers in another strategically important technology sector unless it rapidly develops its own capabilities and supply chains. China, meanwhile, is seeking to translate its strengths in manufacturing, electronics, artificial intelligence and industrial automation into leadership in humanoid robotics. The spectacular performance of Unitree shares on their first day of trading highlights the growing commercial and strategic importance attached to the sector. Unitree’s financial performance has also demonstrated the rapid expansion of demand for its technology. The company recorded revenue of 1.15 billion yuan in the first half of 2026, representing a 48.5 per cent increase from the same period a year earlier. The company’s stock-market debut and accelerating revenues provide a snapshot of a robotics industry that is moving from research laboratories and demonstrations towards commercialisation and mass production. The emerging competition is likely to reshape

the global industrial landscape. Countries capable of developing complete robotics ecosystems—from artificial intelligence and precision components to manufacturing and deployment—could gain a significant advantage in the next generation of automation. Germany’s appeal for urgent action consequently reflects a broader European dilemma: whether the continent can build a competitive domestic robotics industry quickly enough to avoid falling behind China and other major technology powers. As humanoid robots move closer to widespread industrial use, the race is no longer confined to engineering laboratories. It is becoming a contest over supply chains, investment, manufacturing capacity, technological standards and ultimately the future direction of advanced industry. For Germany and Europe, the message from the accelerating global race is increasingly clear: the window to establish a strong position in humanoid robotics is narrowing, and strategic decisions made today could determine who controls one of the most consequential technologies of the coming industrial era.



Bulgaria begins preparations for October presidential election

Covert Report

Sofia: Bulgaria has formally begun preparations for its presidential election, with the government adopting a decision outlining the organisational and administrative measures required for the October 25, 2026 vote. The decision, approved at a government meeting on Wednesday, covers preparations for the election of the President and Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria. Under the government plan, the Minister of Innovation and Digital Transformation will be responsible for coordinating the organisational and technical preparations for the election. The Interior Minister will oversee activities falling within the remit of the Ministry of the Interior, including those related to ensuring the smooth implementation of the electoral process. The Minister of Regional Development and Public Works will coordinate the preparation and publication of voter lists, a key step ahead of polling day. The government has also assigned respon-



sibility for the election of Bulgarian citizens living abroad. The Minister of Foreign Affairs will oversee the organisation and conduct of voting at polling stations outside the country. The decision marks the formal start of the government’s preparations for the presidential election, bringing

together several ministries to ensure that the electoral process is organised across Bulgaria and at overseas polling stations. The October 25 election will determine Bulgaria’s next President and Vice President, with preparations now moving ahead across the relevant government institutions.

Pakistan, Portugal seek new economic avenues as envoy highlights investment potential



Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan and Portugal have reaffirmed their commitment to deepening longstanding friendly ties, with a particular focus on expanding trade, investment, labour mobility, education and parliamentary cooperation, as Portuguese Ambassador Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez held talks with Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in Islamabad.

The meeting, held at the Senate chairman's residence in Ministers' Enclave this week, carried a strong economic dimension, with both sides exploring avenues to translate the cordial political relationship between the two countries into broader commercial and institutional partnerships.

The Portuguese envoy's engagement with the Senate leadership comes at a time when Pakistan is seeking to diversify its economic partnerships and attract greater foreign investment, while Portugal is emerging as an increasingly relevant European partner for cooperation in trade, human resource development, education, technology and maritime-related sectors.

During the meeting, Ambassador Dominguez conveyed Portugal's keen interest in further strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in trade, investment and economic cooperation. His emphasis on expanding commercial engagement reflected Lisbon's interest in exploring new opportunities with Pakistan and encouraging stronger links between the two business communities.

Senate Chairman Gilani said Pakistan attached great importance to its longstanding and friendly relations with Portugal and expressed the country's desire to take bilateral cooperation to a broader and more productive level.

He identified trade and investment, agriculture, information technology, education, culture and the blue economy as areas offering considerable potential for closer cooperation.

Gilani stressed that the existing level of bilateral trade did not fully reflect the potential of the two economies and called for the identification of new avenues that could help businesses from both countries establish stronger commercial links.

He invited Portuguese companies and investors to explore Pakistan's emerging economic and business opportunities, saying greater private-sector engagement could create mutually beneficial partnerships and contribute to strengthening bilateral economic relations.

For Pakistan, such cooperation carries particular importance as Islamabad continues efforts to attract foreign investment, expand exports and establish deeper links with European markets. Portugal, with its position within the European Union and its experience in sectors ranging from maritime activities and renewable energy to technology, tourism and manufacturing, offers opportunities for Pakistani businesses seeking greater access to European networks.

Ambassador Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez's participation in the dialogue underscored Portugal's interest in giving greater substance to bilateral ties.

The envoy thanked Gilani for the warm welcome and expressed

Portugal's desire to strengthen relations with Pakistan, particularly in the economic sphere.

His engagement with the Senate leadership also provided an opportunity to discuss how parliamentary diplomacy could complement government-to-government and business-to-business contacts. Both sides agreed on the importance of sustained engagement and regular exchanges to build greater understanding and identify new areas of cooperation.

The ambassador's emphasis on trade and investment comes against the backdrop of a broader effort by Pakistan to attract European investors and promote itself as a market with a large consumer base, a young population, growing digital capabilities and expanding opportunities in emerging sectors.

Gilani also highlighted the role of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening relations between countries.

Referring to the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference, he described it as an important platform for promoting peace, security



and development in the region.

He stressed the importance of parliamentary engagement as a complementary channel of diplomacy, particularly at a time when global and regional challenges require greater dialogue and cooperation among political institutions.

Closer interaction between the parliaments of Pakistan and Portugal, he suggested, could help strengthen bilateral understanding and provide a platform for legislators to exchange experiences on governance, legislation, economic development and social policy.

The parliamentary dimension could also support greater institutional cooperation between the two countries beyond traditional diplomatic channels.

One of the most significant aspects of the discussions was the role of the Pakistani community in Portugal.

Gilani appreciated the contribution of the Pakistani diaspora, noting that around 50,000 Pakistanis were living and working in Portugal. He described the community as an important human bridge between the two countries and stressed the need to further strengthen cooperation in labour and human resource development.

The Pakistani community has the potential to play a larger role in promoting bilateral economic relations, particularly by facilitating business contacts, investment flows, cultural exchanges and people-to-people links.

Gilani expressed hope for the early conclusion of the Agreement on Labour Mobility Partnership, describing it as an important framework for expanding cooperation in the labour and human resource sectors.

The agreement, once concluded, could provide greater institutional structure to labour mobility between the two countries and potentially create additional opportunities for Pakistani workers while strengthening Portugal's access to skilled human resources.

For Islamabad, labour mobility is also an important component of its broader economic relationship with European countries, given the significant role overseas Pakistanis play in supporting their families and contributing to the national economy.

Education emerged as another promising area of bilateral cooperation.

Gilani called for enhanced interaction between Pakistani and Portuguese universities through student and faculty exchange programmes as well as joint research initiatives.

He argued that stronger academic links could create long-term institutional relationships and expose students and researchers from both countries to new ideas, technologies and areas of expertise. Joint research could also provide opportunities for cooperation in emerging fields such as information technology, artificial intelligence, climate change, agriculture, renewable energy, maritime sciences and other areas connected with the blue economy.

For Pakistan, stronger links with Portuguese universities could provide another channel for expanding its international academic partnerships, while Portuguese institutions could benefit from cooperation with Pakistan's expanding higher education and research ecosystem.

The Senate chairman also appreciated Portugal's continued support



an effort to build on the friendly political relationship between Pakistan and Portugal by developing stronger economic and institutional foundations.

Both countries have maintained cordial relations for decades, but officials on both sides now appear keen to explore ways of giving the relationship greater economic depth.

The Portuguese ambassador's engagement with the Senate leader-

ment, increased investment flows, stronger trade links and practical cooperation in education and labour mobility.

The latest meeting provides a platform for that process.

Ambassador Dominguez's expression of Portugal's keen interest in strengthening trade, investment and economic cooperation, coupled with Gilani's invitation to Portuguese companies to explore Pakistan's emerging opportunities, signals a shared willingness to



ship is particularly relevant in this context because parliamentary diplomacy can help sustain political momentum while creating opportunities for institutional and commercial exchanges.

For Pakistan, stronger ties with Portugal could contribute to its broader engagement with the European Union and help Pakistani businesses develop additional connections within European markets.

For Portugal, Pakistan offers a sizeable market, a young workforce, growing technological capabilities and investment opportunities across multiple sectors.

The challenge, however, will be to convert the goodwill expressed at the political level into sustained business-to-business engagement-

move towards a more substantive economic partnership.

As both sides reaffirmed their commitment to closer engagement, the focus is now likely to shift towards identifying specific projects and mechanisms through which the two countries can translate their political goodwill into measurable economic and people-to-people dividends.

For Islamabad and Lisbon, the message from Wednesday's meeting was clear: the foundation of friendship is already in place; the next step is to turn that goodwill into investment, trade, knowledge and opportunities for the people of both countries.



for Pakistan's GSP Plus status, which provides preferential access for eligible Pakistani exports to the European Union market.

Gilani expressed hope that continued high-level exchanges and regular bilateral consultations would further consolidate relations between Islamabad and Lisbon.

The GSP Plus arrangement remains particularly important for Pakistan because the European Union is one of the country's major export destinations.

Portuguese support within the European framework can therefore carry significance beyond bilateral trade, particularly as Pakistan seeks to retain preferential market access and expand the range and value of its exports to European markets.

Greater awareness among Portuguese businesses of Pakistan's export potential could also help strengthen commercial links and encourage investment partnerships.

The sectors identified during the meeting point towards a potentially broader economic agenda between Pakistan and Portugal.

Agriculture remains an important area for Pakistan, while Portugal's experience in modern agricultural practices, food processing, technology and value-added production could offer opportunities for cooperation.

Information technology represents another promising field.

Pakistan's expanding pool of IT professionals, software developers, freelancers and technology entrepreneurs provides a potential foundation for greater collaboration with European technology companies.

The blue economy could offer an additional avenue for partnership.

With Pakistan seeking to better utilise its maritime resources and strengthen its coastal economy, cooperation with Portugal — a country with a long maritime tradition — could extend into areas such as fisheries, marine research, shipping, port development, ocean technology, coastal tourism and sustainable management of marine resources.

Such sectoral cooperation could move the bilateral relationship beyond conventional diplomatic exchanges and into areas capable of generating tangible economic outcomes.

The meeting between Gilani and Ambassador Dominguez reflects

US-Pakistan forum seeks to connect startups with global markets and investment

Celina Ali

Islamabad: The United States and Pakistan’s higher education and private-sector communities have stepped up efforts to strengthen the country’s entrepreneurship ecosystem, with a new forum in Islamabad bringing together entrepreneurs, startup founders, academics, university leaders and innovation specialists to explore pathways to international investment, market access and stronger university-industry partnerships.

The SEE Global Economic – Entrepreneurship & Investment Readiness Forum, hosted by the US Embassy in Islamabad in collaboration with the Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan (APSUP), brought around 150 participants to the US Educational Foundation in Pakistan Auditorium.

The gathering reflected a growing recognition that Pakistan’s universities can play a much larger role in developing commercially viable technologies, nurturing startups and connecting young entrepreneurs with international markets.

The forum focused particularly on the challenges Pakistani startups face when attempting to move beyond the domestic market, including access to foreign investment, corporate governance, market knowledge, commercial networks and partnerships with established institutions.

Opening the event, Heidi Smith, Director of Public Engagement at the US Embassy in Islamabad, welcomed participants and highlighted the potential for greater engagement between Pakistani entrepreneurs and the US business and innovation ecosystem.

An Entrepreneurship and Trade Spotlight followed, featuring presentations on US-Pakistan commercial engagement and resources available to Pakistani companies seeking to enter or expand their presence in the US market.

The discussions sought to move beyond the traditional emphasis on entrepreneurship as simply a means of creating employment, instead examining how startups and research-driven businesses can become vehicles for innovation, exports, investment and long-term economic growth.

Professor Iqar, Chairman of the Punjab Higher Education Commission, formally opened the forum and stressed the importance of embedding entrepreneurship and innovation more firmly within Pakistan’s higher education system.

His remarks underscored the changing role of universities in economic development, particularly as institutions increasingly move beyond conventional teaching and research functions towards technology transfer, startup incubation and industry engagement.

A series of TED-style presentations provided the forum with perspectives from leading academics and innovation practitioners on the challenges of transforming ideas and research into commercially sustainable enterprises.

Professor Dr. Sumaira Rehman, Rector of Superior University, spoke about university-industry collaboration and the potential of entrepreneurship to empower young people.

She emphasised the importance of creating stronger links between academic institutions and the private sector so that innovative ideas emerging from universities can be developed into sustainable businesses and economic opportunities.

For Pakistan, where a large and increasingly educated young population is searching for new employment and income opportunities, the development of entrepreneurial skills and startup ecosystems could offer an important avenue for economic participation.

Air Vice Marshal Dr. Rizwan Riaz, Pro Rector of the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), focused on another critical part of the innovation chain: research commercialisation.

His presentation highlighted the gap that can exist between academic research and the marketplace, stressing the need to develop mechanisms through which scientific discoveries, technological innovations and university research can be transformed into commercially viable products and services.

The challenge is particularly significant for developing economies, where universities may produce valuable research but lack sufficient links with investors, corporations and international markets to take those ideas to scale.

The forum’s centrepiece was a virtual keynote address by American entrepreneur and angel investor Scott Fox, who offered practical guidance to Pakistani entrepreneurs seeking to build businesses capable of competing in international markets.

Fox addressed issues ranging from entering the US market and developing investor-ready ventures to strengthening corporate governance and transparency.

He also discussed ways entrepreneurs can position their companies to gain access to US-aligned capital and investor networks, areas that can prove decisive for startups seeking to move from early-stage operations to sustainable growth.

For Pakistani startups, internationalisation can provide access not only to capital but also to technology, expertise, customers and strategic partnerships. However, entering mature markets such as the United States requires businesses to meet higher expectations regarding governance, transparency, intellectual property, financial reporting and scalability.

The forum therefore placed considerable emphasis on investment readiness, suggesting that attracting international capital requires more than an innovative business idea. Entrepreneurs must also be able to demonstrate credible management structures, clear business models, transparent financial practices and the ability to operate in competitive global markets.

Addressing the gathering, Heidi Smith said the United States remained a global leader in entrepreneurship, venture capital and emerging technologies, pointing to Silicon Valley’s globally recognised startup ecosystem as well as American advances in artificial intelligence, digital innovation and high-growth businesses.

She said Pakistani entrepreneurs and researchers possessed significant talent but needed stronger international connections and

a better understanding of how to access global markets.

“By linking Pakistani entrepreneurs with American investors like Scott Fox and U.S. innovation ecosystems, these engagements strengthen their global competitiveness and foster partnerships that will shape Pakistan’s innovation economy for years to come,” Smith said.

Her remarks pointed to a broader opportunity for cooperation between the two countries beyond traditional areas of bilateral engagement.

Pakistan has a growing technology and startup community, while its universities are producing increasing numbers of graduates and research initiatives. Yet converting that potential into globally competitive companies remains a challenge, particularly because many startups struggle to secure growth-stage financing and establish international commercial networks.

Greater interaction with US investors, universities and technology ecosystems could help address some of these gaps by exposing Pakistani entrepreneurs to international standards and business practices while opening potential avenues for partnerships and investment.

The forum also highlighted the potential role of private-sector universities in this transformation. With incubation centres, entrepreneurship programmes and research facilities becoming increasingly common within higher education institutions, universities are increasingly positioned to serve as bridges between young innovators and the business community.

The emphasis on university-industry collaboration also reflects a broader shift in the global higher education landscape, where universities are increasingly judged not only by academic output but also by their contribution to innovation, job creation and economic development.

For Pakistan, the ability to commercialise research could be particularly important in sectors such as artificial intelligence, information technology, biotechnology, engineering, agriculture and other technology-driven industries.

The Islamabad forum ultimately sought to connect different parts of this ecosystem — universities, researchers, entrepreneurs, investors and international markets — around a common objective of turning innovation into economic value.

Smith said the gathering provided an opportunity to showcase the US innovation landscape while demonstrating the United States’ commitment to inclusive economic growth and innovation worldwide.

The event also reinforced the idea that stronger international linkages could help Pakistani startups move beyond the limitations of the domestic market and compete for investment and customers abroad.

As Pakistan looks to diversify its economy, expand technology exports and create opportunities for its young population, building a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem is likely to remain an important part of the national economic agenda.

The challenge now is to convert such forums and networking opportunities into sustained partnerships, investment flows, commercial ventures and measurable outcomes — allowing promising Pakistani ideas to move from university laboratories and startup incubators into international markets.



Pakistani Startups Explore U.S. Market Opportunities at Islamabad Forum

Japan’s new industrial frontier: How Europe is reshaping Japanese engineering

Covert Report

Tokyo: Europe is increasingly influencing the way Japanese industrial companies design, develop and commercialise their products, as manufacturers look beyond the traditional goal of exporting to the continent and begin treating European markets as a source of technological standards, regulatory benchmarks and long-term industrial partnerships.

The shift is emerging across a range of Japanese manufacturing sectors, from motion-control systems and industrial automation to electrical safety equipment, and reflects a broader transformation in how Japanese companies view their position in the global industrial economy.

For decades, Japan built its industrial reputation around precision engineering, reliability and high-quality manufacturing. But as global supply chains change, regulatory requirements become more demanding and competition intensifies, Japanese manufacturers are increasingly looking towards Europe not merely as a destination for finished products, but as a reference point for engineering decisions.

The trend was evident during a recent journey from Tokyo to Osaka, where manufacturers, export agencies and industry specialists offered insights into the changing relationship between Japanese industry and European markets.

In Tokyo, companies from different industrial sectors described how European regulations, engineering standards and demanding customers were increasingly affecting the way they develop products at home.

In Osaka, the same pattern appeared in industrial automation and electrical safety, suggesting that the shift is broader than a handful of companies seeking new export opportunities.

One of the clearest examples comes from Muscile Corporation, a Japanese manufacturer specialising in integrated servo motors and motion-control systems.

Founded almost four decades ago, the company initially developed motion-control components for Japanese industrial machinery, including embroidery sewing machines. Over the years, it expanded its technology into compact servo systems that integrate the motor, drive, controller and CPU into a single unit.

At the company’s Osaka facilities, Koichiro Morioka, Motion Control Business Development Director, explained how the integrated design differentiates Muscile Corporation from conventional servo systems.

Traditional servo motors generally require separate controllers, drivers and sensors, creating additional wiring and external components. Muscile Corporation’s system places those functions inside the motor itself.

The result is a compact unit that can be programmed directly, with its own CPU capable of storing and executing commands without requiring a separate external controller.

The technology is aimed at a market being driven by several major industrial trends, including factory automation, robotics and semiconductor manufacturing, as well as emerging mobility applications linked to ageing populations.

Morioka said the global motion-control market was valued at around \$19 billion and could reach approximately \$25 billion by 2030.

That expansion is closely linked to the global push towards automation, with servo motors playing a central role in increasingly sophisticated production systems.

Europe is consequently becoming an important market for Muscile Corporation. But the company’s strategy goes beyond simply increasing sales.

For Muscile Corporation, Europe represents a potential centre for collaborative technological development.

The company wants to establish relationships with European manufacturers and technology firms through which products and

technologies can be developed jointly over the next five to 10 years.

The objective is not simply to sell Japanese technology to European customers, but to exchange expertise and develop new solutions together.

That approach marks an important change in the traditional export model.

Instead of treating overseas markets as destinations for products developed primarily in Japan, companies such as Muscile Corporation increasingly see international markets as part of the innovation process itself.

European regulation is another factor reshaping Japanese industrial development.

Muscile Corporation closely monitors changes in European laws and technical standards and incorporates those developments into its engineering planning.

The company acknowledges that complying with changing regulations creates additional work, but regards the process as an essential part of modern industrial development.

For Japanese manufacturers seeking long-term access to European markets, regulatory compliance is increasingly becoming part of product design from the outset rather than an issue addressed after a product has already been developed.

European standards can influence materials, safety features, manufacturing processes, testing requirements and documentation. Companies seeking to establish themselves in the region therefore have to understand the regulatory environment well before products reach European customers.

For Muscile Corporation, Europe effectively performs three roles at once: it is a growing market, a potential source of industrial partnerships and a regulatory benchmark capable of influencing the company’s future products.

A similar but distinct transformation is taking place at Hasegawa, a Japanese manufacturer whose expertise lies in electrical safety.

Founded in 1925, the company produces voltage detectors used by power utilities, railway operators and construction companies — sectors in which product reliability can directly affect human safety.

At its factory near Osaka, Hasegawa’s International Sales Manager Ayaka Maeda explained that the company’s interest in Europe is relatively new.

The manufacturer had previously explored markets across Asia, India and the Middle East, but began focusing more closely on Europe last year.

Higher freight costs on some routes through the Middle East have made traditional export destinations more expensive to serve, while competition from lower-cost Asian suppliers has intensified.

European manufacturers are widely associated with high quality but can command higher prices, while lower-cost Asian suppliers often compete aggressively on price.

Hasegawa believes its combination



of Japanese manufacturing quality and comparatively competitive pricing could allow it to occupy a space between those two extremes.

But gaining access to the European market requires more than a competitive price.

For Hasegawa, the biggest challenge is technical compliance.

The company previously did not have products designed around the relevant International Electrotechnical Commission, or IEC, standards required for its European expansion.

It has therefore begun developing and manufacturing IEC-compliant products as part of its entry strategy.

That process affects more than the products themselves.

Testing methods, certification procedures and technical documentation also have to be adapted to meet European requirements.

In other words, entering Europe has required Hasegawa to modify part of its industrial system rather than simply establish a sales channel.

Nearly a century of experience as a competitive advantage

Hasegawa plans to initially target European industrial manufacturers before expanding into other sectors where its electrical safety expertise could be relevant.

The company intends to use major international trade exhibitions, including A+A in Germany, as an important gateway into the European market.

For Maeda, however, Hasegawa’s greatest asset is not simply its technology but its accumulated experience.

The company has spent almost a century working closely with Japanese railway operators, power companies and industrial users.

That relationship has involved going directly to worksites to understand how equipment is actually used and what customers require.

Hasegawa now wants to transfer that practical knowledge to Europe.

The company sees its long experience of working in demanding safety

-critical environments as a potential differentiator as it enters a market where reliability and compliance are highly valued.

A broader transformation in Japanese manufacturing

The experiences of Muscile Corporation and Hasegawa illustrate two different routes into Europe.

For one company, Europe represents an opportunity for collaborative technological development in a rapidly expanding automation market.

For the other, the region offers a commercial opportunity but also demands substantial investment in standards, certification and product adaptation.

Yet both point towards the same underlying transformation.

Japanese manufacturers are increasingly recognising that successful internationalisation requires more than exporting products developed for the domestic market.

Global markets are helping shape the products themselves.

European standards are influencing engineering decisions. European regulations are becoming part of product roadmaps. European customers are emerging as potential partners in technological development rather than simply buyers.

This could have implications well beyond the companies currently making the move.

As Japanese manufacturers confront an ageing domestic population, intense international competition, changing logistics costs and rapid technological development, Europe offers both a demanding market and a sophisticated industrial ecosystem.

The European market may therefore become increasingly important not only for Japanese export growth but also for the evolution of Japanese industrial technology.

The emerging relationship is less about Japan selling to Europe and more about Japan and Europe influencing one another.

For Japanese companies, European markets can provide access to demanding customers, advanced industrial partners and regulatory frameworks that increasingly shape global standards.

For Europe, Japanese manufacturers bring decades of expertise in precision engineering, reliability, automation and industrial quality.

That convergence could create a new form of industrial relationship — one in which standards, technology and innovation move in both directions.

As Japanese companies expand their European ambitions, the continent is consequently becoming more than another destination on the export map. It is increasingly becoming part of the engineering process itself.



Ukraine seeks bigger tariff-free farm export quotas from EU amid Black Sea disruptions

NewsWire

Kyiv: Ukraine is seeking to renegotiate and increase the maximum quantities of agricultural products it can export to the European Union without tariffs, with consultations with the European Commission expected to resume next month as Kyiv faces mounting pressure to secure alternative routes for its farm exports. Ukrainian Agriculture Minister Taras Vysotsky said this week that the government planned to reopen discussions with Brussels in September over higher quotas for agricultural products considered sensitive by the EU. "From September we plan to resume consultations with the European Commission on updating and increasing quotas for sensitive items," Vysotsky said during a meeting with representatives of the Ukrainian agricultural sector.

as the country's traditional export routes remain under pressure. Ukraine's agricultural export sector has been particularly affected by repeated attacks on Black Sea ports, which have disrupted maritime shipments and complicated the movement of grain and other commodities. The security situation has increased pressure on Kyiv to diversify export routes and secure greater access to neighbouring EU markets. Several of the EU's agricultural quotas for Ukraine were increased in 2025. The annual tariff-free quota for poultry, for example, rose from 90,000 tonnes to 120,000 tonnes, while the sugar quota increased sharply from 20,070 tonnes to 100,000 tonnes. However, Ukrainian producers argue that the revised limits remain below the volumes they

were able to export during the period of full trade liberalisation introduced in the early years following Russia's invasion. Under the existing framework, a broader review of the quotas was not expected until 2028, when the EU and Ukraine are due to assess Kyiv's progress in bringing its agricultural regulations into line with European standards, including requirements concerning animal welfare and pesticide use. The issue remains politically sensitive within the European Union, particularly in countries bordering Ukraine. Poland, Slovakia and Hungary have continued to maintain unilateral restrictions on certain Ukrainian agricultural imports despite opposition from the European Commission. Polish Agriculture Minister Stefan Krajewski



He urged businesses and industry groups to provide detailed and well-supported data to help the government develop what he described as a strong negotiating position in talks with the EU. The push comes after Ukraine and the EU agreed last year on revised tariff-free export volumes for a range of agricultural commodities. Brussels maintains limits on products considered particularly sensitive because of concerns among European farmers and member states over the impact of Ukrainian imports on domestic markets. The restricted categories include poultry, eggs, sugar, honey, wheat and maize, among other agricultural products. Ukrainian business representatives used Wednesday's meeting to call for a review of quotas covering sugar, starch, molasses, alcohol and bioethanol, arguing that expanded access to the European market is increasingly important

UKRAINE'S GRAIN EXPORT CRISIS

A GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY THREAT



has recently reiterated that Warsaw does not intend to lift its restrictions on Ukrainian grain, highlighting the continuing divisions within the EU over how far preferential access for Ukrainian agricultural products should be extended. Ukrainian agricultural representatives also raised concerns over the deteriorating situation in the Black Sea and the need to strengthen the Danube corridor as an alternative export route. The Danube has become increasingly important for Ukraine's agricultural trade as the country seeks to reduce its dependence on Black Sea shipping. However, the alternative route is also facing difficulties, with drought and record-low water levels creating additional challenges for the movement of cargo. Vysotsky said the government intended to exploit every available opportunity to support agricultural exports, including by securing better preferential trading arrangements with the EU and other international partners. Kyiv's renewed push for larger tariff-free quotas underscores the growing importance of Europe-

Russia chokes Ukraine's wheat exports. Kyiv turns to Europe.

an markets to Ukraine's agricultural economy as the war continues to disrupt established export infrastructure and shipping routes.

The European Commission had not confirmed by the time of publication whether formal consultations with Kyiv would begin in September.



'The real Diana'

Earl Spencer tells his sister's story in powerful new memoir



High Commissioner of United Kingdom to Pakistan Jane Marriott

Covert Report

London: Earl Spencer is set to publish a new book chronicling the life of his sister, Diana, Princess of Wales, offering a deeply personal account of the late



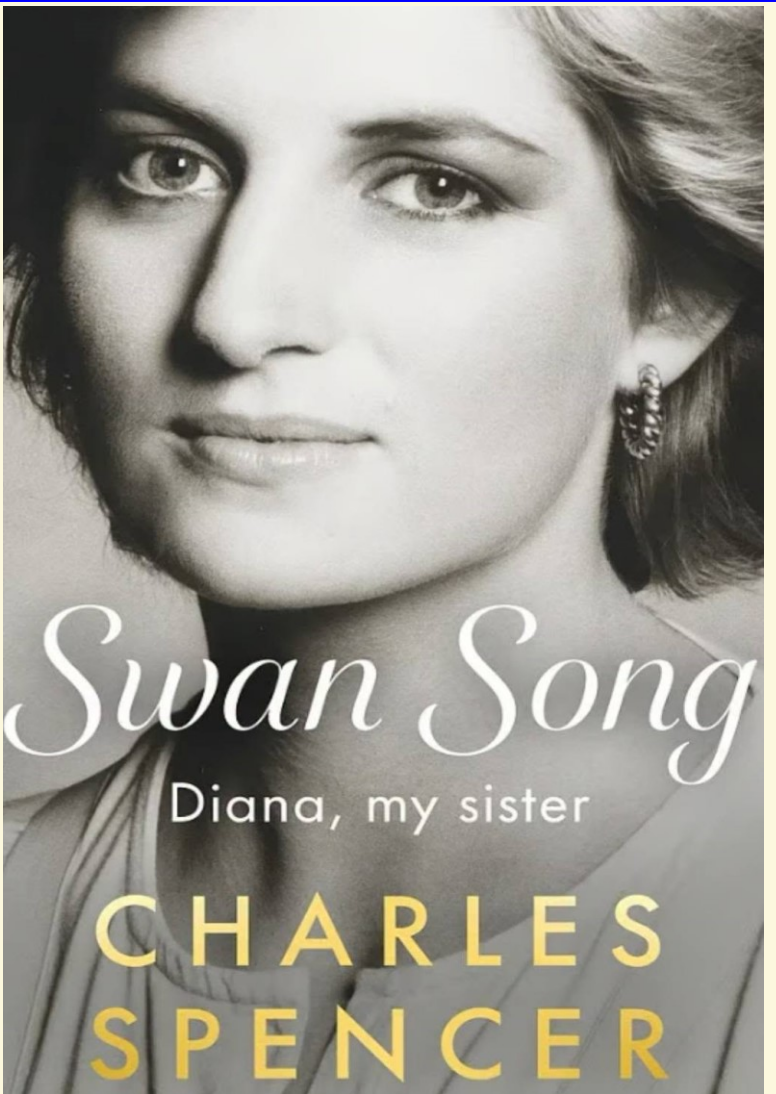
royal nearly three decades after her death. Titled *Swan Song: Diana, My Sister*, the book is scheduled for publication in the United Kingdom on September 22, as the 30th anniversary of Princess Diana's death approaches. It promises to present her life and character through the eyes of her elder brother, who delivered the widely remembered eulogy at her funeral in 1997. Explaining his decision to write the book, Earl Spencer said he wanted to speak on Diana's behalf in an openly positive manner and help readers understand the woman behind the global image. He described his sister as a unique and dynamic personality, characterised by love, charisma and self-doubt, who embraced life fully and sought to make a difference despite the immense pressures surrounding her. "I want to speak on Diana's behalf and do so in an openly positive way," he said, adding that he hoped the book would allow readers to see "who she really was". Princess Diana died at the age of 36 following a car crash in Paris in August 1997. She would have turned 65 on July 1 this year. Her sons, Prince William and Prince Harry, were only 15 and 12 respectively when their mother died. Earl Spencer said the approaching 30th anniversary had once again resulted in a flood of requests for interviews and comments about his sister. Rather than repeatedly revisit the subject through media interviews, he said, he decided to put his own memories and reflections on record. He expressed frustration that many accounts of Diana's life had, over the years, incorporated claims he believes to be untrue but which had nevertheless become widely accepted. "The aim of this book is to tell the truth about Diana from her brother's perspective," he said, recalling that he had sought to do the same during his emotional address at her funeral at Westminster Abbey in September 1997. In that eulogy, Earl Spencer portrayed Diana as the embodiment of compassion, duty, style and beauty. He described her as a global symbol of selfless humanity and an advocate for people who were marginalised and disadvantaged. His funeral address also contained a pointed criticism of the media's relentless pursuit of the princess. He famously referred to Diana as one of the most intensely pursued public figures of the modern era and vowed to protect her two young sons from the pressures that had surrounded their mother. Almost 30 years after her death, Diana remains one of the most recognisable and enduring figures associated with the British royal family. Her public image, humani-



tarian work and tumultuous relationship with the media continue to attract global interest, while her influence remains particularly strong among generations who grew up with her story. Earl Spencer said the new book was intended not only for those who still remember Diana from her years in the public eye but also for younger readers who never had the opportunity to see her at the height of her fame. He said he would be pleased if those too young to remember her could finish the book with a clearer understanding of the person behind the iconic photographs and headlines. The book is being published by Penguin Michael Joseph, part of Penguin Random House UK. Publishing director Daniel Bunyard said the volume would contain revelations likely to attract considerable attention while also serving as a lasting tribute to Diana.



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



“To be modern is to tear the soul out of every thing”
Yohji Yamamoto

“If we all get together, we can truly make a difference, but we must act now. The window of time is closing.” – Jane Goodall

Leonardo-Baykar drone venture enters integration phase in Italy, first deliveries due by year-end

NewsWire
Rome: Leonardo and Turkish defence company Baykar have moved into the industrial execution phase of their new drone joint venture, beginning integration of the first aircraft in Italy and targeting initial customer deliveries before the end of 2026. Leonardo Chief Executive Lorenzo Mariani disclosed the development during the company's second-quarter 2026 earnings call, saying the first aircraft was already being integrated at Leonardo's Ronchi dei Legionari facility. The milestone marks a significant step forward for the partnership, which has progressed from the agreement and regulatory approval stage to

actual aircraft production and integration in Italy. Leonardo and Baykar signed the final agreement establishing the venture shortly before the earnings call. According to Mariani, the partnership has secured all required regulatory approvals in Italy and at the European level, clearing the way for industrial activity. The companies are now preparing a series of presentations and demonstrations for potential customers. The planned activities are expected to showcase different applications of the aircraft and target prospective customers in both Italy and international markets. Mariani did not disclose the identities of the customers expected to receive the first aircraft.



He also did not provide details on the number of aircraft involved, their specific configurations or the financial value of the initial deliveries. The first deliveries, however, are expected before the end of this year, making the programme one of Leonardo's most immediate initiatives for expanding its presence in the rapidly evolving unmanned systems market. The venture with Baykar forms part of Leonardo's broader strategy of using industrial partnerships to accelerate entry into emerging technologies and new markets. Mariani has stressed the importance of partnerships in responding to changing defence requirements, particularly where technological sovereignty and access to advanced capabilities have become increasingly important for European countries. Such partnerships, he has argued, can provide access to technologies and industrial capabilities that could take considerably longer to develop independently. The cooperation with Baykar is particularly significant given the Turkish company's growing international profile in unmanned aerial systems. For Leonardo, the partnership offers an opportunity to combine its established aerospace and defence capabilities with Baykar's expertise in unmanned aircraft and potentially expand the resulting products into international markets. The rapid progress of the Baykar venture also reflects a wider emphasis within Leonardo on accelerating programme development and industrial execution. Mariani has identified speed as an increasingly important element of the company's industrial strategy, arguing that Leonardo needs to move faster in programme development, production, industrialisation and engineering to keep pace with rapidly changing customer requirements. The Baykar programme is among the initiatives where Leonardo believes it has greater control over the timetable. With regulatory approvals now completed, the partners have been able to move directly into aircraft integration and preparations for customer demonstrations, rather than waiting for further external decisions.



Leonardo's chairman H.E. Stefano Pontecorvo

This distinguishes the project from programmes in which regulatory reviews, government decisions or other external factors can significantly affect the pace of development. The start of aircraft integration at Ronchi dei Legionari represents the transition of the Leonardo-Baykar relationship from a strategic agreement into an operational industrial programme. The immediate objective is to complete integration, conduct demonstrations for prospective customers and deliver the first aircraft before the end of 2026. While important details about the initial orders remain undisclosed, the timetable signals Leonardo's intention

to rapidly translate the partnership into commercial and operational results. The venture could also strengthen Italy's role in the European unmanned-systems industry by creating an industrial base for the integration and potential production of advanced drone platforms on Italian soil. For Leonardo, meanwhile, the partnership provides a route to expand its unmanned capabilities while strengthening cooperation with a major international defence technology company. The first customer deliveries expected later this year will therefore provide an important test of the venture's ability to move quickly from partnership formation to industrial-scale execution, while potentially opening the door to wider sales in Italy and international markets.

French Ambassador Nicolas Galey lauded for strengthening Pakistan-France ties



Celina Ali
Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has appreciated the contribution of outgoing French Ambassador Nicolas Galey to further strengthening Pakistan-France relations. Ambassador Galey paid a farewell call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister this week as he completed his diplomatic assignment in Pakistan. During the meeting, Dar congratulated the French envoy on the completion of his tenure and acknowledged his efforts towards deepening bilateral ties between Islamabad and Paris. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister also emphasised the need to further expand Pakistan-France cooperation, stressing the importance of sustained high-level exchanges, dialogue and

engagement on bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest. Dar said continued interaction and regular consultations would help consolidate the positive momentum in relations between the two countries and create new avenues for cooperation. Ambassador Nicolas Galey thanked the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister as well as the Government of Pakistan for the support and cooperation extended to him throughout his tenure. The farewell meeting provided an opportunity to acknowledge Ambassador Galey's diplomatic contribution and reaffirm Pakistan's desire to further strengthen its longstanding relationship with France. Both sides underscored the importance of continued engagement and dialogue in advancing bilateral cooperation and addressing shared regional and international concerns.

