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Meets Iranian President, Supreme Leader

Pakistan ready for talks with India says PM Shehbaz

Addressing joint presser, PM says Pakistan ready to engage in dialogue for resolution of all disputes

DNA

TEHRAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said Pakistan was prepared to hold talks with India for the sake of regional peace, reiterating that the country desired peace and stability in South Asia. "We want peace... we are ready to engage in dialogue for the resolution of all disputes, including the issue of Kashmir," the premier said while addressing a joint press conference along with Iranian President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian in Tehran. Following the conclusion of visit to Turkiye, the premier landed in Tehran as part of his four-nation tour to friendly countries, with aim to express his gratitude for supporting Pakistan during the recent conflict against India. Upon his arrival, the prime minister was received by Iranian Interior Minister and Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan. A smartly turned-out contingent of the Iranian armed forces presented a guard of honour at the airport. The prime minister is accompanied by a high-level delegation, comprising Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Field Marshal General Asim Munir. Federal Ministers Mohsin Naqvi, Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi are also part of the delegation. Speaking during the joint presser, the premier said that Pakistan is a peaceful country that seeks harmony in the region but warned that any act of aggression would be

met with a strong and effective response. He noted that his country was willing to hold discussions on key regional issues, including water sharing and counter-terrorism. Commenting on Pakistan's national security, PM Shehbaz commended the armed forces for their bravery and timely response during the recent conflict with India. "Our armed forces demonstrated exemplary courage," he noted. He also expressed gratitude to Iranian President Pezeshkian for his support and solidarity with Pakistan. "I appreciate the sentiments expressed by President Pezeshkian towards the people of Pakistan," he said, adding that the two countries shared deep-rooted ties based on mutual respect and regional cooperation. Highlighting Pakistan's commitment to peace and development, the prime minister also reaffirmed Islamabad's support for Iran's peaceful nuclear program. Moreover, the prime minister and his delegation are scheduled to meet Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Prior to his visit to Tehran, PM Shehbaz – in an interview with Iranian news agency – said that the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran which stood at \$3 billion, would be taken to \$10 billion volume in the next few years, as there was immense potential of growth. The prime minister noted that the bilateral trade between the two countries had witnessed a significant increase in the past three to four years. "We want to take it up to \$10 billion in the next

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TEHRAN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif paid a courtesy call on His Eminence Sayyed Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran. Tehran, 26 May 2025. – DNA

Malta to recognise State of Palestine next month

DNA

MALTESE Prime Minister Robert Abela announced on Sunday that Malta will recognise the State of Palestine next month, reported Anadolou Agency. The announcement came during a political event in which Abela raised local and global matters, with a particular focus on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, according to Malta Today. "We cannot close our eyes to this human tragedy that is getting worse every day," Abela was quoted by the newspaper as saying in reference to Israel's brutal bombardment of Gaza, which killed

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Fin Min hints at tax relief for salaried class

Finance minister says IMF expressed support; civil-military salary decision not final yet

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has signalled tax relief for the salaried class, saying the upcoming federal

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Live streaming allowed

Sunni Ittehad Council not entitled to reserved seats, observes SC judge

Constitutional Bench questions inclusion of independents in parties not in Parliament

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench has observed that the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is not entitled to reserved seats, questioning how independents can join a political party that is not part of Parliament. During a live-streamed hearing on the reserved seats case, Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan led an 11-member constitutional bench that heard arguments on whether the SIC could claim reserved seats after the inclusion of independent candidates. The court remarked that while independents can join a party represented in Parliament, it is constitutionally unsound for them to join one that did not participate in the elections. "How can independent candidates join a party not present in Parliament?" questioned Justice Musarrat Hilali. "Did Sunni Ittehad Council even contest the elections?" The bench repeatedly questioned how SIC could lay claim to reserved seats, given that it did not contest the 2024 general elections and had no electoral presence in Parliament. Representing the denotified women MNAs, senior lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan argued that the SIC's appeal had been unanimously dismissed and the elected members on reserved seats were denotified without receiving any formal notice. Justice Hilali reminded the court that the Election Commission of Pakistan's notification had earlier been declared null and void.

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'Judges can be transferred from one HC to another'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan has argued before the Supreme Court that judges can be transferred from one High Court to another, both temporarily and permanently, with the consent of the concerned judges, Chief Justice of the two High Courts and the Chief Justice of Pakistan. The AGP begin his argument before the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday after Advocate Faisal Siddiqui, Counsel for the complaining judges, concluded his arguments. The five-member Constitutional Bench, headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, heard petitions challenging the transfer and seniority of judges in the IHC. To a question by Justice Mazhar, Advocate Faisal Siddiqui replied that in India, seniority lists are unified and developed over decades, and transferring judges does not alter their seniority. Justice Mazhar noted that in Pakistan, a judge's transfer involves four levels of judicial

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Briefs

Ruet-Hilal committee meets today

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee will meet in Islamabad on Tuesday for sighting of Zil Hajj moon 1446 Hijri to confirm the dates of Eid ul Adha thsi year. Chairman of the Committee Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabeer Azad will preside over the meeting. Moreover, the Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committees will also meet separately at their respective headquarters for sighting of the Eid ul Adha moon. Eid ul Adha falls on the 10th day of Zil Hajj, which also marks the Hajj pilgrimage, and Muslims in Pakistan are expected to celebrate the occasion on June 7, according to a prediction by the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco). The space agency said that the first of Zil Hajj – the final month in the Islamic lunar calendar – is likely to be observed on May 29, depending on the official moon sighting. This projection places Eid ul Adha on Saturday, June 7.

Jinnah House case SC grants post arrest bail to another accused

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday granted post-arrest bail to Raza Ali, an accused in the Jinnah House attack case, against surety bonds worth Rs 200,000. A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Hashim Kakar, heard the bail plea of the accused. During the proceedings, Justice Kakar asked about the specific charges against Raza Ali. Advocate Sameer Khosa, representing the accused, informed the court that the allegation against his client was that he injured a sub-inspector by throwing a stone at him. He added that the same police officer was allegedly injured by two different individuals, and co-accused Zainul Abideen had already been granted bail. Justice Kakar questioned how two individuals could injure the same police officer in the same incident. – APP

Amidst tensions

Imran Khan asks PTI to prepare for 'major movement'

There is no place in the party for those who play on both sides of the wicket, says Khan

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has asked his party workers and leadership to get ready for a "major nationwide movement" to send the incumbent coalition government packing, Aleema Khan quoted him as saying on Monday. During his interactions with journalists outside Central Jail Adiala, Aleema said that Khan would not call people to Islamabad. "The PTI founder said the movement will be launched across Pakistan," she added. Khan's sister, however, did not give a particular date for the PTI's upcoming movement. "Today, the PTI founder has conveyed three points," she

said. She further said that during the past eight months, Khan was allowed to speak to his children only once. Aleema said that whenever they try to send books, the jail administration stops them. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was booked in multiple cases ranging from corruption to terrorism since his ouster from power via the opposition's no-trust motion in April 2022. Responding to a question about his health, she said the party founder was not being allowed to be examined by his personal physician. Quoting Khan, she said there was no place in the party for those who play on "both sides of the wicket".

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Unity among Muslim world a must for an independent Palestine, says Ambassador Zuhair

The Ambassador of the State of Palestine, Dr. Zuhair Zaid, recently gave an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST, Centreline Journal and Diplomatic News Agency (DNA). He offered insightful commentary on the international community's approach to the Palestinian issue and shared his perspective on the evolving situation. Below is the full text of his interview

EXCLUSIVE

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

Q: Your Excellency, how do you see Pakistan's support for Palestine?

As a Palestinian, I want to express our deep and heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support we have continuously received from Pakistan. This solidarity—both in word and deed—has been a source of strength and comfort for our people, especially in times of hardship and crisis. Pakistan's position on the Palestinian cause has always been principled, clear, and steadfast. On the international stage, whether at the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), or other global forums, Pakistan has consistently raised its voice in defense of Palestinian rights. It has never hesitated to condemn injustice, illegal occupation, and human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people. This diplomatic



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Dr Zuhair Zaid talks to daily Islamabad POST. – DNA

Beyond political support, Pakistan has also extended a generous hand on the humanitarian front. Numerous Pakistani relief organizations, often encouraged and facilitated by the government, have provided vital aid to Palestinians in times of dire need. From medical supplies and food packages to tents and emergency assistance, Pakistan's humanitarian outreach has reached our people in refugee camps, conflict zones, and besieged areas. These acts of compassion and brotherhood are not forgotten—they are etched in our hearts as a reminder that we are not alone in our struggle. In every way, Pakistan has stood by us.

This enduring friendship is a beacon of hope for our nation, and we are profoundly grateful for it.

Q: You have mentioned a desire for practical cooperation between Pakistan and Palestine. Could you elaborate?

Yes, we are keen to move beyond symbolic gestures and establish practical cooperation. We have already presented several agreements to the Government of Pakistan for consideration. With full cooperation from Pakistan, I am hopeful that we will soon sign these agreements, enabling us to enhance cooperation on economic, educational, and cultural levels. This is my



vision—to see concrete progress during my tenure.

Q: Is there any parliamentary-level cooperation being considered?

Absolutely. I believe the Pakistani Parliament and Senate fully support the Palestinian cause. I see no obstacles—legal or otherwise—in enhancing our cooperation. In fact, there have been previous discussions about inviting Pakistani parliamentarians to visit Palestine. Such visits, especially to meet Palestinian prisoners, can be a source of moral support. But the challenge is that Israel controls all borders, making such visits practically impossible

unless Israeli authorities allow entry.

Q: You were once imprisoned in Israel. Would you share that experience?

Certainly. I am part of my people and their struggle. I spent 14 years in Israeli prisons. Over one million Palestinians have faced imprisonment. Many are detained under so-called "administrative detention"—without charges or trial—based on intelligence reports. The initial detention is for six months, often renewed repeatedly. Some remain imprisoned for years under this unjust system.

Q: How do you assess the humanitarian aid currently reaching Gaza?

The current situation in Gaza has surpassed the bounds of humanitarian crisis, embodying a systematic and calculated campaign of violence, displacement, and deprivation. The insufficient aid trickling into the region barely scratches the surface of the dire needs on the ground. Israel's ongoing blockade and deliberate restriction of essential resources—food, water, medicine—constitute a form of collective punishment that violates international law and moral conscience alike. The demolition of homes, arbitrary arrests, and settler violence operate in tandem with official state policy to dispossess Palestinians of their land and identity. What is unfolding is not just a military conflict—it is the systematic cleansing of a people from their homeland, pursued through both overt aggression and structural oppression.

Q: What does the Nakba mean to Palestinians? Nakba, or "catastrophe," refers to the events of 1948 when Palestinians were expelled from their homeland. It began much earlier, with the Balfour Declaration—supported by the British and Americans—granting Zionists the right to establish a state in Palestine. This was an unjust and illogical decision. Palestinians are paying the price for crimes committed against Jews in Europe—crimes we had no part in. Historically, Muslims and Arabs welcomed Jews fleeing persecution, offering them shelter and respect.

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Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune highlighted the African Union's achievements in unity, development, and its growing global role, including joining the G20

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a special event to celebrate "Africa Day 2025." The speakers included: Director General ISSI Amb. Sohail Mahmood; Chairman BoG, ISSI, Amb. Khalid Mahmood; Guest of Honour, Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa), Amb. Hamid Asghar Khan; Keynote Speaker, Dean of African Corps/ Amb. of Morocco, H.E. Mohammad Karmoune, and Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan. In a video recorded message Amb. Amna Baloch, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, shared her perspective on Pakistan-Africa relations. bThe Heads of African Missions in Pakistan and Heads of Pakistan Missions in Africa also shared their views on the occasion. Stalls exhibiting African products and art work depicting African culture were also set up by African Missions in Islamabad.

In his remarks on the occasion, Director General ISSI Amb. Sohail Mahmood stated that 'Africa Day' is a moment to reflect on the continent's rich history, cultural diversity, and enduring struggles and aspirations of its people for freedom, dignity, and development. He noted that the observance commemorates the founding of the African Union (AU) and symbolizes shared values of resilience, justice, and solidarity. He recalled Pakistan's strong political, diplomatic and material support to African nations in their liberation struggles and quest for the right to self-determination. He also highlighted Pakistan's commitment to peace and security in Africa through participation in UN peacekeeping missions since the 1960s. Reflecting on evolving perceptions of Africa, he emphasized its transformation into the "continent of the future," marked by immense



economic potential and strategic significance. Amb Sohail Mahmood described Pakistan's 2019 "Engage Africa" policy as a pivotal initiative aimed at expanding Pakistan's diplomatic footprint in Africa and deepening economic engagement with the continent. He mentioned the opening of five new Pakistani missions, major trade and investment events in African capitals, and growing cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, education, IT, health, and defence. He stressed that Pakistan's pivot to geo-economics was a key driver of its policy approach towards Africa. Amb. Sohail also welcomed the Senate of Pakistan's unanimous resolution declaring May 25 as "Pakistan-Africa Friendship Day," calling it

a landmark initiative in further institutionalizing Pakistan-Africa ties. He concluded by highlighting the whole range of ISSI's activities to further reinforce Pakistan-Africa relations in various domains. Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch reaffirmed Pakistan's historic support for African nations' liberation and its commitment to deepening ties based on mutual trust. She highlighted multilateral cooperation, peacekeeping efforts, and growing trade and defence engagement, calling the Senate's designation of May 25th as "Pakistan-Africa Friendship Day" as a key milestone. Amb. Mohammed Karumune highlighted the African Union's achievements in unity, development, and

its growing global role, including joining the G20. He outlined three priorities for Africa's progress: investment, ACFTA, and a stronger voice in global governance. He praised Pakistan's 'Look Africa' and 'Engage Africa' policies, expanding diplomatic outreach, and the Pakistan-Africa Special Engagement Fund, calling for deeper collaboration through joint ventures, connectivity, and cultural exchanges. In his remarks, Amb. Hamid Asghar Khan described Africa as a welcoming, resource-rich continent with vast potential. While acknowledging its progress, he noted ongoing challenges such as hunger and conflict, and stressed the need for

stronger multilateral cooperation and deeper South-South ties. He highlighted Pakistan's tourism and defence sectors as key areas for collaboration, and underscored the importance of regular political engagement, active resident missions, and enhanced cooperation at the UN. He concluded by commending ISSI's role in promoting Pakistan-Africa relations.

Earlier, Director CAMEA Ms. Amina Khan stated that Africa Day is an occasion to celebrate Africa's legacy and reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to deeper ties. She welcomed the Senate's declaration of May 25 as Pakistan-Africa Friendship Day, highlighted CAMEA's initiatives, and underscored the significance of the 'Engage Africa' policy in strengthening bilateral relations. An interactive discussion followed, where representatives from the African Missions based in Pakistan shared their views. Representatives from the Pakistani Missions based in Africa also joined virtually and underscored the importance of closer ties with Africa and offered their suggestions. A Special Report on the historical roots and future promise of Pakistan-Africa partnership was launched. Amb. Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI, in his vote of thanks, highlighted Africa's growing global significance and recalled Pakistan's unwavering support to the continent's liberation movements. He reaffirmed the deep-rooted ties between Pakistan and Africa, built on shared history, solidarity, and mutual respect.

At the end, the guests visited the stalls established by African Missions in Islamabad, displaying African food and other products, which were introduced by the concerned Heads of Missions.

The event was attended by a large number of diplomats, academics, practitioners, students, members of the media, and African diaspora.

DNA

ABBOTTABAD:Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed, paid a visit to the tourist information and facilitation camp set up by Abbottabad Traffic Police to assist and guide tourists visiting the region. He was accompanied by DIG Hazara Range Nasir Mahmood Satti, District Police Officer (DPO) Abbottabad Umar Tufail Khan, SSP Traffic Abbottabad Qamar Hayat Khan, and other senior police officials. During the visit, the IGP was briefed by the DPO and SSP Traffic about the various facilities being offered at the camp for the convenience of tourists. The camp provides guidance along with complimentary refreshments, including tea, juice, green tea, and snacks for children. IGP thoroughly inspected the arrangements and lauded the efforts of the traffic police in promoting tourism and ensuring visitor comfort. He also interacted with tourists from other provinces who were present at the camp.

LAHORE: Punjab University (PU) Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali has stressed the need to prioritize modern agricultural practices to uplift the rural economy. He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the 18th Honey Bee Training Workshop, a four-day event organized by the Institute of Zoology, Punjab University in collaboration with the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC), Hailey College of Commerce, and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) at the university's Zoological Museum. The event was attended by Secretary Law and Parliamentary Affairs Punjab Asif Bilal Lodhi, CEO SMEDA Socrat Aman Rana, Director Honey Bee Research Institute Ghulam Sarwar, Principal HCC Prof. Dr. Hafiz Zafar Ahmad, Director Institute of Zoology Prof. Dr. Nabila Roohi, Incharge Honey Bee Research Garden Prof. Dr. Abdul Majid Khan, President Academic Staff Association Prof. Dr. Amjad Abbas Magsi, along with faculty members, farmers, researchers, experts, and students from across the country. In his address, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali highlighted that while Pakistani farmers invest significant capital in growing

grain, they often receive inadequate returns due to market dynamics. "If these challenges remain unaddressed, we may eventually face the need to import even wheat," he cautioned. He advocated for respect and support for farmers, describing them as "producers of sustenance, performing a noble task beloved by God." The VC stressed that agriculture must be considered a strategic sector alongside industrialization, artificial intelligence, data science, and emerging technologies. He called for a shift toward corporate farming to boost profitability and sustainability. Dr. Ali also emphasized the importance of honey as a natural food with medicinal properties, adding that greater awareness around kitchen gardening and natural products is necessary, particularly in rural areas where urban sprawl continues to reduce agricultural land. Commending the organizers, he noted that such workshops offer students a valuable opportunity to learn from the collective experience of farmers, researchers, and industry experts. On the occasion, Secretary Law Asif Bilal Lodhi said the government is committed to addressing the challenges faced by universities and farmers and is providing legal and administrative support to facilitate

development. He called on all stakeholders to work together for national progress and praised the Institute of Zoology for choosing a vital and timely topic. SMEIDA CEO Socrat Aman Rana said that his organization is committed to promoting industry and entrepreneurship in line with the Prime Minister's vision. He said efforts are underway to modernize the honey production industry and enhance its capacity by equipping farmers with modern tools and facilities. Ghulam Sarwar, Director of the Honey Bee Research Institute, said honey is a time-honored food with healing properties, yet the beekeeping industry in Pakistan remains underdeveloped. He emphasized the critical role of farmer cooperation in advancing apiculture. Earlier, in her welcome address, Prof. Dr. Nabila Roohi shared that students and faculty from universities across Pakistan are participating in the workshop. She expressed hope that the training would foster entrepreneurial skills among students and help build sustainable careers in agriculture-related fields. Prof. Dr. Abdul Majid Khan called for the establishment of a fully equipped Bee Research Center at the university, stressing the need for dedicated research infrastructure.—DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) launched a major operation against illegal constructions in Islamabad on Monday, sealing 30 commercial and residential units in Pak PWD Employees Co-operative Housing Society, Lohi Bher.

out approved building plans, completion certificates, or legal occupancy permits. Notable sealed units were Shahid Fabrics, Samson, Shaheen Chemist, Muslim Cash & Carry, and several others. "All units sealed were non-compliant despite prior notices, show-causes notices, and final warnings," stated the CDA press release. "Further legal action will be taken against repeat violators." The operation followed the CDA Ordinance 1960 and Building Control Regulations 2020 (amended 2023). Authorities warned the public against illegal construction, urging them to obtain proper approvals before starting any projects in Islamabad. The campaign ensures regulatory compliance and

protects the city's planned development," the release added. More operations are expected in other unauthorized zones. The joint enforcement operation was timed at ensuring regulatory compliance and upholding the sanctity of Islamabad's building regulations. All units leased were found non-compliant despite prior notices, Show Cause Notices and Final Notices. Further legal action as per CDA Bye laws will be initiated against repeated violators. All stakeholders are once again advised to obtain proper approvals and certificates from concerned Wing of CDA before initiating any illegal construction or occupancy in the limit of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). —DNA

FAISALABAD:Director General (DG) Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Muhammad Asif Chaudhary said that FDA is committed to providing all services online to applicants and in this regard, the administrative affairs are being aligned with modern requirements for fast service delivery. Addressing a meeting of the experts of Punjab Urban Land System Enhancement “PULSE” in his office, he reviewed the latest status of the process of modernizing the land system under the supervision of “PULSE”. He directed that the scanning of outstanding records should be completed immediately and there should be no obstacle in uploading all details of the properties of all residential colonies and commercial markets PULSE system so that the property owners could check status and details of their property by sitting at their home. He said that after real-time issuance of Ownership Clearance Certificate, the system should be operational to further improve the provision of town planning reports and other services. He directed the officers of Information Technology Department FDA to expedite the process of modernizing the services of FDA so that the applicants could benefit at maximum extent. He said that there should be no delay in completing the integration of administrative matters of all sectors under modern reforms. In this regard, all officers should adopt modern thinking and expertise in office procedures so that the public could see a clear management system of progress, he added. Quality Assurance Specialist of “PULSE” Haseeb Akhtar and Geo Specialist Kamran Baig gave a briefing on technical issues related to further improving the online service delivery system. Director IT Yasir Ejaz Chhattha, Deputy Director IT Abdullah Noor, Usman Ramey and others were also present on the occasion. —APP

With its holistic approach to training, mentorship, and cultural engagement, the Alhambra Academy of Performing Arts stands as a beacon of artistic excellence and national pride.

DNA

LAHORE:The Lahore Arts Council continues to play a pivotal role in nurturing Pakistan's artistic future through its flagship initiative, the Alhama Academy of Performing Arts. With a strong commitment to creativity, discipline, and cultural heritage, the academy is emerging as a vital hub for training and mentoring the country's next generation of artists, a spokesperson for the council said. Offering expert-led instruc-

tion across a broad range of disciplines, including acting, drama, classical and contemporary music, dance, sculpture, and visual arts, the academy is equipping hundreds of young students with the skills and inspiration needed to thrive in the creative world. Renowned professionals lead each area of study: Ustad Abdul Rauf guides vocal music students, while sculptor Maisam Abbas and visual artists Amjad Naeem and Zarmina Aslam provide hands-on training in

drawing, painting, and sculpture. Classical instruments such as the sitar, violin, harmonium, guitar, and flute are taught by masters including Ustad Saleem Khan, Ustad Abdul Wahab, Sajjad Tafu, Chand Khan, and Naushad Ali Khan. In theatre arts, senior instructor Qaiser Javed imparts performance techniques to aspiring actors. More than just a training ground, the Academy fosters cultural awareness by connecting students with Pakistan's rich artistic heritage. Through a disci-

plined and passion-driven environment, Alhamra is not only preserving traditional art forms but also cultivating contemporary expressions of creativity. Speaking on the academy's mission, Alhamra Executive Director Tauqeer Haider Kazmi said, "Alhamra Academy is not just a place of learning, it is a sanctuary where talent is shaped, identities are rooted in heritage, and excellence is pursued with discipline. We aim to inspire a generation that carries forward Pakistan's

artistic legacy with pride and purpose.” In addition to its main campus at Alhambra Mall Road, the Lahore Arts Council is expanding access to quality art education through its Cultural Complex, offering a range of specialized programs that reach aspiring artists across the city. With its holistic approach to training, mentorship, and cultural engagement, the Alhambra Academy of Performing Arts stands as a beacon of artistic excellence and national pride.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

May 03/Poland National Day

May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day

May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day

May 07/Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day

May 08/Czech Republic National Day

May 09/European Union National Day

May 17/Norway Constitution Day

May 21/Hungary Armed Forces Day

May 22/Yemen Republic Re-unification Day(National Day)

May 24/Eritrea National Day

May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day

May 25/Argentina National Day

May 25/Jordan Independence Day

May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day

May 28/Ethiopia National Day

May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Guests delight in global flavours at IFWA charity bazaar at Serena

The IFWA bazaar not only provided an opportunity for cultural exchange but also reaffirmed the spirit of generosity and community support that defines Islamabad’s vibrant diplomatic community

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Serena Hotel was abuzz with color, culture, and culinary delights as the International Foreign Women’s Association (IFWA) hosted its much-anticipated annual charity bazaar, drawing a large crowd of diplomats, expatriates, and local guests. Held in the elegant halls of the Serena, the bazaar featured a vibrant collection of stalls set up by embassies and international communities, showcasing traditional handicrafts, cultural items, and, most notably, an array of authentic delicacies from around the world. Guests eagerly sampled cuisine from Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas, turning the event into a global food festival. From freshly baked pastries and delights to spicy curries and savory Middle Eastern dishes, the bazaar offered something for every palate. Children and adults alike were seen enjoying the food and cultural performances, making



it a fun and festive family outing. The proceeds from the bazaar will be used to support local NGOs working in the fields of education, healthcare, and women’s empowerment. The IFWA bazaar not only provided an opportunity for cultural exchange but also reaffirmed the spirit of generosity and community support that defines Islamabad’s vibrant diplomatic community.

Telenor, Telecom Foundation partner to promote child online protection

ISLAMABAD:Telenor Pakistan and the Telecom Foundation have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement Telenor’s flagship Child Online Protection program across the Telecom Foundation Education System (TFES). TFES, affiliated with the Ministry of IT & Telecom, provides quality education enhanced by modern facilities, including laboratories, coding programs, and digital learning environments, according to a press release. Under this collaboration, Telenor Pakistan will deliver comprehensive training to TFES students and staff on key areas such as digital literacy, online safety, cyberbullying prevention, and responsible internet use. The initiative aims to equip young learners and educators with the knowledge and tools required to navigate the digital world safely and confidently. The MoU signing ceremony was held at Telenor Pakistan’s headquarters, 345, in Islamabad. The event was attended by Khurram Ashfaq, CEO, Telenor Pakistan; Areej Khan, Chief People Officer, Telenor Pakistan; Syed Zomma Mohiuddin, President & CEO, Telecom Foundation; along with senior representatives from both organizations. Speaking at the ceremony, Khurram Ashfaq said: “It is a privilege to announce our partnership with the Telecom Foundation to advance Child Online Protection and promote digital literacy among young learners. At Telenor Pakistan, we believe that true digital empowerment is only possible when it is underpinned by digital safety. This collaboration marks an important step in equipping the next generation with the tools and awareness they need to navigate the digital world responsibly and confidently.” Syed Zomma Mohiuddin added: “Through this partnership, we aim to fulfill the Foundation’s vision of instilling character-building and ethical values among students, while also empowering both students and staff with the necessary knowledge and safeguards to engage in the digital world effectively and responsibly.” Telenor Pakistan, in collaboration with UNICEF, is currently implementing a nationwide Child Online Protection project. The initiative targets educating 750,000 adolescents and caregivers through a mix of in-person training sessions and digital awareness campaigns. This new collaboration with the Telecom Foundation further reinforces Telenor Pakistan’s commitment to digital inclusion and safety, contributing to the development of a well-informed and digitally responsible generation. —APP



Islamabad: Minister of Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi met with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy to discuss matters of mutual interest on Monday.

Use of Technology in Judicial System in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD:The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan convened a landmark symposium titled “Use of Technology in Judicial System in Pakistan: Prospects and Promises”, bringing together esteemed members of the judiciary, international experts, and senior government officials to explore the future of judicial reforms through digital transformation. Justice Shahid Waheed, Judge Supreme Court of Pakistan presented an overview of the progress and evolution of information technology within Pakistan’s judicial system, highlighting the milestones achieved and the structural challenges that remain. The symposium featured perspectives from international experts, Ms. Li Xiaohui, an expert from the Supreme People’s Court of China, who shared China’s dig-

ital journey in judicial reforms. Prof. Dr. Hasan Mandal, Rector of Istanbul Technical University, Türkiye presented a global view on how courts are adopting technology, while Prof. Dr. Çetin Elmas of Gazi University, Türkiye, discussed the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in shaping the future of justice delivery. Mr. Zarrar Hasham Khan, Federal Secretary for Information Technology and Telecom, outlined Pakistan’s digital infrastructure plans and emphasized inter-institutional collaboration to support justice sector transformation. In his keynote address, Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi, highlighted that the integration of technology into the justice system is not simply a matter of modernization—it is essential to making courts more accessible, transparent, and efficient for the people they serve.

He described the symposium as timely and forward-looking, aligning with the reform agenda to be deliberated by the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC) in its forthcoming meeting. The Chief Justice acknowledged the vital contributions of Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Ali Baqar Najafi, Judges Supreme Court of Pakistan / Chairman & Members of the National Judicial Automation Committee (NJAC), and the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP) for leading this initiative. He also extended a warm welcome to international guests and expressed gratitude to Justice Zhang Jun, the Chief Justice of the Supreme People’s Court of China, and Justice Kadir Ozkaya, the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of Türkiye, for their continued support. —APP

4.6m students receive training in High-Demand freelancing skills

ISLAMABAD:The Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication was informed on Monday that a total of 4.6 million students have received training through 19 batches under 15 of the most in-demand freelancing courses. The meeting, chaired by Syed Amin ul Haq, was briefed by Ignite officials, who stated that 28% of the trained individuals were female, while 72% were male. Ignite further informed the Committee, according to a survey conducted in October 2024, freelancers and trainees who underwent training under Ignite’s programs collectively generated revenue amounting to USD 1.65 billion. Additionally, Ignite revealed that it has introduced 10 new courses, bringing the total number of offerings to 25, including programs related to Artificial Intelligence (AI). The Committee directed Ignite to submit a district-wise list of student enrollments from Balochistan under these training programs. Regarding gender representation, the Committee urged Ignite to increase female participation from the current 28% to at least 50% to ensure greater inclusion and empowerment of women in the national workforce. The Committee also expressed concern over the absence of the CEO of PTCL during the meeting. It was brought to the Committee’s attention that PTCL is planning to sell certain properties, including some high-value assets. The Committee directed PTCL to present the specific clauses in its sales and purchase agreements that authorize the company to proceed with these property sales. Furthermore, the Committee instructed that in the next meeting, it must be ensured that the CEO of PTCL appears before the Committee to respond to its queries. The Committee re-appointed the Sub-Committee under the convenership of Gohar Ali Khan, maintaining the same composition and Terms of Reference. —DNA

Rizvi vows reforms in NPF housing, welfare & education

ISLAMABAD:Managing Director of the National Police Foundation (NPF), Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, on Monday chaired key meetings to review progress and issue fresh directives regarding housing, welfare, and education sectors. An official told APP that the meetings were attended by Director Housing Syed Ali Mohsin, Deputy Director Finance, Deputy Director Welfare and Education, and other NPF officials. MD Rizvi conducted a comprehensive review of ongoing housing projects and directed concerned departments to adopt an effective marketing strategy to make NPF’s real estate ventures more investment-friendly. MD Rizvi emphasized that the National Police Foundation is taking significant steps to strengthen its real estate projects, prioritizing the welfare of members, investors, and individuals associated with the police force. “The NPF is committed to delivering modern and well-equipped real estate projects that ensure a contemporary lifestyle and superior facilities for all stakeholders,” he said. MD Rizvi added that the Foundation aims to provide complete information about various projects, facilitate memberships, and offer valuable investment opportunities to citizens and police officers alike. MD Rizvi further directed the Deputy Director Welfare and Education to ensure robust and practical initiatives for the benefit of police personnel and their families. MD stressed that NPF will also provide high-quality healthcare services, with the well-being of families of martyred and injured police officers remaining a top priority. Additionally, he noted that ongoing projects—including modern residential facilities, schools, colleges, and healthcare centers—are being reinforced to improve the quality of life for police officers and their families. —DNA

Two women held in house theft case

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police’s Sumbal Police team have arrested two female suspects involved in a series of organized house thefts, recovering a large quantity of gold jewelry, cash, local and foreign currency, and prize bonds from their possession Monday. An official told APP that the arrests were made under the special directives of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, as part of an ongoing crackdown against criminal elements in the federal capital. He said that Sumbal Police utilized both technical surveillance and human intelligence to trace and apprehend the accused. The arrested women were identified as Asia Bibi and Parveen, both allegedly members of a group involved in multiple household thefts. He said the police have registered cases against the accused, and further investigation is underway to trace other accomplices and recover additional stolen property. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq reiterated the police’s commitment to ensuring the safety of life and property of the citizens. He said no criminal would be allowed to disrupt public peace. —APP

MoU’s broader impact on skill development

ISLAMABAD:Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Monday underscored significance of the agreement between the Overseas Employment Corporation and Punjab Vocational Training, stating it holds greater importance than a typical Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Speaking at the MoU signing ceremony on Global Employment Opportunities, Salik Hussain emphasized its crucial role in advancing skill development and expanding overseas job prospects. He highlighted that the initiative would play an essential part in equipping workers with relevant skills for international employment. He further stated that institutions such as the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) would be integrated into the process. —APP

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HEC trains
Sindh varsities
focal persons

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan conducted training sessions on Pakistan Qualification Register (PQR) in Karachi for focal persons of universities in Sindh. The training aimed to enhance the accuracy and transparency of qualification data within PQR.

PQR is a centralized database of qualifications maintained by HEC. It serves as a tool for verifying academic qualifications offered by HEC-recognized institutions. It ensures that degree programmes meet national standards, enabling students, employers, and universities to easily interpret and verify qualifications. Additionally, it aligns all qualifications with National Qualifications Framework, which provides structure, standards, and the intended outcomes for various qualifications.

During the training, the participants were informed about the procedures of compiling and submitting qualification data in PQR. The session covered essential documentation requirements, including No Objection Certificates for levels 7 and 8 programmes, minutes from the academic council, and advertisements for the first student intake. The participants received practical training on using the Internal Portal for Universities (IPFU), a platform that streamlines data entry for institutions, campuses, departments, and qualifications. The key focus of the training was the role of PQR focal persons, who liaison between different university offices and HEC. Their responsibilities include keeping PQR up to date and ensuring that academic programmes are properly documented. The session addressed common issues faced by focal persons during the verification process, such as inconsistent program names or missing documents. The training provided real-world solutions to help participants effectively navigate these challenges.—APP

IRSA
releases
260,726 cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD:Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 260,726 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 297,584 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.84 feet which was 71.84 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 168,700 cusecs and 155,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1156.00 feet, which was 106.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 41,158 cusecs and 18,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 211,692, 140,453, 105,263 and 32,494 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 41,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 20,579 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

RCCI honors ambassadors
in Presidents conference

“The presence and unwavering support of these ambassadors symbolize the unity and shared values we uphold as a nation and as a global community”



ISLAMABAD: DIn a symbolic and heartfelt gesture during a special segment of the 17th All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conference (APCPC), the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) honored esteemed ambassadors Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan with commemorative mementos. The gesture recognized their unwavering solidarity, enduring friendship, and diplomatic support—particularly in the context of the recent Pakistan-India conflict.

The ceremony was graced by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, who joined RCCI President Usman Shaukat, Group Leader Sohail Altaf, and other senior dignitaries in presenting the honors. The segment was held to acknowledge the pivotal role of diplomatic partners in fostering peace, cooperation, and mutual respect.

H.E. Atadjan Movlamo, Dean

of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Turkmenistan, who graciously accepted the memento on behalf of the Ambassador of

China. “This recognition is more than ceremonial; it reflects the deep-rooted partnerships Paki-

stan shares with its friends across the globe,” said RCCI President Usman Shaukat. “The presence and unwavering support of these

ambassadors symbolize the unity and shared values we uphold as a nation and as a global community.”

Pakistan highlights
mining sector
potential at Summit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Deputy Head of Mission at Pakistan Embassy in Beijing, Bilal Mahmood Chaudhary, emphasized the transformative role of mining cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He was addressing the 4th Asia Mining Innovation and Development Summi here in Beijing, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Monday. Chaudhary underscored Pakistan's vast mineral wealth, including 186 billion tons of coal reserves, over 5 million tons of copper, and 400 tons of gold at the Reko Diq mine, alongside 500 million tons of iron ore. “These resources position Pakistan as a pivotal player in regional industrial growth, particularly under CPEC 2.0, which prioritizes value addition and downstream processing,” he stated. The alignment of China's advanced

mining technologies with Pakistan's resource base, he noted that CPEC's upgraded phase aims to foster “mutually beneficial partnerships” in line with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The deputy head referenced recent milestones, including the \$2.3 billion railway project linking mining hubs to Gwadar Port—a CPEC Phase II initiative set to expand the port's capacity to 2 million tons annually by 2030. He also cited flagship projects like the Saindak Copper-Gold Mine, operated by China's MCC Group, and the Duddar Lead-Zinc Mine in Balochistan, which achieved a peak output of 500,000 tons in 2019 under China Huaye Group. These ventures, he said, exemplify “win-win collaboration” through job creation and technology transfer. To streamline investments, Chaudhary outlined Pakistan's policy reforms, including the National Minerals Harmonization Framework 2025, which

offers tax incentives and expedited licensing under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). “Our goal is to transform mineral wealth into industrial growth and human development,” he asserted. Shaikh Muhammad Shariq, Vice President of the National Bank of Pakistan, echoed these sentiments, stressing the financial sector's commitment to supporting mining ventures. “CPEC-driven projects are unlocking new avenues for sustainable financing, ensuring that infrastructure and energy initiatives align with long-term economic resilience,” he remarked. The summit concluded with a call for deeper Sino-Pakistani collaboration, building on President Asif Ali Zardari's February 2025 visit to China, which reaffirmed mining as a strategic priority. As Bilal Chaudhary stated, “Our iron-clad friendship will shine brighter through innovation and shared prosperity.”

NUML media
students
organize tree
plantation
drive

ISLAMABAD:Students from the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) took action to promote environmental sustainability by organizing a tree plantation drive near the campus on Monday. The initiative, led by sixth-semester students from the Department of Media and Communication Studies, aimed to enhance biodiversity and combat climate change. Under the supervision of Dr. Ayesha Siddique, Head of the Department, the group planted fruit and shade trees, including mango, guava, neem, and sheesham saplings. “Trees are vital for clean air, reducing urban heat, and maintaining ecological balance. By planting them today, we are securing a better tomorrow,” said Sawaira Safer, the group leader from the New Media program. Dr. Siddique praised the students' efforts, stating, “It is heartening to see young individuals take responsibility for environmental protection. Such activities align with NUML's vision of fostering socially responsible citizens.”—APP

Kamal launches third
national Polio
vaccination campaign

ISLAMABAD:Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal on Monday officially launched the third National Polio Campaign of 2025 at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC). Addressing a press conference, emphasizing the critical importance of immunization, the Minister reiterated the government's firm resolve to eliminate polio from Pakistan. The nationwide campaign, which begins today, aims to vaccinate approximately 45.4 million children under the age of five. In a historic move, Pakistan and Afghanistan are conducting synchronized polio campaigns this year—a landmark joint initiative, as both countries remain the only ones in the world where polio persists. Minister Kamal personally administered polio drops and vitamin A supplements to children at the event, commending the tireless efforts of frontline polio workers. “These workers are the real heroes of this fight,” he stated, while urging parents to ensure their children receive the vaccine without fail. “Vaccination is essential for your child's health and future,” the Minister appealed passionately. “Polio is incurable—unlike cancer, which can be treated. Only immunization can protect children from this crippling disease.” Sharing the latest surveillance data, the Minister revealed that poliovirus has been detected in environmental samples from 50 out of 89 districts. “The virus lurks in our surroundings,” he warned, urging communities to reject misinformation and actively support immunization teams. “Polio eradication remains one of the top priorities of the Government of Pakistan,” Kamal affirmed. “If a child is disabled by this preventable disease, we all bear responsibility. We must unite—just as we have in other national challenges—to end polio once and for all.” He also highlighted positive developments from recent campaigns in Karachi, where community engagement efforts led to a noticeable decline in refusals to polio drops. The Minister called on every citizen to support this critical health initiative, ensuring a safer, polio-free future for the children of Pakistan and Afghanistan.—DNA

OEC starts
Japanese
language
course

ISLAMABAD:Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) has launched a short Japanese language course for skilled workers to get jobs in Japan as basic knowledge is must for job seekers who were interested to work in Japan. An official source told APP, he said that OEC as a manpower promotion public agency which was playing a vital role to provide maximum jobs to Pakistanis abroad to generate the huge remittances. In this regard, OEC seeking application from eligible candidate to apply for the Japanese language course, should have minimum education middle, 18-39 age limits and one year experience must for relevant field. Course fee was Rs 10000 non-refundable and course duration around three months and two session one in morning and other in an evening. He said, “All interested candidates those are seeking jobs in Japan could visit jobs.oec.gov.pk/jlt_form.—APP

Online Qurbani
market booms
ahead of Eid ul
Adha

ISLAMABAD:As Eid ul Adha approaches, online marketplaces and apps were witnessing a significant surge in demand for qurbani animals. Many Pakistanis were opting for digital platforms to purchase their sacrificial animals, taking advantage of the convenience and accessibility offered by these services. A satisfied customer, Danish Tanveer said “I was hesitant at first, but the online platform made it easy to browse and select a goat saying that the delivery was prompt, and the animal was healthy”. He added It's a game-changer for people like him who struggle to visit markets. The online qurbani market has become increasingly popular, with many apps and websites offering a wide range of animals for sale, he stated. A resident of Islamabad Wahab Khan shared her experience, saying, “I purchased a goat online for Eid ul Adha last year, and the experience was seamless. I was thoroughly satisfied with the animal's health and overall quality. He further told that he was skeptical about buying animals online, but the convenience was undeniable adding that he will consider it this year if he can find a reliable platform. As a busy professional he appreciate the option to buy qurbani animals online saying that it saves time and effort, he added.—APP

Twin cities buzz with
festive cheer as Eid nears

ISLAMABAD:Islamabad and Rawalpindi have come alive with Eid preparations as enthusiastic shoppers swarm bustling markets, malls, and shopping centers—the air filled with excitement as families, youth, and children hunt for festive deals, transforming the twin cities into a vibrant celebration of colors and joy. The commercial hubs pulse with activity as vendors showcase dazzling Eid collections, from traditional attire to festive delicacies. Shopkeepers entice customers with special discounts, heightening the anticipation for the grand celebration ahead. This year, rising tailoring costs make off-the-rack outfits a practical choice offering affordability and diverse fashion options. For many, these pre-stitched options strike the right balance between affordability and trendiness. Inam-ur-Rehman, a resident of Islamabad, shared his thoughts with APP, saying, “It's

overwhelming to witness such massive crowds yet encouraging for local businesses,” he highlighted how ready-made garments have streamlined Eid shopping for many while stressing the need for more discounts. “Shopkeepers should offer promotions to help more people celebrate Eid with ease,” he said, adding that it's essential to support the underprivileged during this time. “As Muslims, we have a duty to remember and support those who are less fortunate.” omana, a shopper from Rawalpindi, echoed similar sentiments. “This year, I chose ready-to-wear clothes because of their variety and affordability,” she said. “I found everything I needed, in line with the latest trends and traditional styles.” She urged authorities and business owners to introduce more price cuts on Eid-related items. “If discounts are offered, lower-income families would be able to participate in the celebrations without financial strain,” she added. —APP



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Imposition of 18% Sales
Tax in tribal areas lauded

Import and Income Tax exemptions should also be repealed: Omar Butt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former president of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Shahid Rasheed Butt said on Monday that the government's decision to impose an 18 percent sales tax on goods manufactured in the erstwhile FATA and PATA is a crucial and forward-thinking move. He argued compellingly that we must consider withdrawing import discounts and income tax concessions to foster a more equitable economic environment, as it will help the government raise billions of rupees. Shahid Rasheed Butt praised the policy shift, calling it a

long-overdue move towards tax uniformity and fiscal discipline. He stressed that this is a necessary step to discourage elements from misusing the exemptions and ensure a level playing field for all businesses. In a statement issued here today, he said that the withdrawal of the sales tax exemption is expected to generate over Rs45 billion in revenue during the upcoming fiscal year. This amount could increase significantly if income tax exemptions are also withdrawn. The FBR is currently drafting the necessary legal amendments to the Sales Tax Act and other relevant laws to implement the measure in the 2025-26 federal budget. The move is aligned with broader efforts to reduce fiscal deficits and

expand the national tax base. Until now, goods manufactured in the tribal regions were exempted from sales tax under the Finance Act 2024, with exemptions set to expire on June 30, 2025. These exemptions had been retained after the 2018 merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as part of an economic support package for the conflict-affected region. This package was designed to boost the region's economy, which was severely affected by years of conflict and instability. “While the intention behind the tax breaks was to stimulate growth, over time, these concessions have been misused by certain businesses operating outside the tribal areas,”

Shahid Rasheed Butt said. “Such distortions harm fair competition across the country.” He added that the exemption on import into these areas would remain, but under stricter regulations aimed at ensuring imported goods are actually used within the region for legitimate industrial purposes. These regulations will be designed to prevent the misuse of the system, ensuring that the tax benefits are directed towards the intended economic development of the tribal areas. Influential business groups based outside tribal areas argue that the region still lacks adequate infrastructure, energy access, and financial services, making it challenging to sustain full taxation.

Climate Change and the crisis facing Pakistan

CLIMATE change is no longer a distant threat—it is a present and intensifying reality, especially for third world countries like Pakistan. While the global community is grappling with the consequences of rising temperatures, it is the economically weaker nations that bear the heaviest burden. These countries, despite contributing the least to global greenhouse gas emissions, are the most vulnerable to the climate crisis due to inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and socio-political challenges. Pakistan exemplifies this disparity. Ranked among the top ten countries most affected by climate change, Pakistan experiences frequent and severe natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves. The catastrophic floods of 2022 submerged one-third of the country, affecting over 33 million people and causing damages worth billions of dollars. Crops were destroyed, homes were swept away, and essential infrastructure was crippled. The agricultural sector, which employs a large portion of Pakistan's population, is increasingly unpredictable due to changing rainfall patterns and extreme weather, threatening food security and rural livelihoods. Moreover, rising temperatures and glacial melt in the northern regions are endangering Pakistan's water supply. The country depends heavily on glacier-fed rivers, and as glaciers retreat, the risk of both floods and future water shortages grows. Urban areas also suffer as prolonged heatwaves, combined with power shortages, impact public health and productivity. The impacts of climate change are not limited to environmental degradation; they exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities. The poor, who often live in vulnerable areas and lack the means to recover from climate-related disasters, are pushed deeper into poverty. Children miss school during floods, families are displaced, and healthcare systems are overwhelmed. Climate change, in this context, is not just an environmental issue—it is a humanitarian crisis. So, how can Pakistan and other third world countries cope with this mounting challenge? First, there must be a renewed focus on climate-resilient infrastructure and disaster preparedness. Building flood defenses, improving drainage systems, and constructing climate-resilient homes can save lives and reduce economic losses. Investment in early warning systems is essential to give communities time to prepare and evacuate if needed. Second, international support is critical. Wealthier nations have a moral and historical responsibility to assist the Global South through climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building. Initiatives like the Loss and Damage Fund established at COP27 must be implemented swiftly and transparently, with developing countries having a seat at the decision-making table. Third, at the national level, Pakistan must prioritize sustainable development and environmental protection. Transitioning to renewable energy, reforestation, and public awareness campaigns can play significant roles in reducing vulnerability. Strengthening institutions and enforcing environmental regulations is equally crucial. In conclusion, climate change is an existential threat to Pakistan and many other third world nations.

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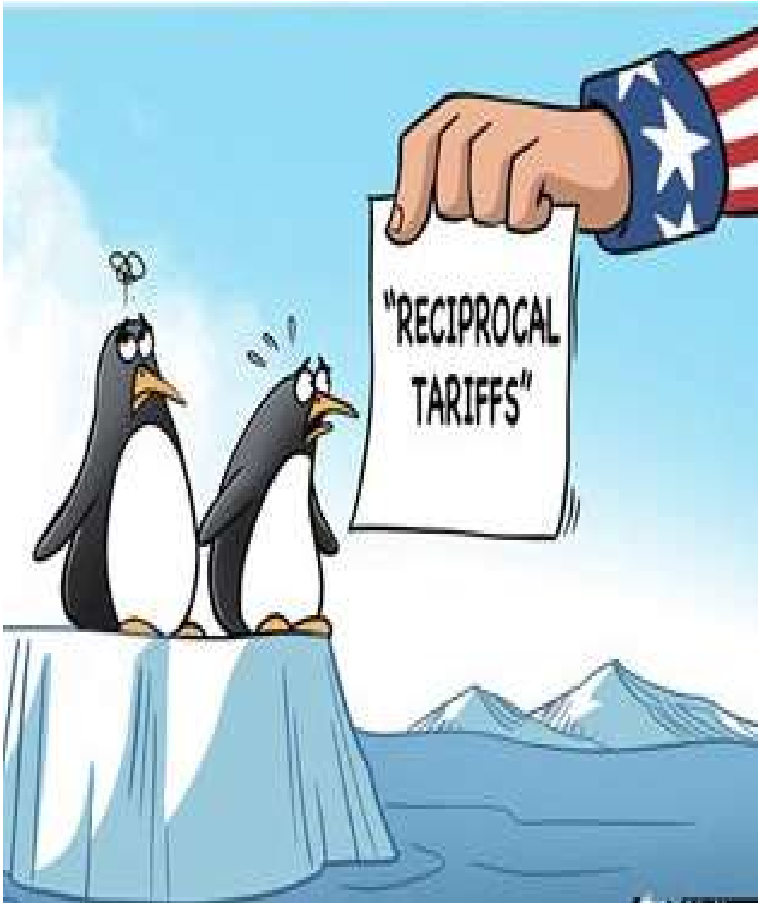
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The Gaza humanitarian crisis

THE humanitarian crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions. With thousands of lives lost, basic infrastructure decimated, and an entire population trapped in dire conditions, the world is witnessing one of the most urgent humanitarian emergencies of our time. Yet, the international response, especially from powerful nations like the United States, has been inadequate and, at times, complicit in prolonging the suffering. The densely populated Gaza Strip, home to over two million people, has long been under siege. But the recent escalation in violence has intensified the suffering to an unprecedented level. Civilians, including children, are paying the heaviest price. Hospitals have run out of medical supplies, clean water is scarce, electricity is sporadic, and food insecurity is growing. Schools, UN shelters, and even ambulances have not been spared from bombardments. The destruction of homes and infrastructure has left hundreds of thousands displaced, with no safe refuge. This is not just a political or military issue—it is a humanitarian catastrophe. The collective punishment of a civilian population, whether intentional or incidental, is a violation of international humanitarian law. The right to life, shelter, health care, and dignity are fundamental human rights that must be protected, even in times of conflict. The global response to the crisis has been inconsistent and deeply politicized. While many countries and international organizations have called for ceasefires and humanitarian corridors, the implementation of these measures has been slow and often blocked by political considerations. The United Nations has repeatedly expressed concern, but its resolutions are often stalled or vetoed by powerful member states. The United States, as one of the most influential global actors and a key ally of Israel, holds a particularly important role. While the U.S. government has occasionally expressed concern over civilian casualties and pledged humanitarian aid, it has continued to provide military and diplomatic support to Israel, without adequate conditions to ensure the protection of civilians. This dual approach undermines its credibility as a proponent of human rights and international law. If the United States truly wishes to promote peace and stability in the region, it must adopt a more balanced and principled stance. It should use its leverage to demand an immediate and sustained ceasefire, support a robust humanitarian operation, and push for a long-term political solution that guarantees security and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis. Peace cannot be achieved through force; it requires justice, dialogue, and mutual recognition. Moreover, the international community must increase pressure for immediate humanitarian access to Gaza. Aid agencies should be allowed to operate freely and safely. Reconstruction efforts must begin, not just to rebuild buildings, but to restore hope, education, and opportunity for a generation scarred by war. In conclusion, the Gaza humanitarian crisis is a test of global conscience. The suffering of innocent civilians must not be sidelined by geopolitical interests. It is time for the world—and especially powerful nations like the United States—to act with compassion, courage, and commitment to human dignity. History will judge us not by our words, but by our actions.

Trump's TAKE IT DOWN Act: Not enough to end sexual exploitation

Qamar Bashir



United States: Despite its legal protections, the U.S. is far from immune. The National Human Trafficking Hotline identified 15,299 victims in 2022, with 5,572 cases involving sex trafficking. The FBI has flagged an alarming rise in cases of child exploitation linked to online pornography. Globally, the University of Edinburgh estimates that over 300 million children are victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse annually. In the UK alone, reports of AI-generated child sexual abuse material surged by 380% in a single year

THE global crisis of sexual exploitation did not happen by chance. It was the direct consequence of a single legal decision: the June 21, 1973 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Miller v. California*, which legalized the distribution and marketing of adult content under the guise of free speech. This decision unleashed a monster that grew unchecked, embedding itself into cultures, economies, and digital landscapes worldwide. Today, we are living with the consequences of that decision, and unless the root cause is reversed, no legal reform, including the recently passed TAKE IT DOWN Act, will be enough to stop the damage. The pornography industry is not a small fringe sector—it is a global behemoth. Estimates put its annual revenue between \$97 billion and \$100 billion. In the United States alone, the industry contributes between \$12 and \$20 billion to the economy. In California, over 50,000 individuals work in the porn sector, from performers to production crews. This industry thrives on the exploitation of women, children, and marginalized communities—turning human intimacy into a commodity for mass consumption. The online adult entertainment market, valued at \$76 billion in 2024, is projected to exceed \$118 billion by 2030. Cable and satellite providers also profit enormously, retaining up to 80% of pay-per-view revenues from adult content. And this is not a phenomenon confined to the United States. The ripple effects of America's legal precedent have spread worldwide, creating industries of sexual exploitation in vulnerable countries. Thailand: Once known for its cultural heritage, Thailand has become a global hub for sex tourism. Thousands of women and children, often trafficked, are trapped in an industry catering to foreign demand, particularly from Western countries. Philippines: The country faces an epidemic of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). Tens of thousands of minors are coerced into performing explicit acts in front of webcams, with paying customers predominantly in the U.S. and Europe. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) reported over 30,000 cases of OSEC in a single year. India: With weak enforcement and a booming digital market, India is grappling with millions of cases of non-consensual intimate images, sextortion, and

revenge porn. Victims, predominantly women, face lifelong stigma and psychological trauma. Pakistan: The impact of legalized pornography has been profound. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority reported that approximately 20 million Pakistanis attempt to access pornographic websites daily, despite government bans. In 2023, the NGO Sahil documented 4,253 cases of child abuse, with over half involving sexual abuse. Additionally, the U.S. State Department's 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report identified 20,809 sex trafficking victims in Pakistan, including 921 children. Africa: Trafficking networks in Nigeria, South Africa, and other regions have expanded, with victims—especially minors—coerced into sex work. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is now one of the fastest-growing criminal enterprises across the continent. Europe: The European Union reported over 10,000 victims of human trafficking in a single year, with the majority subjected to sexual exploitation. Eastern Europe, in particular, has become a pipeline for trafficking women into Western markets. United States: Despite its legal protections, the U.S. is far from immune. The National Human Trafficking Hotline identified 15,299 victims in 2022, with 5,572 cases involving sex trafficking. The FBI has flagged an alarming rise in cases of child exploitation linked to online pornography. Globally, the University of Edinburgh estimates that over 300 million children are victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse annually. In the UK alone, reports of AI-generated child sexual abuse material surged by 380% in a single year. These statistics are not just numbers—they are lives shattered, futures stolen, and human dignity erased. This is the landscape in which the TAKE IT DOWN Act was introduced. The Act, passed in December 2024 and signed into law by Trump on 19th of May 2025 was championed by First Lady Melania Trump aimed at criminalizing the distribution of non-consensual intimate images, including deepfakes, and requires platforms to remove such content within 48 hours of notification. It is a necessary step, but let us be honest—it is not enough. The law addresses the symptoms of the problem, not its cause. The real issue is that the legal framework created by *Miller v. California* remains intact. As long as pornography—whether consensual, adult, or

otherwise—is legally protected and commercially distributed, the monster will continue to thrive. The victims, especially in poorer nations, will not have the resources, knowledge, or legal access to seek redress. They will remain trapped in a system that profits from their suffering. It is not practical to expect millions of exploited individuals across the globe to navigate complex legal systems to have their images removed. Laws like the TAKE IT DOWN Act are reactive; they respond after the harm is done. By then, the damage—psychological, reputational, and financial—is irreversible. What is needed is a complete reversal of the 1973 decision. Pornography, in all its forms—whether adult, consensual, or otherwise—must be outlawed. This is not about censorship or prudery; it is about common sense and basic human decency. It is about dismantling an industry that profits from the exploitation of the vulnerable, the normalization of deviance, and the destruction of societal values. The numbers speak for themselves. The global sex trade, fueled by legalized pornography, is estimated to involve over 25 million people, with children—both girls and boys—making up a significant portion of the exploited. Human trafficking for sexual purposes alone is a \$99 billion industry. These figures represent not just economic data but a moral failure on a global scale. The TAKE IT DOWN Act is a step in the right direction, but unless we confront the root cause—the legal and commercial normalization of pornography—the exploitation will continue. The world must learn from America's mistake, not repeat it. It is time for countries to outlaw pornography entirely, dismantle the legal frameworks that protect it, and take decisive action to protect their citizens—especially the most vulnerable. This is not a call for censorship; it is a call for sanity. A call to protect the fundamental dignity of the human person, to stop treating bodies as commodities, and to halt an industry that has done untold harm. The TAKE IT DOWN Act has opened the door. Now, the world must walk through it and finish the job.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at the Embassy of
Pakistan to France
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Macomb, Michigan, USA

Yom-e-Takbeer: The day Pakistan became indomitable

Azhar Zeeshan

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine inherited the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world overnight. However, it gave up on them following its accession to the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). The decision at the time was lauded by many, except one: John J. Mearsheimer, the founder of Offensive Realism, who, while criticising Ukraine's decision argued that without these weapons, Ukraine would not stand a chance against a nuclear-armed Russia, and no state, including the US, will extend meaningful security guarantees

HANS J. Morgenthau, one of the most renowned strategists, once famously wrote in his magnum opus book, *The Politics Among Nations*, that “the weak is meat which the powerful eat”. Morgenthau was actually referring to one of the harsh realities of the international system, which is characterised by anarchy and where there is only one currency for survival, i.e., power. And what can be the greater source of power than a nuclear weapon? So, it was precisely this desire for survival and security that led Pakistan to conduct successful nuclear explosions 27 years ago and become the seventh nuclear power of the world. The journey to this historic day is a tale of exceptional foresight, and extraordinary sacrifices. It is a tale that is worth reiterating here on this memorable day. The genesis of Pakistan's nuclear program is deeply rooted in its security needs. These security needs were felt tremendously in the aftermath of the 1971 War with India, which resulted in the dismemberment of the Eastern wing of Pakistan. The war highlighted the limitations of Pakistan's conventional military strategy. However, at the same time, it also managed to effect a change in Pakistan's strategic thinking, particularly in the context of pursuing a nuclear weapon, which is deemed as the ultimate deterrent. The change, which was already in place, was pushed through with new vigour, after India conducted the so called peaceful nuclear tests in 1974, codenamed ‘Smiling Buddha.’ The then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, aptly captured this renewed commitment towards the pursuit of nuclear weapons in

the words, “If India builds the bomb, we will eat grass, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own... We have no other choice!” In due course, the successive governments remained committed to this pursuit despite facing considerable diplomatic and economic pressures from around the world. It finally achieved its objective on 28 May 1998, when Pakistan detonated five nuclear devices in the Ras Koh Mountains of Chagai, Balochistan. The tests, which were codenamed Chagai-I, yielded an estimated total yield of 40 kilotons. These tests were followed by another test which was codenamed as Chagai-II in the Desert of Kharan. These tests sealed Pakistan's status as an official nuclear power state. This feat was made possible by the tireless and timeless efforts of many unsung heroes, which includes scientists, engineers, and technicians from Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and Kahuta Research Laboratories, under the leadership of towering figures such as Munir Ahmed Khan and Dr Abdul Qadir Khan, respectively. However, after all these years, as we celebrate this achievement, many nuclear pessimists often raise this important question: Was the pursuit of nuclear weapons worth it? The answer to this is a resounding yes. Since Pakistan has acquired nuclear capability, it has proven its worth time and again, be it the Kargil War of 1999 or the more recent Balakot Crisis of 2019. It has successfully prevented what could have been catastrophic and full scale conflicts by keeping the belligerence of India at bay and by maintaining the overall strategic stability in one of the world's most volatile regions. The strategic value of nuclear weapons

becomes even clearer when one do a comparative analysis with the other states, particularly those states that have either relinquished or never acquired nuclear capabilities. Consider the example of Ukraine, for that matter. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine inherited the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world overnight. However, it gave up on them following its accession to the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). The decision at the time was lauded by many, except one: John J. Mearsheimer, the founder of Offensive Realism, who, while criticising Ukraine's decision argued that without these weapons, Ukraine would not stand a chance against a nuclear-armed Russia, and no state, including the US, will extend meaningful security guarantees. Fast forward to 2025, and his prediction turned out to be correct: Russia is engulfing parts of Ukraine, meanwhile, the US has washed off its hands from the conflict and is standing on the side as a spectator. The Ukrainian experience screams one truth – Z.A. Bhutto was right. That defiant oath to “eat grass” was not mere rhetoric but a prophecy, written in the blood of nations that gambled on goodwill over strategic deterrence. Today, as we celebrate Yom-e-Takbeer, our nuclear shield glows in the dark like an unsleeping sentinel conveying this unshakable truth that Pakistan would rather walk hungry with its head high than feast on the crumbs of subjugation. Long Live Pakistan!

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Briefs

PM Shehbaz congratulates Qalandars

ISTANBUL: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday congratulated the Lahore Qalandars on winning the final contest of Pakistan Super League 10, sealing their third title in four seasons. The prime minister, who is currently in Türkiye on the first leg of his four-nation visit, praised both Quetta Gladiators and Lahore Qalandars for their outstanding performance in the final match of the 10th edition of the PSL. "Lahore Qalandars achieved the target successfully after a thrilling contest. All teams participating in PSL 10 displayed excellent performances," the prime minister commented in a statement. He also congratulated Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and the PCB administration on the successful organization of the PSL 10. He also appreciated all the players, particularly the foreign players, whose participation ensured the success of the event. – APP

Fin Min hints at tax relief for...

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budget – set to be presented on June 10 – will include measures to ease the financial burden on salaried individuals. Speaking at an event in Islamabad on Monday, the finance minister said the government is actively working to reduce the tax burden on salaried persons, adding that their income is taxed as soon as it is credited into their accounts. He stressed the need for a strategic direction in the budget, not just a statement of income and expenditure. "We are taking bold steps in the upcoming budget to show where the economy stands and where it is headed," he said. Aurangzeb said Pakistan's economic recovery is gaining international recognition, with the speed of improvement surprising observers. He highlighted that digitisation in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is under way and reducing human intervention will increase transparency. The finance minister further noted that reforms are being introduced in the tax system, energy sector, and other areas. "We have already handed over 24 SOEs to the Privatisation Commission," he said, adding that the economy is moving towards technological transformation. The minister shared that during recent meetings with investors in Washington and London, Pakistan received a positive response on its economic outlook.

Pakistan ready for talks with...

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few years, but I think the potential is much larger than that as well. We are discussing signing a free trade agreement (FTA). I think in the next ten years, the trade volume between the two countries will expand a great deal," the Iranian news wire quoted the prime minister as saying. The premier, to a query, replied that he strongly believed that the economic destiny of both countries was interlinked as they shared a border of about 900 kilometres.

Imran Khan asks PTI to prepare...

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"Even if I am kept in jail for life, I will not bow down," she quoted him as saying. Although Khan urged preparation for a protest movement, PTI is said to have resumed efforts to start a fresh round of negotiations with the incumbent government.

Malta to recognise State of...

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nearly 54,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom were women and children. Abela said the move is a moral responsibility and that Palestine will be recognised following a conference on June 20.



TEHRAN: President of Iran Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif held delegation level meeting at Sa'dabad Palace. – DNA

Perera, Sikandar lead Lahore Qalandars to third PSL title

Mohammad Amir, who had bowled an excellent opening spell, looked to miss the trick towards the end of the innings as he conceded 30 runs off his last two overs

DNA

LAHORE: Powered by a scintillating unbeaten fifty by Kusal Perera and a cameo by all-rounder Sikandar Raza led Lahore Qalandars to chase down improbable 201 and beat Quetta Gladiators by six wickets in a thriller in the final of the PSL X at the Gaddafi stadium here on Sunday night. This is highest total chased by a team in a T20 final across the globe and third title won Lahore Qalandars in the last four seasons. Lahore Qalandars and Islamabad have won three PSL titles each in its 10-year-long illustrious history. Lahore Qalandars looked down and out of the title contention by the 15th over with the total at 131-3 and needed 71 runs off the last five overs but they did turn table on the Quetta Gladiators through brilliance of Kusal Perera and belligerence of Sikandar Raza – who had flown from England after national duty and reached just on time to play the final. Sikandar Raza played a cameo of 22 runs off mere seven balls while Kusal Perera played an unbeaten knock of 62 off 31 balls to knock

Quetta out of PSL trophy contention. Lahore's march to victory was ably aided by Mohammad Naeem 46 (27) and Abdullah Shafique's 41 (28). Mohammad Naeem hit six towering 6s and a lone boundary in his aggressive knock which laid the foundation of a famous victory as he kept the run-rate under check as they hunting down a big target of 202 runs. Rajapaksa provided stability to the innings but was slow in chase and when he fell to the guile of Mohammad Amir in the 17th over with the team total at 145-4, Lahore required 57 runs off 20 balls but it was the brilliance and calculated approach of Kusal Perera who made it happen. He hit five boundaries and four 6s in one of the best knocks of his career. If Perera was brilliant, Sikandar Raza was maverick in the run-chase as he kept up to his reputation of a man in crisis and hit the winning boundary on the penultimate ball of the match to bring his team-mate into ecstasy. Mohammad Amir, who had bowled an excellent opening spell, looked to miss the trick towards the end of the innings as he conceded 30 runs off his last two overs. Comparing the bowling effort with the Lahore Qalandars who had curtailed Quetta

to 31 runs in last three overs of the innings and claimed four wickets, Quetta bowlers conceded 57 runs in the last three overs without taking any wicket. Mohammad Amir, Usman Tariq, Abrar Ahmed and Faheem Ashraf claimed one wicket each while Khurram Shahzad remained wicketless. Earlier, Quetta captain Saud Shakeel won the toss and elected to bat first. A blistering knock Hasan Nawaz and a cameo by Faheem Ashraf powered Quetta Gladiators to a commanding total of 201-9 in 20 overs against Lahore Qalandars before a capacity crowd at the iconic Gaddafi stadium. In a wonderful display of power-hitting by the hitman Hasan Nawaz 76 (43), Quetta innings never lost the way despite early jolts when Shaheen Shah Afridi and Salman Mirza drew the first blood and restricted Quetta to 21-2 in the fourth over. However, Finn Allen and Hasan Nawaz took their team to 58 runs before Allen fell in the seventh over. Rilee Rossouw played a quick knock of 22 off 11 balls before Sikandar Raza, who flew from England 10 minutes before the toss to play the final, got the better of him when he was superbly caught by Afridi in the covers. Hasan Nawaz, whose

innings included eight boundaries and four 6s, anchored the innings but he scored freely. He, in partnership with Avishka Fernando, put on 67 runs partnership off 39 balls. Both the batters were harsh towards the spinners and played freely against Sikandar and Rishad Hussain. Hasan Nawaz played a master-class as he led the assault against the Qalandars bowling line-up. The fortunes ebbed and flowed during the course of the match. Lahore snatched the advantage in the first part of the innings, Lahore Qalandars drew the first blood as they claimed two wickets in first three overs, and the latter part, when Afridi and Harris bagged four wickets in nine balls, but it was Hasan Nawaz in the early part and Faheem Ashraf towards the close who put Quetta ahead. Quetta Gladiators were well placed to score a big total by the seventeenth over but the fall of back-to-back wickets of Dinesh Chandimal 22 (12) and Hasan Nawaz 75 (45) in Shaheen's last over with a brace from Harris Rauf dented the Quetta's chances to score big before Faheem Ashraf arrested the advantage as he plundered 23 runs off Salman Mirza's last over of the match. Faheem hit three 6s and a four.

Shaheen Shah Afridi named PSL X team captain



ISLAMABAD: Pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi, who led Lahore Qalandars to their third title in four years in HBL PSL last night, has been named captain of the Team of HBL PSL X. The team was selected by the

esteemed members of the commentary team. The HBL PSL X was played across four cities – Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi from April 11 to May 25. In the final, Qalandars defeated Quetta Gladiators

by six wickets at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, said a press release. The 25-year-old Shaheen, not only claimed the Fazal Mahmood Cap for finishing as the highest wicket-taker – 19 dismissals in 13 matches, but also leads a team that features two of his Qalandars teammates. Sikandar Raza (11 matches, 254 runs, 2x50s, 10 wickets) and Fakhar Zaman (13 matches, 439 runs, 4x50s) earned their places on the back of stellar performances in the tournament. Gladiators – the winners of the 2019 edition of HBL PSL are also represented by three players. 23-year-old Pakistan international Hasan Nawaz, who was also adjudged best batter of the tournament (12 matches, 399 runs, 1x100, 3x50s) is joined by experienced all-rounder Faheem Ashraf (12 matches, 163 runs, 17 wickets) and 27-year-old spinner Abrar Ahmed (12 matches, 17 wickets). Karachi Kings, who secured third place on the points table before losing to Qalandars in Eliminator 1 on May 22 at Gaddafi Stadium, also have three representatives. Captain David Warner (11

matches, 368 runs, 3x50s), opening partner James Vince (378 runs, 1x100, 3x50s) and pacer Hasan Ali (10 matches, 17 wickets) all feature in the XI. Khushdil Shah (11 matches, 253 runs, 1x50, seven wickets) is named as the 12th man. Islamabad United's Sahibzada Farhan, who earned the Hanif Mohammad Cap for leading the run charts with 449 runs in 12 matches (1x100, 3x50s), is the sole representative from his side. Completing the line-up is Peshawar Zalmi's emerging talent, fast bowler Ali Raza, who took 12 wickets in nine matches. Squad: Fakhar Zaman (Lahore Qalandars), Sahibzada Farhan (Islamabad United) (wicket-keeper), David Warner (Karachi Kings), James Vince (Karachi Kings), Hasan Nawaz (Quetta Gladiators), Sikandar Raza (Lahore Qalandars), Faheem Ashraf (Quetta Gladiators), Shaheen Shah Afridi (Lahore Qalandars) (captain), Hasan Ali (Karachi Kings), Ali Raza (Peshawar Zalmi) (emerging), Abrar Ahmed (Quetta Gladiators), Khushdil Shah (Karachi Kings) (12th). – APP



Abbasi congratulates Lahore Qalandars on winning PSL final

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi Monday extended heartfelt congratulations to Lahore Qalandars on their remarkable victory in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) final. In his message, the minister praised the team's performance, calling it a shining example of the passion and dedication of Pakistani youth. He said that the victory was a result of outstanding teamwork and relentless hard work and congratulated the entire nation on this memorable win. "Lahore Qalandars have secured a brighter future for Pakistan cricket," said the minister, as he paid tribute to the players and coaching staff for their commitment and efforts. He emphasized that the victory would inspire courage and determination among the country's youth. "This success stands as a symbol of national unity and the advancement of sports in Pakistan," he added. The minister reiterated the government's commitment to promoting sports and supporting young talent across the country. He expressed hope that Lahore Qalandars' win would enhance Pakistan's global image in cricket. "The entire nation celebrates this moment of joy," he added. The victory, he said, serves as a motivating example for other cricket teams in Pakistan. He commended the Qalandars for proving that anything is possible through hard work and passion and offered his prayers for the continued success of the players. – APP

Sunni Ittehad Council not entitled to reserved...

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"This case concerns proportional representation. Reserved seats are allocated based on party performance in elections," she stated. Khan contended that the Supreme Court's previous ruling had made no reference to Article 225 of the Constitution, which bars challenges to election matters outside the election tribunals. However, the bench questioned the applicability of Article 225 in a case that concerns proportional representation rather than a direct election. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, later during the hearing, said unequivocally that the Sunni Ittehad Council is not eligible for reserved seats. The hearing was adjourned until tomorrow (Tuesday), with the court directing the SIC's counsel to present arguments in the next session. At the heart of the dispute is a July 12, 2024, Supreme Court order that, if fully implemented, would see the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerge as the single largest party. The July 12, 2024 order supported by eight out of 13 judges, declared 39 out of 80 contested MNAs as returned candidates of the PTI. This ruling, if enforced, would significantly bolster PTI's parliamentary strength. However, implementation has been stalled, with the National Assembly yet to act and the ECP raising objections. The Pakistan League-Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and the ECP have all filed review petitions against the Supreme Court's order. The Supreme Court's detailed verdict in the reserved seats case on September 23, authored by senior puisne judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, was particularly critical of the ECP. The court observed that the ECP's "numerous unlawful acts and omissions" had "caused confusion and prejudice to PTI, its candidates and the electorate who voted for PTI."

'Judges can be transferred from one HC to another'

FROM PAGE 01

consultation – the chief justices of both the concerned high courts and the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP). If any of them refuses the transfer, it cannot proceed. Following Siddiqi's arguments, Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan began his submissions, stating that under Article 200, judges can be transferred both temporarily and permanently. He explained that temporary transfers include notifications and entitlements like additional allowances, while permanent transfers provide official accommodation. In time-bound transfers, the judge returns to their original court. Awan clarified that permanently transferred judges leave a vacancy in their original court. He noted that judges transferred to the IHC were given official housing, but no additional allowances, and they did not need to retake the oath since it was not a fresh appointment. Justice Mazhar questioned whether the seats of the transferred judges in their original courts had become vacant. Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan remarked that each high court has its own jurisdiction. The AGP said the Constitution's Third Schedule does not prescribe a separate oath for IHC judges, and the oath taken by IHC judges is the same as that taken by judges appointed through transfer. Justice Afghan asked if Article 200 required a new oath on transfer, to which the attorney general replied that no such requirement exists. Justice Afghan further questioned why the final summary of the judges' transfer mentioned no need for a new oath. Awan responded that there is already a Supreme Court ruling on the matter of judges' seniority. The attorney general also pointed out that out of the five judges who submitted petitions, only Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani is in the running for appointment as chief justice.

PMAA and IFMSA-Pak launch self-defense training drive

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Martial Arts Association (PMAA) and International Federation of Medical Students' Associations – Pakistan (IFMSA-Pakistan) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to launch a national self-defense training program. The partnership brings together the country's leading martial arts organisation and its largest network of medical students to address the growing need for gender-based violence prevention, youth empowerment, and awareness on personal and legal safety. Through this collaboration, over 5,000 female students across Pakistan are expected to receive self-defense training by December 2025. The MoU signing ceremony, marked the formal beginning of this transformative alliance. The event also featured the first training session, where more than 100 female students and young doctors participated in a hands-on workshop, learning essential life-saving techniques. "This initiative goes beyond physical training," said Master Anwar Mohiuddin, President of PMAA and Chief Trainer. "It's about instilling confidence, awareness, and resilience in young women, empowering them to protect themselves and face the world with courage." Under the

agreement, the two organisations will jointly conduct a series of workshops, safety awareness seminars, and



leadership sessions in medical universities and colleges nationwide. The program aims to foster a culture of strength and self-reliance while raising awareness about legal rights and community health. Seemab Mehmood, President of IFMSA-Pakistan, echoed the significance of the partnership. "Healthcare advocacy begins with personal safety," she said. "Empowering female students with self-defense training not only safeguards their well-being but also prepares them to serve as stronger, more confident healthcare professionals." The initiative is seen as a powerful fusion of healthcare advocacy and practical martial arts training, bridging the gap between physical safety and mental preparedness. Observers have lauded the program for promoting a proactive approach to violence prevention, especially among vulnerable populations such as schoolgirls, university students, and early-career professionals. The next workshop under the program is scheduled for May 27 at PIMS Hospital, targeting students of the Federal Medical and Dental College, Islamabad. Additional sessions are being planned in Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, with further expansion into secondary cities envisioned in the coming months. The long-term goal is to make self-defense education accessible to students across all provinces of Pakistan.

Briefs

Texas pushes for Social Media ban on minors

NEW YORK: Texas is stepping into uncharted territory with a bold proposal that could reshape the digital landscape for young people. A new bill making its way through the Texas State Senate aims to ban social media access for anyone under 18. If passed, this law would mark a significant shift in how social media platforms interact with minors, raising questions about privacy, parental control, and the future of online engagement for teens. Currently, the bill has passed the House committee and is poised for a final vote in the Senate before the legislative session ends on June 2, 2025. If approved, the law will require social media platforms to verify the age of users, ensuring that minors cannot create accounts without appropriate checks. Much like the state's recent legislation on adult websites, which mandates age verification, this new measure targets social media giants and aims to give parents more power over their children's online lives. What sets Texas' proposed law apart from other states is its strict provisions. While Florida's recent law bans those under 14 from social media, Texas is pushing for an outright ban for minors under 18, giving parents unprecedented control. Parents would have the authority to delete their child's social media accounts, with platforms facing fines if they fail to comply within 10 days. This move comes at a time when social media addiction and online safety concerns for young people are at an all-time high. Critics argue that while the bill may protect children from harmful online content, it could also infringe on personal freedoms and limit the benefits of social media, like networking and learning. As Texas becomes the next battleground for social media regulation, other states and the US Senate are watching closely.—APP

Gold price decreases
Rs.2,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD :The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs.2,600 on Monday and was sold at Rs.351,500 against its sale at Rs.354,100 on the previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.2,228 to Rs.301,354 from Rs.303,583 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat came down by Rs.2,042 to Rs.276,251 from Rs.278,294. The rates of per tola silver and ten gram remained unchanged and closed at Rs.3,508 and Rs.3,007 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$26 to \$3,331 from \$3,357 whereas that of silver remained stagnant at \$33.50, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 08 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD, May 26 (APP): The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 08 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.05 against the previous day's closing of Rs 281.97. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.65 and Rs 284.15, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.60 to close at Rs 321.34 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.74, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.97, whereas an increase of Rs 2.52 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 382.70 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 380.18. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 and 03 paise to close at Rs 76.79 and Rs 75.20, respectively.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb with the organizers and participants of the Impact Financing event organized by Karandaaz Pakistan and Pakistan Banks Association (PBA) on Monday. – DNA

Israeli strikes on school in Gaza strip kill over 50

They have official observer state status at the WHO, which is currently undergoing a transformation as it looks ahead to life without its biggest donor the United States

GAZA STRIP: More than 50 Palestinians were killed in two Israeli airstrikes targeting a school sheltering displaced people and a home in Gaza City and Jabalia, northern Gaza, on Monday morning. The Israeli military said its air force has struck more than 200 targets across the Gaza Strip over the past two days, Al Jazeera reported. A medical source told Anadolu Agency that the death toll from the Israeli airstrike on the Fahmi Al-Jirjawi school, which shelters displaced people, in Gaza City's al-Daraj neighborhood has risen to 30. A fire swept through the tents following the bombing, said Al-Aqsa TV and other local sources. Eyewitness videos circulated online, showing charred bodies, many of them children, and others crying out as flames consumed their surroundings. A girl stands in the ruins of the school building in Gaza City that was hit by an air strike Photo: Reuters Charred corpses and the screams of displaced people engulfed in flames were seen

and heard from the site," one report said. In a statement, the Israeli army confirmed the strike, claiming that Hamas has turned the shelter into a "command and control center." It, however, did not provide any proof to support its claim. Meanwhile, in another deadly airstrike, 19 more people were killed and others injured in an Israeli airstrike on a home in Jabalia town, northern Gaza, according to a medical source. Eyewitnesses told Anadolu that the Israeli airstrike "completely destroyed" a multi-story building, with dozens of displaced people residing inside. The intensified violence, after a nearly three-month blockade of humanitarian supplies into the Gaza Strip, has sharpened international condemnation of Israel. World leaders meeting in Madrid at the weekend called for an end to the "inhumane" and "senseless" war, while humanitarian organisations said the trickle of resumed aid is not nearly enough to staunch the hunger and health crises. Gaza's

health ministry said on Sunday that at least 3,785 people had been killed in the territory since a ceasefire collapsed on March 18, taking the war's overall toll to 53,939, mostly civilians, according to AFP. Israel's atrocities have displaced around 90% of Gaza's estimated 2 million residents, created a severe hunger crisis, and caused widespread destruction across the territory. The Israeli army has pursued a brutal offensive against Gaza since October 2023, killing at least 61,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to Al Jazeera. The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants last November for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave. The Palestinian delegation won the right to fly their flag at the World Health Organization after a symbolic

victory in a vote on Monday that its envoy hopes will lead to greater recognition within the United Nations and beyond. he proposal, brought by China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and others, at the global agency's annual assembly in Geneva passed with 95 in favor and four against – Israel, Hungary, Czech Republic and Germany – and 27 abstentions. It follows a successful Palestinian bid for membership of the UN General Assembly last year and comes amid signs that France could recognize a Palestinian state. In apparent reference to the devastating Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, Lebanon's delegate Rana el Khoury said the vote's outcome provided "a small ray of hope for the brave Palestinian people whose suffering has reached unbearable levels." Israel argued against the WHO resolution and called for a vote. Its main ally, the United States, which plans to exit the WHO, did not participate. Even though almost 150 countries have recognized

a Palestinian state, most major Western and other powers have not, including the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Japan. France and Japan voted in favor of the proposal while Britain abstained. "It is symbolic and one act but a sign that we are part of an international community to help on health needs," the Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Ibrahim Khraishi, told Reuters. "I hope we will soon have full membership of the WHO and all UN forums." Palestinians seek statehood in territories Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war. They have official observer state status at the WHO, which is currently undergoing a transformation as it looks ahead to life without its biggest donor the United States. Last week, the Palestinians won the right to receive notifications under the WHO's International Health Regulations – a set of global rules for monitoring outbreaks.—Agencies

Covid-19 cases on the rise in India, with 2 new variants detected

NEW DEHLI: India's Covid-19 cases have surged past the 1,000 mark, with over 752 new infections confirmed in recent days, triggering public concern and renewed attention to the pandemic. Kerala currently leads with the highest number of active cases, registering 430 Covid-19 infections. Other states such as Maharashtra (209), Delhi (104), Gujarat (83), and Karnataka (47) have also seen notable case increases. The national total now stands at 1,009 cases, with Delhi alone reporting 99 new infections in the past week. Despite the rise in numbers, health officials have confirmed that most of the reported cases are mild, with patients currently under home care. The situation has been assessed by various health authorities, including the Union Health Secretary and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). In addition to the rising case count, India has detected two new Covid-19 variants, NB.1.8.1 and LF.7, which have been classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as "variants under monitoring." The NB.1.8.1 variant was first identified in Tamil Nadu, while LF.7 was confirmed in Gujarat. However, the dominant strain in India remains JN.1, found in 53% of recent cases, followed by BA.2 at 26% and other Omicron sublineages at 20%. While some global hotspots like Singapore and Hong Kong have seen similar upticks in Covid-19 cases, health officials in India have stated that there is no indication that the circulating variants are more transmissible or cause more severe disease compared to earlier strains.—DNA

ICCI slams CDA's anti-business practices

Demands full-time chairman, rational fee structure to revive investor confidence

ISLAMABAD : The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has voiced serious concern over the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) persistent anti-business approach, urging the federal government to take immediate corrective action by appointing a full-time, competent Chairman to lead the authority and implement pro-business reforms. Speaking to the media, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi said the current bureaucratic hurdles and governance gaps in CDA are damaging the business climate and discouraging both local and foreign investment. "Even basic processes like obtaining a No Demand Certificate (NDC) are mired in excessive verification steps, even after multiple legal property transfers. This reflects poor administrative trust and causes avoidable delays," he stated. The ICCI leadership also highlighted deep concerns from the industrial sector, particularly regarding the unjustified and inflated fee structure applied by CDA. "Islamabad's industrial units are being burdened with disproportionate charges that are inconsistent with national standards. CDA must rationalize these fees to align with rates in other major regions, ensuring a level playing field for all," emphasized, ICCI President. He called for a comprehensive reassessment of the industrial fee structure, including a reduction in ground rent and property taxes, to relieve financial pressure on existing businesses, attract new investment, and enable the sustainable growth of the industrial sector in the capital. ICCI also reiterated its earlier demand for inclusion of business community representation in the Design Vetting Committee (DVC). "Currently, the process is monopolized, and only those affiliated with CDA insiders manage to get approvals, which stifles open competition and undermines merit," said President Qureshi. The Chamber further criticized the inaccessibility of the CDA Chairman, warning that the lack of responsive leadership has created an environment of administrative opacity and inefficiency. "Citizens and businesses are routinely forced to deal with uncooperative staff, which fosters informal practices and damages trust in public institutions," he added. Joining the call for urgent reforms, ICCI Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry also urged the government to ensure that CDA is headed by a permanent and accountable Chairman who can engage meaningfully with stakeholders and steer Islamabad towards transparent, business-friendly governance. ICCI stands firm on protecting the rights of its members and the citizens of Islamabad and warns that continued neglect of these issues will erode investor confidence and hinder Islamabad's economic development, they concluded.—DNA

Spain hosts European, Arab nations to pressure Israel on Gaza

MADRID: The international community should look at sanctions against Israel to stop the war in Gaza, Spain's foreign minister said, as European and Arab nations gathered in Madrid Sunday to urge an end to its offensive. Some of Israel's long-standing allies have added their voices to growing international pressure after it expanded military operations against Gaza's Hamas rulers, whose 2023 attack on Israel sparked the devastating war. A two-month aid blockade has worsened shortages of food, water, fuel and medicine in the Palestinian territory, stoking fears of famine. Aid organizations say the trickle of supplies Israel has recently allowed to enter falls far short of needs. The talks in Madrid aim to stop Israel's "inhumane" and

"senseless" war in Gaza, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told reporters before the meeting opened. Humanitarian aid must enter Gaza "massively, without conditions and without limits, and not controlled by Israel," he added, describing the Strip as humanity's "open wound." "Silence in these moments is complicity in this massacre... that is why we are meeting," said Albares. Representatives from European countries including France, Britain, Germany and Italy joined envoys from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Morocco, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Norway, Iceland, Ireland and Slovenia, who like Spain have already recognized a Palestinian state, are also taking part, alongside Brazil.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan met with Albares on the sidelines of the meeting. During the meeting, they discussed relations between their countries, areas of joint cooperation, and regional and international developments including the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. After the European Union decided this week to review its cooperation deal with Israel, Albares told reporters Spain would request its "immediate suspension." Spain would also urge partners to impose an arms embargo on Israel and "not rule out any" individual sanctions against those "who want to ruin the two-state solution forever," he added. Sunday's meeting will also promote a two-state solution to

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot spoke by video link with Arab counterparts on Sunday and would press "the need for coordinated pressure" for a ceasefire, aid and the release of Hamas-held hostages, his office said. Barrot will also meet the Palestinian Authority's minister of state for foreign affairs, Varsen Aghabekian Shahin, during a trip to Yerevan next week, the French foreign ministry announced on Sunday. The diplomatic drive comes one month before a UN conference on the Israel-Palestinian conflict presided over by France and Saudi Arabia. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has said his country will back draft resolutions at the United Nations aimed at ramping

up aid access to Gaza and holding Israel to account over its international humanitarian obligations. Madrid's attempt to rally a wider consensus on the war comes a year after it broke with some European allies by recognizing a Palestinian state, infuriating Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people, mainly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. Palestinian militants also took 251 hostages, 57 of whom remain in Gaza including 34 the Israeli military says are dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed almost 54,000 people, mostly civilians, according to Hamas-run Gaza's health ministry.—Agencies

Macron calls for world order 'based on law' in Vietnam

HANOI: France's Emmanuel Macron called in Vietnam on Monday for the preservation of a world order "based on law," as he started a tour of Southeast Asia, a region caught up in the confrontation between the United States and China. During a press statement alongside his Vietnamese counterpart Luong Cuong in Hanoi, Macron said a rules-based order was necessary at "a time of both great imbalance and a return to power-driven rhetoric and intimidation." The president presented France as a reliable alternative for Vietnam, caught between Washington, which is threatening to impose enormous levies on its exports to the United States, and Beijing, an important trade partner with which it is also embroiled in territorial disputes in the South China Sea. After his arrival in Hanoi late Sunday, the first stop of a six-day trip that will take in Indonesia and Singapore, Macron emphasized a shared vision with Vietnam, a country of 100 million people experiencing stellar growth. On Monday, around a dozen agreements were signed between the two countries, including in the field of nuclear power, which Hanoi is keen to develop as it seeks to meet soaring energy demands. Budget airline Vietjet also announced an order for 20 widebody Airbus A330-900 planes, doubling its purchases of the model from the aviation giant in a deal worth an estimated \$8 billion. "It is truly a new page being written between our two countries... a desire to write an even more ambitious page of the relationship between Vietnam and France, between ASEAN and the European Union," Macron said. After paying tribute to aanoi war memorial to those who fought against French colonial occupation, Macron met his counterpart Cuong. The president later had lunch with Communist Party General Secretary To Lam at the capital's star attraction, the Temple of Literature. Lam is considered the most powerful leader in Vietnam, a one-party state which tolerates no dissent and moves quickly to suppress any criticism. APP

India's monsoon lashes Mumbai

MUMBAI: Lashing rains swamped India's financial capital Mumbai on Monday as the annual monsoon rains arrived some two weeks earlier than usual, according to weather forecasters. Heavy rains cooling temperatures – welcomed by farmers for their crops but which cause havoc each year in cities by flooding transport infrastructure – are normally expected in the southwestern state of Maharashtra in early June. Mumbai weather chief Shubhangi Bhute, from the Indian Meteorological Department, said it was the earliest the rains had arrived since their records began in 2011. "This is the earliest the monsoon has arrived in the state since then, so this is the earliest in 14 years," Bhute said. South Asia is getting hotter and in recent years has seen shifting weather patterns, but scientists are unclear on how exactly a warming planet is affecting the highly complex monsoon. The southwest monsoon is a colossal sea breeze that brings South Asia 70-80 percent of its annual rainfall between June and September every year. It occurs when summer heat warms the landmass of the subcontinent, causing the air to rise and sucking in cooler Indian Ocean winds which then produce enormous volumes of rain. The monsoon is vital for agriculture and therefore for the livelihoods of millions of farmers and for food security. But it brings destruction every year in landslides and floods. In India, the southwest monsoon normally arrives on the southern tip at Kerala around June 1, and moves north to cover the country by early July. The rains typically reach Maharashtra around June 7.—APP

Briefs

PMD forecast,
rains from
May 27-31

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast wind-storm and rain-thunder-storm activity in upper and central parts of the country from May 27 (night) to May 31, with occasional gaps. The department stated that moist currents are continuously penetrating the upper and central regions, while a westerly wave is likely to enter the upper parts of the country on May 28, triggering widespread weather activity. Under the influence of this weather system, windstorm and rain-thunderstorms with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms are expected in Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Galliat, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mianwali, Sargodha, Hafizabad, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot, Narowal, Okara, Lahore, Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sheikhupura, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Mansehra, Batagram, Shangla, Kohistan, Abbottabad, Haripur, Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Kohat, Karak and Waziristan. In addition, windstorm with light to moderate rain-thunder is also expected in parts of Balochistan and South Punjab including Zhob, Ziarat, Barkhan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Multan, Bhakkar, Layyah, Bahawalpur, Sahiwal, Pakpattan, Vehari, and Dera Ismail Khan from May 27 (evening/night) to May 30, with occasional gaps. - APP

‘Pak, Iran to
strengthen
diplomatic
and economic
ties’

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, on Monday said that Pakistan is set to enhance its diplomatic and economic cooperation with Iran, as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif embarks on a significant visit to Tehran. While talking to PTV in an exclusive interview, he said the Prime Minister will meet Iran's top leadership and brief them on the recent Indo-Pak conflict. "For recognizing Pakistan's stance," he said, adding that the Iranian leadership will be thanked for their firm support. The visit will also focus on expanding trade, deepening economic cooperation, and strengthening diplomatic engagement, marking a new phase in relations between the two neighboring countries. - APP

PSX retreats
as budget
delay weighs
on sentiment

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The equity market opened the week under pressure and closed sharply lower on Monday, as investors reacted to the government's decision to delay the federal budget and continued ambiguity over fiscal conditions being negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index climbed to an intraday high of 119,290.94 points, gaining 188.27 points, or 0.16%, from the previous close of 119,102.67, before retreating to a low of 118,150.27 points, marking a decline of 952.40 points, or -0.80%. The index eventually settled at 118,221.12 points, down 881.55 points, or -0.74%, at close. "Delay in Budget announcement and lack of clarity on IMF conditions related to budget pushing investors to trim their exposure," Muhammad Sohail, CEO of Topline Securities, told Geo.tv. The federal government has rescheduled the presentation of the Budget 2025-26 to June 10, moving it from the previously planned date of June 2, as talks with the IMF on revenue and spending targets remain unresolved.

Unity among Muslim world a must
for an independent Palestine: envoy

FRONT PAGE 1

Q: How do you view the roles of Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran?

We, as Palestinians, look to our brothers and sisters across the Muslim world with hope and expectation. Our cause is not just a national struggle—it is a humanitarian and moral issue that resonates deeply with the Islamic Ummah. We do not ask for war or conflict; rather, we appeal for meaningful and sustained diplomatic, political, and economic pressure on those who continue to deny our fundamental rights. In today's interconnected world, political influence and international alliances can be powerful tools to advocate for justice and to hold aggressors accountable.

We particularly commend the principled position taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The clear and unwavering stance—that normalization with Israel cannot proceed without a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue—has been a significant and encouraging development. This policy not only affirms the importance of Palestinian rights but also sends a strong message to the international community that peace cannot be built upon injustice. We trust the leadership of Saudi Arabia, whose central role in the Muslim world and on the global stage gives weight to its positions. With their support, we feel stronger, more hopeful, and less alone in our struggle. Likewise, the roles played by countries such as Egypt and Jordan have been vital. As neighbors with direct stakes in the region's stability and with longstanding historical ties to the Palestinian people, their involvement has been instrumental in diplomatic efforts, humanitarian support, and mediation during moments of crisis.

We believe that the collective strength of the Muslim world—when guided by unity, justice, and compassion—can influence international dynamics in favor of a just and lasting solution.

Q: Some countries like UAE and Bahrain have normalized ties with Israel. Your thoughts?

We respect sovereign decisions, but we must question what has been gained. Unity within the Arab League and commitment to its initiatives are vital. Without collective Arab consensus, such moves weaken our position. The Zionist mindset still sees Arabs and Muslims as adversaries, regardless of peace deals. As regards the role of the OIC and the Arab League, both work in harmony. Both institutions have always supported Palestine on political and humanitarian fronts.

Q: What role do Palestinian youth play in the resistance?

Our youth have always been at the forefront of the struggle. From stu-



dent movements to social media activism, they are deeply engaged. Even in Pakistan, we have over 400 Palestinian students enrolled in various universities, with many having graduated already. They are our future and a crucial part of our resistance.

Q: Has social media impacted global opinion on Palestine?

"Yes, immensely. Social media has played a pivotal role in shaping global awareness and opinion regarding the ongoing atrocities committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. Through platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, graphic evidence of the destruction in Gaza, the suffering of civilians, and violations of international law are being disseminated in real time. This direct flow of information has bypassed traditional media filters and given the global public, especially the youth, unfiltered access to the truth."

Donald Trump says US
negotiators had productive
weekend talks with Iran

"I think we could have some good news on the Iran front," says US president

DNA

MORRISTOWN: President Donald Trump said on Sunday that US negotiators had "very good" talks with an Iranian delegation over the weekend as he seeks a deal to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon. "I think we could have some good news on the Iran front," Trump told reporters at the Morristown, New Jersey, airport as he prepared to return to Washington after a weekend at his Bedminster golf club. Trump said serious progress had been made. He did not elaborate on the talks in Rome between US special envoy Steve Witkoff and an Iranian delegation. "I don't know if I'll be telling you anything good or bad over the next two days, but I have a feeling I might be telling you something good," he said. Trump backed away on Sunday from his threat to slap 50% tariffs on imports from the European Union next month, agree-

ing to extend the deadline until July 9 for talks between Washington and the 27-nation bloc to produce a deal. Trump on Friday said he was recommending a 50% tariff go into place on June 1 because of frustration that talks with the EU were not moving quickly enough. The threat roiled global financial markets and intensified a trade war that has been punctuated by frequent changes in tariff policies toward US trading partners and allies. Trump, who has repeatedly expressed disdain for the EU and its treatment of the United States on trade, relented after European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told him on Sunday that the EU needed more time to come to an agreement. She asked him during a call to delay the tariffs until July, the deadline he had originally set when he announced new tariffs in April. Trump told reporters he had granted the request. "We had a very nice call, and I agreed to move it," Trump said before returning to Washington after a weekend in New Jersey.

“Pakistan is closer
than ever to ending
polio: Unicef official

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Polio Programme officially commenced its third National Immunisation Days (NIDs) campaign on Monday, to make Pakistan a polio-free nation. The launch ceremony, held at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Islamabad, was spearheaded by Ayesha Raza Farooq, the prime minister's focal person for polio eradication. During the inauguration, Farooq personally administered oral polio vaccine (OPV) and Vitamin A drops to children under the age of five. This act reaffirmed the government's steadfast dedication to ensuring every child in Pakistan is protected from the virus. The week-long campaign aims to immunise over 45 million children under five years of age. This effort is seen as a decisive step in the country's final push to stop poliovirus transmission and achieve eradication by the end of 2025. "Polio eradication is more than a public health goal—it's a national mission," said Farooq. "This campaign is a pivotal part of our 2-4-6 roadmap. The rounds we've held from September 2024 through May 2025 have been designed to strategically close immunity gaps and disrupt virus circulation before high transmission season begins." The event saw the participation of key partners and officials, including Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal who made a plea to parents and the nation to unite against the crippling disease.

18 lives lost as
‘unprecedented, beyond
expectations’ in Punjab

“Structural collapses caused by solar panels linked to most fatalities,” says top PDMA Punjab official

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: As torrential rains and violent thunderstorms swept through Punjab, at least 18 people have lost their lives and 110 others sustained injuries in rain-related incidents, PDMA confirmed on Monday. Speaking on Geo News' morning programme "Geo Pakistan", DG PDMA Punjab Irfan Ali Kathia termed the weather conditions "unprecedented" and "beyond expectations", saying that although heavy rainfall had been forecast, the severity of the system was not anticipated. According to Kathia, 124 incidents of structural collapse have so far been reported across Punjab. A majority of these incidents were linked to rooftop solar panels, which he said were not installed with adequate safety measures. "Eighty per cent of the collapses involved solar plates. Except for three incidents, all others were caused by these installations," he revealed. "We welcome solar technology, but installations must be secure to prevent such tragedies." Kathia urged citizens to be prepared for worsening weather patterns, highlighting the link between increasing temperatures and extreme climate events.

India and Canada seek to mend
diplomatic ties, claims Jaishankar

Call, which took place late Sunday, is highest diplomatic contact between Ottawa, New Delhi in recent times

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar said he had spoken to his Canadian counterpart as the two sides seek to ease fraught relations. The telephone call, which took place late Sunday, is the highest diplomatic contact between Ottawa and New Delhi since Mark Carney became Canadian prime minister in March. Ties between Canada and India were strained following accusations of New Delhi's involvement in the 2023 assassination of a Canadian Sikh, claims India denied. Jaishankar said he had "discussed the prospects of India-Canada ties" with newly appointed Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand and he had "wished her a very successful tenure". India, Canada seek to mend diplomatic ties, claims Jaishankar Anand, whose parents hailed from India, said on X she looked forward "strengthening Canada-India ties, deepening our economic cooperation, and advancing shared priorities". Canada is home to the largest Sikh community outside of India and includes activists for "Khalistan", a sepa-

ratist movement seeking an independent state for the religious minority carved out of Indian territory. Ottawa previously accused India of orchestrating the 2023 killing in Vancouver of 45-year-old naturalised Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistan campaigner, and targeting other Sikh activists connected to the movement. India has repeatedly dismissed the allegations, which sent diplomatic relations into freefall, with both nations last year expelling a string of top diplomats. The Khalistan campaign dates back to India's 1947 independence and has been blamed for the assassination of a prime minister and the bombing of a passenger jet. It has been a bitter issue between India and several Western nations with large Sikh populations. New Delhi demands stricter action against the Khalistan movement, which is banned in India, with key leaders accused of "terrorism". Canada will host the G7 summit next month. India Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited to attend previous summits since 2019, when France invited him to Biarritz. There are no details as to whether Modi has been invited to Canada.

"Across the United States, Canada, and Europe, we are now witnessing a historic shift. University students, young activists, and even schoolchildren are organizing protests, sit-ins, and public awareness campaigns demanding justice for Palestine. These movements reflect a global awakening—a deep moral response from younger generations who have grown up with values rooted in human rights, equality, and social justice. They no longer rely solely on state narratives; instead, they seek the truth, and they stand firmly on the side of the oppressed." "The power of social media has allowed Palestinian voices—voices that were once marginalized or silenced on international platforms—to be heard loudly and clearly. It has also fostered solidarity movements, linking people from different cultures and backgrounds in a united front against oppression. The impact has been so significant that governments and institutions have begun to respond—sometimes with suppression, but increasingly with calls for inquiry and accountability." "This shift in global consciousness, driven largely by the youth and amplified through social media, gives us hope. It assures us that the Palestinian cause is not isolated. It is part of a broader global struggle for dignity, justice, and human rights. And as long as these voices continue to rise, the truth cannot be buried."

Q: Finally, Your Excellency, a message for the people of Pakistan?

The people of Pakistan are our beloved brothers and sisters. The love and support we receive from every Pakistani—young, old, political, or civilian—is unparalleled. My message, especially to youth, is to keep Palestine in your hearts. We pray for peace, prosperity, and stability for Pakistan, and we are forever grateful for your solidarity.

Pakistan has always stood by the choices of the Palestinian people—firmly supporting our legitimate rights and legal institutions. This unwavering support is deeply valued. To those political parties in Pakistan that may hold differing views, my humble message is this: unity is vital. Pakistan should continue to serve as a unifying force for the Palestinian cause, not one that contributes to division. As for the various organizations involved—whether political or humanitarian—they are merely instruments. We, as freedom fighters, are also instruments. The ultimate goal for all of us is one and the same: Palestine. Allah SWT blessed us to be the guards of the first Qibla of Al-Masjid Al-Mubarak. We know that this holy land for all and also for Pakistan. Keep always Palestine above everything. The liberation of the Palestinian people is our shared objective. This goal should be embraced as a guiding principle by our Pakistani brothers and sisters. Lastly, I want to express that just as the people of Pakistan love, respect, and support us—we, too, feel the same for you. We pray for Pakistan's stability, for peace across your land, and for your continued development and prosperity.

Bilal Bin Saqib to lead
crypto future as SAPM

Saqib also serves as the CEO of the PCC and Chief Advisor to the Finance Minister

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has appointed Bilal Bin Saqib as the Special Assistant to the PM (SAPM) on Blockchain and Crypto, with the status of state minister. This groundbreaking decision positions Pakistan among an elite group of 7-9 nations, including the United States, El Salvador, and the UAE, with dedicated leadership for cryptocurrency and blockchain, signalling a bold commitment to leading the global digital economy. Saqib also serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan Crypto Council (PCC) and Chief Advisor to the Finance Minister. As CEO of the Pakistan Crypto Council, Bilal has spearheaded strategic collaborations and built critical bridges between Pakistan and global technology stakeholders. Under his leadership, the Council signed a landmark partnership with World Liberty Financial (WLF) — a decentralised finance platform backed by US President Donald Trump — to help



drive blockchain innovation and stablecoin adoption in Pakistan. He also invited Changpeng Zhao (CZ), founder of Binance, and appointed him as Strategic Advisor to the PCC to help shape regulatory development, infrastructure expansion, and education programs for crypto in Pakistan. A graduate of the London School of Economics (LSE) with a Master's in Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, he has been featured in Forbes Asia 30 Under 30 for his work in social impact.

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