



Islamabad POST

Friday, June 06, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Trump orders inquiry into 'conspiracy' to hide Biden health

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Gaza tragedy Pak slams storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque

Ongoing targeting of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza by the Israeli occupying power was a matter of deep concern

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has strongly condemned the provocative storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the escalating Israeli atrocities, calling these reprehensible acts, including violations at multiple entrances of the Mosque, a direct assault on the sanctity, historical character, and legal status of the revered Muslim holy site. "Such reprehensible actions not only deeply offend the sentiments of Muslims worldwide but also risk igniting further unrest in an already volatile environment. These are clear violations of international law and must be halted immediately," Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said in a statement. He said that the ongoing targeting of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza by the Israeli occupying power was a matter of deep concern.

Trump, Xi talk on phone

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday held talks with US President Donald Trump by phone, China's state-run news agency Xinhua reported, as bilateral relations have been strained by trade disputes. The phone talks were at Trump's request, Xinhua said, without providing further details about the leaders' conversation. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The highly anticipated call comes amid accusations between Washington and Beijing in recent weeks over critical minerals in a dispute that threatens to tear up a fragile truce in the trade war between the two biggest economies. The countries struck a 90-day deal on May 12 to roll back some of the triple-digit, tit-for-tat tariffs they had placed on each other since Trump's January inauguration.

Iran 'strongly' condemns US veto

Hamas also
condemns US veto

DNA

IRAN on Thursday "strongly" condemned the United States for vetoing a United Nations Security Council resolution that called for an immediate ceasefire and full humanitarian access in Gaza. Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement that the US move to block the resolution, which was supported by 14 of the 15 members of the council, demonstrated "the country's complicity in the crimes of the Zionist regime (Israel) and strongly condemned it. Meanwhile, the Palestinian group has condemned the US decision to veto a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, saying it was the latest sign of Washington's "blind bias" towards Israel, reported Al Jazeera. "We strongly condemn the US administration's defiance of the will of the entire world, as 14 of the 15 countries on the Security Council supported the resolution," it said.

Defence Minister says Pakistan pulls out of Shimla agreement

Line of Control will now become ceasefire line; Foreign Office says no decision yet on pulling out of accord

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a major policy shift, Defence Minister of Pakistan has announced that the country is officially withdrawing from the historic Shimla Agreement signed with India in 1972. Speaking at a press conference, the minister declared that the Line of Control (LoC) will now be treated as a "ceasefire line" instead of a mutually recognized boundary under the bilateral accord. "The Shimla Agreement has lost its relevance due to India's continued violations and unilateral actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK)," the Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated. "As of today, Pakistan no longer considers itself bound by its provisions." The Shimla Agreement, signed in the aftermath of the 1971 war, was intended to establish a framework for peaceful resolution of disputes between the two countries, including the status of Jammu and Kashmir. It also called for bilateralism, discouraging third-party involvement in regional matters. By declaring the LoC as a ceasefire line, Pakistan appears to be signaling a return to the pre-Shimla status, where Kashmir was considered an unresolved international dispute under the purview of the United Nations. The Defence Minister emphasized that

Pakistan will now reassert its position based on UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir. The announcement is likely to have far-reaching diplomatic and security implications for South Asia. It comes amid heightened tensions between Pakistan and India following recent escalations along the LoC and India's 2019 revocation of Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Analysts see the move as a sign of growing frustration in Islamabad over what it perceives as India's intransigence and the international community's silence on human rights abuses in IIOJK. The Defence Minister clarified that Pakistan remains committed to peace but will no longer allow past agreements to be used as tools to freeze progress on the Kashmir dispute. "This decision reflects the changing realities on the ground and Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination," he added. Indian officials have yet to issue an official response, but the development is expected to stir debate in diplomatic circles and could prompt calls for renewed international engagement on Kashmir. Observers note that Pakistan's withdrawal from the Shimla Agreement marks a historic break from decades of bilateral diplomacy, potentially opening the door for greater internationalization of the Kashmir issue.

CEC appointment

PTI names lawmakers for parliamentary committee

Opposition leader asks govt to initiate formation of parliamentary committee for appointment of CEC

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has nominated opposition members for the parliamentary committee for selecting the chief election commissioner (CEC) and members of the Election Commission of Pakistan. Sharing names of opposition leaders, the leading opposition party has asked the government to initiate the formation of the parliamentary committee under Article 213(2B) for the appointment of the CEC and two members from Sindh and Balochistan. Leader of Opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan has shared a letter dated June 2, 2025, on social media, saying he has sent the letter to National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, "nominating members from the opposition for the parliamentary committee as part of the process of selecting the chief election commissioner and members Election Commission of Pakistan (member Balochistan and member Sindh)". The PTI has nominated four members from the NA and two from the Senate for

Continued on Page 06

PTI future moves unlikely to yield gains

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader and head of Senate parliamentary party Senator Irfan Siddiqui has asserted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has lost its ability to mobilize any movement following the events of May 9, 2023, adding that any attempt by PTI to launch a movement would only lead to further difficulties and yield no tangible gains. Talking to a private channel on Thursday, he stated that Khan Sahib was grappling with intense despair. On one hand, he asserted that PTI was the largest party, capable of mobilizing millions from the streets to ignite a revolution.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich, Commander of the Air Force & Air Defence of Belarus, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff. – DNA

Belarus military delegations meets air chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high level defence delegation led by Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich, Commander of the Air Force & Air Defence of Belarus, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force at Air Headquarters Islamabad. During the meeting, a wide array of mutual interests related to air power and military cooperation were thoroughly discussed. The discussions also reaffirmed the mutual commitment of both nations to further strengthening their longstanding bilateral relations, with both sides

Continued on Page 06

No final decision on changes to net metering

Principled decision taken to revise the net metering policy, claim sources

DNA

LAHORE: The Power Division said on Thursday that no final decision has been made regarding changes to Pakistan's net metering policy, stating that the consultation process is still ongoing and various proposals remain under consideration. The Power Division spokesperson said it was premature to form an opinion regarding reports

Continued on Page 06

Mending fences

Pakistan-India conflict discussed by Trump, Putin

Kremlin confirms development recalling hostilities which were "halted with personal involvement of President Trump"

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: After remaining in the world headlines, the recent armed conflict between Pakistan and India continues to have geopolitical reverberations as the issue once came under discussion during the recent telephonic conversation between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. "The Middle East was discussed, as well as the armed conflict between India and Pakistan, which has been halted with the personal involvement of President Trump," said Russian president's aide Yuri Ushakov in a statement issued by the Kremlin on Wednesday. The two presidents, a day earlier, had discussed various issues during their approximately one hour and

Continued on Page 06

Trump slaps new travel ban on 12 countries

Trump said the measure was spurred by a makeshift flamethrower attack on a Jewish protest in Colorado that US authorities blamed on an man they said was in the country illegally

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signed a new travel ban Wednesday targeting 12 countries including Afghanistan, Iran and Yemen, reviving one of the most controversial

Continued on Page 06

Azerbaijan and Pakistan explore strategic partnership; cooperation

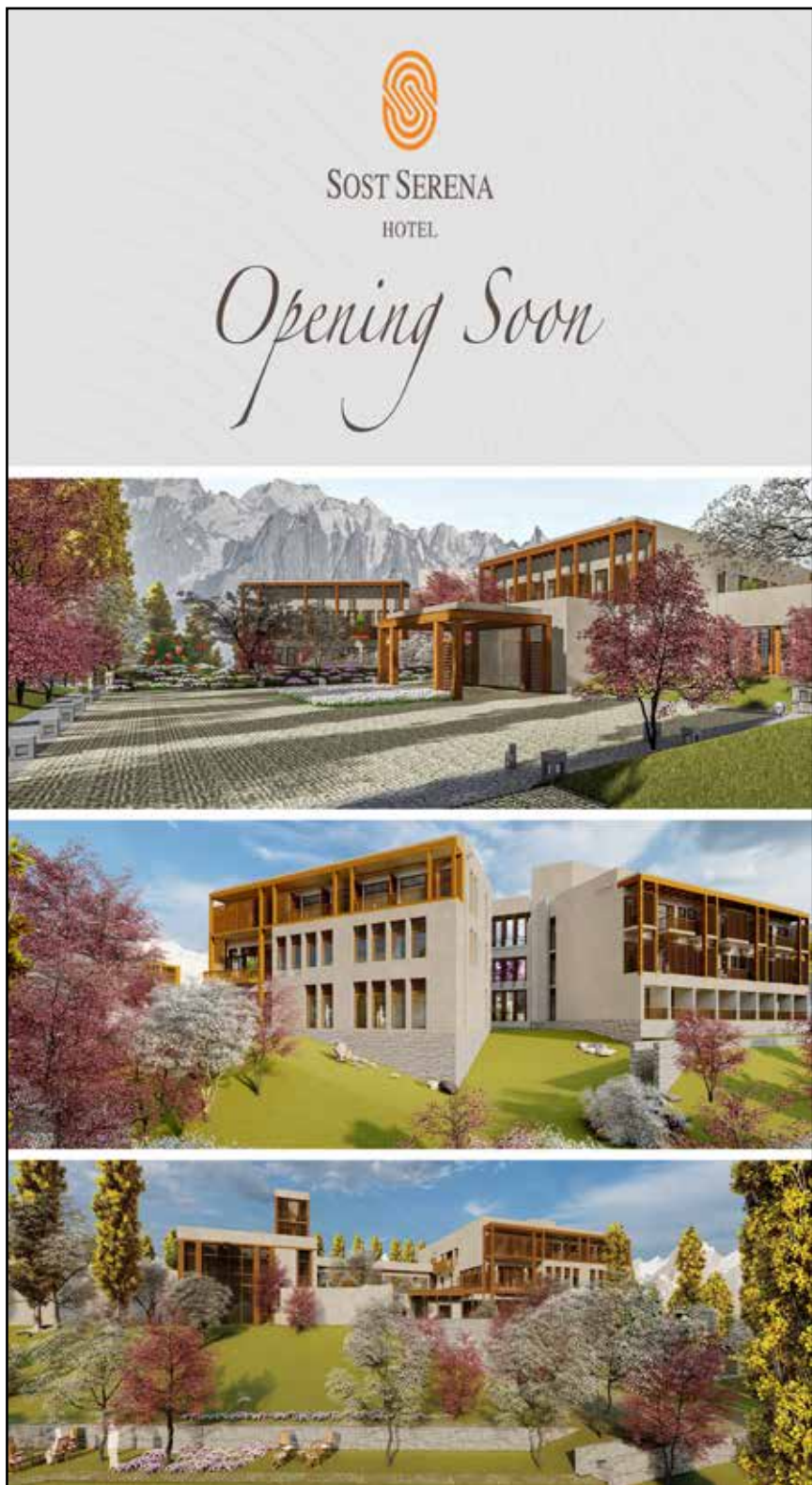
The meeting highlighted the positive role of interparliamentary cooperation in advancing bilateral relations. Speaker Gafarova referenced her official visit to Pakistan in 2021 and her engagement with counterparts during international events held there

DNA

BAKU: Speaker of Azerbaijan's Milli Majlis Sahiba Gafarova met with Qasim Mohiuddin, Ambassador of Pakistan to Azerbaijan. The meeting emphasized the strong strategic partnership between the two countries. Speaker Gafarova fondly recalled Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's official visit to Azerbaijan last week, as well as the trilateral



summit held in Lachin between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Türkiye and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. She noted that the summit was of great importance in strengthening ties among the three brotherly nations. Ambassador Qasim Mohiuddin spoke about the deep-rooted friendly and fraternal relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. He also briefed the Speaker on the Pakistan-India conflict and expressed gratitude for Azerbaijan's consistent support across all areas. Speaker Gafarova reaffirmed Azerbaijan's support for resolving the conflict through dialogue and peaceful means, in line with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. She also praised Pakistan's strong support for Azerbaijan's just stance during the 44-day Patriotic War. The meeting highlighted the positive role of interparliamentary cooperation in advancing bilateral relations. Speaker Gafarova referenced her official visit to Pakistan in 2021 and her engagement with counterparts during international events held there. The sides underscored the close ties between the legislative bodies of both countries in bilateral and multilateral formats, and the significance of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan-Türkiye trilateral cooperation framework. The meeting also addressed other issues of mutual interest.



Briefs

RWMC finalizes Eid cleanliness operation

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On the special instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) has finalized the cleanliness operation plan for Eid-ul-Azha for all districts of the Rawalpindi Division. Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, RWMC Chief Executive Officer Rana Sajid Safdar said leaves of all the staff had been cancelled for the Eid cleanliness operation. He said about 11,687 workers would perform cleanliness duties across the division starting from one day before Eid and continuing until the third day, with 2,823 vehicles to be deployed for collecting sacrificial animals' waste. He said 73 permanent and 168 mobile transfer stations would be set up in all six districts, including Rawalpindi. For complaint registration, he said, the RWMC Helpline 1139, control rooms, and special mobile numbers 0316-4801718, 0316-4801719, and 051-9291108 would remain fully active throughout the Eid operation. A team of 54 personnel would manage some 22 control rooms to manage operations, he added.

Science, tech, AI are game changers: Maqbool

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqi on Thursday said that the convergence of science, technology, and artificial intelligence has introduced a paradigm of possibilities and challenges, where those who rise to the challenge will reap the benefits. He was speaking at the inauguration of as chief guest of the inauguration ceremony of China Pakistan TVET – Industrial Center of Excellence – (CPTICE), at the Government Technical College Kareemabad here. It is worth mentioning here that the national-level partnership is driven by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT), TANG Chinese Education and Technology Ltd, and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTECC). He said that the nations and people who will not be able to make any decisions right now for themselves and, for their nations, after 30 to 35 years, they will be out of every race. He said that the world will change so much that even today's most advanced artificial intelligence technology cannot tell what the world will be like after 35 years. According to an estimate, around one billion people will become irrelevant, he said. He said that there is a great possibility in Pakistan at the moment, as if approximately 150 million young Pakistani men and women are made students, it will be great. – Agencies

Quaid-i-Azam University faces severe financial crisis

ISLAMABAD: Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad (QAU), one of Pakistan's premier institutions of higher learning, is currently facing an acute financial crisis that has severely impacted its operations. This month, in a deeply concerning development, the university was only able to disburse partial salaries to its employees ahead of Eid al-Azha, while pensions for retired faculty and staff remain unpaid. This marks the second such incident in the current fiscal year, said a press release from the Academic Staff Association (ASA) of the university. Earlier in January, the salary disbursement was also delayed, compelling the university to secure a loan from a private bank—a debt which remains unsettled. The financial strain has further crippled the university's ability to meet essential obligations. Since Fall Semester 2023, QAU has been unable to pay medical reimbursements, compensation for extra courses, internal and external reviewers/examiners' bills, visiting faculty payment and research grants. – Agencies

Eid-ul-Adha cleanliness action plan finalized: Chairman CDA

Citizens are urged to avoid slaughtering animals in scattered locations and instead use designated slaughter points

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting was held under the chairmanship of CDA Chairman, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and DG Civil Defense, Muhammad Ali Randhawa at CDA Headquarters. The meeting was attended by CDA board members and relevant officers, finalized special arrangements for disposing of sacrificial animal waste and other debris in Islamabad. The city has been divided into five zones to ensure effective results. Zone One includes F-5, F-6, Blue Area and Saidpur; Zone Two includes Faisal Mosque, E-7, F-7, F-8 and G-8; Zone Three includes F-10, F-11, Gola Sharif, G-9, G-10, G-11, etc.; Zone Four includes H-8, H-9, H-10, H-11, I-8, I-9, I-10, I-11, etc.; and Zone Five includes highways, Model Village Humak, Shahzad Town, Rawal Town, Margalla Town, etc. Each zone will be supervised by a chief sanitary inspector, while sector-wise sanitary inspectors and supervisors will carry out their duties. Under the action plan, the sanitation staff's holidays during Eid have been canceled, and over 2,500 workers, including sweepers, supervisory staff, and officers will perform emergency duties to keep the city clean. Additionally more than 250 vehicles, including tractor trolleys, garbage compactors, skip lifters, dump trucks, front loaders, shovels, and dozers will be deployed. Over 107 disposal pits have been dug at 55 different locations



for the disposal of sacrificial animal waste. In line with the directions of Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, biodegradable plastic bags are being distributed in urban and rural areas of Islamabad to help citizens to dispose of waste safely. Citizens are urged to avoid slaughtering animals in scattered locations and instead use designated slaughter points. They are also requested to keep animal waste at the slaughter site for immediate collection by sanitation staff CDA and refrain from throwing entrails into drains, forests, garbage bins, or trolleys. Non-cooperation may lead to foul odors and the spread of diseases, and legal actions will be taken against violations.

In Islamabad's rural areas, including Bari Imam, Bani Gala, Sohan, Khanna, Korla, Tarlai, Ali Pur, Lehtrar Road, Bahara Kahu, Jhangi Syedan, Tarnol, Sangjani, Sarai Kharboza, and Shah Allah Ditta, sanitation facilities will be provided by the respective union councils, which have finalized their arrangements. All assistant commissioners have been instructed to coordinate with private and cooperative housing societies' management committees, ensuring proper waste disposal and taking strict legal action against non-compliance. Additionally, two emergency cells have been established one at the Sanitation

Directorate's main office in G-6/1-4 and another at the Transport Section in Fire Headquarters, G-7/4—to operate round the clock. A central complaint center has also been set up at the Safe City office in Sector H-11. Citizens can contact the sanitation helpline at 1334 or 9213908, or call 9203216 and 9211555 for waste collection requests. They may also send WhatsApp messages or SMS to 03355001213. Chairman CDA emphasized that the administration can achieve desired results only with citizens' full cooperation and adherence to guidelines, ensuring timely cleanliness and protecting the city from foul odors and diseases.



ISLAMABAD: Governor KP Faisal Karim Kundi presenting an award to Hasan Zaib, CEO of Comfi Trav Tourism during the International Environmental Conference and Awards 2025. Rauf Raja, CEO of Global Trade & Tourism, also present. – DNA

Millions of kids in Gaza, IIOJK victims of brutal aggression: CM Maryam

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, in her message on the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression, expressed deep sorrow over the continued suffering of millions of children in Palestine and Indian-occupied Kashmir, who have tragically become victims of Israeli and Indian aggression. She said that when the innocent smiles of children are replaced with cries and sighs, it shakes the very conscience of humanity. "Thousands of lifeless bodies of children buried beneath the rubble in Gaza stand as a painful reminder of the world's silence in the face of Israeli brutality," she remarked. The CM said the Israeli bombings have not only reduced buildings to rubble but also claimed the lives of countless innocent children. In Kashmir, she added, the air is heavy with the unheard cries of children whose voices have been silenced forever by decades of oppression. Calling it one of the darkest chapters in modern history, she regretted that children continue to suffer aggression not only during wars but even in times of peace. She emphasized that protecting children from all forms of violence and exploitation is a moral and collective responsibility. – Agencies

SNGPL Facilitation Desk inaugurated at LCCI

LAHORE: A dedicated facilitation desk of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has been inaugurated at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) to address gas-related issues of the business community. LCCI Acting President Engineer Khalid Usman and SNGPL General Manager Lahore West Bilal Asghar jointly inaugurated the SNGPL Facilitation Desk. This initiative is part of the LCCI's efforts to strengthening public-private partnership. – DNA

Grants exempted to boost innovation access in pharma sector

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has granted exemptions to boost innovation access in Pharmaceutical sector for maintaining market fairness. In line with its mandate to promote fair competition and protect consumer welfare, the CCP has granted six exemptions to undertakings in the pharmaceutical sector for the fiscal year 2024–25, under Section 5 of the Competition Act, 2010, said a press release issued here on Thursday. These exemptions relate to specific restrictive clauses in commercial agreements—such as territorial exclusivity and non-compete provisions—that would ordinarily be considered anti-competitive under Section 4 (Prohibited Agreements) of the Act. However, after conducting rigorous due diligence, including a detailed assessment of market structures, sector-specific regulations, and the commercial terms of the agreements, the CCP determined that the arrangements in question contribute to production efficiency, technological advancement, and enhanced consumer access to critical pharmaceutical products. The Commission noted that these exemptions are expected to improve service delivery, increase the availability of medicines in underserved regions, and lead to better public health outcomes. Consumers stand to benefit from access to advanced pharmaceutical technologies, more reliable product information, and higher standards of service. Each exemption was granted for a specific duration and is subject to conditions that ensure the pro-competitive benefits clearly outweigh any potential adverse effects on competition. Importantly, the undertakings are required to avoid any form of price-fixing or collusive conduct, and pricing arrangements remain outside the scope of these exemptions. – DNA

Swat Chamber of Commerce hosts dinner for UBG Leadership

DNA

SWAT : The President of the Swat Chamber of Commerce, Noor Muhammad Khan, hosted a grand dinner in honor of the central leadership of the United Business Group (UBG). The event was attended by UBG Patron-in-Chief S.M. Tanveer, UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of the Sarhad Chamber Haji Muhammad Afzal, President of the Bajaur Chamber Haji Lali Shah, Khyber Chamber Leader Syed Jawad Kazmi, senior leader of Abbottabad Chamber Haji Iftikhar, former President of Lower Dir Chamber Jan Alam, former presidents and executive members of the Swat Chamber, as well as a large

number of businesspersons, industrialists, and other distinguished guests. In his address, S.M. Tanveer stated that United Business Group is not just a group but a mission and a vision – one that aims to empower the Pakistani business community not only as an economic pillar but also as a respected and active participant in policymaking. He emphasized that UBG is committed to resolving the issues of the business community, expanding trade, promoting exports, and creating employment opportunities for the youth. He added, "Pakistan is a nuclear power and self-reliant in missile technology. It is now time for us to compete with developed nations in the economic arena. To foster business growth in Pakistan, we must im-

plement modern laws, stable policies, and make decisions through consultation with the business community." Tanveer reiterated that UBG is not a group that vanishes after elections, but a consultative movement that reaches wherever it's needed and advances in partnership with traders. "Our vision is not limited to chambers, but extends to improving the national economy, enhancing the business environment, and restoring the dignity of the trader. We are a strong voice for the business community even at the federal level, and that is our pride," he added. Zafar Bakhtawari, UBG Secretary General, in his remarks said that the late S.M. Muneer founded UBG as a united family, and now S.M. Tanveer is carrying it for-

ward with dignity, vision, and dedication. "Our mission is to ensure that traders receive the rightful position they deserve in Pakistan's policymaking." He praised the traders of Swat for their hospitality, honesty, and sincerity. "If Pakistani traders integrate honesty, transparency, and modernization into their businesses, they can become not only the backbone of the economy but also the driving force of national development. We must become role model entrepreneurs so that the world respects Pakistan's business community and we emerge as an economic power globally," he said. Bakhtawari further stated that UBG is determined to unite the business community across Pakistan on one platform, provide guidance, voice their issues, and demand sustainable facilities and incentives from the government. "We are not just about slogans; we are actively working in the field," he emphasized. President of the Swat Chamber, Noor Muhammad Khan, in his speech, said that the visit of the UBG leadership to Swat is an honor. "We wish that such delegations continue engaging in consultations with traders so that the issues of our region are highlighted at the federal level. The business community of Swat is eager and committed to playing its role in the recovery of the national economy," he added. Former President Haji Muhammad Afzal remarked that the traders of Swat are deeply connected with markets across the country, and their economic contributions are significant. "Together with UBG, we are committed to improving the commercial future of Pakistan," he concluded.



Advanced Neonatal intensive care unit inaugurated in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN : A major step forward in public healthcare has been marked in Dera Ismail Khan with the inauguration and operational launch of a state-of-the-art Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), offering critical care services for premature and seriously ill newborns in the region. This advanced medical facility is now one of the most well-equipped in the province, designed to meet international standards of neonatal care, and features specialized zones and cutting-edge equipment aimed at delivering high-quality neonatal care in accordance with modern medical standards, the hospital official said. The NICU features a dedicated phototherapy room outfitted with 20 LED-based units that use deep blue light technology to effectively treat neonatal jaundice. It also includes an incubator room with 15 modern incubators that provide continuous automated monitoring of infants' heart rate, oxygen saturation, respiratory patterns, and body temperature. To support newborns facing severe breathing difficulties, the unit houses 10 high-tech ventilators capable of delivering both Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) and high-frequency ventilation. Ten digital monitors have been installed throughout the unit to track vital signs such as ECG, blood pressure, oxygen levels, and body temperature in real time. The facility also includes two portable digital X-ray machines capable of producing over 100 diagnostic images daily, enabling rapid and on-site radiological assessments. For cases requiring specialist input, a telemedicine room has been set up to facilitate consultations with international neonatal experts. – Agencies

Nepra announces Rs2.98 per unit refund

DNA

KARACHI: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Thursday notified a negative fuel cost adjustment (FCA) of Rs2.98 per unit for K-Electric (KE) consumers in June's bills for power consumed in March. According to a notification issued by Nepra today, the authority "decided to allow a negative FCA of Rs2.9898/kWh (negative Rs4.045 billion) for March 2025, to be passed on to the consumers in the billing month of June 2025". Nepra said the negative FCA would apply to "all the consumer categories except lifeline consumers, domestic protected consumers, Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS) and pre-paid electricity consumers of all categories who opted for pre-paid tariff". The adjustment would be shown separately in the consumers' bills on the basis of units billed to the consumers in the respective month to which the adjustment pertains, it said. "In case any bills of June 2025 are issued before the notification of this decision, the same may be applied in the subsequent month," the notification said.

Pakistan fighting RAW funded agents

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti on Thursday said Pakistan was fighting a full-fledged "intelligence-driven war" funded by India's RAW and carried out through "Indian proxies". The security situation in Balochistan has deteriorated, with militants escalating attacks as part of a long-running insurgency. Last month, Inter-Services Public Relations Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry accused India of activating its "assets" post-Pahalgam to intensify terrorism in Pakistan, citing "irrefutable evidence" of state-sponsored attacks directed by Indian military personnel. He said "credible intelligence" showed India tasked groups such as the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban and other militant cells to ramp up activity.

National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02/Italy National/ Independence Day

June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day

June 06/Sweden National Day

June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)

June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution& Army Day

June 11/United kingdom Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth

June 12/Philippines Independence Day

June 12/Russian Federation Day of Sovereignty of the Russian Federation (National Day)

June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day

June 17/Iceland National Day

June 18/Seychells National Day

June 25/Croatia National Day

June 25/Mozambique National Day

June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police.....9266044

Motorway Police.....9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114


PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Canth Hospital.....9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Poly Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

PM vows united response to Indian water threats

The prime minister addressed a high-level meeting convened here at the Prime Minister’s Office to discuss Pakistan’s water security, which was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal General Asim Munir, federal ministers, chief ministers of all provinces, and senior civil and military officers

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday called for an urgent and united national response to safeguard the country’s future against warning of India’s increasing attempts to weaponize the Indus Waters Treaty. The prime minister addressed a high-level meeting convened here at the Prime Minister’s Office to discuss Pakistan’s water security, which was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal General Asim Munir, federal ministers, chief ministers of all provinces, and senior civil and military officers. The Prime Minister welcomed the participants and emphasized the single-point agenda of the session: tackling the water crisis and India’s ongoing threats. Referring to India’s actions following its recent military defeat, the Prime Minister said, “Instead of learning from its mistakes, India has now shifted its aggression toward the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, posing dangerous threats to our water security. These threats are not decreasing but growing with every passing day.” He added that the world community has rejected India’s unilateral moves and denounced its aggressive posture. However, he stressed that Pakistan must not remain complacent. “It is our duty to take this issue seriously for the sake of our future generations. As a lower riparian state, we must rise to this challenge with unity and resolve. The decisions we take today must earn the pride of our children tomorrow,” he stated. Shehbaz Sharif described the war victory as a blessing of Almighty Allah and said the only way to show gratitude was by building a prosperous and strong Pakistan. “This will not happen through rhetoric. It demands sacrifice, sweat, and tireless effort—especially in the economic arena, where the federation and provinces must work together to shape a better future for 240 million Pakistanis,” he said. Referring to Pakistan’s legal rights under the Indus Waters Treaty, the Prime Minister reiterated that the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers fall under Pakistan’s control and the treaty could not be withdrawn unilaterally by India. He also pointed to global legal frameworks like the UN Watercourses Convention and recent international climate forums as potential avenues for diplomatic recourse. He underscored the need for consensus-based water storage development, saying, “There is no controversy among Sindh, Punjab, KP, or Balochistan on this front. I will not touch controversial issues, but where there is complete unanimity, we must move swiftly and decisively.” The Prime Minister also highlighted the pressing issue of sedimentation in Tarbela and Mangla dams, reducing their water storage capacity. He warned that without bold decisions now, future generations will suffer. “Living nations plan for their future. Our armed forces stood shoulder to shoulder with the people in defending our homeland; now we must fight together for our water security,” he remarked. He lauded the recent diplomatic successes of Pakistan, including the approval of development loans by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, despite Indian lobbying efforts. “India failed to block Pakistan’s projects despite three days of intense lobbying. I congratulate the Finance and Economic Affairs Ministers and relevant secretaries on this national diplomatic achievement,” he said. In conclusion, PM Shehbaz Sharif urged all provinces to commit fully to the national cause of water security. “History remembers those who took bold and timely action in the face of great challenges. Let us be remembered for building a stronger, united, and self-reliant Pakistan,” he stated.

Photo journalists’ delegation meet Punjab Governor

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Photojournalist Association, led by President Sajjad Haider, held separate meetings with Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider at Punjab House and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at Ministers Enclave. Other office bearers including Rizwan Khan, Mudassar Raja, Parvez Mughal, Khadim Hussain, Syed Mehdi, and Raja Zafar were also present on the occasion. During the meetings, discussions were held regarding the welfare of photojournalists and support for upcoming events. Sajjad Haider stated that photojournalists are the vanguard of the journalist community, always present on the front lines for coverage, yet they often lack access to high-level decision-makers. He requested both governors to sponsor a photo exhibition and training workshops for photojournalists.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways, Mohammad Hanif Abbasi, met with the Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Ms. Marilina Armellini, and discussed important matters.

NSU faculty members selected for prestigious STEM program

ISLAMABAD: In a momentous academic achievement, National Skills University Islamabad (NSU) proudly announces the selection of two of its distinguished faculty members, Dr. Maryam Subhani from the Department of General Studies and Ms. Anita Bibi from the Department of Health Sciences Technology for the STEM Faculty Development Program under the PAK-UK Education Gateway. This prestigious initiative, a joint effort by the British Council and the Higher Education Commission (HEC), reflects on the academic excellence and global potential of NSU’s faculty. The training program, to be conducted at the globally acclaimed King’s College London, underscores NSU’s growing visibility on the international academic stage and marks a historic first in its collaborative engagement with one of the UK’s most prestigious universities. “This achievement is not just a personal success for our brilliant faculty but a testament to NSU’s expanding global academic footprint,” said Founding Vice Chancellor of National Skills University Islamabad. “Their selection opens doors to rich collaborations, academic excellence, and exposure to world-class teaching practices.” The STEM Faculty Development Program is designed to enhance the teaching methodologies, assessment techniques, and technological integration of faculty members working in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics. Participants will undergo rigorous, hands-on training facilitated by expert faculty at King’s College London. “This opportunity represents a leap forward in our academic mission,” noted the Head of the Department of General Studies Dr. Ehnber Naheed. “Dr. Subhani’s participation ensures that cutting-edge pedagogy and global best practices will directly impact our classrooms.” Echoing the sentiment, Dr. Muhammad Arif Nadeem Sagib, Head of the Department of Health Sciences Technology, stated, “Ms. Bibi’s selection reflects her dedication and our department’s growing emphasis on international collaboration and educational innovation. We are extremely proud of her.” The training module will focus on innovative pedagogical strategies in STEM education, modern tools and technologies for effective teaching, assessment and evaluation methodologies aligned with global benchmarks and exposure visits to key institutions in the UK upon completion, the trained faculty will act as Master Trainers, cascading their knowledge and experiences to fellow educators at NSU.—DNA

IFA conducts surprise milk checks: 9 vehicles fined

During the campaign, the IFA teams checked 24 vehicles carrying milk into Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Thursday launched surprise inspections before Eid to monitor the quality of milk being delivered in the Federal Capital and inspected 36,500 liters of milk in which 3000 liters disposed off due to poor quality. The move comes as part of a wider plan to ensure safe food reaches citizens during the festive season. Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations of IFA, Dr Tahira Siddique said that a surprise campaign was launched in Rawat, focusing on key entry points such as GT Road and T-Chowk. During the campaign, the IFA teams checked 24 vehicles carrying milk into Islamabad. These inspections led to the examination of 36,500 litres of milk to determine whether the quality met the required safety standards. She said, out of the 24 vehicles inspected, 15 were cleared after passing quality checks. However, the remaining nine were found to be transporting substandard milk. These vehicles were fined a total of Rs. 125,000 for violating food safety regulations. More than 3,000 litres of poor-quality milk were disposed of on the spot by the Food Authority teams. This action was taken after the milk failed to meet safety benchmarks. Dr. Tahira Siddique, Deputy Director of the Islamabad Food Authority, said that field teams will remain active during the Eid holidays to ensure continued monitoring. “Our teams will be present across different areas during Eid to stop the supply and production of substandard food in Islamabad,” she said. The milk inspection campaign is one part of a broader initiative by the Food Authority to maintain strict food safety ahead of Eid ul Azha, a time when food consumption and meat distribution typically increase. The inspection process included tests for water content, temperature, colour, and smell to identify spoiled or diluted milk. IFA’s recent action follows complaints of poor-quality milk being sold in parts of the city. Many residents had raised concerns about milk that appeared to be watered down or stale. In response, the Food Authority designed a strategy to conduct unannounced checks at points where milk is brought into the capital.

SEPA DG’s plea on World Environment Day

This day every year highlights the urgent need for collective action to address the environmental crises of our time, he emphasized

ISLAMABAD: On World Environment Day, Director General of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) Waqar Hussain Phulpoto Thursday stressed the importance of adopting sustainable practices, including the use of cloth bags to mitigate environmental harm. In a candid conversation with a local news channel, SEPA’s Waqar Hussain Phulpoto warned of the disastrous impact of plastic pollution and urged a complete overhaul of current practices in favor of environmentally friendly alternatives. The government is set to launch rigorous initiatives to enforce a ban on plastic bags, and media awareness is essential to spread the message, he said. DG SEPA Waqar Hussain Phulpoto stated that plastic bags pose a significant threat to the environment, causing choking of waterways, entangling and killing wildlife and contributing to litter and pollution. He emphasized that the government is committed to taking strict initiatives to discourage plastic bag use and promote eco-friendly alternatives, with media awareness being a crucial component of this effort. Let us pledge to work together to safeguard the environment and ensure a sustainable future for our planet,’ he urged. “On this World Environment Day, I urge everyone to join hands in protecting our planet and promoting sustainable practices. Let’s work together to address environmental challenges and create a better future for generations to come,” said Waqar Hussain Phulpoto, Director General of SEPA. “Plastic pollution is a triple threat, worsening climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The staggering reality is that millions of tons of plastic waste enter our oceans and waterways each year, while micro plastics also pollute our soil,” he highlighted. “This day every year highlights the urgent need for collective action to address the environmental crises of our time, he emphasized.

DG ISA Mubashir Tauqir holds farewell meeting with Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Director General Information Service Academy (ISA) Mubashir Tauqir Shah on Thursday held a farewell meeting with Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar. The minister presented a shield of honour to Mubashir Tauqir Shah on his retirement in recognition of his outstanding services in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Speaking on the occasion, Attaullah Tarar said that Mubashir Tauqir Shah’s services in the fields of the Ministry of Information, media and mass communication were exemplary. He said Mubashir Tauqir Shah had always prioritized national interest and professional integrity. Under his leadership, the Information Service Academy played a prominent role in training young officers, Attaullah Tarar maintained. Mubashir Tauqir Shah said he was grateful to the Ministry of Information, fellow officers and staff and was proud of his career in the Ministry of Information. He prayed that the Ministry of Information continues to play a full role in strengthening the national narrative in the future as well.—APP

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Briefs

**IRSA releases
235,044
cusecs water**

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 235,044 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 155,670 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1465.32 feet which was 63.32 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 76,800 cusecs and 155,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1163.70 feet, which was 113.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 33,826 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 174,428, 153,583, 124,381 and 60,633 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 23,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3064 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

**Eid-ul-Azha
festivities
unite
Pakistanis**

ISLAMABAD: The festive season of Eid-ul-Azha elsewhere in the country is in full swing, with families preparing for the occasion, kids grazing animals, parents shopping for necessities and vendors selling decorations and animal feed. A report aired by a state-run news channel highlights Pakistan's vibrant Eid-ul-Azha celebrations, where families come together, kids bond with animals, parents shop for essentials, and vendors sell festive merchandise. The streets are filled with vibrant colors and the air is filled with the sounds of laughter and chatter, creating a truly unforgettable experience for all, report added in Lahore, the historic Wazir Khan Mosque is a hub of activity during Eid-ul-Azha. "The atmosphere is electric, with thousands of people gathering for prayers and celebrations," says local resident. "It is a time for spiritual reflection and community bonding," he added. In Karachi, the streets are filled with vibrant colors and sounds. "Eid-ul-Azha is a time for family and friends to come together," says a vendor. "We see a surge in demand for livestock, and it's a busy but joyful time for us," he added.—APP

**Motorway
police launch
crackdown
against
overcharging**

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to ensure safe and fair travel for commuters, the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have launched a nationwide campaign targeting overcharging and overloading by public transport operators during the Eid-ul-Azha. According to the spokesperson of the Motorway Police, all bus companies have been strictly directed to refrain from charging passengers more than the officially approved fares. "Strict action will be taken against violators," said Additional Inspector General (IG) of the North Region.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan and others witnessing an exhibition at the Bulgaria embassy.— DNA

IRS, V20 Group launch landmark partnership

Consequently, a panel discussion on the theme 'Green Development as a Shared Global Imperative: Aligning towards Climate Prosperity' was moderated by Mr. Hamza Haroon, Director South Asia, CVF-V20. Dr. Khalid Waleed, Research Fellow, SDPI Mr. Khalid Waleed highlighted the need to integrate energy, economy, and environment for a sustainable transition in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) and The Climate Vulnerable Forum - V20 Group of Finance Ministers (CVF-V20) launched a landmark partnership following a high-level forum in Islamabad focused on advancing green development and strengthening South-South cooperation. This collaboration is intended to contribute directly to the implementation of Pakistan's Climate Prosperity Plan and bolster broader efforts to meet regional sustainability goals aligned with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The high-level dialogue entitled 'China's Role in Advancing Green Development Across the Global South', brought together senior government officials, diplomats, scholars, and climate finance experts to explore how developing countries can collaborate with China to accelerate climate resilience, green infrastructure, and sustainable finance through platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of IRS, emphasized the urgency of collective climate action, highlighting the need for stronger regional cooperation to tackle transboundary air pollution. He called for integrated policies, investments in clean technology, and community engagement to ensure a sustainable and healthier future for the region. He underscored the significance of such solutions-focused dialogue aimed at advancing sustainable development and energy transition. Ms. Sara Jane Ahmed, Managing Director of CVF-V20, framed the opening discussion under the theme "Green Development and South-South Cooperation." She indicated that the green development is not just an environmental necessity, it is an economic opportunity for the Global South. "By deepening South-South cooperation, we can scale solutions that are locally driven, financially sound, and globally relevant", she remarked. Delivering the keynote address, Mr. Zulfiqar Younas, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination

(MoCC&EC) stressed the urgency of transition from climate ambition into climate action. He remarked that Pakistan has added over 13,000 MW to its grid, focusing on solar, wind, and hydro energy. He emphasized partnership with China including cooperation on clean air technologies and disaster risk financing. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working with China and global South partners for inclusive, climate-resilient development. Mr. Wang Shengjie, Political Counselor, Embassy of the People's Republic of China highlighted China's commitment to green development through comprehensive policies and ambitious targets like carbon peaking and neutrality. He highlighted China's role as a leader in clean energy, with significant achievements in air and water quality improvement, and extensive investments in renewable energy infrastructure. Mr. Wang outlined China's global climate cooperation efforts, including partnerships under the UN, BRI, and BRICS frameworks, and substantial financial support to countries in the Global South. He acclaimed Pakistan's active climate diplomacy and green projects, such as wind and hydropower plants, stressing the potential for robust bilateral cooperation. Mr. Wang reaffirmed China's commitment to jointly working with Pakistan and the Global South to build a sustainable, green future for all. >In his address, H.E. Erik Solheim Vice-president, BRI-International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC) highlighted China's remarkable leadership in driving the global green transformation. He emphasized China's role as the world's leading producer of solar, wind, electric vehicles, and next-generation battery technologies. H.E. Erik Solheim also commended Pakistan for its rapid progress in transition to solar energy, underscoring the potential for shared learning and collaboration across the Global South. He called on the Global South, to engage with China's green Belt and Road Initiative to benefit from its investment, innovation, and people-centric economic development model. Consequently, a panel discussion on the theme 'Green Development as a Shared Global Imperative: Aligning

towards Climate Prosperity' was moderated by Mr. Hamza Haroon, Director South Asia, CVF-V20. Dr. Khalid Waleed, Research Fellow, SDPI Mr. Khalid Waleed highlighted the need to integrate energy, economy, and environment for a sustainable transition in Pakistan. He emphasized leveraging China's expertise for sector coupling. Mr. Waleed concluded by advocating stronger South-South cooperation to connect Pakistan with regional partners for green development. Mr. Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director, Pakistan-China Institute highlighted China-Pakistan's strong cooperation, citing recent defense and climate partnerships. He praised China's environmental progress and its 'ecological civilization' model. Stressing action over mere discourse, he urged Pakistan to pursue focused, high-impact green collaboration with China. He called for a clear national strategy to attract climate investments and adopt smart, sustainable technologies. Mr. Red Constantino, International Policy Adviser to CVF Secretary-General stressed the growing significance of South-South cooperation amid global challenges.

Junaid calls for sustainable maritime practices

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has urged urgent action to combat plastic pollution threatening Pakistan's coastal ecosystems and marine biodiversity. In his World Environment Day message, he emphasized aligning maritime policies with global climate goals to ensure cleaner oceans and greener coasts. The Ministry has planted mil-

lions of mangrove saplings to restore coastal biodiversity and mitigate pollution. Highlighting this year's theme, "Beat Plastic Pollution," Minister Chaudhry called for sustainable solutions to protect Pakistan's over 1,000 km coastline, which supports ports, fishing communities, and coastal towns but is increasingly endangered by plastic waste. He stressed the need to transition from a linear "take-make-dispose" economy to a circular model emphasizing reuse, recycling, and sustainable

alternatives. The Minister said the Ministry is collaborating with stakeholders to enforce waste regulations at ports and on vessels to prevent marine pollution. Mangrove restoration remains a key focus, as these forests act as natural coastal protectors, nurseries for marine life, and filters for pollutants. "Pakistan's Indus Delta hosts one of the world's largest mangrove ecosystems, with ongoing efforts involving local communities and international partners", he added. Min-

ister Chaudhry called on industries, civil society, academia, and citizens to join the fight against plastic pollution, underscoring that lasting solutions require both policy and daily commitment. He concluded: "Let this World Environment Day be a turning point — a pledge that we, as a nation, will not only protect but also restore the blue heart of our planet. Together, we can chart a course toward cleaner oceans, greener coastlines, and a sustainable future."

**Sacrificial
animal
decoration
prices soar
up**

ISLAMABAD: As the festival of Eid ul Azha gets closer, the prices of decorative items for sacrificial animals have seen a sharp rise in the federal capital's markets, adding to the overall expenses for buyers. On this festive occasion, many people are eager to make their sacrificial animals stand out—especially for social media photos and family gatherings. From vibrant garlands, halters, and beaded harnesses to traditional bells, embroidered saddles, decorative blankets, and ornate headpieces, a wide array of accessories is available in local livestock markets at premium prices. Official cattle markets have been set up in key locations across the capital, including Sangjani, Sector I-15, Barakahu, Lehrtr Road, and Islamabad Expressway, catering to the growing demand for aesthetically adorned animals. Talking to APP, stallholder Irfan Qureshi, who runs a decorative items stall at the officially designated cattle market in Barakahu, acknowledged that not only have cattle prices surged, but the cost of accessories used to adorn sacrificial animals has also increased by approximately 30 to 40 percent compared to last year. "Inflation, increased transportation costs, and high demand are the main reasons for the price hike," he told. Buyers in the capital are feeling the pinch. Subhan, A buyer at cattle market in Barakahu said, "We spend tens of thousands on buying animals, and now even the decorations are becoming unaffordable." However, Subhan and other buyers voiced concerns over the steep rise in sacrificial animals decorative items prices, urging the government to intervene and offer relief during the festive occasion. Zubair, another buyer at Islamabad Expressway cattle market said, "Sacrificial animal rates are already high and almost doubled as compared to the last year, along that decorative items stalls set up in the market also offering high rates of their displayed items which are burdensome." A slight relief could come if the relevant authorities stepped in to regulate and reduce the soaring prices of sacrificial animal decorations. With Eid ul Azha set to be celebrated on Saturday, preparations are in full swing across Islamabad and the country, as markets bustle with eager buyers and traders.

BISP, World Bank discuss data sensitization

Ms. Melis U. Guven lauded BISP's continued efforts to strengthen Pakistan's social protection systems. She reaffirmed the World Bank's full support, pledging regular follow-up meetings and continued technical assistance to ensure sustainable improvements

DNA

ISLAMABAD In a bid to enhance transparency, data security, and the effectiveness of social protection systems in Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the World Bank have agreed to deepen their collaboration, focusing on responsible data sharing, cybersecurity, and key reforms in social welfare delivery. In this regard, Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid, held a meet-

ing on Wednesday with Ms. Melis U. Guven, Lead Economist and Global Lead for Social Protection Delivery Systems at the World Bank, at BISP Headquarters. The meeting centered around strengthening cooperation in the areas of data sensitization, cyber safety, and operational reforms. During the discussion, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the need for a national-level workshop bringing together stakeholders from all provinces to build awareness on the risks and challenges of data

sharing and cybersecurity, and to promote trust and coordination among partners. "After NADRA, BISP holds the second-largest household data repository in the country through the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER)," she said. "We share this data responsibly and strictly follow all safety protocols to support various social welfare initiatives. However, there is now a pressing need to centralize NSER data, similar to NADRA, so it can be effectively leveraged for development

planning." She stressed that data sharing must be guided by established cybersecurity frameworks, particularly considering the sensitive nature of personal household information. "All stakeholders must grasp the importance of secure data management. A dedicated workshop is vital to address concerns, streamline processes, and ensure our collective commitment to data protection," she added. The meeting also covered several key operational aspects, including improvements

to the household survey questionnaire, redefining household structures, enhanced training for enumerators, and the introduction of regular third-party spot checks to boost transparency and data reliability. Ms. Melis U. Guven lauded BISP's continued efforts to strengthen Pakistan's social protection systems. She reaffirmed the World Bank's full support, pledging regular follow-up meetings and continued technical assistance to ensure sustainable improvements.

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Modi under pressure – time for dialogue on Kashmir

THE recent political backlash against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, following India's setback in a military face-off with Pakistan, has taken an ugly and unproductive turn. Opposition leaders, rather than offering constructive criticism, have resorted to mocking Modi with derogatory labels like "Narender Surrender." While such name-calling is undignified and reflects poorly on India's political discourse, it highlights a more pressing concern: the growing domestic and international pressure on Modi to address India's deteriorating relations with Pakistan, particularly the unresolved Kashmir issue.

Kashmir remains one of the most militarized regions in the world, a legacy of the 1947 Partition that has fueled decades of hostility between India and Pakistan. The two nuclear-armed neighbors have fought multiple wars over the territory, with neither side willing to concede ground. The Modi government's decision in August 2019 to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status and bifurcate the state into union territories further escalated tensions, drawing sharp condemnation from Pakistan and raising concerns globally.

Despite India's insistence that Kashmir is an internal matter, the reality is that the dispute cannot be resolved unilaterally. Pakistan, despite its own political and economic challenges, has consistently called for dialogue, recognizing that peace in South Asia hinges on a mutually acceptable resolution. India's refusal to engage, however, has only deepened the stalemate, leaving Kashmir a volatile powder keg that threatens regional stability.

Recent intelligence reports and strategic analyses suggest that India, facing mounting domestic pressures—economic slowdown, farmer protests, and political opposition—may be tempted to launch another military operation against Pakistan to divert attention. Such a move would be perilously shortsighted. The 2019 Balakot airstrikes and subsequent dogfight demonstrated how quickly tensions can spiral out of control, risking a full-scale conflict between two nuclear powers. Another military misadventure would not only endanger millions of lives but also destabilize the entire region. Pakistan, with its credible nuclear deterrent and battle-hardened military, would respond decisively, making any Indian aggression a lose-lose scenario. History has shown that wars between India and Pakistan resolve nothing—only dialogue can break the cycle of hostility.

Modi must rise above domestic political theatrics and recognize that sustainable peace requires statesmanship, not brinkmanship. Pakistan's repeated offers for dialogue—including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent calls for "serious and sincere talks"—should not be dismissed as mere rhetoric. Instead, India should view them as an opportunity to de-escalate tensions and explore a diplomatic way forward.

The world cannot afford to remain a passive spectator as India and Pakistan teeter on the edge of conflict. The United Nations, the United States, China, and other major powers must actively encourage both nations to return to the negotiating table. The UN's longstanding resolutions on Kashmir, though largely ignored in recent years, provide a framework for peaceful resolution that should not be entirely discarded. Prime Minister Modi stands at a crossroads. He can either continue down the path of confrontation, risking catastrophic consequences, or demonstrate true leadership by initiating meaningful talks with Pakistan. The opposition's jibes may be crude, but they reflect a growing frustration with his government's inability to secure lasting peace. The choice is clear: dialogue is the only viable option. Another military gamble would be reckless, with potentially irreversible consequences. The people of Kashmir, India, and Pakistan deserve peace—not perpetual conflict. The time for statesmanship is now. Modi must act before it's too late.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 37

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The Future of SAARC Amidst India-Pak Tensions

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was envisioned as a platform for regional integration, economic collaboration, and diplomatic engagement among South Asian nations. However, its effectiveness has been repeatedly undermined by geopolitical tensions, particularly between India and Pakistan. As the two nuclear-armed neighbors continue to grapple with longstanding disputes, the future of SAARC remains uncertain.

SAARC has been largely inactive for the past decade, with no summit held since 2014. The organization has struggled to function due to deep-rooted political conflicts, particularly between India and Pakistan. The cancellation of the 2016 Islamabad summit following the Uri attack exemplifies how bilateral tensions have paralyzed the regional body¹. While other member states have expressed interest in reviving SAARC, the India-Pakistan rivalry remains the primary obstacle.

India has increasingly prioritized alternative regional frameworks such as BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) over SAARC. New Delhi views SAARC as ineffective due to Pakistan's involvement, preferring to engage with South Asian nations through bilateral and sub-regional initiatives. This shift has further diminished SAARC's relevance and raised questions about its future viability.

Despite India's reluctance, Pakistan continues to advocate for SAARC's revival, emphasizing its potential for economic cooperation and conflict resolution. Islamabad argues that SAARC remains the only platform that brings together all South Asian nations, making it indispensable for regional stability. However, without India's participation, SAARC's ability to function effectively remains doubtful.

The recent escalation in India-Pakistan tensions, particularly following the Pahalgam attack, has further complicated SAARC's prospects. India has accused Pakistan of harboring terrorist elements, while Pakistan has called for an impartial investigation². These hostilities make diplomatic engagement within SAARC increasingly difficult, as mutual distrust prevents meaningful cooperation.

For SAARC to regain relevance, both India and Pakistan must recognize the benefits of regional collaboration. Economic integration, trade facilitation, and joint efforts to combat climate change could serve as common ground for engagement. Additionally, backchannel diplomacy and third-party mediation may help ease tensions, creating space for SAARC's revival.

The future of SAARC remains precarious, largely dependent on the trajectory of India-Pakistan relations. While Pakistan continues to push for its revival, India's strategic shift away from SAARC suggests that the organization may remain dormant. Unless both nations find a way to reconcile their differences, SAARC risks becoming an obsolete entity, overshadowed by alternative regional alliances.

Oman spearheads push to revive US-Iran nuclear talks

Hassan Al-Mustafa

The brief but high-stakes visit saw Al-Busaidi deliver an American proposal to Iranian officials regarding Tehran's nuclear program, setting the stage for a pivotal sixth round of negotiations scheduled for later this month under Omani supervision. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi responded via social media, stating his government would "examine the proposal and respond according to our principles and national interests." The diplomatic exchange followed closely on from President Masoud Pezeshkian's two-day state

OMANI Foreign Minister Badr Al-Busaidi's lightning visit to Tehran has injected fresh momentum into the stalled US-Iran nuclear negotiations, as the Gulf sultanate positions itself as the crucial mediator in preventing regional conflict while advancing diplomatic solutions. The brief but high-stakes visit saw Al-Busaidi deliver an American proposal to Iranian officials regarding Tehran's nuclear program, setting the stage for a pivotal sixth round of negotiations scheduled for later this month under Omani supervision. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi responded via social media, stating his government would "examine the proposal and respond according to our principles and national interests." The diplomatic exchange followed closely on from President Masoud Pezeshkian's two-day state visit to Muscat, where he held extensive talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on political, economic and bilateral cooperation matters. He also met with high-level Omani officials, businessmen and the Iranian community in Oman. Oman is pursuing tangible outcomes from the current US-Iran diplomatic process through intensive bilateral engagement and coordination with key Arab nations to build regional consensus around negotiated solutions. The sultanate views dialogue as the only viable mechanism for bridging Washington-Tehran divisions, recognizing that diplomatic breakdown could trigger dangerous escalation dynamics. Should negotiations collapse or reach an impasse, the resulting tensions might provide Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the political and strategic justification to authorize military action against Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Such strikes would risk unleashing a broader Middle Eastern conflict with catastrophic and unpredictable ramifications—a scenario Gulf Arab states are determined to prevent as they advance ambitious economic transformation initiatives that fundamentally depend on sustained regional stability and cross-border cooperation frameworks. The sultanate views dialogue as the only viable mechanism for bridging Washington-Tehran divisions. Hassan Al-Mustafa Uranium enrichment remains the core obstacle frustrating diplomatic progress. American officials have sent mixed signals, alternately supporting low-level enrichment for peaceful purposes

while sometimes demanding complete suspension—a position Iran categorically rejects. Araghchi has consistently maintained that enrichment capabilities represent "fundamental national necessities," declaring that "the right to enrichment has always been our Foreign Ministry objective in both previous and current negotiations," while emphasizing Iran's rejection of what it terms foreign "hegemony." Building on these diplomatic efforts, Oman has developed behind-the-scenes proposals that remain unpublicized, though Iranian diplomatic sources have revealed to me a "core concept centered on temporary enrichment cessation lasting several months, with potential extension up to two or three years." This Iranian moratorium would trigger reciprocal American concessions, including graduated sanctions relief and the release of frozen Iranian financial assets, creating space for sustained bilateral negotiations aimed at securing a comprehensive, lasting accord. According to the source, this framework would ensure "Washington refrains from blocking Iranian enrichment activities within internationally sanctioned parameters for civilian nuclear applications," representing "a pragmatic compromise acceptable to both sides that could narrow existing gaps and avert diplomatic collapse." Tehran appears receptive to this approach, particularly given its prior willingness to halt enrichment activities temporarily. The implementation of such measures would likely be interpreted as a confidence-building initiative demonstrating genuine commitment to peaceful resolution of the nuclear standoff. Sweeping alignment remains distant, suggesting an interim arrangement may represent the most achievable near-term outcome.

Hassan Al-Mustafa However, implementation faces significant technical hurdles requiring resolution. First, determining the operational status and disposition of Iran's advanced third-generation centrifuge infrastructure. Second, establishing protocols for managing Iran's substantial stockpiles of 60 percent-enriched uranium. Third, resolving uranium supply chain arrangements for Iranian reactor operations—whether through the depletion of existing reserves or negotiating external procurement agreements. And, fourth, defining the scope and structure of international monitoring mechanisms, particularly

whether Tehran would accept oversight personnel beyond standard International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors.

Concerning the American initiative delivered by the Omani foreign minister to Iranian officials on May 31, while official details remain classified, Axios cited a US administration source indicating the "American proposal aims to resolve the central impasse surrounding Iran's insistence on maintaining domestic enrichment capabilities."

According to Axios, US envoy Steve Witkoff's communication to Tehran outlined a concept for "a regional consortium operating under joint International Atomic Energy Agency and US oversight to manage uranium enrichment for civilian nuclear applications," with the critical caveat that Washington "insists any shared enrichment infrastructure be established outside Iranian territory." These recommendations align with a complementary diplomatic formula proposing "American acknowledgment of Iranian enrichment rights contingent upon Tehran's complete cessation of all enrichment activities." The New York Times reported that "the American document delivered to Iran consists of condensed talking points rather than a comprehensive draft accord," indicating that sweeping US-Iranian alignment remains distant and suggesting an interim framework arrangement may represent the most achievable near-term outcome. Meanwhile, the Tehran Times emphasized in its June 1 analysis that any successful agreement must treat Tehran's core demands as fundamental rather than peripheral considerations, particularly regarding "effective, verifiable and irreversible sanctions relief"—described as a nonnegotiable prerequisite for meaningful progress. The forthcoming sixth round of talks promises to be exceptionally demanding, but it could prove decisive in charting the exact trajectory of US-Iran diplomatic engagement, establishing whether the two nations can forge workable accommodations that secure Gulf Arab endorsement, while thwarting the military escalation actively sought by extremist factions and the Netanyahu administration.

The role of Okara cantonment security and development

Arooj Fatima



Okara Cantonment is located in the Okara District of Punjab Province. It lies close to Okara City and is in proximity to other urban centers such as Renala Khurd and Sahiwal. Its strategic location provides both tactical military benefits and excellent connectivity. The cantonment is well-linked via the Grand Trunk (GT) Road and Pakistan Railways, enabling easy movement of military personnel and equipment while also facilitating civilian travel to major cities like Lahore

OKARA Cantonment, commonly known as Okara Cantt, is a prominent military-administered area situated in the Okara District of Punjab, Pakistan. The cantonment is not only important due to its military value but also serves as a bridge between the defense establishment and the surrounding civilian population. Located near the city of Okara, it plays a dual role, offering military facilities alongside civilian services and infrastructure. Three key entry points secure Okara Cantt: Al-Jehad Gate, Al-Barq Check Post and the Runway Gate, which regulate access and ensure tight security. The origins of Okara Cantonment trace back to the British colonial era when it was established as a military garrison. Like many cantonments built by the British in the Indian subcontinent, its location was chosen strategically to support military logistics and regional stability. After Pakistan gained independence in 1947, Okara Cantt was inherited by the Pakistan Army, which transformed it into a critical base for various army units. Given its proximity to the India-Pakistan border, the cantonment gained substantial importance for national defense and continues to play a vital role in regional military readiness.

Okara Cantonment is located in the Okara District of Punjab Province. It lies close to Okara City and is in proximity to other urban centers such as Renala Khurd and Sahiwal. Its strategic location provides both tactical military benefits and excellent connectivity. The cantonment is well-linked via the Grand Trunk (GT) Road and Pakistan Railways, enabling easy movement of military personnel and equipment while also facilitating civilian travel to major cities like Lahore and Multan. A Cantonment Board that operates under the Military Lands and Cantonments Department, Ministry of Defence governs Okara Cantt. This administrative system is distinct from the regular municipal governance applied in civilian areas. The board comprises elected civilian members and military representatives and is overseen by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Its responsibilities include providing essential services such as: Waste management and sewerage systems Health and sanitation services Management of primary and secondary education institutions Maintenance of parks, recreational areas and graveyards Regulation of commercial zones Administration of land and property matters

The Cantonment Board focuses on maintaining a clean, organized and efficiently managed environment, embodying a disciplined model of urban governance. The infrastructure of Okara Cantt is robust and diversified, catering to both military and civilian populations. Okara

ra Cantt hosts various military installations including army barracks, training grounds, administrative offices and supply depots. It houses two key divisions of the Pakistan Army: the 40 Division and the 14 Division, both commanded by Major Generals. These divisions are crucial for defensive operations and strategic planning in the region. The Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Okara is a major medical facility situated within the cantonment. Operated under the Pakistan Army's Medical Corps, CMH provides healthcare services to military personnel and civilians alike. It includes departments such as General Medicine, General Surgery, Pediatrics, Gynecology & Obstetrics, Psychiatry, Physiotherapy and Trauma Care. Laboratory and radiology services are also available, making it a well-rounded healthcare institution. Educational services in Okara Cantt are of high quality, particularly through institutions like the Army Public School and College and various FG and Cantonment Board (CB) Schools. The Army Public School and College is part of the APSACS system and offers both Matriculation (FBISE) and O/A Level (Cambridge) education. These institutions not only serve the children of military families but are also open to civilians, promoting educational excellence in the region. Recreational amenities in Okara Cantt include parks, sports complexes and exclusive messes and clubs for officers and their families. "Coffee O Clock" is a popular venue for families, reflecting the area's blend of military precision and civilian comfort. The cantonment is divided into two main residential zones: the Civil Area and the Defense Officer Housing Society (DOHS). Both are well-planned, offering modern housing and amenities in a secure environment.

Security in the cantonment is stringent, with check posts regulating access and surveillance systems ensuring the safety of residents. Outsiders require proper clearance to enter, maintaining the area's integrity as a military zone. The Army Selection and Recruitment Center (AS&RC) in Okara Cantonment plays a crucial role in enlisting new personnel into the Pakistan Army. Located near the Al-Barq Check Post on GT Road, the center serves candidates from Okara and adjacent districts such as Sahiwal and Pakpattan. Recruitment categories include: Soldiers (Sipahi) Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) Clerical and technical staff Medical Corps personnel Cadets for specialized courses like PMA Long Course and Technical Cadet Course

This center is a gateway for local youth aspiring to serve in the military, contributing to regional employment and national defense. Established in 1913 during British rule, Military Farms Okara were initially designed to supply dairy products to the British Indian Army. Today, the Pakistan Army's Remount Veterinary and Farms Corps (RV&FC) operate these farms. They serve multiple functions: Providing fresh dairy

products for military consumption Engaging in agricultural production and livestock breeding Offering training for veterinary and agricultural science professionals Conducting research on advanced farming and breeding techniques These farms span thousands of acres and include dairy facilities, barns, veterinary hospitals and irrigation systems. Residential colonies are also provided for military and civilian staff. Okara Cantt contributes significantly to the local economy by generating employment in both military and civilian sectors. It also enhances the quality of life in the surrounding region by providing access to premium healthcare, education and secure housing. The cantonment's infrastructure and governance serve as a model for urban planning, characterized by cleanliness, order and discipline. Strategically, Okara Cantonment serves as a defense buffer against potential threats from Pakistan's eastern border with India. It is equipped for rapid troop mobilization and intelligence operations. In addition to its military preparedness, the presence of the cantonment instills a sense of security among the local population and acts as a stabilizing force in the region. Despite its advantages, Okara Cantt faces several challenges. The restriction of public access limits deeper integration with the civilian areas of Okara city. Furthermore, urban expansion from nearby civilian zones could place pressure on the secure and organized layout of the cantonment. Balancing the military's strategic needs with the developmental aspirations of the civilian population remains a persistent challenge. Okara Cantonment stands as a symbol of national security, disciplined governance and socio-economic development. While its primary role is to serve Pakistan's defense interests, its contributions to public services, healthcare, education and employment make it an indispensable part of the Okara District. Its organized infrastructure, strategic importance and commitment to public welfare position it not only as a military stronghold but also as a model of progressive urban development in Pakistan. In the last, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Sir Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer for his invaluable support and encouragement in guiding me to write an insightful write-up about Okara Cantonment. His unwavering motivation, constructive feedback and deep understanding of the subject matter played a vital role in shaping my ideas and strengthening my research. It was through his mentorship that I found the confidence to explore this topic with depth and originality. I am truly thankful for his generous help and academic inspiration.

Briefs

Pakistan-India conflict discussed by Trump...

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15 minute-long telephone call including the ongoing war in Ukraine where President Putin stressed that Moscow would respond to recent attacks on its airbases. However, the discussion of the recent limited conflict between Islamabad and New Delhi comes against the backdrop of cross-border skirmishes between the two nuclear-armed neighbours raised eyebrows worldwide prompting Washington to intervene with President Trump announcing a ceasefire which was widely praised. The military confrontation between Pakistan and India — which included cross-border strikes by both countries — came weeks after 26 tourists were killed in Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir's (IOJK) Pahalgam and India falsely blamed Pakistan for the attack. After the incident, India killed several innocent civilians in unprovoked attacks on Pakistan for three days before the Pakistan Armed Forces retaliated in defence with the successful Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos. Pakistan downed six IAF fighter jets, including three Rafale, and dozens of drones. After at least 87 hours, the war between the two nuclear-armed nations ended on May 10 with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States. Since the US-brokered ceasefire that followed, both Islamabad and New Delhi have undertaken a diplomatic outreach initiative globally to present their respective stance on the recent clashes between the arch-rivals.

Trump slaps new travel ban on 12...

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measures from his first term. Trump said the measure was spurred by a makeshift flamethrower attack on a Jewish protest in Colorado that US authorities blamed on an man they said was in the country illegally. The move bans all travel to the United States by nationals of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. Trump also imposed a partial ban on travelers from seven countries: Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Venezuela. Some temporary work visas from these countries will be allowed. The bans go into effect on Monday, the White House said. "The recent terror attack in Boulder, Colorado has underscored the extreme dangers posed to our country by the entry of foreign nationals who are not properly vetted," Trump said in a video message from the Oval Office posted on X. "We don't want them."

Belarus military...

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agreeing to sustain close and continuous engagement between their respective Air Forces. On his arrival, a smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff highlighted the robust bilateral military ties between the two countries and assured that PAF is committed to extending full support for the basic to tactical-level training of pilots and maintenance crews for capacity building of Belarus Air Force. He reiterated his resolve to consolidate the existing bilateral Air Force to Air Force ties between the two countries by enhancing collaboration, particularly in the areas of training, technological development and operational capability. A key highlight of the meeting was the mutual consensus on enhancing Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation through a variety of domains. This includes the initiation of high-level exchange programs aimed at fostering professional development between the two Air Forces.

England women seal ODI series with dominant win over West Indies

Jones and Beaumont once again dismantled West Indies bowling attack, adding 202 runs for first wicket

DNA

LEICESTER: England's newly formed white-ball opening duo of Amy Jones and Tammy Beaumont continued their sensational form, scoring back-to-back centuries to hand the West Indies another crushing defeat in the second Women's ODI at Grace Road. The commanding performance sealed an unassailable 2-0 lead for the hosts in the three-match series. Having already shared a 222-run opening stand in the series opener at Derby last Friday, both Jones and Beaumont once again dismantled the West Indies bowling attack, adding 202 runs for the first wicket. The visitors, already struggling with form, were further weakened by the absence of their skipper and star all-rounder Hayley Matthews and fellow opener Qiana Joseph, leaving them without their regular top-order. Wicket-keeper-batter Amy Jones, who has spent most of her career in the middle and lower order, has flourished in her new role at the top. She smashed 129 off just 98 balls, including 20 boundaries. Just days earlier, she had scored her maiden ODI century—122 at Derby—marking a remarkable transition in her career. Her partner Tammy Beaumont, the more experienced of the two, also notched up her second consecutive hundred, finishing with a six over midwicket. This was her 12th ODI century, extending her record as the leading century-maker in women's ODIs for England. The pair's two consecutive double-century stands now place them alongside Australia's Meg Lanning and Ellyse Perry as the only partnerships in women's cricket history to



secutive hundred, finishing with a six over midwicket. This was her 12th ODI century, extending her record as the leading century-maker in women's ODIs for England. The pair's two consecutive double-century stands now place them alongside Australia's Meg Lanning and Ellyse Perry as the only partnerships in women's cricket history to

achieve such a feat. England's dominance continued down the order, with Emma Lamb contributing a brisk 55, and Sophia Dunkley blasting 31 off 19 balls, powering the hosts to a formidable total of 366/6 in 50 overs. Chasing a daunting 367, the depleted West Indies side faltered, and bowled out well short of the target. The lone bright spot for

the visitors was debutant opener Realeanna Grimmond, who scored a composed 53 off 72 balls. Middle-order batter Janillea Glasgow added a fiery 44 off 24 balls, but the efforts were not enough to threaten England's total. With the ball, Alice Capsey led the attack for England, claiming 3/42 in 8.3 overs, while Lauren

Filer and Linsey Smith chipped in with two wickets apiece. Bell, Cross, and Davidson-Richards took a wicket each. The third and final ODI will be played at Taunton on Saturday, June 7, where England will aim for another series whitewash, having already swept the T20I series 3-0 against the same opposition.

Ronaldo lifts Portugal to Nations League final

Portugal will now face either European champions Spain or France in Sunday's final at the same venue

DNA

MUNICH: Cristiano Ronaldo scored the winner in a 2-1 victory over Germany in Munich on Wednesday, sending Portugal through to the Nations League final and breaking his run of bad fortune against the Germans.

Ronaldo's 68th-minute tap-in, a record-extending 137th international goal, sealed a first win over Germany after five losses — his longest streak against any national side without tasting victory. After a stuttering first half, Florian Wirtz produced a moment of magic to give Germany the lead

three minutes after half-time, starting and finishing a clever burst through the middle and heading in the opener. Portugal's Francisco Conceicao ran 35 metres to score a brilliant solo goal, levelling things up with half an hour remaining. The stage was then set for Ronaldo, who had missed two solid chances earlier, to land the telling blow — turning in a Nuno Mendes pass from close range. Portugal, winners of the inaugural Nations League in 2019, will now face either European champions Spain or France in Sunday's final at the same venue. The loss is a setback for Julian Nagelsmann's German

many, who had lost just one of their previous 17 games. Portugal had four players backing up from winning Saturday's Champions League final — and the ensuing celebrations — but it was Germany who struggled to find rhythm early. The match started 10 minutes late due to a violent storm which left hailstones scattered across the turf. Aleksandar Pavlovic mislaid several passes while Portugal's approach of pressing Jonathan Tah almost paid dividends, with the defender insecure in possession. Ronaldo, greeted by Portuguese cheers and German boos every time he

came near the ball, almost scored the opener six minutes in, but his shot was claimed by old La Liga sparring partner Marc-Andre ter Stegen, playing his first match for Germany since September 2024. Germany's best chance of the opening half fell to debutant Nick Woltemade with 18 minutes gone, but the 1.98-metre-tall striker's low shot was well saved by Diogo Costa. Ronaldo was inches away from giving Portugal the lead when the visitors broke immediately after half-time, but he was unable to get enough of his boot on a clever Nuno Mendes cross with an open goal beckoning.

Djokovic downs Zverev to reach French Open semis

PARIS: Novak Djokovic brought his run at a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title to the semi-final stage at Roland Garros on Wednesday as he edged out Alexander Zverev in a tense last-eight battle. The 38-year-old fought past third seed Zverev 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 in a night session duel, which captivated Court Philippe Chatrier over three-and-a-quarter hours. Sixth seed Djokovic moves on to face world number one Jannik Sinner in the last four, after the Italian earlier raced past the unseeded Alexander Bublik in straight sets. "Matches like this is one of the reasons I carry on playing and I love the competition," said Djokovic. On centre court, last year's runner-up Zverev roared out of the blocks with a break of serve in the very first game. That game proved the difference-maker as the only other break point generated in the entirety of the rest of the set was saved by the German as he served out the opener. It was the first time former world number one Djokovic has dropped a set at the French Open this year. But the 24-time major winner did not dwell on that fact. The second set continued where the first had left off, until Djokovic engineered himself a 3-1 lead after Zverev pushed a backhand long when serving at 30-40. The next game then produced just the second deuce of the match so far as both players began to make headway on the other's service. Djokovic eventually consolidated a crucial hold with an ace to end the game, which lasted nearly nine minutes.—DNA

Cuban seniors defy aging by diving in

HAVANA: It's never too late to make a splash, as Orestes Quintana, one of the doyens of the Juventud Acumulada (Forever Young) swimming club in Cuba's capital Havana discovered. The 87-year-old former revolutionary, who helped Fidel Castro fight his way to victory over a dictatorship in 1959, took up swimming relatively late in life, in his sixties. Before that, "I knew how to float, I used to bob about in the water like everyone else but I didn't know the different strokes," the silver-haired ex-soldier said. Now he spends a full two hours a day cleaving through the aquamarine waters of the Caribbean and has a bunch of amateur swimming titles to his name. "I have almost no challengers. In my age category, very few people know how to swim," he confided with a smile. Lazaro Diaz, 75, was also a pensioner when he learned to swim as a panacea for a weak heart and recurring back pain. "I was starting to feel the effects of aging," said Diaz, who undertakes a six-kilometer (3.7-mile) round trip from home every day to get in his vivifying 400-meter (1,300-foot) swim "In the water I don't feel (any pain)," he added. Juventud Acumulada operates out of one of a string of leisure centers built for the Cuban elite along the coast west of Havana between the 1930s and 1950s.—DNA

Nintendo fans stoked for Switch 2 'mega launch'

TOKYO With shops planning midnight launch parties after a run on pre-orders, Nintendo releases the Switch 2 on Thursday, hoping to score record early sales for the games console. But the Japanese company has its work cut out to match the overall success of the Switch, which became a must-have during the pandemic with hit games such as "Animal Crossing". Featuring a bigger screen and more processing power, the Switch 2 is an upgrade to its predecessor, which has sold 152 million units since it came out in 2017 — making it the third best-selling console of all time. Serkan Toto from Tokyo consultancy Kantan Games said he "would not be surprised to see Switch 2 breaking sales records in the next weeks and months". In Japan, Nintendo's online store had 2.2 million pre-order applications for the Switch 2 — an "insane number the industry has never seen before", Toto told AFP. "We are looking at some sort of mega launch," he added. Challenges for Nintendo include uncertainty over US trade tariffs and whether it can convince enough people to pay the high price for its new device. The Switch 2 costs \$449.99 in the United States, more than Switch's launch price of \$299.99. Both are hybrid consoles which can connect to a TV or be played on the go. New Switch 2 games such as "Donkey Kong Bananza" and "Mario Kart World" — which allow players to go exploring off-grid — are also more expensive than existing Switch titles. "After playing it, I think it's worth the price," 24-year-old aspiring filmmaker Steven Paterno told AFP at a Nintendo launch event in New York City. "I loved the original Switch, but I had to admit the Switch 2 really tops it." Retailers in the United States, Europe and other major markets are gearing up for a rush of excited fans, with some stores opening at midnight to welcome them. "I'm very excited to pick it up at midnight," 22-year-old recent college graduate Angel Caceres said at the New York launch event. "I'm going to be very tired after that." Supply pressures have forced retailers to cancel orders, with Britain's Game saying it is "working hard to reinstate as many affected pre-orders as possible". "It seems that retailers in the US were especially confident in their ability to ship pre-orders and now need to deal with some serious backlash from customers," Toto said.—APP

No final decision on changes to net metering

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that buyback rate for net metering consumers may be reduced to Rs10 per unit, adding that the matter still needs to go before the prime minister and no final outcome has been reached. Sources in the Ministry of Energy said that a principled decision had been taken to revise the net metering policy. A summary on the matter has been prepared and will be presented to the federal cabinet for approval after the budget. Among the proposals under review is a suggestion to reduce the per-unit cash payment to solar consumers from the existing Rs27 to Rs10, according to sources. The sources also said that discussions on the new policy are ongoing and a final decision will be made after consultations, keeping consumer interests in mind. According to sources, solar energy production in the country has reached 5,000 megawatts, with 1,400 megawatts generated within the Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) network. Solar capacity exploded from 321MW in 2021 to over 4,124MW by December 2024, and the number of net metering consumers leapt from 226,440 in October 2024 to 283,000 by year's end.

PTI names lawmakers for parliamentary...

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the parliamentary body — MNA Asad Qaiser, MNA Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, MNA Sahibzada Hamid Raza, MNA Sardar Latif Khosa, Senator Shibli Faraz and Senator Allama Raja Nasir. Ayub said the members were nominated in accordance with the prescribed procedure and following the due consultation. The PTI has formally announced names for the committee a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif invited thNA Opposition Leader for a meeting regarding consultations over the appointment of the CEC. In a letter addressed to the opposition leader, the PM pointed out that the term of the CEC as well as two other members of the ECP culminated on January 26 but they have been continuing their duties under Article 215 of the Constitution. Under Article 218, proposals for the CEC and members have to be sent to the parliamentary committee, the premier wrote. It is pertinent to note that the five-year term of CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja ended on January 26, 2025, along with two other members of the Election Commission i.e., Nisar Ahmad Durrani (Sindh) and Shah Muhammad Jatoti (Balochistan).

PTI future moves unlikely to yield gains

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Yet, he questioned why, if PTI truly holds such influence, it is seeking support from figures like Mahrang Baloch. He further remarked that in its current state of desperation, PTI might even contemplate aligning with the BLA, while forming any meaningful political alliance remains beyond its reach. Irfan Siddiqui said PTI never desired for negotiations, democratic processes or parliamentary traditions, adding that the party was now incapable of forming any meaningful or effective political alliance based on a broader purpose or ideology, as evidenced by the bitter experiences of Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Mahmood Khan Achakzai. Quoting Imran Khan, he said that Khan sahib was calling on the youth to rise and fill the jails simply because he himself was imprisoned, but he said, you are in jail due to your own actions, so why should the youth of Pakistan jeopardize their future and suffer the consequences of your mistakes?



RAWALPINDI: Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi's Urdu Department Chairperson Dr. Farhat Jabeen presenting the shield award to Mushaira host Prof. Ehsan Akbar, chairman of Mushaira Banyan Marsus.

Briefs

PSX loses 157 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 157.87 points on Thursday, showing a negative change of 0.13 percent, closing at 121,641.00 points as compared to 121,798.87 points on the last trading day. Drones A total of 854,617,208 shares were traded during the day as compared to 710,591,203 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 25.793 billion against Rs 35.216 billion on the last trading day. As many as 478 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 217 of them recorded gains and 208 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 53 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 179,677,072 shares at Rs 5.83 per share, Unity Foods Limited with 62,902,228 shares at Rs 26.89 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 52,373,487 shares at Rs 1.42 per share. Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 114.29 per share closing at Rs9,855.72 whereas runner-up was Pakistan Engineering Company Limited with Rs81.93 rise in its share price to close at Rs 901.23 PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 3,198.89 per share price, closing at Rs 28,789.98, whereas the runner-up Khyber Textile Mills Limited with Rs 303.91 decline in its per share price to Rs 2,735.17.—APP

Rupee gains 05 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 05 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.17 against the previous day's closing of Rs 282.22. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.90 and Rs 284.40, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 74 paise to close at Rs 322.02 against the last day's closing of Rs 321.28, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.96, whereas an increase of Rs 1 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 382.71 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 381.71. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paise each to close at Rs 76.82 and Rs 75.23, respectively.—APP

Philippines, US hold joint maritime drills for seventh time

MANILA: The Philippines and United States militaries have sailed together in the South China Sea for seventh time to boost interoperability between the two sides, Manila's armed forces said on Thursday. The exercises, held on Wednesday in waters off the provinces of Occidental Mindoro and Zambales and away from contested features, included joint operations near shorelines as well as fire support. "The MCA (maritime cooperative activity) is a demonstration of both nations' resolve to deepen cooperation and enhance interoperability in line with international law," the Philippine armed forces said in a statement. The joint sail also showcased the Philippine vessel Miguel Malvar, a 118-meter guided missile frigate commissioned last month. It is one of two corvettes built by South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries under the Philippines' military modernization program. Military engagements between the treaty allies have soared under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who has pivoted closer to Washington in response to China's growing presence in the South China Sea. China claims sovereignty over nearly all the South China Sea, including parts of the exclusive economic zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.—APP

Iranian Consulate organizes ceremony to mark 36th anniversary

On this occasion, senior journalists Ayub Jan Sirhindi, Sher Mohammad Khuhawar, KUJ Vice President Rahib Gaho, Syed Mazhar Abbas Rizvi, Waqar Shar and a large number of others also participated, while Agha Shirazi also performed the stage duties of the event

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Iranian Consulate in Karachi organized a grand ceremony to mark the 36th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution of Imam Khomeini.

The ceremony was attended by political and social leaders and personalities from all schools of thought.

On this occasion, a documentary was presented on the life and struggle of the Imam of the Revolution, Imam Khomeini.

Addressing the ceremony, Iranian Consul General Dr. Vahid Askari, Director General of the Iranian Cultural Center in Karachi, Dr. Saeed Talebi, Dr. Meraj Al-Huda Siddiqui of the Jamaate-Islami, Dr. Shazia Imam, Mahmud Al-Hussaini of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Allama Zafar Hussain Nagvi, Allama Aqeel Anjum, Dr. Masoumeh Shirazi and others said that Imam Khomeini was a teacher, a teacher, a true leader and the Imam of the Revolution. He brought about great changes in various fields and fields during his time. Imam Khomeini was a reformist man. He wrote more than 40 books.

Today's young generation needs to read the ideas writ-



ten by this revolutionary leader. The leaders said that

Imam Khomeini wanted the Islamic armies to become

powerful. Khomeini's revolutionary thinking made the

Islamic Republic of Iran so powerful that even America

and Israel think a hundred times before attacking it.

inDrive.Delivery launches Business Mode with enhanced package coverage

ISLAMABAD: inDrive.Delivery, a fair-play courier service by inDrive, has launched Business Mode in Pakistan — a dedicated feature set for entrepreneurs and small business owners — following an estimated 36% increase in B2B activity over recent six months. The new mode offers streamlined tools for frequent business senders, including in-app access to package coverage, priority support, and advanced delivery options — all tailored to the fast-evolving needs of local enterprises. Pakistani SMEs are increasingly turning to courier apps to gain speed, flexibility, and control in their delivery operations. According to inDrive study, among the top reasons cited by business users are the ability to order multiple couriers as needed (63%), faster delivery times (57%), and real-time monitoring and control (48%). And while a majority of businesses (58%) still operate mostly offline, many are adopting digital tools to meet growing customer expectations. Today, businesses using inDrive.Delivery complete dozens of deliveries monthly, with top-performing industries including fashion, electronics, restaurants, cosmetics, and auto parts. Business Mode was created to support this shift from traditional to digital means to delivery. It includes package coverage of up to PKR 10,000 in case of loss or theft, offered in partnership with local financial services provider Simpaisa. It also introduces priority customer support providing immediate response to any requests from the Business mode users, which has led to a twofold increase in customer satisfaction (CSAT). All that is complemented by inDrive's hallmark features — such as courier selection based on ratings, price negotiation, multi-point delivery, and real-time parcel tracking. Business Mode is available directly in the inDrive app for business users who make regular deliveries through the platform. Activation is instant — no paperwork, separate registration and additional cost needed. According to pilot results, Business Mode users already appreciated the innovations: placing more orders and using advanced features like multi-drop routes more actively. These behaviors suggest that tools offering control, reliability, and speed are becoming essential for entrepreneurs competing in a digital-first economy. "Pakistani entrepreneurs are practical, ambitious, and increasingly digital — and Business Mode was built with exactly that mindset," said Muhammad Awais Seed, Country Lead at inDrive. "With trusted couriers, transparent pricing, and smart delivery management, inDrive.Delivery is proud to support the country's small business community as it scales.—DNA

Modi's Hindutva agenda threatens fragile peace across South Asia

ISLAMABAD: India's political landscape has, over the years, been increasingly influenced by the ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing Hindu nationalist organization advocating for a unified cultural and religious identity rooted in Hindutva. This ideology includes the concept of Akhand Bharat (Undivided India), envisioning a greater Indian civilization extending beyond current national borders. Concerns about this ideology have been expressed both within India and across South Asia. Several neighboring countries—Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and others—have voiced concerns over India's ideological shift, fearing risks to regional peace, minority safety, and diplomatic ties. Despite its global influence, India's tilt toward Hindutva politics has raised alarms about press freedom, minority rights, and regional trust. Upon asking has Hindutva ideology made it harder for India to maintain good relations with neighboring countries? Former Ambassador General (retd) Raza Muhammad, talking to APP, responded that "India's founding fathers such as Gandhi and Nehru had envisioned a secular state, but the RSS even in its early years functioned as a Hindu extremist group. Gandhi himself was assassinated by an RSS follower. Today, the influence of the RSS has deeply penetrated the BJP, Indian society and governance under Modi resulting in irrational and aggressive foreign policy behavior". He also pointed to the Akhand Bharat mural displayed in the Indian Parliament as a symbol of India's expansionist mindset encompassing much of South Asia parts of Afghanistan and even China. Populism and religious extremism have taken root, leading to strained or hostile relations with nearly all of India's neighboring countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and even Bhutan. He explained that Hindutva has now become central to India's national conduct leading to systemic atrocities against minorities. Despite this, India's strategic significance especially as a counterweight to China for the U.S. has shielded it from international scrutiny.—DNA

ICCI to launch comprehensive dengue awareness campaign

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, has emphasized that dengue prevention is a shared responsibility and affirmed ICCI's commitment to facilitating awareness campaigns and anti-dengue spraying operations across major commercial and industrial areas of the capital in coordination with relevant stakeholders.

He made these remarks while addressing a largely attended Dengue Awareness Session organized by ICCI in collaboration with the District Administration, Islamabad Capital Territory. The session aimed at mobilizing the business community and relevant institutions to take preventive action against the potential threat of dengue outbreaks. President Qureshi stated that

ICCI will actively mobilize its member associations and volunteers from various markets to support ongoing awareness efforts and promote community-level engagement. "We believe in preventive and corrective measures rather than punitive actions, and therefore appreciate the District Administration's decision to suspend inspection raids until June 20, giving traders time to ensure

compliance with safety protocols," he said. Highlighting the importance of a coordinated approach, he urged that Ulemas be engaged to deliver dengue prevention messages in Friday sermons, and that educational institutions incorporate awareness content into their morning assemblies. He also called for electronic media channels to fulfill their public service duty by airing dengue prevention messages

as a core responsibility. "The Chamber will extend full logistical and communication support to distribute educational materials among business owners, workers, and the wider community," he concluded. Earlier, Dr. Abdul Sattar, Dengue Focal Person at the Directorate of Health Services, CDA, delivered a detailed presentation outlining the causes of dengue larva growth, symptoms of the disease, and

effective preventive measures. In his welcome address, Senior Vice President ICCI Abdul Rehman Siddiqui reaffirmed ICCI's dedication to public health and highlighted the Chamber's efforts in partnership with the business community. Delivering the closing remarks, Vice President ICCI Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry announced that soon after Eid-ul-Azha, the Chamber, in collaboration with all relevant departments, will launch an extensive awareness drive, including educational sessions in every major business hub. The event concluded with a comprehensive question-and-answer session, providing attendees the opportunity to seek expert guidance. Prominent attendees included former Senior Vice President Malik Naveed, ICCI Executive Members Malik Abdul Aziz, Raja Naveed Satti, Zulqurnain Abbasi, ICCI Member Chaudhry Ehtesham, Entomologists Osama Bin Manzoor, Usama Bin Waheed, and Assistant Entomologist Muhammad Jamal.



EU urged to stop 'provoking trouble' in S China Sea dispute

BEIJING: The Chinese embassy in the Philippines advised Manila on Thursday not to "fantasize" about relying on outside forces to resolve the South China Sea dispute, and urged the European Union to stop "provoking trouble." An embassy spokesperson made the comments after EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas visited the Philippine capital and voiced concern over China's activities in the busy waterway, where its claims overlap those of some Southeast Asian nations. "The EU is not a party to the South China Sea disputes and has no right to interfere in the South China Sea differences between China and the Philippines," the spokesperson said in a statement on the embassy website. The Philippine embassy in Beijing did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Egypt, Greece agree to protect status of Mount Sinai monastery ATHENS: Greece and Egypt have agreed to safeguard the status of one of the world's oldest sites of Christian worship, foreign ministers of both countries said late on Wednesday, after an Egyptian court ruling last week cast uncertainty over its future.—APP

Aamir Ibrahim urges govt to reduce telecom taxes, support digital growth

ISLAMABAD: Aamir Ibrahim, CEO of Jazz and Chairman of the Telecom Operators Association, has called on the government to reduce the tax burden on the telecom sector and take urgent steps to bring the informal economy into the tax net. He emphasized that digital connectivity is now as essential as roads, electricity, and water, and should be treated as a basic utility—not a luxury. The Telecom Operators Association, which Ibrahim represents, has submitted a set of budget proposals aimed at creating a more balanced and growth-oriented fiscal regime for the telecom sector. The proposals argue that the current tax structure, which includes multiple layers of indirect and advance taxes, is undermining investment, slowing innovation, and limiting the sector's ability to support national development goals. "The industry has recommended adding a clause to the Second Schedule of the Income Tax Ordinance to exempt telecom operators from withholding tax deductions and collections," said Aamir. "This would simplify compliance and potentially eliminate the need for other compensatory tax measures currently being debated." The proposal also urged that the 4% withholding tax on telecom services under Section 153 be made adjustable rather than treated as a minimum tax. Similarly, the 10% advance income tax on spectrum auctions and renewals under Section 236A should be abolished, and the time period for carrying forward minimum tax credits under Section 113 should be restored to five years—reversing the change made in the Finance Act 2024. "Other recommendations include reversing recent amendments that allow tax commissioners to reject advance tax estimates filed by companies, and eliminating the requirement for a 30% upfront tax deposit to obtain a stay order from the High Court under Section 133(10). The proposals also call for rationalizing duties on telecom equipment and aligning customs valuation with global norms by using transaction value (Section 25) instead of reference values (Section 25D) under the Customs Act 1969. The operators seek abolition of the 75% advance tax on non-filers (Sections 114B and 236), a reduction in advance income tax under Section 236, lower duties on raw materials for local optical fiber cable manufacturing, and cuts in sales tax and Federal Excise Duty (FED) on telecom services. "Nearly 35% of every mobile recharge goes toward taxes and duties, making digital access increasingly unaffordable for low-income users," said Aamir. "At the same time, Pakistan's tax burden continues to fall on a narrow base of compliant individuals and businesses, while an estimated 35% of the economy—worth between \$100 and \$140 billion—remains undocumented. Even formalizing a small portion of this could significantly broaden the revenue base without stifling growth." In comparison, he added, the undocumented economy accounts for only about 5% in the United States and roughly 25% in India. Countries that have embraced digitization have demonstrated stronger tax collection, greater transparency, and more sustainable growth. Despite this, digital payment adoption in Pakistan remains limited. The country has around 2 million credit cards and just 50,000 acceptance points—serving a market of over 5 million retail outlets. QR code adoption remains low, even though it's a low-cost, efficient method for transactions. Many traders are reluctant to adopt it due to concerns about transparency. Aamir reiterated that telecom is not just about connectivity or entertainment—it enables e-commerce, mobile banking, online education, telehealth, and public service delivery. Treating the sector merely as a source of revenue, he warned, would harm not just the economy but the social fabric of the country.—DNA

ISSI Commemorates World Environment Day

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized an in-house event to commemorate World Environment Day 2025. Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson, Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), was the Keynote Speaker on the occasion. In her introductory remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, CSP, emphasized that World Environment Day is a moment to reflect not only on the national but also the global dimensions of environmental degradation—from plastic pollution to the escalating impacts of climate change. She stressed the need to examine what policy and institutional responses are required to confront these challenges in a manner that is both just and effective.

In his welcome remarks, Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the growing urgency of the global climate crisis and noted with concern that the targets set under the Paris Agreement are increasingly at risk of being missed, and that many international commitments made over the years remain off-track. He pointed to the widening gap between global climate goals and actual progress, referencing key areas such as climate-induced disasters and the mechanisms for loss and damage. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood emphasized that for Pakistan, the situation is particularly severe. As one of the lowest carbon emitters yet among the most climate-vulnerable nations, Pakistan faces acute environmental stress. He underlined that Pakistan's environmental challenges are multi-faceted and deeply intertwined with regional and global dynamics, requiring urgent and sustained focus.

Mr. Ahmed Naeem Salik, Research Fellow at ISSI, during his remarks, called attention to Pakistan's plastic pollution crisis and identified enforcement, and governance issues as key challenges for the country. He urged the government to adopt a national plastic policy, phase out single-use plastics, enforce corporate accountability, support eco-friendly alternatives, and launch mass awareness campaigns. Mr. Salik emphasized that without coordinated action and societal change, the cost of plastic will continue to be paid by people.—APP

Russia to repair warplanes damaged by Ukraine's drones

MOSCOW: Russian warplanes were damaged but not destroyed in a June 1 attack by Ukraine, and they will be restored, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said. Ukrainian strikes targeted airfields in Siberia and the far north where Russia houses heavy bombers that form part of its strategic nuclear forces. The United States assesses that up to 20 warplanes were hit and around 10 were destroyed, two US officials said, a figure that is about half the number estimated by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. But Ryabkov, who oversees arms control diplomacy, told state news agency TASS: "The equipment in question, as was also stated by representatives of the Ministry of Defense, was not destroyed but damaged. It will be restored." It was not immediately clear how swiftly Russia could repair or replace the damaged aircraft — if at all — given the complexity of the technology, the age of some of the Soviet-era planes, and Western sanctions that restrict Russian imports of sensitive components. Commercial satellite imagery taken after the Ukrainian drone attack shows what experts said appear to be damaged Russian Tu-95 strategic bombers and Tu-22 Backfire long-range bombers that Russia has used to launch missile strikes against Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin told US President Donald Trump in a telephone conversation on Wednesday that Moscow would have to respond to the attacks, Trump said. Russia has an estimated fleet of 67 strategic bombers, including 52 Tu-95s, known as Bear-H by NATO, and 15 Tu-160s, known as Blackjacks, of which about 58 are thought to be deployed.

Briefs

Trade deficit
narrows
23.47% in
May 2025

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Exports from the country during May 2025 grew by 17.43 per cent, whereas imports into the country decreased by 7.58 per cent compared to the previous month (April) of the financial year 2024-25. The trade deficit stood at \$2.619 billion in May 2025, down 23.47 per cent from the previous month, according to the latest figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Exports from the country during the month of May 2025 were recorded at \$2.553 billion as compared to the exports of \$2.174 billion, showing an increase of about 17.43 per cent on a month basis, it added. Meanwhile, imports into the country during the month under review went down from \$5.596 billion to \$5.172 billion, registering a decrease of about 7.58 per cent, it said. On a year-on-year basis, the trade deficit of the country grew by 26.16 per cent as exports decreased by 10.07 per cent, whereas the imports increased by 5.23 per cent in May 2025 as compared to the same month of the last year, it added. The exports from the country during the month of May 2025 were recorded at \$2.553 billion as compared to the exports of \$2.839 billion of the same month of the previous year, the data revealed. On the other hand, imports into the country during the period under review were registered at \$5.172 billion as compared to the imports of \$4.915 billion of the same month of the previous year, the data revealed.

Govt eyes
sale of
surplus
7,000MW

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Amid on-going talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government has decided to introduce sweeping energy reforms that include offering 7,000 megawatts of surplus electricity to agriculture and industry at competitive rates. The government is currently sitting on a 7,000MW power surplus, which it intends to sell to the agriculture and industrial sectors at a flat rate of 7 to 7.5 cents per unit – without subsidies. With the current administration retaining net metering for solar energy users, it plans to introduce a more transparent net billing system. “We are not discouraging solar adoption. This is about creating a balanced, transparent and sustainable framework that ensures fair returns for consumers while protecting grid stability and long-term energy planning,” Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari said.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on water resources and storage , on 5 June, 2025. – DNA

Uzbekistan Airways

Tashkent–Islamabad direct flights starting from June 14

Operating every Saturday, the new route underscores the shared commitment of Uzbekistan and Pakistan to strengthen their long-standing partnership and deepen cooperation across multiple sectors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As part of a broader vision to enhance regional integration and connectivity, Uzbekistan Airways, the national carrier of the Republic of Uzbekistan, will launch direct flights between Tashkent and Islamabad beginning June 14, 2025. Operating every Saturday, the new route underscores the shared commitment of Uzbekistan and Pakistan to strengthen their long-standing partnership and deepen cooperation across multiple sectors. This direct link marks a strategic advancement in bilateral relations and aligns with the broader goals of the Central and South Asia Connectivity Initiative – a regional framework aimed at fostering infrastructure development, trade, energy cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges between the two regions. In addition to the new Islamabad route, Uzbekistan Airways currently operates bi-weekly direct flights to Lahore on Wednesdays and Fridays. These connections are helping expand the airline's regional footprint, linking Pakistan's major cities not only with Uzbekistan, but also with the wider Central Asian region and beyond.

Together, these routes support cross-border mobility, business travel, educational exchange, and cultural cooperation.

As both countries pursue ambitious agendas of modernization and economic diversification, the Tashkent-Islamabad flight offers a practical, high-impact platform for advancing trade facilitation, attracting investment, and enhancing regional supply chain networks. Key sectors, such as textiles and apparel, agriculture and agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, logistics and transport, tourism and hospitality, are expected to benefit from this enhanced connectivity. Serving as gateways to larger regional blocs – Uzbekistan to Central Asia and the CIS, and Pakistan to the Indian Ocean and Gulf states – both nations are well-positioned to leverage this route as a channel for transregional trade and transit. Beyond its commercial significance, the Tashkent-Islamabad route is poised to enhance people-to-people ties by enabling smoother, more direct travel for students, pilgrims, tourists, academics, and official delegations. As both countries work to rebuild regionalism and trust, such air links play a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding, cultural diplomacy, and shared prosperity.

With a growing number of educational partnerships, cultural exchanges, and intergovernmental initiatives, improved connectivity is expected to significantly increase academic and civil society engagement.

The direct link is also expected to boost tourism in both directions. For Pakistani travelers, Uzbekistan's famed Silk Road cities – Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva – are now more accessible than ever. Likewise, Uzbek visitors can now more easily explore Pakistan's rich landscapes, from the mountains of the north to historic and spiritual sites across the country. Tourist flows between the two nations have seen steady growth in recent years, driven by shared historical ties, cultural affinity, and religious heritage. The new air service offers a convenient and reliable option for a growing number of visitors, students, and pilgrims seeking meaningful cross-border experiences. This air route is a cornerstone of the Central and South Asia Connectivity Initiative, first proposed by the President of Uzbekistan in 2021. It is part of a broader strategic push to transform Central Asia from a landlocked region into a land-linked hub, through a combination of air, road, rail, and energy corridors.

The Tashkent-Islamabad flight complements major regional infrastructure initiatives such as the Trans-Afghan Railway and supports broader cooperation in transport, logistics, infrastructure, energy, and digitalization. By connecting two dynamic and culturally rich regions, this air route fosters deeper economic integration, facilitates interregional trade, and contributes to continental connectivity across Asia.

The launch of the Tashkent-Islamabad route is not only a milestone in bilateral cooperation but also a broader statement of intent: to build a peaceful, interconnected, and economically resilient Asia. It reflects a new chapter in regional diplomacy, where economic pragmatism and strategic connectivity go hand in hand. By reducing travel time and improving accessibility, Uzbekistan Airways is playing a pivotal role in translating this vision into tangible results. More than just a transport link, this route is a gateway to deeper economic integration, cultural exchange, and strategic partnership – a testament to the growing synergy between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, two nations united by shared values, complementary interests, and a long history of collaboration.

Trump orders
inquiry into
'conspiracy' to
hide Biden's
health decline

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday ordered an investigation into what Republicans claim was a cover-up of Joe Biden's declining cognitive health during his term in the White House. “This conspiracy marks one of the most dangerous and concerning scandals in American history,” a presidential memorandum reads. The move is the latest in a long-running campaign by Trump to discredit his predecessor, which has been joined by Republican Party politicians and their cheerleaders in conservative media. They cite Biden's infrequent public appearances while in office, as well as his apparent unwillingness to sit for interviews as evidence of what they say was a man incapable of doing the demanding job of Commander-in-Chief of the United States. They insist that those around Biden covered up his physical and cognitive decline, taking decisions on his behalf and using a device that could reproduce his signature to allow them to continue to run the country in his name. – Agencies

At least 10
killed in
Israel strikes

GAZA CITY: Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes killed at least 10 people in the battered Palestinian territory on Thursday as the military keeps up an intensified offensive. “Ten martyrs so far resulting from Israeli strikes since dawn,” agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP, adding that they had targeted an area where displaced civilians were sheltering in the southern city of Khan Yunis and houses in Gaza City and the central town of Deir el-Balah. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment. Israel has stepped up its offensive in what it says is a bid to defeat Hamas, whose October 7, 2023 attack sparked the war. – Agencies

PM takes
notice of
polio case
in Diamer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday taking strict notice of a polio case reported in the Diamer district, directed the relevant authorities to improve immunization further. The prime minister, in a meeting with Federal Minister for National Health Syed Mustafa Kamal and PM Focal Person for Polio Ayesha Raza Farooq here, expressed deep concern over the recently reported polio case in the Gilgit-Baltistan district, according to a PM Office press release. Prime Minister Shehbaz instructed strict monitoring of the Union Councils where more polio cases were being reported and immunization was not satisfactory.

Pakistan urged to
secure United States
financial support

“The Pakistan-US cooperation should translate into economic gains for Pakistan, this bill has foreign appropriations, which could help Pakistan consolidate its economic growth plans,” he said

WASHINGTON: A prominent Pakistani-American business leader has said Pakistan must strive to benefit from the uptick in Pakistan-US relations by securing financial support for its development and infrastructure projects. Mossadaq Chughtai, who runs energy, data center and pharmaceutical companies, was commenting on the international dimension of a tax-cut bill the U.S. President Donald Trump has described as one big beautiful bill and is trying to get passed in Congress. He noted that the Bill has provisions which offer an opportunity for Pakistan to benefit from. “The Pakistan-US cooperation should translate into economic gains for Pakistan, this bill has foreign appropriations, which could help Pakistan consolidate its economic growth plans,” he said. Chughtai, who founded a think tank two decades ago, said the Pakistani leaders should convince the current U.S. Administration that, as a close ally, Pakistan should have a share of about \$20bln in foreign appropriations to lift its manufacturing and industrial sectors. “If that does not happen, this would not be considered Pakistan's success.” – Agencies

US pressures NATO to seal deal
on ramping up defence spending

BRUSSELS: US defence chief Pete Hegseth on Thursday pushed NATO to agree a deal on ramping up defence spending that can satisfy President Donald Trump at a summit later this month. The volatile US leader has demanded that alliance members agree to boost defence budgets to five percent of their GDP at the June 24-25 meeting in The Netherlands. NATO chief Mark Rutte has put forward a compromise agreement for 3.5 percent of GDP on core military spending by 2032, and 1.5 percent on broader security-related areas such as infrastructure.

“We're here to continue the work that President Trump started, which is a commitment to five percent defence spending across this alliance, which we think will happen, we think has to happen by the summit at The Hague,” Hegseth said at the start of a meeting with NATO counterparts in Brussels. “That's our focus. Five percent, combat credible and capable forces, and then making sure NATO is focused on its core mission, continental defence, where its comparative advantage exists.” Multiple diplomats say that Rutte looks on track to secure the deal for the summit in The Hague – but that some allies are still hesitant about committing to such levels of spending. “I'm really, absolutely, positively convinced that at the summit with the 32, we will come to an agreement when it comes to this really big increase in defence spending,” the NATO chief said on Wednesday.

Most vocal in its reluctance is Spain, which is only set to reach NATO's current target of two percent of GDP by the end of this year. Diplomats say that other countries are also haggling over making the timeline longer and dropping a demand for core defence spending to increase by 0.2 percentage points each year. But the deal appears an acceptable compromise to most, which will allow Trump to claim that he has achieved his headline demand, while in reality setting the bar lower for struggling European allies.

The United States has backed Rutte's plan – but its ambassador to NATO insisted on Wednesday that Washington wants to see “plans, budgets, timelines, deliverables” to meet the target. In a connected move, NATO ministers will sign off at their meeting in Brussels on new capability targets for the weaponry needed to face the threat from Russia. NATO officials have estimated that, on average, meeting the new targets would cost countries between 3.5 and 3.7 percent of GDP.

Hegseth, a former TV presenter, rocked NATO on his last visit in February with a fiery warning that Washington could look to scale back its forces in Europe to focus on China. Since then there has been no concrete announcement from the United States on troop withdrawals, but NATO allies remain on tenterhooks. – Agencies

Bilawal-led Pakistani
delegation meets US
Congressional leaders

The delegation engaged with a bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers, including a key meeting with the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, co-chaired by Congressmen Jack Bergman and Tom Suozzi

DNA

WASHINGTON: A high-level Pakistani parliamentary delegation, led by the PPP chairman and former foreign minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, held a series of meetings with members of the U.S. Congress on Capitol Hill. The delegation's visit underscores Pakistan's commitment to peace, dialogue, and partnerships built on justice, particularly in the context of recent escalations in South Asia, a press release of the Pakistani embassy said. The delegation includes several prominent members of Pakistan's Parliament and former senior officials, including Musadik Masood Malik, Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination; Senator Sherry Rehman (PPP), Chair of the Climate Change Committee, former Minister for Climate Change, and former Ambassador to the U.S.; Senator Bushra Anjum Butt (PML-N); Hina Rabbani Khar (MNA, PPP), Chair of

the National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and former Foreign Minister; Senator Faisal Sabzwari (MQM); Engineer Khurram Dastagir Khan, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense; Ambassador (r) Jalil Abbas Jilani, former Foreign Minister/Secretary; and Tehmina Janjua, a former Foreign Secretary. The delegation engaged with a bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers, including a key meeting with the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, co-chaired by Congressmen Jack Bergman and Tom Suozzi. During these discussions, Bilawal Bhutto briefed the members on “India's recent acts of unprovoked aggression, including the targeting of civilians and the deeply concerning, unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, a clear breach of international law.” He extended appreciation to the United States, particularly “President Donald Trump, for his constructive role in helping de-escalate tensions and supporting efforts towards a ceasefire.”

JUNE 2025

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