



Thursday, June 12, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Elon Musk regrets some of his Donald Trump criticisms

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Bilawal team pleads Pak case in EU

Detailed News On Page-08



Hope recalled for West Indies Test series

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Finance Minister says

Tariff reforms key to growth, export boost

Projecting a deficit of 3.9% of the GDP, the budget expects inflation to be at 7.5% in the next fiscal year. Suggesting a 20.2% hike in the defence expenditure to Rs2,550 billion, the budget sets out an 18% more tax collection target of Rs14,131 billion — reflecting a 1.6% rise in tax-to-GDP ratio to 10.1%.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has stressed the significance of tariff reforms proposed in the budget for the Fiscal Year 2025-26 (FY26). "The tariff reforms have not been carried out for the last 30 years," he said during a post-budget presser on Wednesday while highlighting that not only were they necessary for economic development but would also contribute towards an increase in exports. The press conference, initially walked out by journalists due to not being given a technical briefing by the FBR on the federal budget as per tradition, comes a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government tabled its Rs17.57 trillion budget for FY26 setting a 4.2% GDP growth target and announcing relief measures for the salaried class while overall federal expenditure being slashed by 7%. Projecting a deficit of 3.9% of the GDP, the budget expects inflation to be at 7.5% in the next fiscal year. Suggesting a 20.2% hike in the defence expenditure to Rs2,550 billion, the budget sets out an 18% more tax collection target of Rs14,131 billion — reflecting a 1.6% rise in tax-to-GDP ratio to 10.1%. It also proposes new tax slabs for the salaried class — which has borne the brunt of the tax burden — with the minimum rate reduced to 4% from the existing 15% for taxpayers

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Budget spurs PSX rally as CGT kept unchanged

KSE-100 Index jumps to intraday high of 124,514.30, rising by 2,489.86 points, or 2.04%

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The equity market rose sharply on Wednesday amid strong investor confidence in the newly announced federal budget, with analysts pointing to favourable tax treatment and IMF-aligned fiscal discipline as key drivers of sentiment. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index climbed to an intraday high of 124,514.30, gaining 2,489.86 points, or 2.04%, and touched a low of 123,237.99, reflecting a rise of 1,213.55 points, or 0.9%. Brokers and analysts welcomed the FY2025-26 budget, which kept the capital gains tax (CGT) on equities unchanged at 15%, while increasing taxes on interest income — a move seen as tilting investor preference towards stocks. "Lower taxes on equity versus fixed income is a major trigger for PSX."

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DPM Dar, UK envoy discuss cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: UK High Commissioner, Jane Marriott called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here and discussed bilateral cooperation at the multilateral fora, particularly at the UN Security Council. During the meeting, both the dignitaries exchanged views on Pak-UK bilateral relations, regional and global issues of mutual interest, a DPM's Office news release said.

PM Shehbaz set to embark on UAE visit

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will undertake an official visit to the United Arab Emirates tomorrow (Thursday) to discuss bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest during some high-level meetings. Over the last few months, UAE expressed the country's commitment to strengthening its long-standing partnership with Pakistan and announced a \$2 billion debt rollover soon after. In April, the two nations signed and exchanged multiple memoranda of understanding (MoU) to further strengthen the bonds between the people of both nations. A press release issued by the Foreign Office today said that the visit reflected the "deep-rooted fraternal ties" between Pakistan and the UAE, marked by mutual trust, shared values, and close cooperation across multiple sectors.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. — DNA

Indo-Pak tensions

Trump willing to help settle Kashmir dispute

US State Dept spox emphasises that President Trump's actions always aimed at resolving long-standing global conflicts

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's diplomatic efforts appear to have borne fruit as the US Department of State has expressed hope that President Donald Trump will help resolve the longstanding Kashmir dispute during his tenure in office. This correspondent had submitted questions to the State Department, inquiring about the recent engagement between Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Allison Hooker, and a Pakistani parliamentary delegation led by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Specifically, queries were raised about whether the United States had assured

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Trump's nominee for South Asia backs Pakistan ties

Paul Kapur says he will work to prevent Afghanistan from becoming terrorism launchpad

DNA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Paul Kapur has pledged cooperation with Pakistan in the domain of

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Syrian women asked to wear swimwear

NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS: Syria's government has decreed that women should wear burkinis or other swimwear that covers the body at public beaches and swimming pools, while permitting Western-style beachwear at private clubs and luxury hotels. The tourism ministry decision issued this week marks the first time the Damascus authorities have issued guidelines related to what women can wear since Bashar al-Assad was toppled in December. During the Assad family's iron-fisted rule of Syria, which was shaped by a secular Arab nationalist ideology, the state imposed no such restrictions, though people often dressed modestly at public beaches, reflecting conservative norms.

Police plea for polygraph test of Khan rejected

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: ATC in Lahore has dismissed the police's request to conduct polygraph and photogrammetric tests of PTI founder Imran Khan in 12 cases related to May 9 riots. The vandalism was followed by the PTI founder's arrest on the aforementioned date in 2023 during which alleged party workers resorted to violence in many parts of the country. The violent protests saw attacks on public properties, including military installations, prompting the civil and military leadership to try the rioters under the Army Act. Rejecting the fresh plea of the prosecution, the ATC judge remarked that the court granted permission to the police twice but it failed to conduct polygraph and photogrammetric tests of the accused.

Tariffs row comes to and end

Trump says China deal 'done', Beijing to supply rare earths

China would supply "magnets, and any necessary rare earths" to world's biggest economy, says US president

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump touted ties with China as "excellent" on Wednesday, saying the superpowers reached a deal after two days of talks aimed at preserving a truce in their damaging trade war. Trump said on his Truth Social platform that China would supply rare earth minerals and magnets — vital elements for US industries — while Washington would allow Chinese students to remain in US universities. His post came hours after top US and Chinese negotiators announced a "framework" agreement late Tuesday following two days of marathon talks in London. "Our deal with China is done," Trump wrote, adding that the agreement was still "subject to final approval with President Xi (Jinping) and me." "President Xi and I are going to work closely together to open up China to American Trade,"

Continued on Page 06

Iran says it will target US bases

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iran threatened on Wednesday to target United States military bases in the region if conflict breaks out, while US President Donald Trump said he was "less confident" about reaching a nuclear deal. Iran and the United States have held five rounds of talks since April to thrash out a new nuclear deal to replace the 2015 accord that Trump abandoned during his first term in 2018. Since returning to office in January, Trump has revived his "maximum pressure" campaign on Tehran, backing nuclear diplomacy but warning of military

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India engaged in disinformation against Pakistan, says FO

A spokesperson for the Foreign Office stated that the rhetoric of senior diplomats should seek to foster peace and mutual understanding, rather than resorting to provocative and combative soundbites

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has categorically rejected the irresponsible and unfounded remarks made by the External Affairs Minister of India during various media engagements in Brussels. A spokesperson for the Foreign Office stated that the rhetoric of senior diplomats should seek to foster peace and mutual understanding, rather than resorting to provocative and combative soundbites. The tone and demeanor of a Foreign Minister should reflect the dignity and responsibility of their position. For several years, India has been actively engaged in a disinformation campaign aimed at misleading the international community through a contrived narrative of victimhood. However, its relentless anti-Pakistan rhetoric cannot obscure the fact of India's complicity in cross-border terrorism, nor can it whitewash the ongoing state-sponsored oppression in Indian Ille-

gally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Rather than casting baseless aspersions on others, India would do well to reflect on its own record of sponsoring terrorism, engaging in subversive activities, and orchestrating targeted killings. India must also refrain from fabricating justifications for its recent provocative actions. Pakistan remains committed to peaceful coexistence, constructive dialogue, and diplomacy. Nonetheless, it stands firm in its resolve and capability to defend its sovereignty against any form of aggression — as clearly demonstrated by its measured yet resolute response to India's reckless strikes last month. The narrative currently emanating from India reflects a deep sense of frustration in the wake of its failed military misadventure. Indian leadership would be better served by raising the quality of its discourse and moving beyond its fixation with Pakistan. In the end, history will not judge by the volume of one's voice, but by the wisdom of one's actions.

FBR proposes ban on key transactions by non-filers

Tax-collection authority is expected to notify categories of persons who will be affected

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move aimed at broadening the tax net and curbing undocumented wealth, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has introduced stringent new measures within the proposed Finance Bill 2025-26. These measures seek to prohibit "ineligible persons" from engaging in high-value economic transactions, including the purchase of immovable property, vehicles, and securities.

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War on terror

Pakistan is a 'phenomenal partner': US Centcom chief

Recounting terrorists attacks in Pakistan, Gen Kurilla says they are "in active counter-terrorism fight right now"

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: United States Central Command (Centcom) Chief General Michael Kurilla has lauded Pakistan as a "phenomenal partner" in global counter-terrorism efforts, highlighting its successful operations against Daesh-Khorasan and the ongoing fight against terrorism. "Through a phenomenal partnership, Pakistan has gone after Daesh-Khorasan, killing dozens of them... through a relationship we have with them and providing intelligence, they have captured at least five ISIS Khorasan high-value individuals," he said during a House Armed Services Committee hearing in Washington. Last month, Islamabad and Washington reaffirmed the continuation of counter-terrorism cooperation to advance regional and

global security and stability during a counter-terrorism dialogue. The dialogue underscored the cooperation between the two countries in addressing the most pressing challenges to regional and global security, including the threats posed by terrorist organisations such as the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Daesh-Khorasan. Pakistan has been reeling under rising violent attacks since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021, particularly in the bordering provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. During the congressional hearing, General Kurilla was questioned about the security situation along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan. "... right now what we saw is the Taliban is going after Daesh-K...they hate each other,

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PA speaker meets US Chargé d'Affaires, consul general

LAHORE: Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan met United States Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A. Baker and Consul General Kristin Hawkins at the Punjab Assembly on Wednesday. He warmly welcomed the guests and termed their visit to the Assembly a positive step toward strengthening institutional ties. Speaker Malik Ahmad appreciated Natalie Baker's constructive and dynamic role in Pakistan, stating that Pakistan-US relations are based on mutual trust and a valued strategic partnership. He stated that the United States' proactive and constructive role in ensuring peace in South Asia is of utmost importance. Drones The meeting included detailed discussions on Pakistan-US relations, regional peace, climate change, food security, educational collaboration, and cooperation in other vital sectors. The speaker expressed a desire to further deepen ties between Punjab and the US state of California, noting that the Pakistani-American community continues to serve as a robust bridge between the two nations. He further remarked that Pakistan views the US as a key global partner in addressing climate change, development, and food security, and wishes to expand this strategic cooperation even further. Natalie Baker affirmed that the United States aims to further strengthen diplomatic engagement with Pakistan and will continue to support democratic institutions and parliamentary exchanges. Kristin Hawkins expressed her intent to enhance collaboration in the fields of education and social development—APP

Escalators to become operational at Lahore Railway station

LAHORE: Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi has announced that escalators at Lahore Railway Station will be made operational from June 25 to facilitate passengers. He made this announcement while chairing a meeting at the Pakistan Railways Headquarters on Wednesday which focused on reviewing the performance of the Civil Engineering Department. During the meeting, the minister expressed serious concerns over inspection procedures and questioned the officials. He criticized the practice of conducting inspections on paper. Abbasi made it clear that if any life is lost due to negligence, he will personally become the complainant. Referring to the recent Khanewal bridge collapse, he warned, "Let the Khanewal inquiry be completed — the result will ensure no one dares to be negligent again." He directed authorities to conduct immediate emergency inspections of all passenger and railway bridges across the country. Additionally, the Additional General Manager (AGM) Infrastructure was instructed to focus on the capacity building of officers to improve performance and accountability. —APP

Mass marriages of 22 couples held

KOHAT: In a landmark event, the provincial government on Wednesday arranged a mass marriage ceremony for 22 underprivileged couples here. The initiative, carried out under the directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, was organized by the Zakat Department Kohat. District Khatib Mufti Shafiullah solemnized the Nikah of all 22 couples. Each couple received a cheque of Rs. 200,000 and a bouquet from the Government of KP with a total of Rs 4.4 million disbursed during the event. This was the first-ever officially organized mass marriage event in Kohat's history and was widely praised as a successful and compassionate initiative. —APP

Provision of quality deed to farmers Govts top priority

In his remarks, the Federal Minister categorically rejected the proposal to reinstate fake seed companies, stating that any form of exploitation or deceit against farmers is unacceptable

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The third meeting of the Board of Governors of the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA) was held on Wednesday with Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain in chair. The minister emphasized transparency, quality, and institutional reforms in the seed sector and directed that timely provision of certified and high-quality seed to farmers must be ensured at all costs. In his remarks, the Federal Minister categorically rejected the proposal to reinstate fake seed companies, stating that any form of exploitation or deceit against farmers is unacceptable. He reiterated the government's firm commitment to building a transparent, strong, and farmer-friendly seed system, with zero tolerance for compromise in this regard. During the meeting, four new members of NSDRA were approved to further strengthen the governance of the authority. A structured and transparent service framework for new employees was also finalized, aimed at enhancing institutional efficiency and professional capacity. The minister placed special emphasis on the development and supply of high-quality cotton and



oilseed varieties. He stated that the country's agricultural output heavily depends on seed quality, and therefore, research, development, and collaboration with the private sector should be prioritized to improve seed standards. Various stakeholders, including the Chair-

man of the Authority, Director General Strategic Projects, and representatives from prominent seed companies, participated in the meeting. The participants presented several suggestions for the improvement of the seed sector, which were well received. On the

occasion, the minister instructed all relevant institutions to ensure the implementation of effective policies through mutual coordination, keeping in view the national needs of farmers. The minister reaffirmed that NSDRA will be developed into a modern, effi-

cient, and transparent regulatory body that will play a key role in steering Pakistan toward agricultural self-sufficiency. The government considers the welfare of farmers and the provision of quality seed as a vital pillar of national development.

DC for anti-dengue activities more effective

DNA

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Capt (ret'd) Nadeem Nasir has directed all departments concerned to make anti-dengue activities more effective, especially in identifying hotspots, sanitation, field surveillance and awareness campaigns. He was chairing a meeting of the District Emergency Response Committee for Dengue here on Wednesday, in which officers from the health, WASA, environment, education and other relevant departments participated. He said that no negligence will be tolerated in anti-dengue surveillance. He directed the municipalities department and WASA to improve the drainage system and take immediate action wherever water accumulates. He directed the officers to make dengue eradication their top priority and ensure practical steps at the ground level so that the public can be protected from this deadly disease. On the occasion, the challenges faced during the anti-dengue campaign and their possible solutions were also discussed in detail.

KSRelief completes strategic funding support to AHTF

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) has completed its strategic funding support to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund (AHTF) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) for the establishment of an innovative telemedicine platform across Afghanistan. The platform is being rolled out across 20 provinces, aiming at enhancing healthcare access for communities in need. Abdullah Butt, CEO of Educast, the organization overseeing the development of the platform, stated,

"This transformative initiative is providing strength and building the capacity of Afghan healthcare providers, enhancing medical education, and improving access to quality healthcare services for communities in need." The newly developed eCast telemedicine platform, supported by KSRelief, connects Afghan healthcare providers with international medical experts in real-time. This advanced platform enables consultations, knowledge sharing, and collaborative diagnosis, which is expected to significantly improve

the clinical capabilities of Afghan doctors. In addition to supporting healthcare delivery, eCast is playing a key role in revitalizing medical education in Afghanistan. The platform has re-engaged thousands of medical students, offering them access to interactive learning modules, expert-led virtual sessions, and valuable digital resources. This initiative provides new learning pathways, ensuring continuity in medical education despite the country's ongoing challenges. By fostering collaboration between Afghan doctors

and international specialists, eCast is contributing to a global exchange of knowledge and best practices. This partnership not only strengthens the medical skills of Afghan healthcare providers but also helps build a new generation of medical talent equipped to serve their communities. KSRelief's support for this initiative underscores its commitment to humanitarian development in crisis-affected regions and its focus on building long-term capacity in Afghanistan's healthcare system.—DNA

SCCI urges reforms to unlock economic growth

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Tuesday reaffirmed its commitment to constructive engagement with the government, urging policymakers to revisit and integrate business-friendly proposals to support sustainable economic growth under the Federal Budget 2025-26. Speaking at a press conference held at the Chamber House here, SCCI President Fazal Moqem Khan said the business community remains hopeful that the government will consider the Chamber's comprehensive recommendations aimed at reviving industry, particularly in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that have been significantly affected by past challenges. President Moqem Khan acknowledged the difficult fiscal environment under the current IMF program, and emphasized the need for pragmatic, growth-oriented steps. "We understand the constraints, but

believe it is still possible to build a progressive and inclusive economic roadmap by incorporating input from the real stakeholders, the business community," he noted. The press briefing was attended by senior SCCI leaders, including Senior Vice President Abdul Jalil Jan former FPCCI President Ghazanfar Bilour, ex-president Haji Muhammad Afzal, and prominent members of the Chamber's executive body and trade community. The united presence reflected a strong call for continued dialogue and cooperation with the government. While identifying areas needing improvement, the Chamber also welcomed the government's willingness to engage and expressed confidence that amendments could be made before the final approval of the fiscal budget. "We urge the authorities to review taxation policies and bring balanced measures that support both large industries and small traders," said Haji

Muhammad Afzal, who also represents the FPCCI in the region. Former FPCCI President Ghazanfar Bilour stressed the importance of protecting the middle class and ensuring that fiscal policies encourage domestic investment. "By creating an enabling environment, we can turn challenges into opportunities and retain valuable local capital," he said. The SCCI leadership reiterated that a truly business-friendly budget is essential for long-term economic stability and social development. They called upon the government to roll back excessive powers granted under recent FBR regulations and consider incentives that boost productivity, exports, and employment. In conclusion, the Chamber reaffirmed its readiness to collaborate with policymakers for national economic betterment and urged all stakeholders to work towards a budget that is fair, forward-looking, and inclusive.—DNA

Balochistan okays establishment of 'Climate Change Fund'

QUETTA: Balochistan government has approved the establishment of 'Climate Change Fund' to address environmental challenges in the province. The decision, taken under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti here Wednesday, aims to strengthen the province's capacity to mitigate the effects of climate change, protect natural resources, and promote sustainable development. The fund is designed to support adaptation and mitigation strategies that address climate-related risks. Under the fund key areas of focus include conservation of natural resources, nature-aligned development planning, and ecosystem restoration through Nature-Based Solutions (NBS). Chief Minister Bugti described the fund as a timely and essential initiative, noting that Balochistan faces serious threats from climate change. "This fund will enable us to take practical steps not only to meet environmental challenges but also to provide a healthier and safer environment for our people," he said. Sarfraz Bugti added that environmental protection has become a top priority for the provincial government in its pursuit of sustainable development goals. The Climate Change Fund represents a concrete step towards that vision. The environmental experts have welcomed the initiative, expressing hope that the fund will play a crucial role in restoring ecological balance and raising environmental awareness across the province. Earlier, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti here on Wednesday announced that the provincial budget for the upcoming fiscal year will be balanced, realistic and focused on public welfare. During meetings with members of the provincial assembly and various delegations, the chief minister emphasized that the budget would align available resources with the province's priorities and the needs of its people. He said that the government was committed to adopt transparency, good governance, and sustainable development strategies in the budget-making process to effectively address the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing Balochistan. Highlighting key priorities, CM Bugti said the budget will place strong emphasis on improved governance, public welfare, quality education, healthcare services, employment opportunities, and integrated development projects. He also announced the establishment of a "Climate Fund" to counter the impacts of climate change and ensure the protection of natural resources. This fund will support eco-friendly initiatives and projects across the province. The chief minister reaffirmed his government's resolve to eliminate public deprivation, provide equal development opportunities, and ensure transparent use of resources for the progress and prosperity of Balochistan. —DNA

Japan CG addresses officers of the 43rd MCMC



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Consul General Japan H.E. Hattori Masaru on Wednesday visited the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA). The Consul General of Japan, while

addressing the officers of the 43rd Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC) highlighted that Japan-Pakistan relations are getting stronger. The Consul General of Japan Hattori Masaru in a presentation and discussions to the Officers of 43rd MCMC here at NIPA, said that the bilateral

relations by education, culture and technology exchanges are vital. Consul General expressed his pleasure to participate in NIPA session over talk to civil services Officers and their training capabilities by the administration authority. He also discussed the pre and post war development of overall Japan technology and advancements of cultural activities after world war II. He said the Nation has continued to fight various challenges for the years in different sectors, Japan's internal policies and industrial skilled workforce mechanism in manufacturing and technology was a difficult task to the concerned ministries, Consul General said. Regarding, foreign capital policy and Business globalisation Japan improved in international competence told H.E. Hattori Masaru in the presentation. Earlier, Director General NIPA Dr. Saif-ur-Rehman welcomed the Consul General of Japan Director General NIPA Dr. Saif-ur-Rehman briefed the Consul General of Japan about the services of the institution. Consul General of Japan Hattori Masaru also planted a sapling as part of the tree planting campaign at NIPA.



National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02/Itlay 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



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Shifa International 4603666



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CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

340 pilgrims back through first hajj flights

The minister reaffirmed the government’s commitment to further improving Hajj arrangements in the years ahead. “It is our duty to extend all possible support to pilgrims in fulfilling this sacred religious obligation,” he added

ISLAMABAD: The first post-Hajj flight, PK-732, carrying 340 pilgrims from Saudi Arabia, arrived at Islamabad International Airport on Tuesday, marking the beginning of the repatriation process for Pakistani pilgrims. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, warmly received the pilgrims at the airport.

During interactions, the returning pilgrims expressed satisfaction with the Hajj arrangements made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and commended the quality of services provided during their stay in the Kingdom. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the government of Pakistan had made every effort to ensure that pilgrims were provided with the best possible facilities throughout their spiritual journey. He also acknowledged the cooperation of the Saudi government in ensuring smooth and well-coordinated Hajj operations in collaboration with Pakistani authorities. The minister reaffirmed the government’s commitment to further improving Hajj arrangements in the years ahead. “It is our duty to extend all possible support to pilgrims in fulfilling this sacred religious obligation,” he added.—APP



Parliamentarians welcome Budget

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentarians on Wednesday praised the public-oriented budget for 2025-26, calling it a balanced budget that prioritizes the salaried class, predicts favorable outcomes and effectively incorporates allied parties’ suggestions to address key concerns. Discussing the budget’s impact within Parliament’s premises during the PTV interview, Parliamentary Secretary Farah Naz Akbar highlighted that it is a significant step towards economic stability, focusing on the salaried class and aiming to control inflation. She

further emphasized that the increase in tax exemptions for the middle class is noteworthy, providing them some relief. With prudent implementation, she believes this budget can stimulate growth and improve economic indicators, anticipating positive outcomes in the coming years with potential for increased economic activity. She emphasized that all allied parties were taken on board while presenting the budget and expressed optimism about the coming days.

Secretary of the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) Dr. Shahida

Rehmani described the budget as balanced, highlighting that it provides maximum relief to the salaried class with a notable 10 percent increase, aiming to benefit this segment significantly.

Member National Assembly (MNA) Tahira Aurangzeb described the budget as people-friendly, emphasizing its focus on climate change and welfare-related projects and noted that it surpasses previous years’ budgets in these aspects. MNA Syeda Shehla Raza lauded the budget, particularly for incorporating allied parties’ suggestions, noting that the

increase in salaries was initially proposed at 6 percent but was successfully raised to 10 percent after consultations, providing significant relief to the salaried class. MNA Zeb Jaffar also praised the government’s efforts, stating that the allied parties’ concerns and demands were thoroughly addressed, showcasing the government’s commitment to collaboration. Terming the budget as balanced, MNA Zeb Jaffar commended the government’s ability to listen and adapt, ultimately creating a budget that caters to the needs of the people.

Crackdown on illegal IMEI tampering

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Lahore, in close coordination with the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NC-CIA) Gujranwala, carried out two successful raids in Gujranwala against illegal IMEI tampering and the sale of cloned/patched devices. The first raid took place at Google Valley Mobile Plaza, Model Town,

where 19 tampered/cloned phones were seized, and the shop owner was arrested, said a news release. The second raid was conducted at Musa Mobile, Main Market, Gujranwala, where 6 tampered devices were confiscated. The shop owner, however, escaped, exploiting the crowd gathered at the scene. One seized device had an IMEI linked to Disney Mobile, a brand not officially avail-

able in Pakistan. Confiscated phones included models from Google Pixel, OnePlus, Motorola, and a Samsung S23 Ultra, all with reconfigured IMEIs of lower-priced devices. FIRs have been lodged, and investigations are ongoing. PTA maintains a zero-tolerance policy against the illegal modification of mobile device identifiers. IMEI tampering and the distribution of cloned phones pose

serious threats to national security and public safety, facilitating criminal anonymity and enabling cybercrime, financial fraud, abductions, and other offenses. PTA urges the public to stay vigilant and report any suspicious activity related to mobile phone cloning or tampering. Regulatory actions are being strengthened, and violators will face strict legal consequences.—DNA

Additional Secretary(Europe), Swedish envoy discuss bilateral ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Swedish Ambassador to Pakistan, Alex Berg von Linde called on Additional Secretary(Europe), Muhammad Ayub, and presented a commemorative shield and the book “75 Years of Partnership – Sweden and Pakistan”, published by the Embassy of Sweden in Islamabad. The book chronicles key milestones, landmark visits, and people-to-people connections that have shaped bilateral relations over the past seven and a half decades. It also highlights the valuable contributions of Swedish companies, NGOs, and individuals to Pakistan’s development journey. This commemorative exchange is a reflection of the enduring friendship, shared values, and future-forward cooperation between Pakistan and Sweden.



Employees hail salary raise

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Government employees have welcomed the government’s decision to increase salaries by 10 percent in the budget 2025-26. Several employees shared their reactions with the APP on Wednesday, acknowledging the relief while calling for further revisions. Naeem Ahmad, an officer in a public sector organization described the salary increase as a much-needed measure. “It will ease financial pressures on low- and middle-grade employees”, he said. He observed that the 10 percent would certainly help to some extent. However Abid Mahmood, another Govt employee said that the dual benefit of salary increases and reduced income tax slabs will draw a collective impact. He highlighted that the government’s decision to reduce income tax rates for middle-income earners would increase the buying power. Tahir Kayani, a government officer in a university proposed that pensions should also be increased by equal ratio to that of the salaries.

Six members of notorious gang nabbed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Aabpara and Kirpa police station teams arrested six wanted members of a notorious criminals gang involved in numerous criminal activities and recovered snatched valuables and weapons with ammunition from their possession. An official told on Wednesday that the arrested accused were involved in numerous criminal activities in various areas of the city. The accused were identified as Hassan Tariq, Hamad, Ibrahim, Arslan, Azam and Yousaf Khan. Cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq also directed officers for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in heinous criminal activities and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens.

Call for unified action among deptts to improve public service delivery

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting was held at the Ministry of Interior on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in which the heads of all attached departments of the Ministry participated. On the special directive of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, a decision was made to enhance mutual cooperation among all subsidiary institutions of the Ministry of Interior. The interior minister emphasized that mutual cooperation among all departments is extremely important. He said that all institutions should make full use of each other’s capabilities and bring ease to the lives of citizens. He stressed that the timely exchange of information and data was crucial. He further added that officers posted in foreign embassies under various departments can also provide assistance to other institutions of the Ministry. He underlined the importance of making full use of the human resources of all institutions, stating that improved coordination among departments would benefit both the government and the public. Mohsin Naqvi directed that only officers who fulfill merit criteria should be nominated for training courses so that their professional capacity can be enhanced. He instructed all departments to submit their recommendations in this regard. Based on these recommendations, the Federal Secretary Interior will prepare a comprehensive plan and present it to Interior Minister. Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry, Secretary Interior, Additional Secretaries Interior, and heads of departments including NADRA, Anti-Narcotics Control, FIA, Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary, Rangers, National Police Academy, National Police Bureau, Passport and Immigration, National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency, and Islamabad Police attended the meeting.—DNA

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Briefs

Govt presents
'best possible'
federal
budget

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik on Wednesday termed the federal budget 2025-26 as balanced and people-friendly, emphasizing that it addresses the needs of various sectors while promoting economic stability. He said the government has presented the best possible budget, notably reducing tax burdens on industries and the salaried class, providing significant relief. During an interview with PTV News Channel, Malik highlighted the government's efforts to provide relief to the people, adding that the government has taken significant steps to address economic challenges and improve the lives of citizens. By reducing tax rates for the salaried class and offering incentives to industries, the government hopes to foster a more favorable economic environment and improve the overall standard of living, he added. This balanced approach, he said, reflects the government's commitment to sustainable development and improving the welfare of the people. —APP

DIG visits key
city points

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Muhammad Jowad Tariq, accompanied by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan, visited various duty points across the city including D-Chowk on Wednesday to inspect deployments and encourage police personnel. An official told APP that the DIG Tariq met with Islamabad Police officers and jawans, including women personnel, who were actively engaged in maintaining law and order. He appreciated their performance and dedication to duty, commending them for their professionalism under all circumstances. DIG Tariq said that Islamabad Police is fully prepared to tackle any law and order situation in line with legal protocols. Officers were instructed to regularly brief their teams, monitor field duties personally, and ensure all deployed personnel are fully equipped. DIG Tariq said that all officials must maintain a high standard of public dealing and uphold the safety and security of citizens, which is the foremost responsibility of the police. He emphasized that no negligence in this regard would be tolerated. —APP

Ministries
join hands
to integrate
cultural
heritage

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Education and Professional Training and the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture will expand collaboration for effective integration of the country's rich cultural heritage and civilizational values into the national curriculum. In this regard, Minister of State for Education, Wajida Qamar, held a key meeting with Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, in Islamabad on Wednesday. The meeting focused on promoting strategic collaboration between the two ministries to embed cultural themes into the national education system. —APP

Junaid highlights climate-
resilient infrastructure

This comprehensive approach positions maritime sector to contribute meaningfully to global climate goals while fostering economic growth and enhancing the country's competitiveness in international trade, the Minister stated

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Wednesday emphasized the importance of climate-resilient infrastructure in a new maritime strategy, aiming to modernize ports, reduce environmental impact, and boost economic growth. In a series of high-level meetings, the minister reviewed progress across key maritime institutions, including the Port Qasim Authority (PQA), Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority (KoFHA), and the Marine Fisheries Department



ISLAMABAD: Guests taking interest in various pieces of art during an exhibition on the sidelines of the Russian National Day reception. —DNA

'Increased defence
allocation in budget
a welcome step'

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, while reacting to the federal budget 2025-26, said the total size of the budget has been fixed at Rs 17,573 billion and priority had been given to defense, interest payments on debt, and revenue generation. He said that the federal and provincial governments are expected to spend Rs 3,800 billion on public welfare projects. Mian Zahid Hussain acknowledged that the budget attempts to strike a balance between national security, internal stability, and fiscal responsibility. However, he expressed concern over several aspects that may negatively affect the general public, business community, and investors. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that imposing

taxes on vital sectors, such as renewable energy, could hamper the country's economic momentum. The proposed 18 percent sales tax on the import of solar panels is a regressive measure that will obstruct the growth of alternative energy sources, he warned. Mian Zahid Hussain pointed out that several items have become more expensive under the new budget, including automobiles, petroleum products, beverages, mineral water, pet food, coffee, and chocolates. The increased levies and carbon taxes on petroleum products are expected to burden daily life, especially for the middle class and salaried segments of the population. This could potentially create financial strain for many, a concern that the business leader shares.

Mian Zahid welcomed the increase in defense expenditure, calling it a necessary response to India's recent hostility and aggressive military posture. He termed investment in national security as unavoidable. He stressed that to accelerate development in education, health,

and social welfare sectors, the government must encourage impact financing. While acknowledging that tax reforms and digital monitoring systems can help improve revenue collection, he cautioned that such measures would only be effective if taxpayers are also provided with corresponding facilitation. He welcomed the introduction of a simplified income tax return form, particularly addressing long-standing demands of SMEs and salaried individuals. Referring to the incentives provided in the housing and real estate sectors, including reforms in the mortgage system, he noted that this could encourage investment and potentially lower the cost of small houses and flats, a concern development for the general public. These incentives could stimulate the real estate market and make housing more affordable for the middle class. He said that while the modest increase in salaries and pensions may not fully meet public expectations, it should still provide some relief amid the ongoing inflationary pressure. Mian Zahid termed the tax

collection target of Rs 14,100 billion as extraordinary, noting that it is 20 percent higher than the actual collection in the previous budget. Achieving this target without broadening the tax base will be difficult, he said, yet necessary for long-term economic stability. He further stated that the imposition of carbon levies on petrol, diesel, and furnace oil would push prices even higher, thereby aggravating inflation and indirectly impacting both the economy and the people.

In conclusion, Mian Zahid Hussain stated that the budget does reflect efforts toward stability, but long-term, sustainable growth requires strategic depth, vision, and protection of renewable energy, online businesses, and social sectors. He urged the government to allocate funds in the budget to safeguard these areas, thereby strengthening the country's economic foundations. The need for these strategic reforms is urgent, and Mian Zahid Hussain's call for action is clear.

ICCI welcomes
defense budget
increase

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has lauded the federal government's decision to enhance the defense budget, terming it a timely move in response to growing regional threats, particularly in the aftermath of the Operation 'Banyan Marsoos'. In a comprehensive response to the Federal Budget 2025-26, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry welcomed the government's initiative to streamline governance by proposing the merger or abolition of 45 government entities. They emphasized the pressing need to privatize all loss-making public sector enterprises to reduce fiscal burden and enhance efficiency. The ICCI leadership appreciated tax relief measures for the salaried class and the introduction of a simplified income tax return form for SMEs and individual taxpayers, calling it a step in the right direction. However, President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi expressed disappointment over the government's continued neglect of the business community's repeated calls for broadening the tax net and implementing deep structural reforms—both essential for sustainable economic growth. He voiced strong reservations regarding the "unrealistic targets" set in the new budget, particularly in light of the government's failure to meet key economic indicators in the previous fiscal year, including GDP growth and fiscal consolidation. He questioned the feasibility of achieving new targets amid high inflation, economic fragility, and IMF-imposed restrictions. Highlighting the high cost of doing business, Qureshi criticized the absence of tangible measures to reduce electricity tariffs and interest rates. He warned that unless the energy and borrowing costs are urgently addressed, many businesses could face collapse. Additionally, he raised alarm over the expanded powers granted to tax officials, cautioning that such unchecked authority may hamper business confidence and growth. The ICCI President further called on the government to offer targeted incentives to unlock the immense potential of the oil & gas, and mining & minerals sectors, to attract much-needed foreign investment.

Police kick
off summer
camp

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police inaugurated the Summer Camp 2025 at Police Lines Headquarters on Wednesday. An official told APP that Additional Inspector General (AIG) Logistics Abdul Haq Umrani formally inaugurated the summer camp, which aims to strengthen the concept of community policing through meaningful engagement with children. He said that children are the future of the nation, and such recreational and educational activities play a key role in their mental and physical development. He said that the consistent organization of the summer camp every year reflects the growing public trust in the Islamabad Police. He said that professional coaches have been appointed to train participating children in sports like football and golf. He said that the camp also includes activities such as swimming, horse riding, martial arts, gymnastics, archery, and obstacle courses. In addition to physical activities, children are educated on their own safety and security, first aid, and traffic rules. He said these activities not only encourage healthy competition among children but also build self-confidence and discipline. He said the summer camp helps children improve their physical and mental capabilities while offering them an opportunity to explore life beyond their home environment. He said Islamabad Police has been organizing the summer camp annually since 2002. —APP

Pakistan's
economy moving
towards stability

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Information for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs, Ikhtiar Wali Khan, asserted that Pakistan's economy is steadily moving towards stability, dismissing all rumours and negative propaganda. In a post on his official account on social media platform X on Wednesday, Wali Khan remarked, "In the past, some claimed that Pakistan's economy was on the verge of collapse, while others criticised it overall economic indicators and outlook. However, against all odds and despite such scepticism, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has not only revitalized the economy but is steering it towards greater stability." He also emphasized the government's commitment to supporting taxpayers, stating that those who contribute through taxes will be facilitated. —APP

PGJDC to organize gem,
jewellery exhibition

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Gems and Jewellery Development Company (PGJDC) is set to organize a dazzling Gems and Jewellery Exhibition (KGJE) from 14 to 15 June 2025 at Karachi. This exhibition will provide a lucrative platform to the local exhibitors to showcase varieties of gems and jewellery products including loose precious, semi-precious gemstones, mineral

specimens and fine jewellery (gold, white gold, silver) and gems studded jewellery, said a news release here on Wednesday.

The exhibition will be an excellent window of opportunities for buyers and sellers and will provide an enabling environment for the gems and jewellery traders, exporters and importers. Ten renowned Gems and Jewellery traders and export-

ers are displaying their gemstone treasures and finely crafted jewellery during the Exhibition. These include New Era Jewellers, Heritage Jewellers, Bilal's - The Diamond Store, Syed Jewellers, The Emerald Royale Co., Hussain Sons Jewellery (Tariq Road), Nadia Chhotani Designer Jewellery, Haroon Jewellery, Rozani and Galaxy Gemological Institute. An inauguration ceremony,

to be inaugurated by the Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan and to be attended by diplomats, government functionaries and renowned businessmen. This exhibition is a positive step taken by PGJDC for development of this sector and enhancing gems and jewellery exports and will act as a platform for the gems.—DNA

IRSA releases
252,791 cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 252,791 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 241,611 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1444.22 feet which was 42.22 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 131,300 cusecs and 150,700 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1164.10 feet, which was 114.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 36,137 cusecs and 27,917 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 182,708, 131,435, 103,553 and 43,610 cusecs, respectively. —APP

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Trump’s Kashmir mediation offer: A diplomatic mirage

US President Donald Trump’s recent remarks offering to mediate on the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan should be taken with a healthy dose of skepticism. Known for his frequent flip-flops and unpredictable statements, Trump’s latest intervention appears more like a calculated geopolitical maneuver than a genuine peace initiative. The timing and tone of his comments raise eyebrows. When India launched aggressive military actions against Pakistan, the U.S. maintained a deafening silence, brushing the conflict aside as an internal matter. Yet, when Pakistan responded, and it became increasingly evident that India was facing a significant challenge on the battlefield, Trump suddenly emerged as a peacemaker. This shift indicates not a balanced concern for peace but rather a strategic alignment favoring India. It is no secret that the U.S. has deepened its ties with India over recent years. From defense deals to economic partnerships, Washington views New Delhi as a crucial counterbalance to China in the Indo-Pacific region. Trump’s statement, therefore, seems less about resolving the long-standing Kashmir dispute and more about protecting a key ally from military embarrassment. The selective nature of U.S. engagement in South Asia underscores the growing perception that Washington is far closer to New Delhi than to Islamabad. This dynamic was evident in the way Trump’s administration framed the narrative – downplaying Indian aggression and highlighting the need for restraint only when Pakistan asserted itself. Despite the dubious motivations behind Trump’s offer, the broader idea of a ceasefire deserves attention. Both India and Pakistan are nuclear-armed nations with a history of conflict and mistrust. Escalations like the recent flare-up not only threaten regional stability but also global security. A ceasefire, therefore, is not merely a tactical pause but a crucial step towards de-escalation and dialogue. For peace to be sustainable, however, it must be built on mutual respect, genuine diplomacy, and a commitment to resolving core issues like Kashmir – not on opportunistic interventions by external powers with vested interests. Any mediation that lacks neutrality or fails to consider the aspirations of the Kashmiri people is doomed to fail. In conclusion, while Trump’s offer may have grabbed headlines, it is unlikely to change the geopolitical equation in South Asia. It serves more as a reminder of the U.S.’s strategic priorities than as a credible step toward peace. That said, both India and Pakistan must recognize the danger of further conflict and commit to upholding the ceasefire – not for the sake of global spectators, but for the future of their own people.

Pakistan’s First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 37

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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Pakistan and Turkey: A Brotherhood Forged in Fire

Qamar Bashir



Turkey’s transformation under Erdogan—from a turbulent parliamentary system to a relatively stable presidential model—also offers instructive lessons for Pakistan. Turkey has successfully redefined its civil-military relations, with its armed forces now playing a stabilizing, rather than interventionist, role. In contrast, Pakistan’s political ecosystem has been mired in cyclical instability. A strong, transparent, and accountable governance model—similar to Turkey’s balance between democratic authority and institutional support—could serve as a framework for reform and progress in Islamabad

IN international relations, genuine friendships are tested not during moments of comfort, but amid adversity. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s recent visit to Istanbul to meet President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was not merely ceremonial—it was deeply symbolic and strategically significant. It came in the wake of the four-day military confrontation between India and Pakistan (May 5–10, 2025), during which Turkey stood firmly by Pakistan’s side. In doing so, Turkey did not just display diplomatic courtesy, but reaffirmed a timeless and resilient brotherhood. Sharif’s meeting with Erdogan was marked by warmth and fraternity. A photo he posted on social media—walking hand-in-hand with Erdogan—went viral as a powerful image of solidarity. “Had the honour of meeting my dear brother President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul this evening,” Sharif wrote on X. “Thanked him for his resolute support to Pakistan in the recent Pakistan-India standoff which resulted in Pakistan’s overwhelming victory, Alhamdulillah! Conveyed the sentiments of gratitude from the people of Pakistan to their Turkish brothers and sisters.” Turkey’s support for Pakistan extended beyond verbal endorsements. Reports suggest that Turkish-manufactured drones played a tactical role in the conflict, helping Pakistan gain an upper hand. Ankara’s vocal alignment with Islamabad, despite its formal ties with India, marked a bold geopolitical stance that came with repercussions. India, a global economic heavyweight, responded swiftly. Calls for boycotting Turkish goods began trending across Indian media. Prime Minister Modi urged citizens to prefer domestic travel over international destinations such as Turkey. More consequentially, the Indian Bureau of Civil Aviation Security revoked the operating clearance of Turkish ground-handling firm Celebi, which serviced major Indian airports including Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. These measures reflect growing diplomatic strain and an increasingly adversarial posture from New Delhi toward Ankara. Yet, Erdogan stood his ground. In a response to Sharif’s message, he reiterated, “We reaffirmed and strengthened our determination to enhance the deep-rooted historical, human, and political relations between Turkiye and Pakistan in all areas. May our Lord make our unity, togetherness, and brotherhood everlasting...” Turkey’s consistent alignment with Pakistan is not new. From the Kashmir issue to global Islamic causes like Palestine and Gaza, Ankara has persistently echoed Pakistan’s voice. This enduring partnership has transcended changing governments, strategic calculations, or economic dependencies. During Pakistan’s power crisis when Turkish floating

power plants provided electricity to Karachi. Similarly, during natural disasters and political isolation, Turkey has always extended its hand. This is not transactional diplomacy—it is principled alignment born of shared faith, common causes, and historical memory. The emotional bond stretches back to the Khilafat Movement in the early 20th century, when Indian Muslims rallied to save the Ottoman Caliphate. Though the movement eventually faded, Turks never forgot the solidarity of South Asian Muslims—a memory that remains alive in the hearts of both nations. Sharif’s visit also reinforced the institutional mechanisms that underpin this friendship. The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC), co-chaired by both leaders, held its seventh session earlier this year in Islamabad, underscoring the continuity of engagement. Their recent discussions covered trade, defense, tourism, education, and media collaboration—areas ripe with potential. Currently, the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Pakistan and Turkey, signed in 2022, grants tariff concessions to various products. In 2023, bilateral trade reached \$602.9 million—with Pakistan exporting \$352.1 million and importing \$250.8 million worth of goods. However, this figure represents a fraction of the potential that exists. According to economic analysts, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Turkey can conservatively grow to \$5 billion over the next five years if both sides implement the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA), ease non-tariff barriers, and create export facilitation zones. Pakistan’s textile, leather, and sports goods can find major Turkish markets, while Turkey’s automotive parts, construction materials, and advanced defense equipment can fill key gaps in Pakistan’s industrial ecosystem. Investment potential is equally significant. Turkish companies have already shown interest in Pakistan’s energy, construction, food processing, and logistics sectors. If Pakistan offers dedicated Turkish Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and ensures policy continuity, foreign direct investment from Turkey could increase from the current \$200 million to over \$1 billion by 2030. Joint ventures in shipbuilding, cement production, and tourism infrastructure are also under discussion. Turkey’s transformation under Erdogan—from a turbulent parliamentary system to a relatively stable presidential model—also offers instructive lessons for Pakistan. Turkey has successfully redefined its civil-military relations, with its armed forces now playing a stabilizing, rather than interventionist, role. In contrast, Pakistan’s political ecosystem has been mired in cyclical instability. A strong, transparent, and accountable governance model—similar to Tur-

key’s balance between democratic authority and institutional support—could serve as a framework for reform and progress in Islamabad. The people-to-people connection between Pakistan and Turkey is one of the strongest elements of this bilateral relationship. Turkish television dramas have become a staple in Pakistani households, with Dirligi; Ertugrul enjoying a cult following. Similarly, Pakistani dramas—famous for their emotional depth—are gaining traction in Turkey. During the visit, Sharif proposed formal cooperation in media content exchange, film production, and cultural diplomacy that echoes shared values and aesthetics. During the formal bilateral meetings, the leaders explored new horizons in educational exchange, tourism development, and counterterrorism. Erdogan emphasized the value of cooperation in intelligence, technology, and internal security. Turkey’s advanced UAV and cybersecurity infrastructure could benefit Pakistan’s national security framework, particularly in border management and urban counterterrorism. Educational collaboration, including scholarships, student exchanges, and faculty training programs, was also discussed. Erdogan offered assistance in developing Pakistan’s tourism sector, drawing from Turkey’s world-class experience in heritage conservation and hospitality. Tourism potential between the two countries is largely untapped. In 2024, less than 50,000 Pakistanis visited Turkey, and fewer than 10,000 Turks visited Pakistan. With targeted initiatives and improved flight connectivity, this number can increase tenfold over the next decade—bringing not just revenue, but also cultural enrichment. The friendship between Pakistan and Turkey is not based on shifting interests or short-term gains. It is a profound relationship shaped by Islamic brotherhood, cultural closeness, and historical solidarity. It has translated into multifaceted cooperation in trade, investment, defense, education, and humanitarian causes—and it continues to evolve. As Pakistan reflects with gratitude on this enduring support, it looks forward with optimism to a future of even stronger ties—a future where the Pakistan-Turkey partnership becomes a model of strategic brotherhood for the world to emulate. The visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Ankara was not just an act of appreciation—it was a reaffirmation of a shared vision: to build a just, prosperous, and peaceful world, side by side. – Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at the Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC Macomb, Michigan, USA

The politics of budget in Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The role of leadership, too, has been significant. Speakers who ensured strict observance of the rules of debate, and finance ministers who remained present to respond to queries, helped maintain the focus on fiscal content. On the other hand, where leadership allowed the dilution of discipline, the quality of debate suffered

EACH year, as June draws near in Pakistan, the air within the corridors of Parliament begins to thicken with anticipation. The federal budget – a crucial document that reflects the government’s priorities, aspirations, and challenges – is presented before the National Assembly during this month. Constitutionally enshrined and regulated by procedural rules, the budget is laid out before the people’s representatives who are expected to dissect its contents, critique its projections, and, ultimately, give it their assent. This annual exercise is not merely a financial ritual; it is the theatre of democracy where the fiscal vision of the nation is unveiled and contested. From the time of Pakistan’s independence in 1947 until now, more than seventy federal budgets have been presented, with varying styles, strategies, and outcomes. From the modest initial budgets of the post-Partition years to the more elaborate and technocratic fiscal outlines of recent times, each has been both a mirror and a map – a reflection of its era’s economic realities and a roadmap for national policy. The task of presenting the federal budget has historically rested with the Finance Minister, though on a few occasions it has been carried by the Prime Minister or an acting minister. From Ghulam Muhammad, the first Finance Minister of Pakistan, who presented the country’s first budget in the Sind Assembly Chamber, Karachi chaired by Deputy President Mr. Tamizuddin Khan on February 28, 1948, to the recent presentations by the finance heads of elected governments and interim administrations alike, the legacy is rich and telling. With the return of parliamentary democracy in 1985, budget sessions became more regular, structured, and open to greater legislative engagement. These debates have since served as a barometer of parliamentary performance and political maturity. A comparative study of the budget sessions from 1985 to the present reveals a mixed record. On paper, the rules permit members to discuss all aspects of the

budget, including its macroeconomic assumptions, taxation proposals, development allocations, and sectoral priorities. In practice, however, the content of budget speeches and debates often strays far from these core fiscal matters. While the budget is meant to be a national financial document warranting informed scrutiny, many members use the opportunity to raise local issues, express grievances against administrative excesses, or engage in political posturing. According to the crystal-clear ruling given by the Deputy Speaker Dr. Ashraf Khatoon Abbasi during general discussion on budget in 17 June 1975 that “Any matter may be discussed by members during general discussions on the Budget”. Detailed research into the proceedings of the National Assembly from 1985 onwards indicates that, on average, less than 40 percent of the parliamentary debate during budget sessions has been directly focused on the budget itself. The remaining 60 percent often veers into discussions on political rivalries, law and order, governance failures, regional complaints, and historical reckonings. This imbalance, while at times reflective of the political pressures of the moment, undermines the technical scrutiny that the budget deserves. In years of political stability, the proportion of budget-focused speeches tends to increase slightly, while in times of political upheaval or transitions, the debates become more rhetorical and less policy-oriented. The budget sessions of 1988, 1993, 1999, 2008, and 2018 were particularly overshadowed by political transitions, caretaker arrangements, or abrupt changes in government, resulting in more perfunctory or highly politicized budget debates. Conversely, some sessions – such as those in 2002, 2013, and 2021 – witnessed more structured and issue-based discussions, particularly when parliamentary committees and opposition parties engaged with budget documents in greater detail. The role of leadership, too, has been significant. Speakers who ensured strict observance of the rules of debate, and finance ministers who remained present to

respond to queries, helped maintain the focus on fiscal content. On the other hand, where leadership allowed the dilution of discipline, the quality of debate suffered. Moreover, the absence of technical support and budget analysis tools for most parliamentarians has further limited their ability to meaningfully engage with the figures and forecasts embedded in budget documents. Despite these limitations, the budget debate remains one of the most significant events on Pakistan’s legislative calendar. It is the time when the opposition has the opportunity to challenge the government’s claims with facts and alternative visions, and when treasury members are expected to defend the government’s performance. It is also the most public moment for Parliament to communicate with citizens on matters of taxation, subsidies, public investment, and economic reform. In this sense, even when discussions deviate, they carry a broader democratic utility, albeit at the cost of technical depth. As Pakistan confronts rising fiscal deficits, growing public debt, and the pressures of structural reform demanded by global financial institutions, the need for a more informed and focused budget debate becomes ever more urgent. Parliamentarians must be equipped and encouraged to treat the budget not merely as a political document but as a financial charter that impacts every citizen. The trend of political theatre must give way to financial literacy, scrutiny, and accountability. Only then can the National Assembly truly fulfill its constitutional role as the guardian of the public purse. In reviewing the trajectory from 1985 to the present, one sees a Parliament in gradual evolution – marked by frequent diversions yet capable, at moments, of rising to its fiscal responsibilities. The budget session, if reclaimed as a time of serious deliberation, can serve as a forum for economic consensus and national direction. The challenge lies not in the rules, which already provide ample space for debate, but in the will and preparation of those who stand to speak in the name of the people.

Briefs

Tariff reforms key to growth, export boost

FROM PAGE 01
earning up to Rs2.2 million annually. The tax rate for individuals making between Rs600,000 and Rs1.2 million a year will drop from 5% to 2.5%. Also, it suggests strict measures against non-filers to increase Pakistan's tax net which, if approved, will leave non-filers locked out of the country's financial system.
Briefing the media today, the finance czar elaborated on the tariff reforms, saying that the tariff has been brought down to zero on 4,000 tariff lines out of the total 7,000.
"The tariff reforms have not been carried out for the last 30 years," he lamented while stressing the significance of tariff reforms proposed in the budget, saying that not only were they necessary for economic development but would also contribute towards an increase in exports. Noting that pensions and salaries have to be linked to inflation, Aurangzeb said that the Centre would work with the provinces for the development of agriculture and livestock. There should be a policy related to agriculture and livestock, he added.

Budget spurs PSX rally as...

FROM PAGE 01
This is just the beginning towards 150,000 in a year," said independent investment and economic analyst AAH Soomro. The budget projects Rs19.3 trillion in revenues and Rs25.8 trillion in expenditures, resulting in a federal fiscal deficit of Rs6.5 trillion, or 5.0% of GDP. The overall national deficit is estimated at Rs5 trillion (3.9% of GDP), requiring provincial governments to generate a Rs1.5 trillion surplus — up from Rs1 trillion in FY25. Topline Securities noted that if passed without significant changes, the budget could support a re-rating of the market's price-to-earnings (PE) ratio from 5.2x to 7x, further enhancing the appeal of equities in the coming fiscal year.

Trump says China deal 'done'...

FROM PAGE 01
he said in a second post. "This would be a great WIN for both countries!!!"
US stock markets showed little enthusiasm despite Trump's latest statements, with the broad-based S&P 500 and the Dow flat while the tech-heavy Nasdaq edged higher in morning deals. The two sides had agreed to reduce their tit-for-tat, triple-digit tariffs during talks in Geneva last month, but cracks appeared in the detente after Trump accused China of violating the deal. Washington was concerned at slower supplies of rare earths after Beijing in early April began requiring domestic exporters to apply for a license — widely seen as a response to US tariffs. Rare earths are used in everything from electric vehicles to hard drives, wind turbines and missiles.
US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said in London on Tuesday that US measures imposed when rare earths "were not coming" would likely be relaxed once Beijing moved forward with more license approvals.

FBR proposes ban on key...

FROM PAGE 01
The core of this initiative lies in the newly inserted Section 114C of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001. This section establishes a framework that will restrict individuals and entities who have not filed their income tax returns, or who cannot adequately justify their financial capacity through formally declared resources, from participating in major economic activities. This means that only those who have filed their income tax return for the immediate-ly preceding tax year and possess sufficient declared resources, will be able to make such significant purchases.



ISLAMABAD: US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker, accompanied by Consul General Kristin Hawkins, met with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to discuss a wide range of shared priorities. The meeting underscored the United States' commitment to promoting trade and investment and strengthening people-to-people ties in support of a prosperous future for both nations. — DNA

Romania supports Moldova's EU accession, President affirms

President Dan also extended an invitation to President Sandu to visit Romania, emphasizing that his own visit is a symbol of Romania's continued support for Moldova's EU aspirations

DNA
BUCHAREST: Romania strongly supports the Republic of Moldova's European Union (EU) accession, President Nicusor Dan stated during his visit to Chisinau. He expressed optimism that Moldovan citizens will reaffirm the country's Europe-bound direction in the upcoming parliamentary elections this fall. "The most important project for Moldova is joining the EU, and you can count on our full support," President Dan said during a joint press conference with Moldovan President Maia Sandu. He added that he is confident the September 28 elections will reflect the Moldovan people's commitment to maintaining the European path they have followed for years. President Dan also extended an invitation to President Sandu to visit Romania, emphasizing that his own visit is a symbol of Romania's continued support for Mol-

dova's EU aspirations. "This is my first official visit as Romania's President, and I am glad it is here, in Chisinau. We share a special, heartfelt relationship, and my presence here guarantees Romania's ongoing support for Moldova," he said. "This is a crucial moment for Moldova, marking the beginning of its EU accession process." The two leaders discussed areas of further cooperation, including energy, infrastructure, and customs. President Dan stressed the need for more Romanian investment in Moldova and highlighted the dedicated guarantee fund Romania has pledged for the private sector. Romania's support extends beyond diplomacy. "We also stand by your reforms, which ensure prosperity, institutional stability, and security for Moldova," Dan noted. On security concerns, the Romanian president highlighted the Russian Federation as the region's greatest threat. He emphasized the need for joint efforts to counter hybrid warfare, especially in

light of the ongoing war in Ukraine. "Our cooperation on hybrid warfare response is critical, and we discussed this during talks," he added. Meanwhile, Romania's Energy Minister, Sebastian Burduja, emphasized the need for better cross-border energy infrastructure to create a truly unified European energy market. Burduja pointed out the current price differences between EU member states and stressed that the European energy market is only unified on paper. "Why is the day-ahead electricity spot price 84 euros in Romania, 25 euros in France, and 60 euros in Austria? Because the European energy market is single just on paper," Burduja wrote on Facebook. He explained that while energy produced in Western Europe, especially in nuclear power plants, is much cheaper, it cannot reach countries like Romania, Bulgaria and Greece due to lack of proper infrastructure. The minister noted that he has repeated-

ly called for equal obligations and rights among EU member states in terms of energy interconnectivity. He emphasized that the European energy project, which began with coal and steel unions, should ensure equal access for all members. Burduja highlighted Romania's contribution to regional energy integration, saying that the country already shares 4,000 MW of electricity grid interconnections with its neighbors and plans to increase this to over 7,000 MW in the next five years, through transmission system operator Transeletrica. He also pointed out gaps in other regions, such as the lack of interconnections between Austria and Slovakia, and noted that Austria and Hungary's interconnection capacity could easily be doubled, but there has been no significant effort to do so. The minister concluded that energy interconnections and the improvement of the European energy market have become top priorities for the European Commission, with continued efforts to monitor progress.

Nintendo's Switch two scores record early sales

TOKYO: The Switch 2 has smashed records to become the fastest-selling console ever after gamers snapped up 3.5 million units in its first four days, Nintendo said Wednesday. Featuring a bigger screen and more processing power, the console is an upgrade to the original Switch — the third best-selling console of all time. It was released last Thursday to a global swell of fan excitement that included sold-out pre-orders and midnight store openings. The Japanese game giant said the Switch 2 had reached "the highest global sales level for any Nintendo hardware within the first four days". It also broke industry records, analysts said, beating the first Switch and Sony's PlayStation 5, which respectively sold 2.7 million and 3.4 million units in their first month. Now the key question is whether Nintendo can extend early excitement to

match the overall success of the original. The first Switch, which enjoyed a popularity boost during the pandemic with hit games such as "Animal Crossing", has sold 152 million units since its launch in 2017. "Sales momentum will be difficult to sustain in the long run," cautioned Darang Candra of games market research firm Niko Partners. "It could be that consumers want to buy before potential price increases due to potential tariffs by the United States," he told AFP. "Its long-term success will depend on Nintendo's ability to sustain engagement with new titles" and attract casual gamers in emerging markets such as the Middle East and Asian countries outside Japan, Candra said. Nintendo forecasts it will sell 15 million Switch 2 consoles in the current financial year, roughly equal to the original in the same period after its release. But it will also need to convince

enough people to pay the high price for its new device. The Switch 2 costs \$449.99 in the United States, compared to a launch price of \$299.99 for the original Switch. Both are hybrid consoles which can connect to a TV or be played on the go. New 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. The cost of the Switch 2 for American consumers is "a calculated move on Nintendo's part to avoid potential impacts from US tariffs", Candra said. A Japan-only version is cheaper, at 49,980 yen (\$350). Nintendo says that hardware for North America is mainly produced in Vietnam, which US President Donald Trump has threatened with hefty extra tariffs of 46 percent. — Agencies

England stunned by Senegal

NOTTINGHAM: England slumped to a 3-1 home friendly defeat by Senegal on Tuesday to ramp up the scrutiny on boss Thomas Tuchel one year out from the World Cup. Goals from Ismaila Sarr, Habib Diarra and Cheikh Sabaly inflicted England's first ever defeat against African opposition at Nottingham Forest's City Ground after Harry Kane had given the hosts an early lead. Tuchel was scathing in his criticism of his side's dreary display in beating minnows Andorra just 1-0 in World Cup qualifying on Saturday. The German, who was appointed with the task of ending England's wait since 1966 for a major tournament win, has now suffered his first defeat in four games in charge. "Not good enough. We had moments, but with and without the ball things aren't clicking, we're not finding the right tempo," said England captain Kane. "We've lost that aggressive nature that we had." Tuchel responded by making 10 changes, with Kane the only player to retain his place. It took just seven minutes for the Bayern Munich striker to maintain his record of scoring in every game since Tuchel took charge. Former Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy should have done better when he could only parry Anthony Gordon's shot into the path of Kane, who tapped in his 73rd international goal. — Agencies

Hope recalled for West Indies Test series

ST. JOHN'S: Shai Hope has been recalled by the West Indies Test side after being named in their 16-man squad for a three-match series against Australia on Tuesday. The white-ball captain has been rewarded for his strong form in limited-overs cricket and could play his first Test since 2021 when the opening game gets underway on June 25 in Bridgetown. Guyana batter Kevlon Anderson could make his international debut after being included courtesy of a strong domestic season. "I'm excited about the inclusion of young prospect Kevlon Anderson, who comes in after solid seasons in our domestic competitions to help provide stability in the top order, while the return of Shai Hope is welcomed given his consistency in white ball cricket," said West Indies coach Daren Sammy. Hope has made 1,726 runs in 38 Tests, with two hundreds and five fifties. There is no place for veteran seamer Kemar Roach, who has 284 Test wickets. Shamar Joseph, who inspired the Caribbean team to a famous victory in the second Test against Australia in Brisbane last year, is part of the squad. The second Test will be played in St George's and the third in Kingston. The series is part of the 2025-27 World Test Championship cycle. Roston Chase (capt), Jonel Warrian, Kevlon Anderson, Kraigg Brathwaite, John Campbell, Keacy Carty, Justin Greaves, Shai Hope, Tevin Imlach, Alzarri Joseph, Shamar Joseph, Brandon King, Johann Layne, Mikyle Louis, Anderson Phillip, Jayden Seales. — APP

Polish government faces confidence vote after presidency blow

WARSAW: Poland's pro-EU government faces a confidence vote in parliament on Wednesday as it tries to demonstrate it has continued support even after suffering a major blow in this month's presidential election. The vote was called by Prime Minister Donald Tusk after nationalist Karol Nawrocki won the presidency, prompting expert predictions that the government could become fatally weakened and there may be early elections. Nawrocki, a fan of US President Donald Trump, is expected to try to bring down the government and boost the main opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party which backed him. Tusk, a former EU president, came to power in 2023 as head of a coalition between his centrist Civic Platform, Poland 2050, the Polish People's Party (PSL) and New Left. New parliamentary elections are not scheduled until 2027. Tusk will give a speech ahead of Wednesday's vote, due around 1200 GMT according to Polish media, which he is set to win as his coalition controls 242 votes in the 460-seat parliament and only needs a majority. Nawrocki won the June 1 presidential vote with 51 percent against Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski on 49 percent. Tusk, who had supported centrist Trzaskowski, vowed to

stay on and said the confidence vote in parliament should be a "new beginning" for the coalition government which he promised could do things "better, faster". There have been tensions within the governing coalition, particularly with the PSL, which advocates for socially conservative values and wants more curbs on immigration. Poland, an EU and NATO member of 38 million people, is a fast-growing economy and has become an increasingly important regional player since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Polish presidents have some influence over foreign and defence policy but their key power is being able to veto legislation passed by parliament. This will likely hamper reform efforts by Tusk's government such as the planned introduction of same-sex partnerships or easing a near-total ban on abortion. Internationally, it could also make ties with Brussels difficult particularly over rule of law issues as Nawrocki supports the controversial judicial reforms put in place by the previous PiS government. Ties with Ukraine could become more tense as Nawrocki opposes Ukraine's membership of NATO and has been critical of the support for Ukrainian refugees in Poland. — Agencies

Scheffler seeks back-to-back major wins at formidable Oakmont

OAKMONT: Top-ranked Scottie Scheffler tries to become the first back-to-back major winner in a decade by taking this week's 125th US Open, which tees off Thursday at intimidating Oakmont. Not since Jordan Spieth captured the 2015 Masters and US Open has anyone swept consecutive major crowns, but two-time Masters champion Scheffler is on a hot streak. The 28-year-old American has won three of his past four starts, including a third major title at May's PGA Championship and defending his Memorial title two weeks ago. This week, however, offers a severe test with thick high rough, tricky bunkers and sloped greens known for lightning-fast speed. "This is probably the hardest golf course that we'll play, maybe ever, and that's pret-

ty much all it is," Scheffler said. "It's just a different type of test." Scheffler arrives after a rest week as the oddsmakers' favorite over world number two Rory McIlroy and defending champion Bryson DeChambeau. "I don't pay attention to the favorite stuff or anything like that," Scheffler said. "Starting Thursday morning we're at even par and it's up to me to go out there and play against the golf course and see what I can do." Fourth-ranked Collin Morikawa, a two-time major winner, expects brutal rough off most every missed fairway. "Overall you have to hit the ball really well. You know you're going to get penalized even on good shots," Morikawa said. "Step number one is to hit it in the fairways. I don't think people understand how thick the rough is. It's not wispy like the

club is going to go through. This is just thick. Clubs will turn over. "You're going to see guys trying to hit pitching wedge out and it's going to go 45 degrees left because that's how thick the rough is." The 7,372-yard, par-70 layout offers a vast array of bunkers and a course where many trees were removed to produce an expansive feel. "Extreme challenge," two-time major winner Jon Rahm said. "Even when you just stand on the putting green, seeing the whole property, you know you're somewhere special. It's quite iconic." McIlroy, who won the Masters in April to complete a career Grand Slam, has top-10 US Open finishes each of the past six years. He declared Oakmont "a big brute of a golf course." "You're going to have to have

your wits about you this week all the way throughout the bag, off the tee, into the greens, around the greens. It's going to be a great test." Defending champion Bryson DeChambeau, a winner last month at LIV Golf Korea, seeks his third US Open after wins in 2020 and 2024. The 31-year-old American is trying to become only the eighth back-to-back US Open winner, the first since compatriot Brooks Koepka in 2017 and 2018. "Everybody knows this is probably the toughest golf course in the world right now, and you have to hit the fairways, you have to hit greens, and you have to two-putt, worst-case scenario," DeChambeau said. "When you've got those putts inside 10 feet, you've got to make them. It's a great test of golf." — APP

Pakistan is a 'phenomenal partner'

FROM PAGE 01
pushed a lot of them into the tribal areas on the Afghan-Pakistan border through a phenomenal partnership with Pakistan," he said. "They [Pakistan] have extradited back Jaffar, who was one of the key individuals behind the Abbey Gate bombing," he added, referring to Daesh operative Mohammad Sharifullah, an Afghan national who was arrested by Pakistan earlier this year. The Daesh operative allegedly helped carry out the 2021 suicide bombing outside Kabul airport during the chaotic US military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Sharifullah has confessed to scouting out the route to the airport, where the suicide bomber later detonated his device among packed crowds trying to flee days after the Taliban seized control of Kabul, the Justice Department said. The blast at the Abbey Gate killed at least 170 Afghans as well as 13 US troops who were securing the airport's perimeter. Furthermore, the Centcom chief said, he received a call from Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir after Sharifullah's arrest, saying, "He said 'I've caught him, I'm willing to extradite him back to the United States, please tell the secretary of defence and the president'." "We're seeing Pakistan — with limited intelligence that we provided them — go after them using their means to do that and we're seeing an effect on Daesh Khorasan," he added.

Trump willing to help settle...

FROM PAGE 01
the Pakistani side of using its good offices to bring India to the negotiating table so that all outstanding issues could be discussed and the ceasefire sustained. Responding to these questions, US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce stated, "State Department officials, including Under Secretary for Political Affairs Hooker, met with the Pakistani parliamentary delegation during a visit they had to Washington last week. She reiterated US support for the ongoing ceasefire — as you might imagine, thank God — between Pakistan and India. They also discussed important issues to the bilateral relationship, including counterterrorism cooperation." Bilawal led the nine-member delegation to New York and Washington before departing for London and Brussels. During his stay from May 31 to June 6, he met with more than a dozen members of the US House of Representatives and Senate.

Trump's nominee...

FROM PAGE 01
security, bilateral trade and investment, The News reported on Wednesday. Kapur, speaking during a confirmation hearing before US Senate, told the body that he would pursue security cooperation with Pakistan while exploring opportunities for bilateral trade and investment collaboration. "If confirmed, I will continue to promote longstanding US security interests with Pakistan and India through the pursuit of peace and stability, and the fight against terrorism," said Trump's nominee who is a US scholar of Indian origin. His remarks come against the backdrop of his strong support for deepening the strategic ties between India and the US as well as preventing Afghanistan from becoming a "terrorism launchpad". "If confirmed, I'll support efforts to bring home detained Americans in Afghanistan and work to prevent the country from becoming a terrorism launchpad again," he once remarked. Iran says it will target...
FROM PAGE 01
action if it fails. "All its bases are within our reach, we have access to them, and without hesitation we will target all of them in the host countries," Iran's Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh said in response to US threats of military action if the talks fail.

Briefs

Gold price ups
by Rs 600 to
per tola

ISLAMABAD :The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.600 and was traded at Rs.352,900 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.352,300 on last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.514 to Rs.302,554 from Rs. 302,040 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went up by Rs471 to Rs.277,351 from Rs. 276,880.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,745 and Rs.3,210 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market went up by \$6 to \$3,345 from \$3,339, whereas the prices of silver remain unchanged at \$35.87, the Association reported.—APP

PSX stays
bullish, gains
2,328 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 2,328.24 points, showing positive change of 1.91 percent, closing at 124,352.68 points as compared to 122,024.44 points on the last trading day. A total of 1,041,129,574 shares were traded during the day as compared to 592,952,761 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 46,707 billion against Rs 21.827 billion on the last trading day. As many as 478 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 283 of them recorded gains and 157 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 38 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Pervez Ahmed Company with 78,292,186 shares at Rs 2.00 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 55,140,713 shares at Rs 1.45 per share and Sui South Gas with 45,087,896 shares at Rs 41.14 per share.—APP

Gold price
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Turkish court
issues arrest
warrant for
owner of
pro-opposition
TV channel

ANKARA: An Istanbul court has issued an arrest warrant for the owner of a television channel aligned with Turkiye's main opposition party on charges of bid-rigging, the prosecutor's office said late on Tuesday.

The arrest warrant for Cafer Mahiroglu, owner of Halk TV, was issued as part of an investigation into an alleged criminal organization suspected of rigging public tenders by bribing public officials. Several main opposition CHP members including district mayors were arrested under the investigation, part of a widening legal crackdown against the jailed mayor of Istanbul, President Tayyip Erdogan's main political rival, and the opposition. Mahiroglu, a Turkish businessperson who lives in London, denied the charges in a post on X. "I am being accused based on the fabricated false statements and slander of someone I have never met or seen in my life," he said, adding that he has been living abroad for 35 years.—APP

Curfew imposed in LA as more
US cities brace for protests

LA police have detained dozens of protesters in recent days, while authorities in San Francisco and other US cities have also made arrests.

LOS ANGELES: Several US cities braced for protests on Wednesday against President Donald Trump's sweeping immigration raids, as parts of the country's second largest city Los Angeles spent the night under curfew in an effort to quell five days of unrest. The Governor of Texas, Republican Greg Abbott, said he will deploy the National Guard this week, ahead of planned protests. Protesters and police in Austin clashed on Monday. Trump's extraordinary measures of sending National Guard and Marines to quell protests in Los Angeles has sparked a national debate on the use of military on US soil and pitted the Republican president against California's Democrat governor. "This brazen abuse of power by a sitting president inflamed a combustible situation, putting our people, our officers and even our National Guard at risk. That's when the downward spiral began," California Governor Gavin Newsom said in a video address on Tuesday. "He again chose escalation. He chose more force. He chose theatrics over public safety. ... Democracy is under assault." Newsom, widely seen as preparing for a presidential run in 2028, and the state of

California sued Trump and the Defense Department on Monday, seeking to block the deployment of federal troops. Trump in turn has suggested Newsom should be arrested. Hundreds of US Marines arrived in the Los Angeles area on Tuesday under orders from Trump, after he also ordered the deployment of 4,000 National Guard to the city. Marines and National Guard are to be used in the protection of government personnel and buildings and not in police action. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said the deployments were not necessary as police could manage the protest, the majority of which have been peaceful, and limited to about five streets. The curfew will run through 6 am local time on Wednesday and will last "for several days," Bass said at a separate press conference. It will only be in effect within a roughly one square mile area in downtown that includes the Edward R. Roybal Federal Building and City Hall. Earlier Tuesday, Trump pledged to "liberate" the US's second largest city during remarks delivered to Army troops at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, claiming the protests

sparked by his mass deportation campaign are "a full-blown assault on peace, on public order and on national sovereignty, carried out by rioters bearing foreign flags with the aim of continuing a foreign invasion of our country." He also said California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Bass are "incompetent, and they paid troublemakers, agitators and insurrectionists. They're engaged in this willful attempt to nullify federal law and aid the occupation of the city by criminal invaders." The president attempted to walk back those comments as well as the broader claim that the protesters are being paid when asked by reporters about his remarks. "I didn't say the governor or the mayor. I said somebody's paying them, I think. And if they're not, they're just troublemakers. What can I tell you? But I believe somebody's paying them," he said. Trump has deployed roughly 4,000 US National Guardsmen and 700 Marines to the streets of Los Angeles in defiance of warnings from Newsom and Bass that the action would only serve to further inflame already-heightened tensions.

A federal judge denied Newsom's request for a restraining order to block what Newsom described as Trump's "unlawful militarization of Los Angeles." Senior District Judge Charles Breyer with the Northern District of California instead set a Thursday hearing on Newsom's request. Protests erupted Friday after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents raided local businesses and detained hundreds of people suspected of living in the US illegally. The Trump administration has continued to carry out the raids in defiance of the community's opposition. Critics of the raids say ICE is going after law-abiding undocumented immigrants, a vital part of the community and the local economy, rather than the criminals that Trump pledged to deport while campaigning last year to return to the White House. Previously, hundreds of US Marines were expected in Los Angeles on Tuesday after President Donald Trump ordered their deployment in response to protests against immigration arrests and despite objections by state officials. The 700 elite troops will join around 4,000 National Guard

soldiers, amping up the militarization of the tense situation in the sprawling city, which is home to millions of foreign-born and Latino residents. The small-scale and largely peaceful demonstrations — marred by sporadic but violent clashes between police and protesters — were entering their fifth day. In downtown LA's Little Tokyo neighbourhood at night Monday, scores of protesters faced off with security officials in riot gear, some shooting fireworks at officers who fired back volleys of tear gas. Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom wrote on X that US Marines "shouldn't be deployed on American soil facing their own countrymen to fulfill the deranged fantasy of a dictatorial President. This is un-American." But Trump has branded the LA protesters "professional agitators and insurrectionists." "They're meant to be protecting us, but instead, they're like, being sent to attack us," Kelly Diemer, 47, told AFP. "This is not a democracy anymore." LA police have detained dozens of protesters in recent days, while authorities in San Francisco and other US cities have also made arrests.—Agencies

Greenland
ice melted 17
times faster
than average
in May
heatwave

NUUK: Greenland's ice sheet melted 17 times faster than the past average during a May heatwave that also hit Iceland, the scientific network World Weather Attribution (WWA) said in a report Wednesday.

The Arctic region is on the frontline of global warming, heating up four times faster than the rest of the planet since 1979, according to a 2022 study in scientific journal Nature. "The melting rate of the Greenland ice sheet by, from a preliminary analysis, a factor of 17... means the Greenland ice sheet contribution to sea level rise is higher than it would have otherwise been without this heat wave," one of the authors of the report, Friederike Otto, associate professor in climate science at the Imperial College London, told reporters. "Without climate change this would have been impossible," she said. In Iceland, the temperature exceeded 26 degrees Celsius on May 15, unprecedented for that time of year on the subarctic island. "Temperatures over Iceland as observed this May are record-breaking, more than 13 degrees Celsius hotter than the 1991-2020 average May daily maximum temperatures," the WWA said.—APP

Syria requires
women to
wear burkinis
on public
beaches

DAMASCUS: Syria's Islamist-led government has decreed that women should wear burkinis or other swimwear that covers the body at public beaches and swimming pools, while permitting Western-style beachwear at private clubs and luxury hotels. The tourism ministry decision issued this week marks the first time the Damascus authorities have issued guidelines related to what women can wear since Bashar Assad was toppled in December. During the Assad family's iron-fisted rule of Syria, which was shaped by a secular Arab nationalist ideology, the state imposed no such restrictions, though people often dressed modestly at public beaches, reflecting conservative norms. The new requirements were set out in a wider decree dated June 9 and which included public safety guidelines for beaches and swimming pools ahead of the summer, such as not spending too long in the sun and avoiding jellyfish. It said that beachgoers and visitors to public pools should wear "appropriate swimwear that respects public decency and the feelings of different segments of society," requiring "more modest swimsuits" and specifying "the burkini or swimming clothes that cover the body more." Women should wear a cover or a loose robe over their swimwear when moving between the beach and other areas, it said. Men should wear a shirt when not swimming, and are not allowed to appear bare-chested "in the public areas outside the swimming areas — hotel lobbies or ... restaurants," it said.—APP

Israel
opposition
submits bill
to dissolve
parliament

JERUSALEM: Israel's opposition leaders said Wednesday they submitted a bill to dissolve parliament, which if successful could start paving the way to a snap election.

Ultra-Orthodox parties that are propping up Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government are threatening to vote for the motion.

"The opposition faction leaders have decided to bring the bill to dissolve the Knesset to a vote in the Knesset plenum today. The decision was made unanimously and is binding on all factions," the leaders said in a statement, adding that all their parties would freeze their ongoing legislation to focus on "the overthrow of the government.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a coordination-focused meeting of all departmental heads.

Gaza rescuers
say 31 killed by
Israel fire near
aid center

GAZA: The Gaza civil defense agency said Israeli forces opened fire on people waiting to enter a US-backed food distribution center on Wednesday, killing 31 and wounding "about 200. "We transported at least 31 martyrs and about 200 wounded as a result of Israeli tank and drone fire on thousands of citizens... on their way to receive food from the American aid center," civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP. The Israeli army did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment. Restrictions imposed on media in the Gaza Strip and the difficulties of access on the ground mean AFP is not able to independently verify the death tolls announced by the civil defense agency. Bassal said thousands of Palestinians had been gathering since 2 am (2300 GMT Tuesday) in the hope of reaching the US and Israeli-backed food distribution center. "Israeli tanks fired several times, then at around 5:30 am intensified their fire, coinciding with heavy fire from drones targeting civilians," he said. Mohammad Abu Salima, head of Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital, told AFP it had received the bodies of 24 people killed while waiting to enter the aid center and was treating 96 who had been wounded. Al-Awda hospital, in Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, said in a statement that it had received seven bodies and was treating 112 people who had been wounded in the same incident. There have been a series of deadly shootings since the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) first opened aid distribution points in the Palestinian territory on May 27, as Israel faced mounting international condemnation over the humanitarian conditions.—DNA

Finland
summons
Russian diplomat
after suspected
airspace
violation

HELSINKI: Finland on Wednesday summoned Russia's charge d'affaires for talks, a day after a Russian military aircraft was suspected of violating Finnish airspace, the foreign ministry said. Finland's defense ministry said on Tuesday that it believed a Russian military aircraft had violated Finnish airspace off the coast of Porvoo, east of the capital Helsinki. The foreign ministry said it would provide more details after the talks. The incident came only weeks after a similar incident, which was also followed by a summoning of Russia's diplomatic representative. Finland, which joined NATO in 2023 after Moscow's fully-fledged invasion of Ukraine a year earlier, shares a 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) border with Russia. "An investigation into the alleged violation of airspace was launched immediately," Defense Minister Antti Hakkarinen said of Tuesday's incident, adding that the coast guard would head the inquiry.—APP

SECP registers
3,609 new companies

Foreign investment in Pakistan's corporate sector also showed encouraging growth, with 98 new companies receiving capital from international investors

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered a historic high of 3,609 companies in May 2025, surpassing the previous record of 3,442 set in January 2025. The capital raised amounted to over Rs. 2.7 billion, with approximately 99.9% of new company registrations now processed digitally, said a press release issued by the SECP on Wednesday. This upward trend reflects growing investor confidence and the success of SECP's digital reforms, which aim to simplify business registration and promote entrepreneurship. The SECP remains committed to enhancing the ease of doing business by strengthening its regulatory framework, improving transparency, and fostering an inclusive, investor-friendly corporate environment across Pakistan. This surge has increased the total number of registered companies in the country to over 255,000. Private Limited Companies accounted for 59% of total registrations, while single-member companies represented 37%. The remaining 4% included public unlisted companies, not-for-profit organizations, guarantee-limited companies, and limited liability partnerships (LLPs). A closer look at sectoral growth reveals strong activity across multiple industries. The Information technology (IT) and e-commerce sectors saw the largest growth, adding 718 new companies. The trading sector followed with 506 new companies, while services recorded 447 new companies. Real estate development and construction registered 342 new companies, followed by tourism and transport with 237, food and beverages with 187, and education with 160. Other notable sectors included mining and quarrying (89), pharmaceutical (78), textile (74), marketing and advertisement (72), cosmetics and toiletries (67), engineering (62), and healthcare (51). Additional sectors contributing to this growth—such as chemical, transport, corporate agricultural farming, fuel and energy, Section 42, auto and allied, power generation, and sports and allied—collectively added 519 new companies. In line with its efforts to enhance market access and financial inclusion, the SECP granted 56 licenses across multiple regulatory domains. These included three in capital markets, one in the insurance sector, three in non-banking financial services, and 49 to NGOs under Section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017. Foreign investment in Pakistan's corporate sector also showed encouraging growth, with 98 new companies receiving capital from international investors.—DNA

Paris tech fair opens with AI
and trade war in the spotlight

But the company has warned the braking effect may be larger in the current quarter

PARIS: Drawing high-powered tech CEOs and a presidential visit, the Vivatex trade fair opened in Paris on Wednesday with a centre-stage role for AI dogged by transatlantic trade tensions. People from around the globe thronged out of packed metro trains into a southern Paris convention centre, crammed with stands in blaring colours showing off the latest innovations from start-ups, tech giants and more traditional firms. The top attraction on the opening day of one of Europe's largest tech fairs will be Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang, looking to make a mark in

Europe for the company that builds the most computing hardware for artificial intelligence. Vivatex regular President Emmanuel Macron will also attend, with a walking tour and chats with French tech start-ups on the agenda. Tech watchers expect more products than ever embedding AI into everyday life to be touted in the exhibition halls over the show's four days. "What's changed from previous years is that we've moved from AI as science fiction to applied AI," Vivatex managing director Francois Bitouzet told AFP ahead of the opening. He

trailed around 30 sectors with concrete AI-powered products on show, from luxury to insurance, health, energy, cars, logistics and more. Around 14,000 startups and more than 3,000 investors were expected in Paris, while organisers forecast total visitor numbers to at least equal last year's 165,000 people. Nvidia's Huang — likely sporting his trademark leather jacket — has top billing with an opening presentation slated to last more than an hour. Bitouzet said it was a "source of pride" to bring aboard semiconductor heavyweight Nvidia, whose high-powered GPUs (graphics processing units) are

widely used to power the latest generative AI models. "It proves that the European market in general and the French market in particular are attractive and that today (Nvidia) has ambitions for this market," the Vivatex boss added. Cedric Foray, head of European tech at EY consulting firm, predicted that "there will definitely be announcements targeted at Europe" from Nvidia. French digital affairs minister Clara Chappaz said France would "continue to do all we can to make the country the best place in the world to start and develop businesses and build the technology we need".

But she acknowledged that AI in particular "has never been as political as it is today". US-based Nvidia has seen export restrictions slapped on its top-performing chips by Washington, with American politicians leery of ceding their country's lead in generative AI. Remaining high-tech controls on China are at issue in high-stakes trade talks with Beijing. Huang has warned that the US' superpower rival is nevertheless making swift strides to catch up.

There was little sign of impact from export restrictions on Nvidia's chip sales in its May earnings release.—APP

Briefs

Pak-NATO
co-op to be
deepened:
envoy

BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Pakistan to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg Rahim Hayat Qureshi on Wednesday met Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy of NATO Boris Ruge. In the meeting, they discussed the ongoing engagement tracks and the global issues of mutual importance, besides exploring avenues to deepen bilateral cooperation. The ambassador also briefed the Assistant Secretary General on the regional peace and security situation. Meanwhile, Ambassador Qureshi also met with Ambassador of South Korea to the EU Jeonghyun Ryu. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on regional and geopolitical developments, underscoring the importance of dialogue and negotiated solutions. - APP

Trump to
issue executive
order lifting
sanctions on
Syria

DAMASCUS: Damascus, SANA- U.S. Congressman Cory Mills has affirmed that President Donald Trump wants Syria to be a unified, free and stable country and will within days, issue an executive order lifting a range of sanctions imposed upon it. In an interview with Syria TV, Mills said: "Syria has rid itself of a dictatorial regime that ruled it for more than 50 years. It is time for it to have an opportunity, and we want it to be a unified, stable state, and we will not waste much time." The Congressman explained that when President Trump signs the executive order, the first thing that will happen is the U.S. Treasury Department will lift sanctions and permit financial transfers and free trade with Syria, noting that repealing the "Caesar Act" requires the legislative committee to gather the necessary votes in Congress. Mills indicated that his country, along with the countries in the region, will assist the new Syria through bilateral and joint economic agreements to contribute to its reconstruction process. "We want our relations with Syria to be strategic," the Congressman said, explaining that lifting U.S. sanctions will aid in reconstruction and prosperity, capacity building, and economic growth. - APP

World still
had 138 mn
child laborers
in 2024: UN

UNITED NATIONS: Nearly 138 million children were still working in the world's fields and factories in 2024, the United Nations said Wednesday, warning that given the slow pace of progress, eliminating child labor could be delayed by "hundreds of years." Ten years ago, upon adopting the so-called Sustainable Development Goals, the world's countries set themselves the ambitious target of putting an end to child labor by 2025. "That timeline has now come to an end. But child labor has not," UNICEF and the International Labor Organization (ILO) said in a joint report. Last year 137.6 million children ages 5-17 were working, or approximately 7.8 percent of all children in that age group, according to data published every four years. The figure is equivalent to twice the total population of France. This nevertheless represents a drop since 2000, when 246 million children were forced to work, often to help their impoverished families. After a worrying rise between 2016 and 2020, the trend has now reversed, with 20 million fewer children working in 2024 than four years prior. "Significant progress" has been recorded in reducing the number of children forced into labor, UNICEF chief Catherine Russell said. - APP

Pakistan, Philippines commit to
strengthening bilateral relations

Ambassador Dr. Asima Rabbani presents credentials to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.



DNA

MANILA: Dr. Asima Rabbani, the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Republic of the Philippines, formally presented her credentials to His Excellency Ferdinand R.

Marcos Jr., President of the Philippines, in an official ceremony held at Malacañan Palace. The ceremony, which included a traditional guard of honour inspection by Ambassador Rabbani, marked the beginning of her diplomatic mission in the Philippines. Following the presentation of credentials, the Ambassador held a constructive meeting with Presi-



dent Marcos to discuss opportunities for expanding bilateral cooperation in key areas, including trade, investment, leadership exchanges, and collaboration in international forums. Ambassador Rabbani reiterated Pakistan's commitment to deepening its longstanding friendship with the Philippines and highlighted the potential for enhanced economic and strategic partnerships.

She emphasized the importance of people-to-people ties and mutual support on global platforms. President Marcos welcomed Ambassador Rabbani and expressed his government's readiness to work closely with Pakistan to further strengthen relations between the two nations. Both sides acknowledged the shared values and common interests that serve as a foundation for future collaboration.

Reaches Belgium

'Nuclear war a reality',
warns Bilawal Bhutto

PPP chief warns India of "more aggressive steps" if it constructs new canals or dams on three rivers

DNA

LONDON: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has warned that the prospect of a nuclear conflict between Pakistan and India is a "reality" if New Delhi carries out its threats to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), calling such actions "water terrorism" and an act of war that must be withdrawn immediately. He was referring to India's unilateral suspension of the IWT after the April 22 militant attack in the Pahalgal area of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). "India and Pakistan are bound by the terms of IWT... India will have to take back and withdraw its threat," he said while addressing a press conference at the Pakistan High Commission at the conclusion of his two days tour of London. He warned that Pakistan may take more aggressive steps if India constructs new canals or dams on the three rivers within its territory. "Were they to act on it, Pakistan has been very clear: we'd consider that an act of war," he added. Bilawal, head of the parliamentary delegation that is touring world capitals to rally support for Pakistan following recent confrontation with India, said that the Pakistan military had made the whole nation proud. Furthermore, the PPP chief said that India was involved in transnational repression. He said that the Canadian and Western intelligence services, including the US government, had evidence that India was involved in terrorism on Western soil.

Musk regrets some of
his Trump criticisms

Their blistering break-up - largely carried out on social media before a riveted public on Thursday last week - was ignited by Musk's harsh criticism of Trump's so-called "big, beautiful" spending bill, which is currently before Congress

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk, the world's richest person and Donald Trump's former advisor, said Wednesday he regretted some of his recent criticisms of the US president, after the pair's public falling-out last week. "I regret some of my posts about President @realDonaldTrump last week. They went too far," Musk wrote on his social media platform X. Musk's expression of regret came just days after Trump threatened the tech billionaire with "serious consequences" if he sought to punish Republicans who vote for a controversial spending bill. Their blistering break-up - largely carried out on social media before a riveted public on Thursday last week - was ignited by Musk's harsh criticism of Trump's so-called "big, beautiful" spending bill, which is currently before Congress. Some lawmakers who were against the bill had called on Musk - one of the Republican Party's biggest financial backers in last year's presidential election - to fund primary challenges against Republicans who voted for the legislation. "He'll have to pay very serious consequences if he does that," Trump, who also branded Musk "disrespectful," told NBC News on Saturday, without specifying what those consequences would be. - DNA

Austria
mourns
mass school
shooting

GRAZ: Austria began three days of mourning Wednesday for the 10 people killed in a school shooting as investigators revealed they found a makeshift bomb at the home of the suspect.

The 21-year-old former pupil at the Dreierschuetzengasse secondary school in the second city of Graz shot dead 10 people on Tuesday in an unprecedented rampage that stunned the Alpine country. Police said that he acted alone and took his own life in the toilet at the school.

A "non-functional homemade bomb" was also found during a search at the suspect's home, police said Wednesday. They also found a goodbye letter to the suspect's parents, but it included no clues about his motive.

Locals hugged each other and cried as they left flowers, candles and letters to the victims outside the city centre school, which has around 400 students aged between 14 and 18. "It is truly shocking... We will always think back on this," Mariam Fayz, a 22-year-old student, said, adding that she feared for younger brother when she heard the news. - APP

Interior Minister
for improving public
service delivery

Interior Minister emphasized that mutual cooperation among all departments is extremely important

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting was held at the Ministry of Interior under the chairmanship of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in which the heads of all attached departments of the Ministry participated. On the special directive of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, a decision was made to enhance mutual cooperation among all subsidiary institutions of the Ministry of Interior. Interior Minister emphasized that mutual cooperation among all departments is extremely important. He said that all institutions should make full use of each other's capabilities and bring ease to the lives of citizens. He stressed that the timely exchange of information and data is crucial. He further added that officers posted in foreign embassies under various departments can also provide assistance to other institutions of the Ministry. He underlined the importance of making full use of the human resources of all institutions, stating that improved coordination among departments would benefit both the government and the public. Mohsin Naqvi directed that only officers who fulfill merit criteria should be nominated for training courses so that their professional capacity can be enhanced. He instructed all departments to submit their recommendations in this regard. Based on these recommendations, the Federal Secretary Interior will prepare a comprehensive plan and present it to Interior Minister. Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry, Secretary Interior, Additional Secretaries Interior, and heads of departments including NADRA, Anti-Narcotics Control, FIA, Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary, Rangers, National Police Academy, National Police Bureau, Passport and Immigration, National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency, and Islamabad Police attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of MNAs from PML-Q led by Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad. - DNA

Pakistan extols Iraq's moves to
solidify democratic institutions

"Sustained reforms and public service delivery initiatives, implementation of the federal budget, successful provincial council elections, and the focus on regional development reflect positive momentum", Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: With parliamentary elections in Iraq scheduled for Nov. 11, and the drawdown of the UN Mission there set for December, Pakistan has commended the country's efforts to consolidate democratic institutions and stabilize the security environment, despite complex challenges. "Sustained reforms and public service delivery initiatives, implementation of the federal budget, successful provincial council elections, and the focus on regional development reflect positive momentum", Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Tuesday. Speaking at a briefing on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), he underscored the need for a "seamless and well-supported transition" as the mission is scheduled to close by December 31, 2025. The decision to terminate UNAMI was made after Iraq requested its work to end by the end of 2025, citing significant progress towards stability and the completion of its tasks. UNAMI was established in 2003 and works to advance inclusive political dialogue as well as reconciliation at the national and community levels, among other mandated tasks. "We encourage all political stakeholders in Iraq to maintain dialogue and inclusivity, especially in the context of preparations for national elections in November this year, and work to ad-

dress the institutional gaps," Ambassador Asim said. Describing the peaceful conduct of elections in the Kurdistan Region last year as a "welcome step", he said that formation of the regional government was still pending, hoping that it would be addressed through dialogue, grounded in Iraq's Constitution. On the humanitarian side, Ambassador Asim said, sustained attention was required including with regards to the needs of the internally displaced persons, acknowledging Iraq's achievements in facilitating voluntary return, reintegration, and improved access to documentation. Pakistan, he said, remains concerned about the volatile regional security environment, which poses a risk to Iraq's stability. "We reiterate our firm support for Iraq's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity - it is imperative that Iraq not be drawn into regional confrontations". Ambassador Asim also reaffirmed Pakistan's strong support for the efforts to resolve outstanding issues between the two brotherly countries of Iraq and Kuwait, including the return of property, archives, and repatriation of all Kuwaiti and third country nationals or their remains. "Pakistan will continue to remain engaged on this matter in the Council and with the two brotherly countries to find an amicable and mutually acceptable way forward, for settlement of all outstanding issues especially the missing person." Briefing the 15-member Council, the top UN official in Iraq reiterated his confidence in the resilience of the country's people, and the determination of their leaders.

