



# Islamabad POST

Friday, June 13, 2025

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**Defence Minister irked at huge raise in MPs salaries**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Jamal Kamal Proposes tax revision**

Detailed News On Page-07



**Haris Zeb to feature in FIFA Club World Cup**

Detailed News On Page-06



## One survivor

# Over 290 die in Air India plane crash

Apart from passengers a number of college students also died; plane crashed on top of dining area of BJ Medical College hostel; sole survivor says he heard a bang and then plane crashed

### CENTRELINE REPORT

AHMEDABAD: More than 290 people were killed when an Air India plane bound for London with 242 people on board crashed minutes after taking off from the western city of Ahmedabad on Thursday, authorities said, in the world's worst aviation disaster in a decade. A number of college students, who were having their lunch also died in this accident.

At least one person is known to have survived, police said, and the man told Indian media how he had heard a loud noise shortly after take-off.

The plane came down in a residential area, crashing onto a medical college hostel outside the airport during lunch hour. It was headed for Gatwick Airport, south of the British capital.

City police chief G.S. Malik told Reuters that 204 bodies had been recovered from the crash site. Vidhi Chaudhary, another senior police officer, said police found one survivor who was in seat 11A, adding that there could be more survivors in hospital.

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## Briefs

**President expresses condolences**

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, has expressed sorrow over the tragic loss of life in the plane crash that occurred in Ahmedabad, India today. "Our heartfelt sympathies and condolences are with the families of the victims who have lost their loved ones in the air crash," the President said.

**UN nuclear watchdog says Iran in breach of obligations**

### DNA

THE UN nuclear watchdog's board of governors declared Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations on Thursday and it announced counter-measures, as an Iranian official said a "friendly country" had warned it of a potential Israeli attack. US and Iranian officials will hold a sixth round of talks on Tehran's accelerating uranium enrichment programme in Oman on Sunday, the Omani foreign minister said on Thursday.

**Farhatullah moves court against harassment**

### MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prominent human rights defender and former Senator Farhatullah Babar has filed a writ petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) alleging that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) conduct is "unlawful, illegal, arbitrary, and mala fide".

**Pakistan, world leaders react to Air India crash in Ahmedabad**

"Saddened by the tragic crash of Air India flight near Ahmedabad," says PM Shehbaz

### MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and global leaders expressed their grief and sorrow on the loss of at least 242 precious lives in a plane crash in India's Ahmedabad. Minutes after take-off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad, the London-bound Air India flight 171 crashed with 242 on board.

The plane came down in a residential area, crashing onto a medical college hostel outside the airport perimeter during lunch hour. It was headed for

Gatwick Airport, south of the British capital. There were no reports of survivors being found. Reacting to the plane crash incident, Prime Minister Shehbaz said: "Saddened by the tragic crash of Air India flight near Ahmedabad." He added: We extend our condolences to the families of the victims grieving this immense loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by this heartbreaking tragedy." Expressing his grief over the tragic incident, Federal Minister for Defence Khwaja Asif said: "We are deeply saddened by the tragic crash of #AirIndia Flight AI171 near Ahmedabad today."

**Pakistan hits rock bottom in WEF's global gender gap**

The annual report benchmarked the current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment

### MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan was bottom-ranked among 148 countries in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2025 – with 56.7 per cent gender parity – the highest since 2006, it emerged on Thursday. The annual report benchmarked the current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

In the latest report, Pakistan has been ranked below Sudan, (57pc, 147th), Chad (57.1pc, 146th), Iran (58.3pc,145th), Guinea (59.5pc, 144th), Democratic Republic of the Congo (60.1pc, 143rd), Niger (61.3pc,142nd), Algeria (61.4pc, 141st), and Mali (61.7pc, 140th). Occupying the bottom rank of the index, Pakistan saw its overall parity score decline from last year's edition, from 57pc to 56.7pc, the report said. Overall Pakistan has closed +2.3 of its gender gap since 2006.

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**PSX retreats after record high**

### BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: The bourse slipped into negative territory on Thursday as profit-taking emerged after the index hit an all-time high earlier in the session, with investors balancing optimism from remittance inflows and budget continuity against the need to lock in recent gains. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 124,093.12, down -259.56 points, or -0.21%, from the previous close of 124,352.68. During the session, the index climbed to an intraday high of 126,718.28, gaining 2,365.6 points, or 1.9%, crossing the 126,000 points mark. The index touched a low of 123,846.55,

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**US to pull personnel from the ME amid rising tensions with Iran**

The State Department updated its worldwide travel advisory on Wednesday evening to reflect the latest US posture. "On June 11, the Department of State ordered the departure of non-emergency US government personnel due to heightened regional tensions"

### DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that US personnel were being moved out of the Middle East because "it could be a dangerous place", adding that the United States would not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. agencies reported earlier on Wednesday that the US is preparing a partial evacuation of its Iraqi embassy and will allow military dependents to leave locations around the Middle East due to heightened security risks in the region, according to US and Iraqi sources. The four US and two Iraqi sources did not say what security risks had prompted the decision, and reports of the potential evacuation pushed up oil prices by more than four per cent. A US official said the State Department had authorised voluntary departures from Bahrain and Kuwait. The State Department updated its worldwide travel advisory on Wednesday evening to reflect the latest US posture. "On June 11, the Department of State ordered the departure of non-emergency US government personnel due to

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**Trump unveils website for \$ 5 million US residency visa**

### NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump touted a new website for his planned \$5 million US residency permit on Wednesday, saying the waiting list for the golden visa has opened on TrumpCard.gov. "Thousands have been calling and asking how they can sign up to ride a beautiful road in gaining access to the greatest country and market anywhere in the world," Trump wrote in a social media post. screengrab via Truth Social/@realDonaldTrump. Trump unveiled the first such visa aboard Air Force One in April, holding a golden prototype that bore his face and promising the special permit would

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## PHILIPPINE NATIONAL DAY



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Rana Tanveer Hussain Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez Ambassador of the Philippines and Heads of Missions of the ASEAN states cutting cake to celebrate the 127th Philippines National Day. – DNA

**What happened to Air India plane?**

### DNA

NEW DELHI: Air India Plane Crash | Noida, UP: Former Pilot Ehsan Khalid says, "... The Flight Data Recorder, Cockpit Voice Recorder and the ACARS data will tell exactly what may have happened. The visuals show that the aircraft went down while flying. Which means there was no mid-air explosion... The visuals show that the aircraft faced a loss of power... The loss of power can be due to engine malfunction, but it is very unlikely that both engines would lose power simultaneously... It is a very big engine, and it is rare that both engines lose power due to a bird hit in a one-minute duration... The pilot gave a mayday call. This means that the failure was seen in the cockpit... They went airborne while combating that failure... I don't understand why the landing gear was still down... The landing gear is raised as soon as the flight takes off... Since the landing gear was down, it is possible that a loss of engine was detected beforehand... There are many variables, and any speculation would be unjust... The biggest question is why the landing gear was not up. The flight was at a height of 600 feet... Whether it was one problem or multiple problems, no one can say anything yet..."

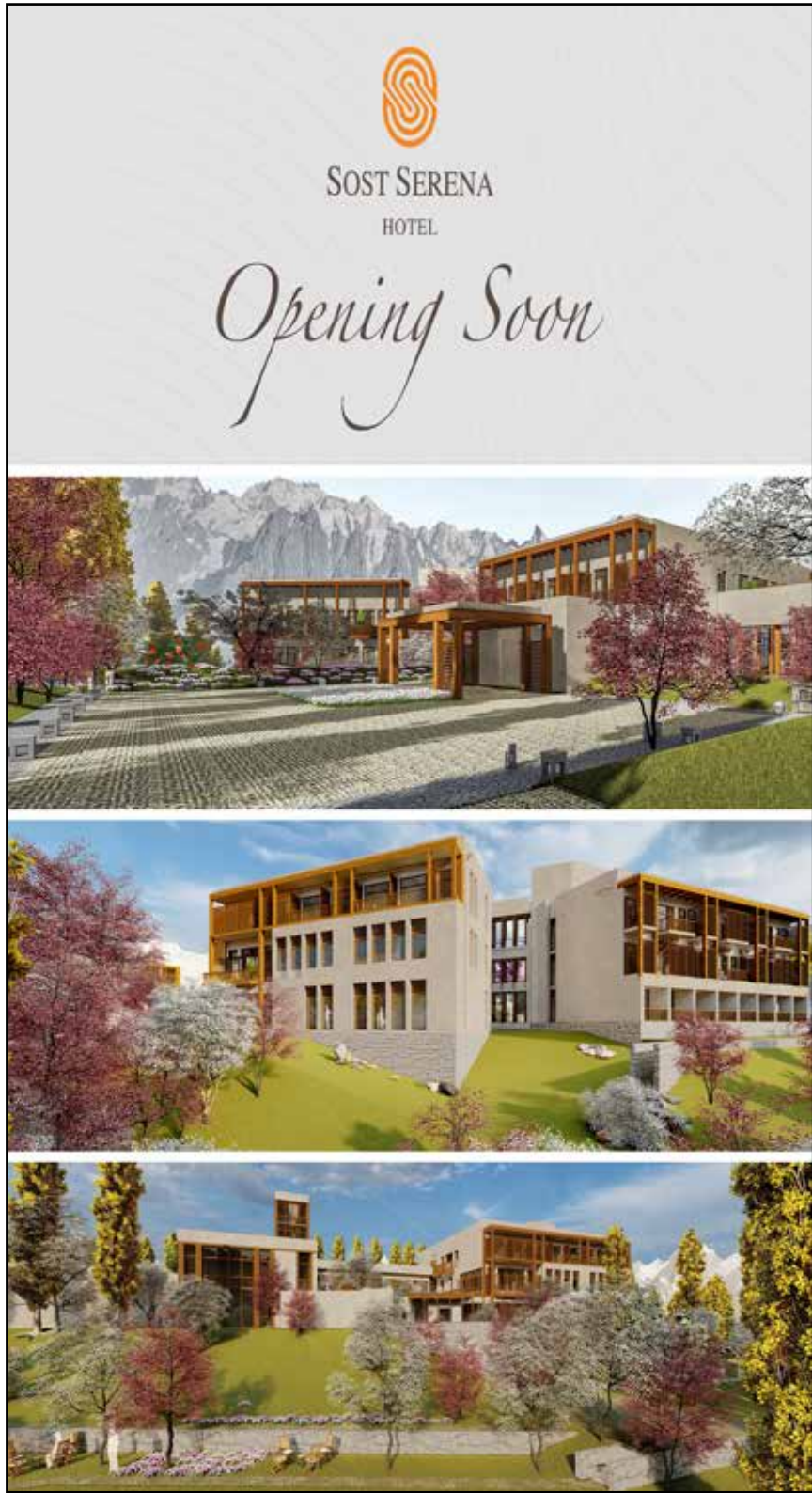
## Shehbaz in Abu Dhabi

**Pak, UAE leaders unanimous on cementing ties**

Shehbaz Sharif met with President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Abu Dhabi His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

### DNA

ABU DHABI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met with President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Abu Dhabi His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan during his official visit to the UAE today. The meeting underscored the deep-rooted, brotherly relations between Pakistan and the UAE, built on mutual trust, shared values, and a history of close cooperation. The two leaders discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest, and reaffirmed their commitment to further enhancing collaboration in key areas. The Prime Minister conveyed his sincere gratitude to the leadership of the UAE for its constructive role in helping to defuse tensions between Pakistan and India. He appreciated the UAE's positive role in promoting peace, dialogue and stability in the region. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral ties and ongoing engagements at all levels. The leaders agreed to maintain close coordination and continue working together to advance shared goals of regional peace and prosperity. The Prime Minister reiterated his earlier invitation to the President of UAE to visit Pakistan. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting Ataullah Tarar, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi were also present in the meeting.





## Call for democratic participation of educational institutions

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Muhammad Afzal Babar, the founder and central president of the Private Schools Network Islamabad, has urged private educational institutions to elect responsible representatives for a three-year term using their valuable votes. During a meeting with central and zonal officials, he highlighted the democratic participation in educational institutions. Dr. Babar also highlighted that democratic movements in education are essential for achieving national and international goals. He noted the intense competition in the upcoming Board of Governors elections for the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE), particularly for the matriculation level, where both male and female candidates are vying for positions. To prepare for these elections, the Private Schools Network's core committee has scheduled an important meeting on June 13, 2025, at the central secretariat. Dr. Babar called on all affiliated high schools to participate in this meeting and to exercise their voting rights in accordance with the decisions made by the core committee. —APP

## Pak to host regional transport ministerial moot

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to host a 2-Day Regional Transport Ministerial Conference in October 2025 which will bring together key regional stakeholders. China, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Central Asian States will be invited to attend this summit. Drones This was disclosed by Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan while chairing a high-level consultative meeting held here on Thursday, said a press release. The Minister stated that countries such as Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Iran will also be invited to attend this Conference. The aim is to strengthen both Business-to-Business and Government-to-Government connectivity across South Asian and Central Asian countries, he added. Highlighting the strategic importance of access to warm waters for Central Asian Countries, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that the expansion of rail, road and air linkages will be a key theme of the Conference. He directed that the objectives of the regional gathering should be clearly defined, with safety and security treated as top priorities. Furthermore, Abdul Aleem Khan instructed that international development partners such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other relevant institutions be invited to participate, as well. Domestic stakeholders including Pakistan Railways, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and other concerned departments will also be on board for this initiative. Drones The Minister directed the formation of an Administrative Committee to ensure seamless organization of the summit. He confirmed that the Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan will lead the Conference. —DNA

# Kundi blasts PTI for handing over province to terrorists

He took a jibe at JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, saying it took him 13 years to realize that PTI leaders were corrupt. "These political cousins are now accusing each other," he remarked, referring to the previously friendly ties between PTI and JUI-F

ABBOTTABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi accused Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of its involvement in corruption and handing over the province to terrorists. Addressing a ceremony at the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Secretariat here Thursday, the governor said those claiming to build a "State of Madina" had embezzled Rs. 33 billion worth of solar panels meant for mosques. He took a jibe at JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, saying it took him 13 years to realize that PTI leaders were corrupt. "These political cousins are now accusing each other," he remarked, referring to the previously friendly ties between PTI and JUI-F. The governor was speaking

at a ceremony held to distribute commendation certificates to PPP workers from Abbottabad who were injured during the May 26 "Save the Province" protest in Peshawar. He said the protest marked a turning point, reigniting the passion of a party that had been dormant for 15 years. "Hazara's workers faced government oppression with courage," Kundi said, adding that he had come on the direction of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to express gratitude. Kundi asserted that the PPP had proposed a salary increase for government employees in the federal budget based on inflation and would work to reverse the tax imposed on solar panels, which he said unfairly burdened the poor.

He also criticized the lack of facilities for farmers. "There's a clear difference between democratic parties and terrorist outfits," he said, challenging PTI to submit to accountability if it believed it was clean. He condemned the May 9 incidents, reiterating that PPP workers were not involved in any attacks on martyrs' memorials and accused PTI of consistently resorting to violence. He demanded FIRs be registered against the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister and Home Minister over violence against PPP workers, saying the party had approached the politically neutral police for justice. The governor also alleged that PTI leadership sought an NRO following Indian aggression, add-

ing that Pakistan Army's strong 78-hour response had shocked India and its allies. He said Bilawal Bhutto was successfully advocating Pakistan's case globally, which had boosted the country's image and the morale of 250 million citizens. On the performance of the provincial government, he said, "The Chief Minister says the province is self-sufficient, but in reality, he is self-sufficient only in corruption. It's unclear whether his statements are made during the day or at night." Kundi affirmed that the PPP would continue to raise its voice for the public and pursue peaceful protests if required. "The May 26 protest was the beginning of a movement to reclaim people's rights," he said.

"We won't hesitate to protest at the district level if necessary." He added that the Governor House was open to all, and the number of people who visited over the past year was unprecedented. PPP District President Syed Saleem Shah, also speaking at the event, condemned the police action on the May 26 protest. He warned that if the Chief Minister attempted a march on Islamabad, PPP would respond by returning to Peshawar with full force. A resolution presented by District General Secretary Iftikhar Khan Tanoli Advocate, calling for a guard of honor for Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari upon his return to Pakistan in recognition of his diplomatic achievements, was passed with a majority. —DNA

## Rangers arrest arms dealer in Malir

KARACHI: Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence based operation in Malir arrested a suspect involved in the trade of illegal weapons. Drones. According to a spokesperson for the Rangers on Thursday, the suspect, identified as Abdullah, was found in possession of a large cache of illegal automatic firearms and ammunition. During the raid, authorities recovered three 222 bore rifles with magazines, one 223 bore rifle with two magazines, one 12-bore rifle with three magazines, a total of 972 rounds of ammunition, two telescopic sights, and a mobile phone. During initial investigations the accused confessed to his involvement in the illegal buying and selling of weapons. The arrested suspect, along with the seized arms and ammunition, has been handed over to police for further legal action. —APP

## Key member of notorious gang held

ISLAMABAD :Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Kohsar Police station team carried out a major operation and apprehended a key member of an organized gang involved in theft incidents at commercial centers. An official told on Thursday said that the arrested suspect was identified as Kamran Masih, who was wanted for his involvement in multiple theft cases targeting businesses in the area. He said that stolen cash was recovered from the possession of the accused during the operation. He said that a case has been registered against the accused at Kohsar Police Station, and further investigation is underway. He said that all legal requirements would be fulfilled to ensure the accused is brought to justice and given due punishment under the law. Large-scale crackdowns are being launched against organized and active criminal gangs operating in the capital under the special directives of DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq.

## Noor Muqadam case SC releases detailed judgment

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has released the reserved judgment in Noor Muqadam murder case dismissing the appeal filed by Zahir Jaffer, the primary accused in the brutal murder of Noor Mukadam, upholding his death sentence. In a detailed 13-page verdict released on Thursday, the apex court declared that the murder was committed with extreme brutality and the convict did not deserve any leniency. The judgment endorsed the rulings of the lower courts, terming them legally sound and based on incontrovertible evidence. The court stated that there was no room for doubt regarding the guilt of accused. In a significant legal development, the Supreme Court recognized the "Silent Witness Theory," stating that video footage obtained from a reliable source can serve

as admissible evidence even in the absence of an eyewitness. The court noted that this principle has already been adopted in several countries, including the United States. The court accepted all key pieces of evidence presented during the trial — including CCTV footage, DVR recordings, hard drives, DNA reports, and the murder weapon containing blood stains — as credible. The videos showed scenes of physical torture inflicted on Noor Mukadam. The court also maintained the convictions of co-accused Muhammad Iftikhar and Muhammad Jan but ordered their release on the grounds that they have already served a substantial portion of their sentences. Justice Ali Baqar Najafi is expected to add a supplementary note to the verdict, offering further legal insight into the case. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan Y. Kistafin met with the Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training of Pakistan, Ms. Wajiha Qamar. During the meeting, they discussed the development of cooperation between the two countries in education.

## KP prepares Rs177.52b uplift budget for 50 projects

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has finalized a development budget of Rs177.52 billion for the upcoming fiscal year to fund 50 major projects in collaboration with international donor agencies. According to documents from the KP Department of Planning and Development, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank will be the leading contributors. This marks a significant increase from the current fiscal year's allocation of Rs112.14 billion in foreign-funded development projects, reflecting a growing focus on infrastructure, energy, health, and education. The key proposed allocations include, KP Road Accessibility Project — Rs28.10 billion, KP Rural Roads Development Project — Rs22.40 billion, KP Cities Improvement Project — Rs18.20 billion, Balakot Hydropower Project — Rs11.20 billion, Integrated Tourism Development — Rs8.40 billion, Irrigation and Drainage Rehabilitation — Rs7 billion, Madyan Hydropower Project — Rs7 billion, National Health Support Program — Rs6.44 billion, Human Capital Investment (Health) — Rs5.88 billion, Human Capital Investment (Education) — Rs5.04 billion and Non-DHQ Hospital Revamping — Rs5.60 billion. The other notable allocations include, Gabral-Kalam Hydropower Project — Rs5.60 billion, KP Rural Investment Program — Rs4.20 billion, FATA Infrastructure Program — Rs3.92 billion, Rural Economic Transformation Project — Rs3.92 billion and Food Security Support Project — Rs3.08 billion. The budget 2025-26 is expected to enhance infrastructure, promote sustainable energy, and uplift public services across the province. With major backing from international development partners, the initiative would play a crucial role in the province's long-term economic growth and stability. —DNA

## Bugti, Abbasi discuss shuttle train service project

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti in a meeting with Federal Minister for Railways, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Thursday discussed key developments in the province's railway infrastructure, particularly the proposed Sariab-Kuchlak shuttle train service in Quetta. During the meeting, both leaders reviewed the plan to launch a commuter train service from Sariab Station in Quetta to Kuchlak. The project is

aimed at improving public transport in and around the provincial capital, offering better travel facilities to residents. Railway officials briefed the Chief Minister on the technical and operational aspects of the proposed shuttle service. The 32-kilometer railway track, which connects Quetta to Kuchlak, is being considered for revitalization and adaptation to support the shuttle service. As per the briefing, the proposed

project will include five stations: Sariab, Quetta, Sheikh Manda, Baleli, and Kuchlak. The estimated cost of the project has been placed at Rs. 283 million. Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi also announced that a world-class football ground will be constructed in Quetta with the assistance of Pakistan Railways, reflecting the federal government's broader commitment to social development in Balochistan. Drones Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that the project is being seriously considered for implementation. He added that the shuttle service would not only provide reliable transportation to the people of Quetta and surrounding areas but also help ease the growing traffic congestion in the city. CM Balochistan said "we aim to provide essential public facilities to our citizens by expanding railway services in Balochistan. The shuttle service project is viable and will offer significant travel facilities to local residents," said CM Bugti. Both sides expressed their commitment to ensuring timely execution of the project in coordination with all stakeholders.

## Development Projects for Islamabad reflect the vision of a Model City: Ahsan

We will extend all possible support to make the capital a model, clean, and tourist-friendly city," says UBG Central Core Committee Member

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, a member of the Central Core Committee of UBG, appreciated the proposed development projects for Islamabad in the Federal Budget 2025-26, stating that these measures lay the foundation for making the capital an exemplary city of the Islamic world in the fields of health, education, security, and tourism. Speaking to a representative delegation of citizens, he specifically thanked the federal government and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb for including projects such

as a modern cardiology block, the establishment of Danish University, and a cancer hospital in Islamabad. He said these initiatives would provide quality healthcare and educational facilities not only to the residents of Islamabad but also to people from surrounding areas. Ahsan Bakhtawari stated that the budget allocates Rs. 3



billion for the treatment of stroke and ICU upgrades at PIMS Hospital, and Rs. 800 million for the expansion of the emergency block, which will bring revolutionary improvements in emergency healthcare in the capital. He welcomed the allocation of Rs. 1.5 billion for Federal Polyclinic, which includes the establishment of a modern cardiology unit. He noted that this old but vital medical institution would now be equipped with advanced machinery and medical facilities, becoming a specialized care center for heart patients and benefitting hundreds of thousands of citizens.

He also called the allocation of Rs. 2.05 billion for equipment for the cancer hospital in Islamabad a commendable step. In terms of transport and urban facilities, Bakhtawari said that Rs. 400 million for the construction of 10th Avenue and Rs. 100 million for the metro bus extension to New Islamabad Airport would not only improve traffic flow but also enhance city planning and urban organization. He termed the Rs. 750 million allocated for municipal schemes an important element of public relief, as these funds will be used for projects such as street repair, clean water supply,

sewerage, and park rehabilitation. He further noted that projects related to the National Police Hospital, police infrastructure, biometric upgrades, and improvement of passport offices are part of the Ministry of Interior's development program, which will enhance the performance of security and law enforcement institutions. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari emphasized that it is essential to make Islamabad a model city for the Islamic world in terms of health, education, and tourism, and the projects announced by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in the current budget reflect this very vision.





National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02/Italy National/ Independence Day

June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day

June 06/Sweden National Day

June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)

June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution& Army Day

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

June 12/Philippines Independence Day

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

June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day

June 17/Iceland National Day

June 18/Seychells National Day

June 25/Croatia National Day

June 25/Mozambique National Day

June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day

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RDA.....5555864

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Cantonment Board 9270151-3

**Water Tank**

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Severe heatwave grips Pindi, temperatures rises to 45°C

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Thursday stated that Islamabad, Rawalpindi, the Potohar region, and upper Punjab may experience cloudy weather, scattered rain, and windstorms between Friday and Wednesday (June 13–16)

RAWALPINDI: The intense heatwave continues in Rawalpindi, with temperatures touched 45°C on Thursday. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has warned that the extreme heat will persist till Friday, with daytime temperatures 5-7°C above normal in central and upper Punjab, including Rawalpindi. Drones Authorities have urged residents to avoid direct sunlight between 11:00 AM and 4:00 PM and to stay hydrated to prevent heatstroke and dehydration. The intense heat poses serious health risks, particularly for children, the elderly, and outdoor workers. According to the MET Office, the high-pressure system in the upper atmosphere is trapping hot continental air over most parts of the country, coupled with shallow westerly trough may bring dust storms, rain, or thunderstorms to parts of

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, South Punjab, and Kashmir by evening, but Rawalpindi is expected to remain hot and dry. The MET predicted the extreme heat will continue on Friday, with partly cloudy conditions and possible dust storms in nearby regions. However, Rawalpindi is likely to experience persistent hot and dry weather, with no immediate relief in sight. Residents are advised to take precautions, including avoiding unnecessary outdoor activities during peak heat hours, drinking plenty of water, wearing light and loose clothing, and watching for signs of heatstroke such as dizziness, nausea, or high body temperature. Health Authorities have also advised citizens to prevent unnecessary travel and the direct sun. Doctors urged citizens to increase use of hydrants to avoid dehydra-

tion. Earlier, The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Thursday stated that Islamabad, Rawalpindi, the Potohar region, and upper Punjab may experience cloudy weather, scattered rain, and windstorms between Friday and Wednesday (June 13–16). An impact-based weather advisory issued by NDMA's National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) has urged the public to take precautions and stay updated via the NDMA app, as extreme heat is expected to affect the rest of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, some areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), from Friday to Wednesday (13–18 June). A weak western weather system is forecast to affect the upper regions of the country from 13th to 16th June, which may influence weather conditions across multiple

provinces. In Punjab, hot weather is expected to persist throughout the week. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), mostly hot conditions are predicted, but scattered rain and windstorms are likely in several districts, including Chitral, Dir, Haripur, Karak, Kohat, Kohistan, Khyber, Kurram, Mansehra, Mohmand, Nowshera, Malakand, Charsadda, Abbottabad, Bannu, Buner, Hazara, Peshawar, Swabi, Swat, Waziristan, and adjoining areas. Sindh and Balochistan are forecast to remain predominantly hot and dry throughout the advisory period. In Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), hot weather will prevail, although areas such as Astore, Skardu, Hunza, Shigar, Bagh, and Neelum Valley may receive isolated rainfall from 13th to 16th June. NDMA, through NEOC, is closely monitoring the

situation and maintaining coordination with provincial and district authorities to ensure timely preparedness and response. The public, particularly those residing in heat-prone regions, is advised to take necessary precautions during extreme temperatures. These include staying hydrated, avoiding outdoor activities during peak heat hours (11:00 AM to 4:00 PM), wearing light and breathable clothing, and checking on vulnerable individuals such as children, the elderly, and those with health conditions. It is also crucial never to leave children or pets unattended in parked vehicles. Travelers and tourists planning to visit northern or hilly regions are urged to remain updated with local weather conditions and follow safety advisories. For real-time updates and alerts, download and use the "Pak NDMA Disaster Alert" mobile application.

## MOFA hosts festival showcasing Pak's mango diplomacy

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday organized a colorful Mango Festival here, bringing together members of the diplomatic corps and their families in a celebration of Pakistan's national fruit. The event served as a unique platform for cultural exchange and informal diplomacy and a tasteful reminder of the country's soft power and cultural diplomacy. Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan was the chief guest of the event who highlighted the importance of mangoes—not only as Pakistan's national fruit but also as a symbol of friendship and goodwill. "Pakistan's mangoes are among the finest in the world. Through this festival, we aim to share a cherished part of our culture with our friends in the diplomatic community," Jam Kamal said in his brief remarks. He said that while Pakistan is among the top producers of mangoes, there is still significant untapped potential in the mango industry that needs to be explored. He also referred to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's 'mango diplomacy', emphasizing how the country's signature fruit is being used to strengthen diplomatic ties and promote a positive image of Pakistan internationally. Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch on the occasion highlighted the significance of the event as a celebration of Pakistan's iconic fruit—the mango, often referred to as the 'king of fruits'. She noted that Pakistan is the fifth-largest producer of mangoes in the world, that shows the country's strong agricultural potential. She further emphasized the government's commitment to modernizing the agriculture sector, with a focus on enhancing the export of value-added agricultural products. The goal, she said, is to empower farmers and exporters to compete effectively in international markets. She also thanked the Chief Executive Officer of the Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani for supporting the ministry in organizing the event.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Head Political Press Sections, China embassy Wang Shengjie met with Director General NAB Islamabad Waqar Chohan. —DNA

## Budget aligns with current realities, defense hike laudable

ISLAMABAD: A respected business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt stated on Thursday that the newly announced budget aligns with the pressing demands of the time. However, he expressed concern over the limited relief extended to the public and the salaried class. He stated that, in light of the extraordinary economic pressures, stringent IMF conditions, rising global tensions, and ongoing Indian hostilities, the federal budget addresses necessary defense, fiscal, and strategic considerations. In a statement issued today,

Shahid Rashid Butt said that the increase in the defense allocation was inevitable, as the prevailing regional situation, a resurgence in terrorism, India's water aggression, and emerging unconventional threats have made national security the foremost priority. The 21 percent hike in the defense budget reflects the state's seriousness in safeguarding its sovereignty and survival. He added that the revenue target has been ambitiously raised by 18.7 percent to Rs 14.13 trillion despite a shortfall of Rs 1.07 trillion in the current fiscal year. Despite repeated claims of expanding the tax net, industrial units operating in tribal areas

have not been fully brought under the tax framework. It is crucial that the concerns of the business community, particularly the controversial tax on the emerging solar energy sector, are addressed with sincerity. He acknowledged the positive aspects of the budget, including incentives for the revival of the industry and construction sectors, which could help stimulate economic activity. Nonetheless, he criticized the reduction in the higher education budget from Rs 65 billion to Rs 39.5 billion, calling it equivalent to cutting investment in future generations. Similarly, he noted that an allocation of only Rs 2.38 billion for climate change

mitigation is insufficient, given the gravity of the crisis. Shahid Rashid Butt emphasized that the budget-making process is just the beginning. To ensure the successful implementation of fiscal measures, we need not just political stability and national consensus, but also a constructive dialogue. He urged all political parties to refrain from criticism for its own sake and instead work collaboratively with the government to improve the budget in the national interest. Only through such collective effort, he said, can Pakistan move towards economic self-reliance, national security, and sustained development.

## Jaffar express derailes near Taxila

WAH CANTT: A Quetta-bound passenger train on Thursday derailed near Margalla tunnel in Taxila, causing the suspension of railway traffic between Rawalpindi-Peshawar sections. No casualties were reported in the accident. According to the railway authorities, the 40 down Quetta-bound Jaffar express coming from Peshawar train derailed due to "technical" reasons, and the train traffic would be restored "soon" after maintenance of the affected track and of damaged coaches.—APP

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## UST hosts assistive technology, inclusion summit

ISLAMABAD: The Assistive Technology and Inclusion Summit (ATIS-2025), themed "Transformative Solutions for Inclusive Development: The Role of Innovation in Fueling an Accessible and Equitable World," was successfully held at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) on Thursday, bringing together over 200 changemakers, experts, and stakeholders from across Pakistan. Jointly organized by NUST and the Pak Everbright Development Organization (PEDO), the summit served as a critical platform to address the growing need for assistive technologies, especially digital devices, aimed at enhancing the quality of life for differently-abled individuals and senior citizens. The event underscored the importance of bridging the gap between users and service providers, raising awareness, and ensuring the cost-effective availability and maintenance of assistive devices within the country. A major highlight of the summit was a high-level panel discussion

titled "Innovation for Accessibility: The Role of Academia, Industry, and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Advancing Inclusion." The session featured thought leaders and industry professionals who shared insightful perspectives on current resources, challenges, and collaborative strategies to foster an inclusive future. Adding to the summit's milestones was the inauguration of the NUST Disability Resource Center (NDRC). Launched in collaboration with PEDO, the center aims to promote inclusive education at the tertiary level and provide an accessible and supportive environment for differently-abled students. "ATIS-2025 marks a significant step towards a truly inclusive society in Pakistan," stated Shahab Ud Din, CEO of PEDO. "Our collective efforts today will ignite further research and development, and empower stakeholders to drive digital innovation for accessibility," he added. Ahmad Al-Mosa Al-Malkawi,

Head of the Physical Rehabilitation Programme (PRP) at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), praised the initiative, emphasizing that the ICRC recognizes the vital role of physical rehabilitation and assistive technology in empowering persons with disabilities. "ATIS-2025 has provided an invaluable platform to share knowledge, foster collaboration, and accelerate inclusive solutions," he remarked. Expected outcomes from the summit include the initiation of pilot projects for assistive technology research, the establishment of a robust referral mechanism linking beneficiaries with service providers, and enhanced data collection on the needs and availability of assistive devices in Pakistan. This landmark summit aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), reinforcing Pakistan's commitment to inclusive and equitable development on a global scale.—DNA



## Briefs

**First woman SHO posted in male station as six new SHOs appointed**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory Police on Thursday appointed six new Station House Officers (SHOs), including Sub-Inspector Misbah Shehbaz, who made history by becoming the first woman officer to lead a male police station in the capital. An official told APP that the decision was taken under the directives of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq as part of ongoing efforts to eliminate gender discrimination in the police department. He said Misbah Shehbaz was posted as SHO Phulgran the first such posting of a woman officer in a male police station in Islamabad's history. He said that Alamgir Kha was appointed as SHO Koral, Zahid Shah as SHO Loi Bher, Shah Nawaz as SHO Shams Colony, Mansabdar as SHO Nilore, and Basreen Akhtar as Incharge of the Women Police Station. He said that these appointments were made after the SHOs of Koral, Phulgran, Shams Colony, and Loi Bher — namely Rizwan Gondal, Abdul Hameed, Khalid Mehmood, and Muhammad Saleem — were 15 closed. DIG Jawad Tariq reiterated that such reshuffles aim to enhance performance and accountability, while affirming the department's continued commitment to empowering women officers through leadership roles.—APP

**AIOU Fall semester admissions to begin**

ISLAMABAD: In line with its mission to bring the light of education to every home, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the commencement of admissions for the Autumn Semester 2025, starting July 1, 2025. The admissions will cover all academic programs, including: Matric (Secondary School)FA, I.Com (Intermediate), Associate Degrees (BA, B.Com, BBA), Associate Degree in Education, B.Ed, BS, Master's, MS, M.Phil, PhD, Diploma and Certificate Courses, said a press release on Thursday. To ensure easy access, detailed program information, prospectuses and admission forms will be available online at AIOU's official website: www.aiou.edu.pk starting from July 1. As per the directions of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, all regional campuses across Pakistan will provide free internet and computer facilities at their students' facilitation centers. Trained staff will be present to guide and assist students in completing the online admission process smoothly. Drones In a special message to aspiring students, Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that AIOU dreams of delivering education to every individual — no matter their age.—APP

# Meta AI introduces generative video editing for creativity

Designed for accessibility, Meta AI's video editing feature enables users to create high-quality edits without prior expertise. Upload a video to the Meta AI app, Meta.AI web, or Edits app, and choose from over 50 preset editing prompts. For a limited time, users can experiment with 10-second transformations at no cost

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Meta AI is unveiling a generative AI video editing feature, now available in the Meta AI app, the Meta AI website, and the Edits app. This new capability allows users to enhance short-form videos through a selection of preset AI prompts, transforming elements like outfits, locations, and light-

ing with a simple tap.

Inspired by Meta's Movie Gen models, this release marks the first step in expanding AI-driven video generation across Meta's platforms. Later this year, users will have the ability to customize edits through their own text prompts, unlocking even greater creative possibilities. Designed for accessibility, Meta AI's video editing feature enables users to create high-quality

edits without prior expertise. Upload a video to the Meta AI app, Meta.AI web, or Edits app, and choose from over 50 preset editing prompts. For a limited time, users can experiment with 10-second transformations at no cost. Whether turning footage into a graphic novel-style animation, adjusting rainy-day lighting for a dreamlike glow, or reimagining a scene as a video game with cinematic effects, Meta AI

seamlessly applies artistic enhancements. Edited videos can be shared directly to Facebook and Instagram from the Meta AI and Edits apps, or posted to the Discover feed via the Meta.AI website. This latest innovation underscores Meta's dedication to AI-powered creativity. Built alongside input from content creators, the feature is designed to integrate seamlessly into the

creative process, offering new ways to engage audiences. Meta AI's journey toward video innovation builds on years of research. Starting with Make-A-Scene in 2022 and progressing to Llama Image models and Movie Gen, the company has continuously advanced generative AI capabilities. Now, with this first AI video editing feature, Meta AI is redefining how users bring their creative visions to life.



ISLAMABAD: Russian artists playing musical instruments and entertaining people during evening of music as Bogema, dynamic Russian duo of Evgenii Soprunov (Balalaika) and Kristina Kochmarik (Violin), at PNCA .

**Efforts afoot to modernize carriage factory**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways is taking significant strides toward modernization with its Carriage Factory in Islamabad now fully equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi highlighted the progress during a media briefing, emphasizing the production of high-quality coaches built daily through a combination of skilled labor, technological innovation and rigorous quality control. The minister said that the manufacturing of modern passenger coaches is ongoing, with a strong focus on passenger comfort and safety. "At every stage of production, we ensure both quality and durability," he said. "Our expert engineers and craftsmen are committed to delivering excellence in every detail." He said that each coach undergoes meticulous inspections using the latest tools and techniques.—APP

## Islamabad sets cleanliness example on Eid ul-Azha

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A special ceremony was organized in Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday to honor the efforts of sanitation workers, following the successful execution of Civic body's "Zero Waste Operation." In a commendable display of teamwork and public service, the capital city maintained exemplary cleanliness during Eid ul-Azha, earning praise from citizens and government officials alike, said the interior minister Mohsin Naqvi addressing the employees of CDA. The initiative, led by Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, saw the participation of over 2,500 sanitation workers and 250 vehicles who worked tirelessly across both urban and rural parts of Islamabad. Their efforts

resulted in the collection of 2,400 tons of offal and waste over just three days. Addressing the ceremony, Minister Naqvi paid tribute to the dedication of the sanitation staff. "The workers performed their duties day and night with great commitment," he stated. He expressed his gratitude to all stakeholders involved, including CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner Irfan Memon, Assistant Commissioners, and field teams for their leadership and coordination. To appreciate their hard work, Naqvi announced a bonus equal to one month's basic salary for all employees who took part in the operation. Additionally, daily wage workers will receive a cash reward of Rs. 15,000 each. Naqvi emphasized that the public's positive response was a true acknowledgment

of the CDA's performance. "Citizens expressed great satisfaction with the cleanliness across Islamabad during Eid," he noted. He also praised the cooperation of the public, which he said played a crucial role in the operation's success. Advanced technology was employed to ensure effective monitoring, with drone cameras helping to oversee the entire cleanliness drive. The Safe City team was particularly commended for its role in maintaining surveillance and coordination. "All departments including CDA, MCI, District Administration, Islamabad Police, Safe City, and Traffic Police worked in harmony, setting aside institutional differences for the greater good," said Naqvi. "From officers to field workers, everyone delivered as one team."

**Budget reflects govt's efforts: Saeed**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Senior leader Dr. Saeed Elahi Thursday termed the budget 2025-26 as balanced, stating the government presented it in line with the people's expectations and expressed hope that it would boost the country's economy. In an exclusive conversation with PTV, Dr. Saeed Elahi highlighted the key features of the budget, noting that the government has taken significant steps to benefit the common man. He particularly emphasized the 10% increase in salaries for government employees, which would provide relief to the middle and lower classes. Dr. Elahi further stated that the tax reduction announced in the budget would also have a positive impact on the economy. By reducing taxes, the government aims to increase revenue collection in the long run by bringing more people into the tax net and encouraging businesses to expand, he mentioned.—APP

## SPARC, Child Protection Bureau mark Child Labour Day

ISLAMABAD: On World Child Labour Day, leaders from the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau, Punjab and SPARC emphasized the need for collective action, strict implementation of laws and media awareness drives to protect Pakistan's children from labour exploitation. They called to end child labour exploitation in Pakistan. Affecting over 20 million children, child labour remains a pressing issue in the country. The organizations emphasized the need for strict enforcement of laws and media-led preventive awareness drives to protect children's rights and prevent exploitation. Chairperson Sara Ahmad of the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau, Punjab, in a conversation with a private news channel, urged the government, civil society, and media to work together and implement practical measures to eliminate child labour. Sara Ahmad stressed that strict laws and proactive media awareness campaigns are essential for preventing child labor and building a brighter future, adding, ignoring children's problems would compound the nation's current difficulties, creating even bigger issues down the line. The issue of child labour in Pakistan is a pressing concern, with millions of children forced into labour due to ineffective laws and insufficient measures, she highlighted. According to recent statistics, the ratio of child labour in Punjab stands at a staggering 14%. This highlights the need for urgent action to protect children's rights and prevent them from being exploited, she added. To address this issue, Punjab is taking a pioneering step by introducing a Child Protection Policy, the first of its kind in any province, she said, adding, this policy aims to provide a comprehensive framework for protecting children from exploitation and abuse. However, despite this initiative, the sheer number of child labourers across Pakistan remains a daunting challenge.—DNA

## 100 years of int'l solidarity for strong journalism and trade unionism

TARIQ USMANI



THE initial preparations for the 100th anniversary celebrations of the International Federation of Journalists, the largest representative organization of journalists around the world, have begun. It has been decided to hold this representative organization of journalists from May 4 to 7, 2026 in Paris, France, the birthplace of this representative organization of journalists. This is going to be a representative and powerful meeting of the IFJ Congress and the main theme of this centenary session is n"100 years of international solidarity for strong journalism and trade unionism" Solidarity for press freedom in

the world, quality journalism and fair working conditions for members of all member countries of the organization, the journalist trade union is going to start its centenary celebrations with a strong message and a strategy of struggle for the future. The IFJ will also democratically elect its new leadership for the next three years at this powerful centenary congress. It is expected that more than 300 IFJ-affiliated journalistic organizations and associations from around the world will participate in this centenary congress to be held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, and this major global meeting will leave its delegates with a message of renewed strength, hope and unity.

The IFJ, the world's largest organization of journalists, represents more than 600,000 (six hundred thousand) media professionals from 187 organizations, trade unions and associations of journalists in more than 140 countries. This international organization of journalists was first established in 1926 in Paris, France as the Federation of International Journalists (FIJ). Later, in 1946, it was renamed the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ). However, as a result of the Cold War, the organization lost many of

its Western members. The current form of this world organization of journalists was reborn worldwide in 1952 in Brussels, Belgium, as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). In Pakistan, the only truly representative organization of journalists across the country, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), is affiliated with this world organization (IFJ), whose president is Rana Muhammad Azeem and secretary general is Shakeel Ahmed. The International Federation of Journalists, together with journalist organizations around the world, raises a strong voice to defend the rights of journalists, their fair salaries, job protection, press freedom and social justice. It not only supports journalist organizations at the international level, but also raises its voice for the abolition of oppressive laws of governments against journalists and media workers through peaceful struggle to protect the professional rights of the media industry and journalists. It also organizes collective actions through its wide platforms to lift government laws against the media from United Nations platforms. The International Federation of Journalists regularly organizes training workshops and seminars in member countries around the world to improve the profession-

al skills of journalists and make them aware of modern technology. This global organization of journalists, in addition to fighting for the rights of journalists around the world and providing them with professional training, also provides humanitarian financial assistance to journalists in need from international safety funds, while also making arrangements for the safe evacuation of journalists trapped in war-torn countries with the help of international aid agencies. The IFJ does not grant membership to any organization with a political or religious viewpoint, but rather promotes collective action to defend fundamental human rights, press freedom, democracy, the rights of journalists and free access to information for media representatives and raises its voice for this right. All policies of the IFJ are decided democratically in Congress meetings held every three years and these decisions are implemented by the Secretariat under the guidance of an elected Executive Committee. The IFJ has its central secretariat in Brussels, Belgium, while there are separate offices for Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle-East. —The Writer is President, Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists tariqusmani007@gmail.com

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**RCCI strongly condemns arrest powers for inland revenue officers**

RAWALPINDI : The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) convened an emergency meeting of the business community to express strong condemnation of the proposed provisions in the Finance Bill 2025-26 that grant Inland Revenue officers the explicit authority to arrest company directors, CEOs, CFOs, and other corporate officials. Addressing the meeting, RCCI President Usman Shaukat and Group Leader Sohail Altaf raised serious concerns over the proposed legislation. "Granting unchecked arrest powers to Inland Revenue officers is deeply alarming and will open the door to harassment, bribery, blackmail, and abuse of authority," said President Shaukat. He warned that such measures would severely damage both domestic and foreign investor confidence and deteriorate Pakistan's already fragile business-friendly environment. Sohail Altaf called on the Prime Minister to take immediate notice of the issue and emphasized that if the proposal is not withdrawn, the business community across the country may call for a nationwide strike. The meeting was attended by former RCCI President Najam Rehan, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, Executive Committee members, and other chamber members. The RCCI leadership also strongly objected to the proposed 18% tax on solar energy, terming it a discouragement to green energy initiatives. "The budget lacks any meaningful steps to promote industry and exports.—APP



## A budget for the few

ON June 10, 2025, the federal government unveiled the much-anticipated annual budget, only to be met with widespread rejection from the country's business community. Business chambers across Pakistan have strongly criticized the budget, calling it regressive, unjust, and riddled with hidden taxes. Their concerns highlight a growing disconnect between policymakers and the realities faced by taxpayers and common citizens alike.

At the heart of the criticism lies the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) approach to taxation. Instead of expanding the tax net and bringing non-filers into the system, the government appears to have doubled down on squeezing those who are already compliant. This has led to frustration among registered taxpayers, especially businesses that already contribute significantly to the national exchequer. While these contributors are burdened further, those operating outside the FBR's reach continue to evade their responsibilities, escaping without consequence.

A major demand from business leaders is the implementation of the Point of Sale (POS) system across all commercial outlets, regardless of size. This would ensure proper documentation and help widen the tax base – a necessary step toward a fair and sustainable economic model. However, the government has once again failed to enforce this system comprehensively, allowing the informal economy to thrive unchecked.

In another blow to fairness, the budget has reportedly increased taxes on small cars – a move that will hurt the middle class disproportionately. At a time when inflation is already eating into household incomes, the decision to further tax affordable transportation adds insult to injury. The salaried class received marginal relief, but the average citizen – the common man – was left out entirely. Prices of essential items continue to rise, and no tangible steps have been announced to control inflation or stabilize the economy.

Equally troubling is the glaring inequity in tax exemptions. Certain enterprises and conglomerates, particularly those linked to powerful forces, have allegedly been granted exemptions – a pattern that reeks of favoritism. This not only undermines the principle of tax justice but also deepens public distrust in the system. Moreover, macroeconomic indicators offer little cause for optimism. The Pakistani rupee continues to slide, with the dollar exchange rate at an all-time high, putting additional pressure on imports and domestic prices. Despite government rhetoric, exports remain stagnant, reflecting deeper structural issues that the budget fails to address.

In sum, this budget is seen not as a roadmap to economic recovery, but as a missed opportunity. It ignores the urgent need to broaden the tax base, fails to address inflation, and offers no meaningful relief to the masses. If the government truly wants to stabilize the economy and foster public confidence, it must engage with stakeholders, embrace transparency, and introduce bold structural reforms – not burden the honest while shielding the privileged.

Without these corrective steps, the gap between the governed and the government will only widen – and the cost of such disconnection will be paid not just in rupees, but in public trust.

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## Trump's China flip-flop raises questions

IN yet another dramatic turn of events, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that a trade deal with China has been finalized and will soon be signed. He also stated that he is planning to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the near future, adding that China is "a good country" and "a great friend." These remarks mark a significant shift from Trump's earlier rhetoric, which often painted China as an economic adversary and strategic threat. This sudden pivot raises important questions about the consistency and reliability of the President's foreign policy stance.

When Donald Trump assumed office, he was unflinching in his criticism of China. He accused Beijing of manipulating its currency, stealing American jobs, and engaging in unfair trade practices. His administration imposed sweeping tariffs, igniting a trade war that sent ripples through global markets and strained diplomatic ties. China was labeled a usurper, and relations between the two powers reached a low point not seen in decades.

Today, however, the tone is strikingly different. The very nation once blamed for America's economic woes is now being praised as a valuable ally. Trump's endorsement of China as a "good country" not only contradicts his earlier positions but also exposes the unpredictable nature of his diplomacy. While a thaw in U.S.-China relations is certainly welcome in an increasingly tense global environment, such abrupt reversals do little to inspire confidence—either domestically or internationally.

This inconsistency in messaging places American foreign policy in a difficult position. The U.S. State Department and other diplomatic institutions are often left scrambling to keep pace with the President's shifting statements. Allies and adversaries alike find it hard to discern the true direction of U.S. policy, which can undermine trust and complicate negotiations. For China, the sudden friendliness may be viewed with suspicion—after all, if Trump could turn so quickly from foe to friend, what assurance is there that he won't reverse course again?

Moreover, the upcoming trade pact, while a potential win for economic diplomacy, must be scrutinized for its long-term implications. Will it address the core issues that sparked the trade war, such as intellectual property theft and market access? Or will it simply serve as a temporary truce, masking unresolved tensions beneath a veneer of progress? Trump's declaration may signal a political victory, but the real test lies in the durability and substance of the agreement. Time will tell whether this new chapter in U.S.-China relations is a genuine shift or merely another episode in a presidency marked by unpredictability.

What is clear, however, is that consistency and strategic coherence are vital in managing one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. If President Trump truly wishes to foster lasting cooperation with China, he must move beyond impulsive declarations and adopt a stable, principled approach—something that has so far eluded his administration.

# How China outsmarted the United States

Qamar Bashir



The Trump administration attempted to reverse this trend by imposing tariffs on Chinese goods, hoping to hurt China economically and financially. But it underestimated China's resilience. Instead of collapsing, China retaliated with its own tariffs and expanded trade with other partners, particularly in the Global South. Worse still, as China invested its trade surpluses into infrastructure..

FOR the past 30 years, the United States has unintentionally paved the path for China's meteoric rise. While America slept, content in its global dominance, China was meticulously building—quietly, efficiently, and comprehensively. And now, in 2025, the tables are turning. The U.S. is waking up to the realization that it has become alarmingly dependent on its once-silent economic rival. China's strategy was never haphazard. It was deliberate and state-driven. It began by creating massive industrial infrastructure at home, offering subsidies to companies, absorbing their liabilities, and providing utilities at heavily reduced costs. This resulted in the emergence of highly cost-effective yet qualitative manufacturing clusters, backed by a skilled and disciplined workforce trained through a state-supported education system. In contrast, U.S. industries were burdened with high labor costs, stringent environmental regulations, and legal hurdles. Setting up industrial infrastructure in America was a slow, expensive, and risky endeavor. Faced with this disparity, American corporations found shifting production to China not just appealing, but imperative for survival.

China's strategy went beyond just making goods. It invited American companies to "design in the U.S., manufacture in China." The U.S. retained the illusion of control while surrendering its industrial edge. Over time, China began replacing foreign designs with its own. It sent millions of students to top U.S. universities, many in STEM fields, and used that knowledge to build its domestic R&D base. China's R&D spending now exceeds \$460 billion annually—second only to the U.S., but growing rapidly and backed by centralized national direction. One of the most egregious strategic errors was in the mineral and rare-earth sector. Instead of setting up refining units within U.S. borders, American firms began shipping raw materials to China for processing, lured by low costs. Today, China controls over 60% of the world's rare earth refining capacity and 80% of global graphite processing—both critical for high-tech industries like electric vehicles, defense, and semiconductors. China also capitalized on its dominance in global shipping. As the U.S. shipbuilding industry shrank—now ac-

counting for less than 1% of global output—China surged ahead. Over 43% of the world's commercial vessels are now built in Chinese shipyards. As a result, the entire global supply chain, including America's, relies on Chinese-built vessels operating in Chinese-managed logistics routes. As of 2024, China leads the world in AI research publications, quantum computing patents, 5G infrastructure, and has even launched its own satellite navigation system, BeiDou, which rivals America's GPS. In semiconductors, China now dominates several parts of the value chain—from mining critical minerals to chip assembly—while the U.S. struggles to regain ground after decades of neglect.

On the energy front, China saw the future. Knowing that high-tech industries—from AI to quantum computing—require colossal amounts of power, it rapidly expanded its energy infrastructure. Between 2000 and 2023, China added over 1,200 GW of power capacity. It now has the largest solar, wind, and hydroelectric capacity in the world, along with growing nuclear and coal infrastructure. The U.S., meanwhile, has suffered from energy bottlenecks and aging grids, with nearly 70% of transmission lines more than 25 years old.

Then came China's most brilliant geopolitical stroke—the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Launched in 2013, BRI is a multitrillion-dollar infrastructure, trade, and development strategy connecting Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. China built highways, ports, railroads, and energy grids in 153 countries, creating a global trade and political network. The result? China no longer relied solely on exports to the U.S. Today, American demand accounts for just 12% of China's exports—down from over 20% two decades ago.

The Trump administration attempted to reverse this trend by imposing tariffs on Chinese goods, hoping to hurt China economically and financially. But it underestimated China's resilience. Instead of collapsing, China retaliated with its own tariffs and expanded trade with other partners, particularly in the Global South.

Worse still, as China invested its trade surpluses into infrastructure and defense, the U.S. was caught off guard. China now boasts the world's largest navy, cutting-edge

hypersonic missiles, space-based sensors, and cyberwarfare capabilities. Its military is indigenous, highly disciplined, and rapidly modernizing.

Even the once-unquestioned dominance of the U.S. dollar is under threat. BRICS nations, along with others like Brazil, Russia, India, and Saudi Arabia are exploring non-dollar trade settlements. If this trend continues, and the dollar loses its reserve currency status, America's economic supremacy could be fatally undermined.

What hurts more is the realization that the U.S. lacks any meaningful leverage left both economic and military. China has become self-reliant in industrial inputs, diversified its markets through BRI, and built independent platforms in AI, defense, and digital currency. The strength of America once lay not just in wealth, but in strategic foresight. That foresight is what's missing now. Internal political divisions, power struggles between Congress, the Senate, and the White House, the bureaucracy, civil society and Judiciary, and a weakening consensus on national direction are all stalling progress. Yet, all is not lost. The United States still has world-class universities, unmatched innovative talent, abundant natural resources, and deep global alliances. What it needs is a paradigm shift—not just in economics, but in strategic, technological, and geopolitical thinking. It must rebuild its industrial base, repatriate key supply chains, invest in new power infrastructure, create its own version of BRI, and, above all, unite its political machinery toward a common national goal.

History has shown that America has the capacity to reinvent itself. From the post-WWII recovery to the space race, the U.S. has overcome structural crises before. The question is: does it still have the grit to do so now? Time is ticking. The first step must be bold, focused, and unrelenting—because China is already racing ahead, and the window of strategic opportunity is narrowing with each passing year.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)  
Former Press Minister at the  
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## The Indo-Pacific's strategic transition

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The proposed pact should also envision the development of shared military infrastructure, pre-positioning of munitions and the establishment of a unified headquarters. Japan emerges as a potential site for such a command center, especially in light of the United States' intention to upgrade its regional command in Japan. However, alternative locations, including Australia and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii, could also be considered. A formalized structure would necessitate the creation of working groups comprising defense and foreign ministry officials...

THE strategic convergence emerging in the Indo-Pacific signifies a notable transformation in the regional security architecture, reflecting both a response to the shifting geopolitical balance and a reassessment of existing alliance structures. However, this convergence represents a transitional phase rather than a conclusive or optimal configuration. The prevailing security arrangements among the United States and its Indo-Pacific allies remain incomplete and fragmented. Unlike the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which institutionalizes mutual defense commitments and centralized military coordination, the Indo-Pacific lacks binding defense obligations among regional partners and a central command structure for multilateral operations. Coordination exists, but it remains sporadic and lacks the regularized planning processes essential for rapid and cohesive responses to regional threats. The absence of mutual defense obligations among U.S. allies in the region such as Australia, Japan and the Philippines undermines the potential for a unified and effective deterrence posture. While each state maintains bilateral agreements with the United States, the failure to establish inter-allied obligations results in a fragmented network lacking urgency and strategic depth. In this context, the establishment of a collective defense pact focused on these three strategically aligned states offers a pragmatic path forward. Rather than replicating NATO's expansive structure, a smaller and more focused alliance could enhance operational readiness and strategic cohesion. Such a pact could, over time, incorporate additional members, subject to political will and strategic necessity. South Korea, due to its economic and military capabilities and geographical proximity, presents a natural candidate. However, its inclusion would necessitate a recalibration of its strategic priorities, particularly in terms of enhancing cooperation with Japan and reorienting its military focus toward a broader regional mandate. New Zealand, a member of the Five Eyes intelligence network, has shown increasing willingness to align with U.S. positions on China, though it may not yet be prepared for formal defense commitments. Meanwhile, key regional actors such as India and Singapore are unlikely to join in the initial stages but may engage through observer roles or limited operational cooperation. The inclusion of Taiwan remains untenable due to prevailing U.S. policy constraints and the geopolitical sensitivities of other potential pact members. Similarly, the incorporation of European allies appears premature, given their current military posture and regional priorities. Nonetheless, a future in which European militaries, supported by increased defense spending and enhanced capabilities, contribute to Indo-Pacific stability remains within the realm of possibility. The urgency of countering China's growing assertiveness necessitates immediate preparatory efforts. A foundational step involves transforming existing bilateral relationships among Australia, Japan and the Philippines into a web of mutual obligations. While this would require considerable diplomatic engagement, the strategic payoff in terms of en-

hanced deterrence would justify the complexity of negotiations. For Australia and Japan in particular, whose military ties with the United States are already deep, the transition from current defense partnerships to mutual defense obligations would entail only incremental changes. Operationally, a Pacific Defense Pact could build upon ongoing cooperative initiatives, including intelligence sharing, joint military exercises and coordination mechanisms. Notable among these are the U.S.-Japan Bilateral Intelligence Analysis Cell at Yokota Air Base, focused on Chinese movements in the East China Sea and the U.S.-Philippines Combined Coordination Center near Manila. These institutions could be expanded to incorporate Australia and the Philippines, fostering a more integrated regional intelligence and command structure. Existing basing agreements and troop rotations provide a logistical foundation upon which multilateral coordination could be built, contingent on the establishment of reciprocal access agreements among allies. The proposed pact should also envision the development of shared military infrastructure, pre-positioning of munitions and the establishment of a unified headquarters. Japan emerges as a potential site for such a command center, especially in light of the United States' intention to upgrade its regional command in Japan. However, alternative locations, including Australia and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii, could also be considered. A formalized structure would necessitate the creation of working groups comprising defense and foreign ministry officials tasked with negotiating governance frameworks, legal protocols and decision-making mechanisms. These institutional mechanisms would form the backbone of a robust, day-to-day alliance management system. Moreover, the realignment of existing U.S. bilateral treaties in the region is necessary to reflect contemporary realities. These treaties, designed during an era of uncontested American primacy, reflect asymmetrical commitments that are increasingly misaligned with the capabilities and responsibilities of modern U.S. allies. For decades, U.S. protection was exchanged for military access and economic cooperation, without reciprocal commitments to support U.S. operations beyond the allies' territories. Today, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China presents credible threats not only to U.S. forces in the region but also to the U.S. mainland and American allies now possess the economic and technological wherewithal to shoulder a greater share of the defense burden. Reciprocity is becoming both a strategic necessity and a domestic political imperative in the United States. Growing bipartisan sentiment in the U.S. underscores the demand for allies to contribute more substantively to collective security. Former President Donald Trump, among others, has criticized allied free-riding and emphasized equitable burden-sharing. Although increased defense spending is part of this equation, genuine reciprocity must also encompass greater mutual obligations. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, for instance, limits Japan's commitment to its own territory, producing a strategic imbalance at high-level

summits where U.S. leaders pledge defense commitments while Japanese counterparts remain silent on reciprocal obligations. Realignment would enable more integrated military planning, shared procurement of complementary capabilities and coordinated training exercises tailored to regional contingencies. Clarity on access, basing and overflight rights is vital for enabling rapid U.S. military responses and forward deployments. Infrastructure development and strategic mobility would be enhanced through such access agreements, reinforcing deterrence and facilitating sustained military operations during crises. These changes would inevitably raise complex sovereignty and legal issues, but such matters can be addressed through careful diplomacy and phased implementation. Tensions in economic and diplomatic domains particularly if exacerbated by protectionist U.S. policies could complicate security cooperation. Nonetheless, security establishments in the United States and its allies should seek to compartmentalize defense collaboration from broader political disagreements. The strategic stakes involved necessitate continuity in security planning irrespective of domestic or bilateral disruptions. Despite the challenges, recent trends demonstrate growing resilience in U.S. alliances in the Indo-Pacific. The deteriorating security environment, driven by China's revisionist posture and assertive actions in the East and South China Seas, has prompted an increased appetite for security cooperation among U.S. allies. Even if the current U.S. administration lacks the coherence to execute this vision fully, the groundwork can be laid for a future administration to finalize the pact.

Crucially, regional allies must secure domestic political support for deeper integration. Strategic arguments alone may not suffice; highlighting tangible benefits such as technology transfers, disaster resilience and infrastructure development may enhance public acceptance. In the United States, the proposed pact would not impose new obligations beyond existing ones but would reinforce homeland security and the safety of forward-deployed troops. The United States must also engage the broader Indo-Pacific region diplomatically to assuage concerns and avoid the perception of exclusive bloc formation. A prospective defense pact should be framed as one pillar within a broader strategy encompassing multilateral frameworks such as the Quad, ASEAN and trilateral partnerships. Its stated objective ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific aligns with widely shared regional values and objectives. Importantly, the proposed alliance should limit its scope to defense, refraining from overlapping with economic and diplomatic institutions. Its success will be augmented by parallel initiatives in trade, diplomacy and development assistance. Predictably, China will condemn the formation of any new security coalition as evidence of "Cold War thinking" and "bloc politics." Chinese military officials have already described efforts to consolidate American-led alliances in Asia as binding the region to the U.S. "war chariot." Such rhetoric underscores Beijing's apprehension about the formation of an effective counter-coalition.



## Briefs

Over 290 die  
in Air India  
plane crash

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“Thirty seconds after take-off, there was a loud noise and then the plane crashed,” 40-year-old Ramesh Viswashkumar told the Hindustan Times, which showed a boarding pass for seat 11A in that name online. “It all happened so quickly,” he told the paper from his hospital bed.  
“When I got up, there were bodies all around me. I was scared. I stood up and ran. There were pieces of the plane all around me,” he said. “Someone grabbed hold of me and put me in an ambulance and brought me to the hospital.”  
He said that his brother Ajay was seated in a different row on the plane. “He was travelling with me and I can’t find him anymore. Please help me find him,” he said. Police chief Malik said the bodies recovered could include both passengers and people killed on the ground. Federal minister C.R. Patil said the dead included Vijay Rupani, the former chief minister of Gujarat state, of which Ahmedabad is the main city. “Chances are there could be some more survivors among those who are in hospital,” police officer Chaudhary told Reuters. “There are also chances that the death toll will go up. More than 50 injured are in hospitals at present.”  
Relatives had been asked to give DNA samples to identify the dead, state health secretary Dhnanjay Dwivedi told reporters.  
“Ahmedabad Civil Hospital students’ hostel, staff quarters and other residential areas are located in the area where the plane crashed,” Dwivedi said. “The residents of that area were also injured.” Parts of the plane’s body were scattered around the building into which it crashed. The tail of the plane was stuck on top of the building. India’s CNN News-18 TV channels said the plane crashed on top of the dining area of state-run B.J. Medical College hostel, killing many medical students as well.

Pakistan  
hits rock  
bottom in  
WEF’s...

FROM PAGE 01  
However, this year’s results were a second consecutive drop from the economy’s best score of 57.7pc, achieved in 2023. Pakistan’s parity in economic participation and opportunity has declined by 1.3 percentage points, the report said.  
While economic representation indicators have remained unchanged, income disparity in Pakistan has slightly increased since the last edition (0.02 points), as has perceived wage inequality (4 percentage points). The sole sub-index advance registered by Pakistan in this year’s edition was “Educational Attainment”, bumping educational parity upwards by 1.5 percentage points to reach 85.1pc.  
The shift was partly driven by an increase in female literacy rates (from 46.5pc to 48.5pc). However, parity has also risen because male enrolment shares have dropped in tertiary education, increasing the relative balance between men and women but lowering educational reach overall.  
The report said Pakistan’s economy had seen political parity drop from 12.2pc in 2024 to 11pc in 2025.  
While parity in parliament increased by 1.2 percentage points, women’s ministerial representation dropped from 5.9pc in 2024 to zero in 2025 and with it the overall sub-index score, the report added. Pakistan was listed among countries including Azerbaijan, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, and Vanuatu that have all-male ministerial cabinets.  
Commenting on the 2025 edition of the report, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum, Saadia Zahidi, said the report “arrives at a decisive moment, with the world in flux as technological breakthroughs, geopolitical conflict and economic uncertainty are creating unprecedented challenges as well as bringing new opportunities. “Amid such change, gender parity is both a principle and a strategy,” she said.

Haris Zeb to feature in  
FIFA Club World Cup

*"Love from Pakistan means everything to me [...] If given chance, I want to represent Pakistan," says star footballer*

DNA

KARACHI: When Haris Zeb steps onto the pitch at the FIFA Club World Cup this month, he will make history as the first footballer of Pakistani origin to compete in a FIFA Club World Cup event.  
For the 24-year-old Auckland City winger, this milestone represents more than personal achievement — it’s a triumph over cultural expectations, career-threatening injuries, and the underdog status of Pakistani football. In an exclusive interview with Geo News, Zeb spoke about his football journey — marked by five foot injuries — his future targets and his availability for the Pakistan football team.  
Born in New Zealand to Pakistani immigrant parents, Zeb grew up in a cramped Christchurch home shared by three families. Football became his escape, though his path was far from smooth.  
“At first, my family said I was wasting time with football,” Zeb recalls. “In our Pakistani community, they expect you to become a doctor or lawyer.”



Growing up in New Zealand to immigrant parents, Zeb faced early scepticism about pursuing the beautiful game professionally. Pakistani origin footballer Haris Zeb photographed during a match. — Reporter  
Pakistani origin footballer Haris Zeb photographed during a match. — Reporter  
Football’s lack of popularity among the Pakistani community didn’t deter him either. “I played cricket like every Pakistani kid, but the joy wasn’t the same,” he said, adding: “Football was always my passion.”  
Things started to change when he began finding success at age 18. “Once I started achieving results, everyone began supporting me,” he says. “Today, my family is proud.” That pride will reach new heights when he faces global powerhouses like Bayern Munich — a prospect that still seems surreal. “I used to play against these teams in video games with my brother. Now I’ll face them in reality,” the footballer remarked. Auckland City, may not enter as favourites against Bayern and others. But Zeb, who once played as these teams in video games, is undaunted. “This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I’ll give 100%.”

Twenty-six WC winners headline Club  
World Cup squad announcement

FLORIDA: FIFA has announced the 32 participating clubs in the FIFA Club World Cup 2025™, which are headlined by some of the greatest players to have competed on the global stage over the last two decades, including 26 FIFA World Cup™ winners.  
The new FIFA Club World Cup will see the world’s top 32 club teams compete to be crowned the first true global club world champions across 63 games in 12 venues and 11 Host Cities in the United States — Atlanta, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, New York New Jersey, Orlando, Philadelphia, Seattle and Washington, DC.  
No fewer than 13 of the Argentina squad that lifted international football’s biggest prize in Qatar in 2022 will feature, led by Inter Miami CF’s Lionel Messi, who is likely to feature in the open-

ing game against Al Ahly FC on Saturday, 14th June. There are nine of France’s victorious 2018 vintage, including Real Madrid C. F. star Kylian Mbappé and Les Bleus’ then-captain Hugo Lloris of Los Angeles Football Club. Another three, Ousmane Dembélé, Lucas Hernandez and Presnel Kimpembe, come to the US as European club champions having claimed that title late last month with Paris Saint-Germain.  
“The list of participants at the inaugural 32-team FIFA Club World Cup is a true reflection of a tournament that will be the most competitive and inclusive of global football, bringing together the best talents from every continent to decide the true FIFA world club champion,” said FIFA President Gianni Infantino. “We have 26 players who will be seeking to be among

the first group of stars to raise two World Cups: the FIFA World Cup and the FIFA Club World Cup.” Spanish side Atlético de Madrid boast the most FIFA World Cup winners with six while Argentinian giants CA River Plate are next-best with four. The past four world champion nations will each be represented as FC Bayern München’s Thomas Müller and Manuel Neuer were in the Germany squad that won in Brazil in 2014, while Inter Miami’s Sergio Busquets and CF Monterrey’s Sergio Ramos were part of the Spain side that triumphed in South Africa in 2010 alongside Real Madrid CF’s new coach Xabi Alonso.  
Impressively, nine of the 11 Host Cities will host at least one group-stage game potentially featuring a FIFA World Cup winner, giving the entire fanbase across the US the opportunity to

watch the world’s greatest players in person. Highlighting the global nature of the tournament, the FIFA Club World Cup will see players from all six confederations and 81 countries participating in the tournament, including 22 nations that have never before played in a FIFA World Cup. Participating clubs were able to name an initial squad of between 26 and 35 players for the new competition with most having reinforced their squad during the extraordinary transfer window that was open from 1st to 10th June. FIFA World Cup winners in the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 squads include Marcos Acuña, Julián Alvarez, Franco Armani, Sergio Busquets, Ángel Correa, Ousmane Dembélé, Rodrigo De Paul, Ángel Di María, Enzo Fernández, Olivier Giroud, Antoine Griezmann and Lucas Hernandez. — APP

Pak bowlers climb  
rankings ladder in latest  
ICC T20I update

*Strong showing by pacers enhances their standings in ICC T20I bowlers’ performance table*

DUBAI: Pakistan’s bowlers have surged up the latest ICC T20I rankings following standout performances in recent international matches. In the bowling rankings, pacers Haris Rauf and Abbas Afridi have moved up, both occupying the joint 18th position with 605 rating points. Left-arm speedster Shaheen Shah Afridi’s position has also improved, now holding the 35th spot with 552 points. Meanwhile, Pakistan’s T20I vice-captain Shadab Khan climbed to 58th place in the rankings, alongside spinner Abrar Ahmed, both earning 476 points. However, young bowlers Naseem Shah and Sufiyan Mubeen have slipped in the standings, now placed at 92nd and 95th positions with 407 and 406 points, respectively.  
New Zealand’s Jacob Duffy currently leads the T20I bowling charts, while England’s Adil Rashid has claimed the second spot, pushing India’s Varun Chakravarthy down to third. In the T20I batting rankings, Pakistan’s star duo Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan have retained their 12th and 13th positions, respectively. Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Harris also holds firm at the 30th spot. However, emerging middle-order batter Hasan Nawaz has slipped to 46th place, while Saim Ayub has dropped to 62nd. Pakistan T20I captain (name omitted in original text) has fallen two spots to 76th with 430 rating points, and Fakhar Zaman has slipped one place to 87th. — Agencies

Canada’s McIntosh  
breaks 400 medley  
world record

MONTREAL: Summer McIntosh bagged her third world record in days on Wednesday, clocking 4min 23.65sec to better her own 400 medley record at the Canadian Swimming Trials in Victoria.  
The 18-year-old Canadian prodigy, a three-time Olympic gold medallist, laid down another impressive marker ahead of next month’s World Championships in Singapore with a dominant performance.  
McIntosh’s blistering time beat her old mark of 4:24.38 set in Toronto in May last year at the Canadian Olympic trials. McIntosh’s assault on her own world record got off to a smooth start, with the teenager completing the opening butterfly leg in world record pace.  
She was more than a second ahead of the world record at the halfway stage, and although that margin dropped to one-tenth of a second after the breaststroke, she produced an electrifying freestyle down the stretch to complete a scintillating performance.  
“Going into tonight, I knew I could do something really special because this has probably been the best meet of my career,” McIntosh said afterwards in a pool deck interview. “World records are made to be broken. So by the time I leave this sport, I want to make sure that that record is as fast as possible. — APP

122 million  
forcibly  
displaced  
worldwide

GENEVA: The number of people forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide has dropped slightly from a record high but remains “untenably high”, the United Nations said Thursday. A record 123.2 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes at the end of 2024, said UNHCR, the UN refugee agency. But that figure dropped to 122.1 million by the end of April this year, as Syrians began returning home after years of turmoil. Nearly two million Syrians have been able to return home from abroad or from displacement within the war-ravaged country. — APP

Bellingham ‘special boy’ despite  
‘repulsive’ behaviour, says Tuchel

LONDON: England manager Thomas Tuchel said his own mother finds some of Jude Bellingham’s antics “repulsive” but he does not want to dim the Real Madrid star’s fire. Tuchel suffered his first defeat in four games as England boss on Tuesday when Senegal became the first African side to ever beat the Three Lions in a 3-1 friendly win.  
Bellingham thought he had made it 2-2 late on at Nottingham Forest’s City Ground only for the goal to be controversially disallowed before Senegal broke away for a third in stoppage time.  
Tuchel had to restrain Bellingham’s protests at the decision at full-time and said it is a balancing act to retain the 21-year-old’s fight without it bubbling over.  
“Sometimes you see the rage, the hunger and the fire and it comes out in a way that can be a bit repulsive, for example, for my mother when she sits in front of the TV,” said Tuchel in a wide-ranging interview with radio station talkSPORT on Wednesday. “I see that but, in general, we are very happy to have him. He’s a special boy.”

Tuchel dismissed suggestions England could be better off without Bellingham, who starred in the Three Lions’ run to the Euro 2024 final. But he called on the Bellingham to inspire rather than intimidate his team-mates. “He has a certain something and brings an edge. It’s needed if we want to achieve big things,” added Tuchel.  
“It needs to be channelled towards the opponent and towards our goal, and not to intimidate team-mates or be aggressive towards team-mates or referees but always on winning. “He has the fire — I don’t want to dim that, he should play with that as that’s his strength.”  
“But the fire comes also with some attribute that can intimidate team-mates. Sometimes you see the explosion towards referees and the anger in his game.”  
“If he can channel this in the right way he has something that we need and that edge is hard to find,” Tuchel, who won the Champions League at Chelsea and league titles with Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich, was hired with the task of ending England’s wait for a major tournament victory since 1966. — DNA

PSX retreats  
after record  
high

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reflecting a fall of 506.13 points, or 0.41%. “The market has been rallying for the last few sessions due to budget expectations. A mute budget which stays the path on consolidation and keeps continuity gives certainty to the market,” said Ahfaz Mustafa, CEO of Ismail Iqbal Securities.  
“This along with remarks by the finance minister for further rate cuts is fuelling the market,” he added.

US to pull  
personnel  
from the  
ME amid...

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heightened regional tensions,” the advisory said. The decision by the US to evacuate some personnel comes at a volatile moment in the region. Trump’s efforts to reach a nuclear deal with Iran appear to be deadlocked, and US intelligence indicates that Israel has been making preparations for a strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities. “They are being moved out because it could be a dangerous place, and we’ll see what happens,” Trump told reporters. “We’ve given notice to move out.”  
Asked whether anything can be done to lower the temperature in the region, Trump said: “They can’t have a nuclear weapon. Very simple, they can’t have a nuclear weapon.”  
Trump has repeatedly threatened to strike Iran if stuttering talks over its nuclear programme fail. In an interview released earlier on Wednesday, Trump said that he was growing less confident that Tehran would agree to stop enriching uranium, a key American demand. Iranian Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh also said yesterday that if Iran was subjected to strikes, it would retaliate by hitting US bases in the region. The US embassy in Kuwait said in a statement that it had “not changed its staffing posture and remains fully operational.”

Trump  
unveils  
website...

FROM PAGE 01  
probably be available “in less than two weeks.” The visas are not available yet, but the website announced on Wednesday allows interested parties to submit their name, desired visa and email address under a header that says “The Trump Card is Coming.”  
Trump previously said the new visa, a high-priced version of the traditional green card, would bring in job creators and could be used to reduce the US national deficit. The announcement comes as deportation raids are being ramped up across the country, prompting protests, and as Trump’s administration faces ongoing lawsuits and accusations of rights violations over its anti-immigration blitz. Trump has said the new card would be a route to highly prized US citizenship.

## PMYP, HEC, Qalandars Unite to Scout Cricket Talent across Pak

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a bold move to revolutionize youth sports development in Pakistan, the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme (PMYP), in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC), has partnered with Lahore Qalandars to officially launch the Prime Minister’s Cricket Talent Hunt Programme—a nationwide initiative aimed at identifying and nurturing the next generation of cricket stars.  
The signing ceremony and official launch were held at the Press Information Department (PID) Islamabad, in the presence of PMYP Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, HEC Chairman Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Lahore Qalandars CEO Atif Rana, and team captain Shaheen Shah Afridi. The initiative marks a significant step forward in the government’s broader mission to promote youth inclusion in sports, alongside efforts in education, employment, and digital access.  
Speaking at the event, Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan noted that this cricket initiative follows the successful launch of the national Boxing Talent Hunt and reflects the government’s commitment to expanding sports opportunities across the country. He announced that open trials will be held in 25 cities, beginning in Quetta on June 26–27, with a special focus on reaching underrepresented regions. Calling the programme a transformative step, he stressed that it will provide a level playing field for both boys and girls and reaffirmed the government’s resolve to rebuild Pakistan’s sports infrastructure through merit-based and transparent initiatives.  
Rana Mashhood further praised the media for consistently supporting youth initiatives, fostering national unity, and presenting a positive image of Pakistan worldwide. He stated that the successful hosting of PSL X was seen globally, reinforcing the country’s ability to stage world-class sporting events.

Acknowledging the country’s economic challenges, he remarked, “The budget is tough, but we are committed to making Pakistan self-reliant.” He added that youth development remains a top priority for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, with the aim of providing quality opportunities in both education and sports.  
Lahore Qalandars CEO Atif Rana highlighted the franchise’s decade-long commitment to grassroots development, describing the partnership with PMYP as a historic opportunity to expand their

successful model nationwide. He noted that national players like Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf were discovered through similar open trials. He also cited Lahore Qalandars’ success in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), including three championship titles in four seasons.  
Atif Rana also announced that the PSL trophy will tour the UK and USA, showcasing Pakistan’s cricketing achievements and promoting the country’s image as a safe and thriving sporting nation. He recalled mo-

ments of international solidarity, when diplomats and journalists wore Qalandars shirts at Gaddafi Stadium, reinforcing global trust in Pakistan.  
Speaking at the ceremony, Lahore Qalandars captain Shaheen Shah Afridi expressed optimism about the programme, stating that it will play a key role in discovering and developing top cricketing talent across the nation. He also urged patience regarding the national team’s recent changes, saying that with time, everything will settle and improve.



ISLAMABAD: Rana Mashhood addressing a press conference in Islamabad. — DNA



## Briefs

## Rupee sheds 21 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 21 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.67 against the previous day's closing of Rs 282.46.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 283.25 and Rs 284.75 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 3.29 to close at Rs 325.93 against the last day's closing of Rs 322.64, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen went up by 02 paisa and closed at Rs1.96, whereas an increase of Rs 1.79 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 382.83 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 381.04.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 05 and 04 paisa to close at Rs 76.96 and Rs 75.35, respectively.—APP

## Gold prices up by Rs.4,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.4,000 and was traded at Rs.356,900 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs. 352,900 on last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. Drones The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.3,430 to Rs.305,984 from Rs. 302,554 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went up by Rs.3,144 to Rs.280,495 from Rs. 277,351. 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 \$30 to \$3,375 from \$3,345, whereas the prices of silver remain unchanged at \$35.87, the Association reported. —APP

## PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 259 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 259.56 points, showing positive change of 0.21 percent, closing at 124,093.12 points as compared to 124,352.68 points on the last trading day. Drones. A total of 1,024,633,864 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,041,129,574 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 50.539 billion against Rs 46.707 billion on the last trading day. As many as 474 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 170 of them recorded gains and 270 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 34 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Sui South Gas with 55,899,181 shares at Rs 41.92 per share, Fauji Cement with 50,597,576 shares at Rs 47.36 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 49,327,936 shares at Rs 1.37 per share.—APP

## Egypt FM, US envoy discuss securing Gaza ceasefire

LONDON: Badr Abdelatty, Egypt's minister of foreign affairs, emphasized the need to persist in negotiations between the US and Iran over Tehran's nuclear program during a phone call with Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff. Abdelatty said the negotiations are an important opportunity to achieve calm, avoid escalation, and prevent the region from sliding into greater instability, WAM, the Emirates News Agency, reported. Oman will host the sixth round of negotiations between Iran and the US on Sunday, Oman's foreign minister said on Thursday. Abdelatty and Witkoff, the US president's special envoy for the Middle East, on Thursday addressed Egyptian and US efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip. They discussed the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners.—APP

## Jam propose revisions in E.Commerce taxation framework

Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Thursday held a high-level meeting to explore collaborative measures for the promotion and development of Pakistan's e-commerce ecosystem

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan Thursday said that E.Commerce Policy 2.0 was in its final stages of internal review and will soon be submitted before the Federal Cabinet for formal approval.

In a high-level meeting held to address key issues in Pakistan's rapidly expanding E.Commerce sector, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja discussed multiple aspects covering E-Commerce, said a press release.

In line with the consultative approach of the forthcoming policy, Jamal Kamal Khan announced the formation of a joint working group, with input from the IT Ministry, to gather comprehensive recommendations on taxation, vendor compliance, and digital payments. The group's findings will be formally presented to the Prime Minister for final consideration. He said that E.Commerce sector in the country has witnessed rapid growth, reaching a market size of \$7.7 billion in 2024, with projections estimating a 17%



compound annual growth rate through 2027. The ministers reiterated their commitment to fostering an inclusive, competitive, and digitally empowered trade ecosystem and arising issues, shall be addressed at highest level. Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and Minister for Commerce

Jam Kamal Khan on Thursday held a high-level meeting to explore collaborative measures for the promotion and development of Pakistan's e-commerce ecosystem.

In a significant step forward, both ministries agreed to form a joint working group aimed at streamlining efforts and crafting effective strategies to support the sector's

growth. The ministers highlighted the need for coordinated and sustainable initiatives to strengthen the country's digital economy, stressing that broad-based stakeholder consultation would be central to shaping impactful e-commerce reforms. They reaffirmed the government's commitment to expanding digital trade infrastructure through the adoption of mod-

ern technologies, recognising the sector as a key driver of economic transformation and a national priority.

The joint efforts are expected to improve regulatory frameworks, enhance digital connectivity, and unlock new opportunities for entrepreneurs, SMEs, and consumers across Pakistan's digital marketplace.

## Trump watches 'Les Misérables', tale of revolt and oppression

WASHINGTON: It's a tale of revolutionary fervor, featuring street protesters manning the barricades against a repressive leader. And watching from the audience was US President Donald Trump. Trump's appearance at the opening night of the hit musical "Les Misérables" at the renowned Kennedy Center in Washington on Wednesday night could hardly be more politically charged. The 78-year-old Republican recently orchestrated a conservative takeover of the famed arts venue, reportedly prompting some

"Les Mis" cast members to boycott the show. The performance of the show, set against the backdrop of revolutionary 19th-century France, comes as the United States itself faces fresh turbulence in its second-biggest city. "I couldn't care less. Honestly, I couldn't. All I do is run the country well," Trump told reporters when asked about a boycott as he arrived with First Lady Melania Trump. "And we're going to have a safe country, we're not going to have what would have happened in Los Angeles. Remember, if I wasn't

there... Los Angeles would have been burning to the ground." Trump, who was joined by Vice President JD Vance and second lady Usha Vance at the premiere, has recently sent in troops to deal with protests against immigration raids in Los Angeles. California officials accuse him of "dictatorial" behavior and of manufacturing a confrontation by deploying thousands of National Guard troops and US Marines. "I think the irony is probably lost on him," Peter Loge, director of George Washington University's School of Media, told AFP.

## Syrian, Egyptian foreign ministers hold talks

LONDON: The foreign ministers of the Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt held talks on Wednesday on the sidelines of the Oslo Forum 2025 in Norway. Asaad al-Shaibani and Badr Abdelatty discussed ways to improve collaboration between their countries and exchanged views on the challenges to security and stability in the region, the Syrian Arab News Agency reported. Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan also met Abdelatty on the sidelines of the forum to discuss bilateral relations and the escalating situation in the Gaza Strip and occupied West Bank.—APP

## London museum opens vast 'on-demand' storehouse to public

LONDON: Imagine being able to visit a museum and examine up close thousand-year-old pottery, revel alone in jewelry from centuries past, or peer inside a Versace bag. Now London's V&A has launched a revolutionary new exhibition space, where visitors can choose from some 250,000 objects, order something they want to spend time looking at, and have it delivered to a room for a private viewing. Most museums have thousands of precious and historic items hidden away in their stores, which the public never gets to see or enjoy. But the V&A Storehouse, which opened on May 31 in a specially converted warehouse, has come up with a radical new concept. And it is totally free. "Museums should be and are for everybody ... the V&A's collection is for everybody. It belongs to everybody, and everyone should be able to have free, equitable, and meaningful access to it," said senior curator Georgia Haseldine. "So this is a world first, never has anyone been able to be invited freely, without having to book into the same space as a national collection, on this scale." One fifth of the museum's total collection is now available to be viewed and enjoyed in the four-storey building on the former site of the 2012 London Olympic Games. "It's fantastic, it's so much better than an ordinary museum," enthused retired physics teacher Jane Bailey as she toured the floors.—Agencies

## Camel milk offers hope in Tunisia's poor and arid south

MÉDENINE, Tunisia: Deep in Tunisia's desert south, camels stride toward humming milking machines. Their milk is at the heart of a women-led project promising an economic lifeline for disadvantaged communities. Spearheading this effort is 32-year-old Latifa Frifita, who launched Tunisia's first, and so far only, camel milk pasteurisation unit two years ago in Medenine. The unit is based on research by Amel Sboui, 45, a senior biochemist at the Institute of Arid Regions, who succeeded in patenting a pasteurisation method that preserves camel milk's "nutritional and therapeutic qualities" while extending its shelf life to two weeks. Containing up to five times more iron than cow's milk, camel milk is non-allergenic and some studies have suggested that it has immune-boosting and anti-inflammatory properties. Pasteurisation of camel milk is essential to bringing it to wider markets because the milk is highly perishable. Sboui and her lab of 10 researchers – eight of them women – also conducted clinical trials at the regional hospital, which showed that consuming the milk could help diabetic patients reduce their medication doses by up to half in some cases. Jobs and investment in southern Tunisia are scarce, yet entrepreneur Frifita has pinned her hopes on a product long undervalued by local herders and is working to change their minds. At first, she said she faced many challenges when trying to convince the herders to sell milk instead of meat – a far more common commodity. "They didn't see the point," she said while testing a fresh sample of the milk, wearing a hairnet. "They usually keep it for themselves or give it away for free." But, having built "a relationship of trust", and with demand for the product growing, Frifita said she planned to reach further agreements with breeders Frifita, who holds a master's degree in food technologies, began sketching out her idea in 2016, but it was not until 2023 that she launched Chamelait with the support of the institute, which provided her startup with premises to operate.—APP

## Australia confident in US nuclear sub deal despite review

SYDNEY: Australia said Thursday it is "very confident" in the future of a US agreement to equip its navy with a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, after the Trump administration put the pact under review. The 2021 AUKUS deal joins Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States in a multi-decade effort to balance China's growing military might. It aims to arm Australia with a fleet of cutting-edge, nuclear-powered submarines from the United States, and cooperate in developing an array of warfare technologies. US President Donald Trump's administration has advised Australia and the United Kingdom that it is reviewing AUKUS, a spokesperson for the Australian Defence Department confirmed Thursday. Defence Minister Richard Marles said he was "very confident" Australia would still get the American submarines. "I think the review that's been announced is not a surprise," he told public broadcaster ABC. "We've been aware of this for some time. We welcome it. It's something which is perfectly natural for an incoming administration to do." Australia plans to acquire at least three Virginia Class submarines from the United States within 15 years, eventually manufacturing its own subs. "Time to wake up?" - The US navy has 24 Virginia-class vessels, which can carry cruise missiles, but American shipyards are struggling to meet production targets set at two new boats each year. Critics question why the United States would sell nuclear-powered submarines to Australia without stocking its own military first. Marles said boosting the US production of US Virginia Class submarines was a challenge. "That's why we are working very closely with the United States on seeing that happen. But that is improving," he said. Government forecasts estimate the submarine programme alone could cost Australia up to US\$235 billion over the next 30 years, a price tag that has contributed to criticism of the strategy. Australia should conduct its own review of AUKUS, said former conservative prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, noting that Britain and now the United States had each decided to re-examine the pact. "Australia, which has the most at stake, has no review. Our Parliament to date has been the least curious and least informed. Time to wake up?" he posted on X. Former Labor Party prime minister Paul Keating, a vehement critic of AUKUS, said the US review might "save Australia from itself". Australia should carve its own security strategy "rather than being dragged along on the coat tails of a fading Atlantic empire", Keating said. Any US review of AUKUS carries a risk, particularly since it is a Biden-era initiative, said Euan Graham, senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. But it is "fundamentally a good deal for the US", he said, with Australia already investing cash to boost American submarine production as part of the agreement. I just do not think it is realistic for Australia, this far backed in, to have any prospect of withdrawing itself from AUKUS," Graham told AFP. = "I don't think there is a plan B that would meet requirements, and I think it would shred Australia's reputation fundamentally in a way that would not be recoverable.—APP

## Bangladeshi women break driving taboo on male-dominated roads

DHAKA: When Sharmin Akter Pinky sat behind the steering wheel for the first time, it was because of her aunt, who encouraged her to venture into a field which, in Bangladesh, had traditionally been dominated by men. "She used to inspire me to be an independent woman and to do something with my own abilities," Pinky told Arab News. Her aunt saw women learning to drive at a school in Dhaka and convinced the rest of the family that it would be the right path for her niece as well. "She kept insisting that if the other girls could do it, I would also be able to do the same," Pinky said. This is how I stepped into this driving career, with the support of my parents, uncle, and aunt." Pinky was 20 at the time. Now, eight years later, she is a profes-

sional driver working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. The all-female driving school she enrolled in was opened by BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), Bangladesh's largest development organization, in 2012. Each year, more and more women have been taking the classes – making the wheel their tool for earning a livelihood and building a career. "There was a time when people had a very negative mindset about girls entering the driving profession, but things have improved a lot since then. I would encourage more women to take it up. Girls should be independent and explore the world around them," Pinky said. For her, it also comes with a personal mission to help empower others who may not have had as

much support from their families as she did. In Pinky's village, it was not widely accepted that women could work. She said: "In the early days, when I went back to the village during holidays, people would say things like 'This isn't a respectable job,' or 'You'll have trouble getting married,' or 'You might fall in with the wrong crowd.' But my father always stood by me. He told me not to listen to what people around us said. He encouraged me to focus on being a good human being, doing honest work, and helping others improve their lives. "Later, I brought two other girls from my village, arranged driving training for them, and helped them find jobs. Now, people admit that driving can be a good job for women too. I feel proud I have started something." For Sharmina Akter Banu, who now also works at FAO,

driving offered a means of survival. When her father and husband passed away, she was left alone caring for her 18-month-old child, younger siblings, and mother. "I received an offer from the BRAC Driving School to take driving training. I completed the training over a period of three months. After that, I got a job as a professional driver," she said. "At that time all of my siblings were still attending school. With the income from my driving job, I took on the responsibility of supporting my younger siblings. Thanks to that, all of them were able to complete their education." Banu's younger brother is now pursuing his honors degree, and her son is completing high school. The job has become a source of pride for her. She has a stable profession, is financially independent, has been able to sup-

port her family, and feels like an equal member of society. "I'm surrounded by many male drivers and, among them, I am the only female. It's a matter of pride for me, because as a woman I've been able to work in this challenging profession alongside men," she said. "Wherever I notice a female driver, it fills my heart with joy. More and more girls are coming into this profession. And they are doing well." Banu and Pinky are among more than 3,500 professional women drivers trained by BRAC. They come from various parts of Bangladesh and different backgrounds. "We have BRAC's network in the remotest parts of the country ... We receive applications from minorities and underprivileged women," Abdul Quddus, who is in charge of the organization's driving schools, told Arab News.—Agencies

## Iraq reports 19 Congo fever deaths already this year

BAGHDAD: Iraq said Thursday it has recorded 19 deaths from Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever already this year and urged farmers and abattoir workers to step up precautions when handling livestock. A total of 123 cases have been recorded nationwide, health ministry spokesman Saif Al-Badr said in a statement, adding that 36 of them were reported in the poor southern province of Dhi Qar, which is heavily dependent on livestock farming. Congo fever is a viral disease which is transmitted to people either by tick bites or through contact with infected animal blood or tissues during or immediately after slaughter, according to the World Health Organization. It has a fatality rate of between 10 and 40 percent, and most cases have been reported in the livestock industry. A previous surge in infections in Iraq in 2022 saw at least 27 deaths, compared with just six cases for the two decades from 1989 to 2009.—APP

## Internet down in Gaza after attack on fiber optic cable

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: The Palestinian Authority said Internet and fixed-line communication services were down in Gaza on Thursday following an attack on the territory's last fiber optic cable it blamed on Israel. "All Internet and fixed-line communication services in the Gaza Strip have been cut following the targeting of the last remaining main fiber optic line in Gaza," the PA's telecommunications ministry said in a statement, accusing Israel of attempting to cut Gaza off from the world. "The southern and central Gaza Strip have now joined Gaza City and the northern part of the Strip in experiencing complete isolation for the second consecutive day," the ministry said in a statement. It added that its maintenance and repair teams had been unable to safely access the sites where damage occurred to the fiber optic cable. "The Israeli occupation continues to prevent technical teams from repairing the cables that were cut yesterday," it said, adding that Israeli authorities had prevented repairs to other telecommunication lines in Gaza "for weeks and months." The Palestinian Red Crescent said the communication lines were "directly targeted by occupation forces.—APP

## Israel to expel French nationals on Gaza aid boat by end of week

JERUSALEM: Israel is to expel by the end of the week four French nationals held after security forces intercepted their Gaza-bound aid boat, France's foreign minister said Wednesday, as an Israeli NGO said one of the French campaigners was briefly put in solitary confinement. The announcement came as France's prime minister accused activists aboard the boat – who hoped to raise awareness about the humanitarian situation in war-torn Gaza – of capitalizing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for political attention. The four, who include Rima Hassan, a member of European Parliament from the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party who is of Palestinian descent, will be deported on Thursday and Friday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on X. They were among 12 people on board the Madleen sailboat which was carrying food and supplies for Gaza before it was intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters off the besieged Palestinian territory on Monday. Four, including two French citizens and Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg, agreed to be deported immediately. The remaining eight were taken into custody after they refused to leave Israel voluntarily, according to Adalah.—APP



## Briefs

Brazil court  
favors  
tougher social  
media rules

BRASILIA: Brazil's Supreme Court reached a majority Wednesday in favor of toughening social media regulation, in a groundbreaking case for Latin America on the spread of fake news and hate speech. The South American country's highest court is seeking to determine to what extent companies like X, TikTok, Instagram and Facebook are responsible for removing illegal content, and how they can be sanctioned if they do not. The judges' final ruling will create a precedent that will affect tens of millions of social media users in Brazil. At issue is a clause in the country's so-called Civil Framework for the Internet – a law in effect since 2014 that says platforms are only responsible for harm caused by a post if they ignore a judge's order to remove it. By Wednesday, six of the court's 11 judges had ruled in favor of higher accountability, meaning sites should monitor content and remove problematic posts on their own initiative, without judicial intervention. – **Agencies**

Oman to  
host US-Iran  
nuclear talks  
on Sunday

MUSCAT: Oman said Thursday it would host a sixth round of nuclear talks between Washington and Tehran over the weekend, amid escalating tensions between the long-time foes and reports of an imminent Israeli attack on Iran. Despite reporting progress in earlier rounds, Tehran and Washington have sharply disagreed over Iran's uranium enrichment in recent weeks, with Tehran threatening to target US military bases in the region in the event that the talks fail and conflict erupts. Tensions reached a fever pitch this week as Washington ordered the evacuation of personnel from the Middle East and US media reported that Israel appeared to be preparing an attack on Iran. – **APP**

3.3 magnitude  
earthquake  
strikes Quetta

ISLAMABAD: A 3.3 magnitude earthquake struck Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, on Thursday, sending tremors across the city. According to reports, the epicenter was 23 kilometers south of Quetta, with a depth of 30 kilometers, private news channels reported. Fortunately, there were no reports of casualties or damage to property. Residents rushed out of their homes, reciting Kalma-e-Tayyaba, as the tremors were felt. The region's seismic activity poses a significant threat, and experts stress the importance of proactive measures to ensure public safety and infrastructure resilience. – **APP**

Protests spread across  
US despite Trump threats

Around 1,000 of the 4,700 troops Trump deployed were actively guarding facilities and working alongside ICE agents, said Scott Sherman, Deputy Commanding General Army North, who is leading operations

LOS ANGELES: Protests over headline immigration tactics ignited across the United States Wednesday after days of demonstrations in Los Angeles, as California prepared for a legal showdown over President Donald Trump's deployment of the military. Over 1,000 people massed in America's second biggest city for a sixth day of protests, with the crowd peaceful as they marched through the streets. A second night of curfew was in place as city leaders try to get a handle on the after-dark vandalism and looting that scarred a few city blocks in the 500-square-mile (1,300 square kilometers) metropolis. "I would say for the most part everything is hunky dory right here at Ground Zero," protester Lynn Sturgis, 66, a retired school teacher, told AFP. "Our city is not at all on fire, it's not burning down, as our terrible leader is trying to tell you." The mostly peaceful protests ignited over a sudden escalation in efforts to apprehend migrants in the country illegally. Pockets of violence – including the burning of self-driving taxis and hurling stones at police – were nothing the 8,500 officers of the Los Angeles Police Department had not dealt with before. Trump won the election last year partly on promises to combat what he claims is an "invasion" by undocumented migrants.

He is now seizing the opportunity to make political capital, ordering the California National Guard to deploy despite Governor Gavin Newsom's objections, the first time a US president has taken such action in decades. "We're going to have a safe country," he told reporters on his way into a performance of "Les Miserables" in Washington. "We're not going to have what would have happened in Los Angeles. Remember, if I wasn't there... Los Angeles would have been burning to the ground." Around 1,000 of the 4,700 troops Trump deployed were actively guarding facilities and working alongside ICE agents, said Scott Sherman, Deputy Commanding General Army North, who is leading operations. The rest – including 700 active duty Marines – were mustering or undergoing training to deal with civil disturbances, he said. The Pentagon has said the deployment will cost taxpayers \$134 million. Governor Newsom, a Democrat widely viewed as eyeing a 2028 presidential run, has charged that Trump is seeking to escalate the confrontation for political gain. He warned Tuesday that the unprecedented militarization would creep beyond his state's borders, claiming "democracy is under assault right before our eyes." – **Agencies**

## PM Shehbaz takes notice

## Defence czar slams 'massive' salary rise for parliamentarians

PM has taken notice of increase in pay of Senate chairman, deputy chairman, NA speaker, deputy speaker

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Veteran leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Khawaja Asif slammed the dramatic rise in parliamentary officeholders' pay and benefits on Wednesday, terming it "financial obscenity". The News reported. The defence minister wrote on X: "The massive increase in the salaries and financial perks of the (National Assembly) speaker, deputy speaker, Senate chairperson and deputy chairperson falls under the category of financial obscenity. Please keep the life of the common man in mind – our honour and dignity are all owed to him (common man)." The National Assembly speaker's salary and the Senate chairperson's salary have been approved by the government to be increased by more than five times, to Rs1.3 million per month. News reports state that the officials will also earn a sumptuary allowance equal to half of their revised salary, which is Rs 650,000. Asif's post on X sparked both praise and irony-laced reactions. While some lauded the PML-N leader's bold stance against the government's move, others dismissed



it as symbolic, coming from a senior figure within the ruling coalition. Social media users were also quick to point out that the budget presented under the PML-N government announced no increase in the minimum wage, criticising the government's lack of willingness to provide substantial relief to ordinary people. On the other hand, officials privy to the matter have said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken notice of the increase in salaries of the Senate chairman, deputy chairman, National Assembly speaker and deputy speaker. They said, following the immense reaction on social media against the massive increment, the prime minister has sought a report from the NA speaker and Senate chairman. It should be noted that the federal cabinet has already approved this salary hike. A day after the government announced the federal budget, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb defended salary hikes for the parliamentarians, ministers, National Assembly and Senate custodians. "Look at when the salaries of ministers, ministers of state, and parliamentarians were last increased. The last increase in the salaries of cabinet ministers was in 2016," Aurangzeb said while addressing a press conference on Wednesday.

Constable martyred,  
dacoit killed in Wah  
Saddar shootout

RAWALPINDI: Constable Syed Sajjad Hussain embraced martyrdom while a most wanted dacoit was killed during a shootout in the area of Wah Saddar Police Station on Wednesday night. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the dead dacoit was involved in dozens of dacoit incidents. His accomplices escaped while firing, and a search was underway to arrest them. Meanwhile, the funeral prayers of martyred Constable Syed Sajjad Hussain were offered here at the Police Lines Headquarters. Regional Police Officer Babar Sarfraz Alpa, City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani, other senior police officers and personnel, senior officers of the Pakistan Army, and a large number of citizens attended the Namaz-e-Janaza. A well-dressed police contingent presented a salute while officers laid wreaths on the coffin of the martyr. The martyred constable left behind two sons and two daughters among the mourners. RPO Alpa, on the occasion, said, "Martyrs are our benefactors whose sacrifices are unforgettable, and we stand with their families every hour." CPO Hamdani said Constable Sajjad's sacrifice would always be remembered as he gave his life in the line of duty. "The Rawalpindi Police do not budge to make any sacrifice for protecting the lives and property of citizens and preventing crimes," he added. The CPO said some 122 Rawalpindi cops had embraced martyrdom in the line of duty. After the funeral prayers, the body of Constable Sajjad was sent to his native area, Jhangri Daim (in the limits of Chauhtra Police Station, Rawalpindi District) with official honours. – **Agencies**



ABU DHABI: President of UAE His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan received Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at Qasr Al Shati in Abu Dhabi on 12 June 2025. – **DNA**

Ex-CIA analyst Asif William  
sentenced to 37 months

US Attorney Siebert says Rahman violated position of trust by illegally accessing and transmitting Top Secret documents

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: Former CIA analyst Asif William Rahman has been sentenced to 37 months in prison for unlawfully retaining and transmitting Top Secret National Defence Information to people who were not entitled to receive it, information which was publicly posted on social media platforms in October 2024. According to court documents, Rahman, 34, of Vienna, Virginia, was an employee of the CIA since 2016 and had a Top Secret security clearance with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) until his employment was terminated after his arrest. Some media reports have claimed that Rahman was born in California, and grew up in Ohio. He allegedly leaked secret information about Israeli plans to attack Iran after Tehran had launched a missile attack on Israel on October 1. "For months, this defendant betrayed the American people and the oaths he took upon entering his office by leaking some of our Nation's most closely held secrets," said John Eisenberg, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. "As this case demonstrates, the Department of Justice will continue to protect our nation by vigorously investigating and prosecuting leakers who compromise

our nation's security", remarked John Eisenberg. "[Asif] Rahman violated his position of trust by illegally accessing, removing, and transmitting Top Secret documents vital to the national security of the United States and its allies," said Erik S Siebert, US Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. "The urgency with which Rahman was identified, arrested, charged, and prosecuted is a testament to the commitment and professionalism of the investigators and prosecutors who brought him to justice. This case should serve as a stern warning to those who choose to place their own goals over their allegiance to our nation", maintained Siebert. "By stealing and divulging classified information and then attempting to conceal his crimes, Rahman not only violated the law; he also betrayed his oath as a government employee and his responsibility to the American people," said Assistant Director Roman Rozhavsky of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division. "Now he will pay the price for putting American lives and US national security at risk. Let this be a warning to all clearance holders: The FBI will exhaust all avenues to find and bring to justice anyone – no matter who they are – who endangers our nation by disclosing sensitive information without authorization," remarked Rozhavsky.

‘Seek assistance in  
pursuit of peace via  
dialogue: Bilawal

“We’re all a lot less safe as a result of this conflict than we were before,” says ex-foreign minister

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has warned US lawmakers and diplomats that the risk of full-scale war with India is higher than ever, stressing that recent Indian actions have "dangerously lowered the threshold" for armed conflict in the region. His warning came after escalations between Pakistan and India following an attack in Pahalgam, located in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOJK). Speaking to the New York Post in an exclusive interview, the 36-year-old chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) expressed gratitude for Washington's role in securing a ceasefire. "We're incredibly grateful for the role that the US government – President Trump, Secretary [of State] Marco Rubio – created throughout this crisis in helping us all achieve this ceasefire," said Bilawal. "But our message has been that the ceasefire is a start. But, it is only a start, and what we seek is assistance in our pursuit of peace through dialogue and diplomacy." Bilawal went on to say that the region was not as safe as it used to be before because of India's unilateral measures. "We're all a lot less safe as a result of this conflict than we were before," said the young PPP chief. "The threshold of full-out military conflict between Pakistan and India has been drastically lowered – the lowest it has ever been in our history, as a result of this conflict."

Jaffar  
express  
derails  
near Taxila

WAH CANTT: A Quetta-bound passenger train on Thursday derailed near Margalla tunnel in Taxila, causing the suspension of railway traffic between Rawalpindi- Peshawar sections. No casualties were reported in the accident. According to the railway authorities, the 40 down Quetta-bound Jaffar express coming from Peshawar train derailed due to "technical" reasons, and the train traffic would be restored "soon" after maintenance of the affected track and of damaged coaches. Soon after the incident, the local police, railway police and senior officials of the Railway maintenance department rushed to the scene to investigate the incident and initiate rehabilitation work on the main track. Due to the incident, upcoming and downcoming train schedules were affected. – **APP**

Death toll  
from Israeli  
aggression on  
Gaza rises  
to 55,104

GAZA: The death toll from the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, 2023, has risen to 55,104 martyrs, in addition to 127,394 wounded. In a statement by the Ministry of Health in Gaza said that hospitals in the Strip received 123 martyrs and 474 wounded over the past 24 hours as a result of the ongoing Israeli massacres and targeting of civilians in the Strip. The ministry indicated that the death toll and the number of injuries since March 18 have reached 4,821, in addition to 15,353 injured, noting that Gaza hospitals have received 57 martyrs and more than 363 injured since dawn today. The ministry added that the total number of martyrs received at hospitals from areas designated for aid distribution has risen to 224, with more than 1,858 injured. It noted that a number of victims remain under the rubble and on the streets, as ambulance and civil defense crews cannot reach them. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is becoming increasingly complex due to the Israeli occupation's intransigence in preventing the entry of humanitarian aid to the population, and the continued bombing of all areas, including the remaining medical and service facilities, as well as the tents of displaced people. The Israeli occupation resumed its aggression on the Gaza Strip on March 18, following a two-month pause under a ceasefire agreement that went into effect on Jan. 19. However, the occupation violated the terms of the ceasefire over the course of the two months, continuing its bombardment of various areas in the Gaza Strip, which is experiencing an unprecedented humanitarian tragedy. – **Agencies**

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