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**PM Shehbaz calls blue economy economic frontier'**

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## Israel-Iran tensions

# Iran says its rights under nuclear NPT are not respected

The leaders called for an immediate end to hostilities and the settlement of contentious issues, including those related to Iran's nuclear programme, exclusively through political and diplomatic means

CENTRELINE REPORT

TEHRAN: Expectations that Iran continues its voluntary commitments to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) are "unjustified" when the country's rights under the treaty are not respected and its nuclear facilities are freely targeted by a non-member, Iran's mission to UN in Vienna said on Monday, according to state media. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on Monday for an "immediate" end to fighting between Israel and Iran in a phone conversation, the Kremlin said.

"The leaders called for an immediate end to hostilities and the settlement of contentious issues, including those related to Iran's nuclear programme, exclusively through political and diplomatic means," the Kremlin said in its readout of the call. Iranian media said that a hospital in the country's west suffered serious damage after an Israeli strike in the area on Monday.

"Following the Zionist criminal regime's attack on a nearby workshop in Kermanshah city, Farabi Hospital also suffered serious damage," the Tasnim news agency reported. Meanwhile, The head of the UN nuclear watchdog said Monday there was "no indication of a physical attack" on an underground section of Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment site following Israeli strikes that destroyed the plant's above-ground part.

It comes after Israel last week began launching strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities, alleging that that the country was seeking to develop nuclear weapons – an accusation Tehran has always denied.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has

## Iran launches new missile barrage against Israel

WEB DESK

The Israeli military said it has identified missiles launched from Iran toward the territory of Israel a short while ago, Iranian media reported. "Defensive systems are operating to intercept the threat," it added. Meanwhile, Iran's Revolutionary Guards called on the residents of Tel Aviv to evacuate as soon as possible, Iranian state media reported on Monday, shortly after Israel issued an evacuation warning for a designated area in Tehran. The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz was leaving Southeast Asia on Monday after cancelling plans to dock in Vietnam, amid reports it is headed to the Middle East to boost the US presence as Israel and Iran do battle.

said that a key above-ground component of the Natanz site where Iran was producing uranium enriched to up to 60 percent – short of the 90 percent required to produce weapons-grade material – had been destroyed in the attacks.

Addressing an extraordinary board meeting on Monday, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said there has been "no additional damage" at the Natanz site since Friday.

## Iran will not win war: Trump

# Israel attacks Tehran TV; many lose lives

Netanyahu advises Tehran residents to leave city

DNA

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that Israel was "on the road to victory" and claimed that his air force was "in control of the skies over Tehran", Al Jazeera reported.

The latest military exchange between the arch-rivals began when Israel struck Iran's nuclear and military sites, killing top commanders and scientists. Tel Aviv has said it wants to stop Tehran from building an atomic weapon, which the latter has consistently denied, saying its uranium enrichment programme is for civilian purposes.

Dangers of further escalation loomed over a meeting of G7 leaders in Canada, with US President Donald Trump expressing hope a day ago that a deal could be done but no sign of the fighting abating on a fourth day of war. Trump said that Iran will not win the war therefore it should come on the negotiating table.

Netanyahu made the remarks as he visited the Tel Aviv airport in central Israel, accompanied by Defence Minister Israel Katz and Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Eyal Zamir, according to the Israeli media. "We are on

## UN slams Israeli-backed aid system

NEWS DESK

ISRAELI fire killed at least 40 people, half of them near an aid distribution site operated by the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation on Monday, the territory's health ministry said, as UN officials denounced Israeli-backed aid delivery methods. Medics said at least 20 people were killed and 200 others wounded near an aid distribution site in Rafah, the latest in daily mass shootings that have killed hundreds of Palestinians trying to reach food since Israel imposed a new distribution system after partly lifting a near three-month total blockade.

our way to achieving our two objectives: eliminating the nuclear threat and eliminating the missile threat," he said. Netanyahu

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## SBP keeps key policy rate unchanged

Going forward, inflation is expected to trend up and stabilise in target range during FY26, says MPC

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has decided to maintain the key policy rate at 11% in the wake of the escalating Iran-Israel conflict. The central bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had slashed the interest rate by 100 basis points (bps) to 11% in its last meeting on May 5, mainly owing to steady disinflation. The central bank had cut the rate by 1,100 basis points since June from an all-time high of 22%.

"At its meeting today, the committee decided to keep the policy rate unchanged at 11%," according to an MPC statement. The MPC said that the increase in inflation in May to 3.5% year-on-year (y/y) was in line with its expectation, whereas core inflation declined marginally.

"Going forward, inflation is expected to trend up and stabilise in the target range during FY26," the statement said. The MPC also noted that economic growth is gradually recovering and is expected to gain further momentum next year,

Continued on Page 06

## UK appoints first woman head of MI6 spy service



Appointment of Blaise Metreweli comes at time when work of our intelligence services has never been more vital, says Starmer

DNA

LONDON: The UK government has appointed the first-ever woman to head its MI6 spy service as the country faces "threats on an unprecedented scale", Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced on Sunday. The MI6 Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) achieved global fame through Ian Fleming's fictional agent James Bond. Blaise Metreweli will be the 18th head of the service, Starmer's Downing Street office said in a statement. "The historic appointment of Blaise Metreweli comes at a time

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq receiving Ambassador of Romania Dan Stoenescu at Parliament House. – DNA

## Israeli aggression

# Iran ready for talks if Israel halts attacks, says Dar

Deputy PM says Iranian foreign minister made it clear after first attack that the "act will be responded to"

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: As the conflict between Tehran and Tel Aviv enters its fourth day, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said on Monday that Iran was willing to return to the negotiation table if Israel refrains from further strikes, citing direct communication with his Iranian counterpart after the initial exchange of hostilities. "Iran's Foreign Minister [Abbas Araghchi] told me that if Israel does not carry out another attack, they are prepared to return to the negotiating table," Dar said while speaking on the Senate floor. "We conveyed this message to other countries [...] there is still time to stop Israel and bring Iran back to talks," he added.

Continued on Page 06

## Iran-Israel conflict triggers fuel crisis

Govt spokesperson Shahid Rind dismisses fuel shortage as "a false narrative spread by petrol smugglers"

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: Iran's ongoing armed conflict with Israel has had critical repercussions in neighbouring Pakistan's province of Balochistan where a province-wide fuel crisis is unfolding with alarming speed, The News reported on Monday. From the provincial capital Quetta to Turbat, Panjgur, Gwadar, and Chagai, petrol pumps are shutting

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Govt warns of fuel price hike

Omar Ayub raises alarm over worsening outlook, saying Pakistan already caught in domestic debt trap

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Authorities have warned that domestic fuel prices may rise in line with the global market, where oil has surged by 16% due to the Iran-Israel war, with no intention to reduce the Petroleum Development Levy (PDL).

Reuters reported that global oil prices fluctuated on Monday after surging 7% on Friday, as renewed strikes by Israel and Iran over the weekend sparked fears of a wider regional conflict that could disrupt oil exports from the Middle East.

Brent crude futures were up 6 cents, or 0.08pc, to \$74.29 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures gained 21 cents or 0.29pc, to \$73.19.

### Security Forces kill five Khwarij

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces killed five Khwarij belonging to Indian Proxy, Fitna al Khwarij, in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. "On 15-16 June 2025, five Khwarij belonging to Indian Proxy, Fitna al Khwarij were killed in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province" said an ISPR news release.

An intelligence-based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in Peshawar District, on the reported presence of Indian sponsored Khwarij. During the conduct of operation, own troops skillfully surrounded and effectively engaged the Indian sponsored Khwarij location, and after an intense fire exchange, four Indian sponsored Khwarij.

# Punjab presents Rs5.3 trillion 'zero-tax' budget for 2025-26

Senior provincial minister Aurangzeb says no new tax imposed nor has any tax rate been enhanced



ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Finance Minister Mujtaba Shuja ur Rehman on Monday presented the province's Rs5,335 billion budget for the fiscal year 2025-26. Speaking on the floor of the Punjab Assembly, the finance minister said that

the present present government has allocated a total of Rs1,240 billion for the development programme that is 23% of the budget 2025-26 and is 47% higher than the current FY 2024-25 containing Rs842 billion on this count.

In next FY budget, he said, estimated expenditures under Account-II (Food) have been reduced up to 88%

(Rs53.3 billion) while compared with that of current fiscal year, which is clear proof of the best economic planning of the government, and that is why we have managed to overcome internal debts servicing by 94%. He said that health, education and other sectors under the social sector have always been a top priority of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, that is why a hefty grant of Rs494 billion (40% of the ADP) has been earmarked for the social sector. Giving breakup of the budget in his speech during the assembly session, Mujtaba said that the total revenues collection is estimated at Rs4,890.4 billion, adding that under National Finance Commission (NFC), Punjab will receive Rs4062.2 billion from the federal divisible pool, while provincial receipts (Own Resource Revenue) are

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## Faisal assigned additional charge of Registrar Trade Unions

ISLAMABAD: Faisal Tariq, Director Legal Workers Welfare Fund (WWF), has been assigned the additional charge for the post of Registrar of Trade Unions at the National Industrial Relations Commission (NIRC). Currently serving in Grade 19 at the WWF, Mr. Faisal Tariq has been entrusted with the Grade 20 responsibilities of Registrar Trade Unions for an initial period of 90 days. The official notification regarding his appointment has been issued. His assignment reflects confidence in his legal expertise and administrative capabilities.—APP

## 1,200 litres of oil derived from animal waste discarded

LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) enforcement team foiled an attempt to supply contaminated oil extracted from animal fat during an operation conducted in the Mahmood Booti area, here on Monday Acting on the directives of PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid, the food safety team seized 1,200 litres of loose, substandard oil being transported in an unregistered vehicle. The oil was immediately discarded on the spot. The operation was carried out due to the absence of mandatory documentation and licenses required for transporting such hazardous material. The PFA reiterated its commitment to safeguarding public health by continuing its crackdown on food adulteration and unsafe food practices. PFA DG Asim Javed said that the oil was being transported without proof of delivery to a licensed bio-diesel or soap manufacturing unit. He said that all such consignments must be properly labelled "Not fit for human consumption" and must include complete documentation of the destination facility.—APP

## 4,650 harassment complaints addressed in 4 years

MULTAN: Punjab Ombudsman for Women Nabila Hakim Ali on Monday revealed that her office received 4,650 harassment complaints during her four-year tenure, of which only 50 are currently under investigation while all others have been resolved. She was addressing the National Civil Society Convention 2025 held at University Law College, Multan. She said that with a positive spirit and a desire for change, success is inevitable. "My conscience is satisfied that I worked beyond my capacity for women's rights," she added. She said her office helped women recover inheritance property worth Rs 1,200 billion during the past four years.—APP

# APNS briefs Info Secy about delayed payments, unfair ads distribution

Responding to these concerns, Federal Secretary Ambreen Jan assured the APNS delegation of the government's commitment to resolving the issues through mutual understanding and cooperation. She directed the PIO and DG (IP) to immediately examine and address the concerns regarding delayed payments and ad distribution



### DNA

THE Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Ambreen Jan, held a detailed meeting with the newly formed Federal Capital Committee (Islamabad & Rawalpindi) of APNS, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Faisal Zahid Malik, Chairman & CEO Pakistan Observer. Also present were senior officials from the Ministry, including Mr. Mobashir Hasan (Principal Information Officer), Mr. Ashiq Hussain Sheikh (Director General, IP Wing), Mr. Sohail Aftab (Director), Mr. Adnan Arjmand (Deputy Director), and Mr. Arshad Khan (Deputy Director).

Members of the Federal Capital Committee who attended included Mr. Khushnood Ali Khan (Editor-in-Chief, Daily Sahafat), Mr. Waseem Ahmad (Editor-in-Chief, Daily Awam), Mr. Ansar Mahmood Bhatti (Editor-in-Chief, Monthly Centreline), Mr. Tahir Mughal Chief Editor Daily Nawa-i-Pak, Mr. Agha Bilal (Head of Marketing Daily Dawn), Mr. Abid Mughal (Regional Head Marketing, Daily Khabrain), and Syed Amjad Ali (Daily Jang). At the outset, the APNS delegation congratulated Ms. Ambreen Jan on her elevation to Grade-22 and expressed optimism about enhanced collaboration between the ministry and media stakeholders. The Chairman of the Federal Commit-

tee also commended the Ministry of Information, under the leadership of Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, for effectively articulating and defending Pakistan's position during the recent armed engagement with India. The APNS representatives raised several key issues during the meeting, including: Pending payments to APNS member publications for government advertisements. Unfair distribution of advertisement share among APNS member outlets. Non-implementation of revised advertisement rates that were previously promised. Suspension of government advertisements to the newspaper DAWN, highlighting the need for an equitable and

inclusive policy. Operational challenges posed by the Press Registrar's office and the Press Council of Pakistan. Responding to these concerns, Federal Secretary Ambreen Jan assured the APNS delegation of the government's commitment to resolving the issues through mutual understanding and cooperation. She directed the PIO and DG (IP) to immediately examine and address the concerns regarding delayed payments and ad distribution. Ms. Jan reaffirmed the government's intention to revise and enhance advertisement rates for newspapers and periodicals, instructing the DG (IP) to move a summary in this regard, which would be forwarded to the Prime

Minister via the Ministry of Finance. Addressing concerns about dummy publications, the Secretary stressed the importance of transparency and proposed joint efforts by the government and APNS to identify and eliminate non-genuine newspapers from the system. She requested the APNS's support in this regard, promising full cooperation from the Ministry. The Secretary and PIO assured that all efforts shall be made to clear the pending payments before June 30. The meeting concluded on a positive and collaborative note, with both sides agreeing to maintain ongoing dialogue and work together to promote fairness, professionalism, and sustainability in the media sector.

## Sherry for accelerated regional climate cooperation

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, Senator Sherry Rehman, Chair of Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, called for accelerated investment in land restoration, regional climate cooperation, and an end to the weaponization of water resources, warning that Pakistan is on the frontlines of a compounding climate emergency marked by desertification, drought, and declining water security. "Pakistan is losing fertile land at an alarming rate due to desertification, droughts, and mismanaged water resources, threatening food security, live-

lihoods, and the very fabric of rural economies," she stated. "This is not just an environmental issue—it is a national emergency." Climate Risk Index 2025 ranks Pakistan 1st among top ten countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2022, with over 68 per cent of its land area now classified as arid or semi-arid. The country loses nearly 27,000 hectares of forest and productive land annually, while prolonged droughts in Balochistan, Sindh, and South Punjab continue to push vulnerable communities deeper into poverty. The per capita availability of water has plummeted from

5,000 cubic meters in 1947 to less than 900 today, crossing the threshold of water scarcity. This year's theme—"Restore the Land. Unlock the Opportunities"—could not be more relevant for Pakistan. Healthy land underpins food systems, climate resilience, and economic stability. But as the UNCCD warns, over 1 million km of productive land—about 113% of Pakistan's total land area—is lost to degradation every year, requiring \$1 billion in daily investments worldwide for restoration between 2025 and 2030. Yet current global investments stand at just \$66 billion annually.—APP



Islamabad: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacts with the Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam at Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference.

## Punjab allocates Rs 181b for health sector

LAHORE: The Punjab government has allocated a substantial amount of Rs 181 billion for the health sector in the provincial budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, marking a significant investment in improving healthcare infrastructure and services across the province. According to the Development Programme document, Rs 95 billion has been set aside for Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education, while Rs 86 billion has been allocated for Health and Population. A major initiative under the new budget is the establishment of the Nawaz Sharif Medical District in Lahore, for which Rs 6.288 billion has been earmarked. This advanced medical district will house a number of key healthcare institutions including Children Hospital-II, Institute of Genetic Blood Diseases, Institute of Surgical, Orthopedic & Medical Rehabilitation, Center of Excellence for Nursing Education, a Specialized Medical Hospital, a 1000-bedded Cardiac Institute, a Medical University, and a state-of-the-art Diagnostic Lab. In an effort to enhance access to medical education in underserved regions, the government has announced the establishment of three new medical colleges in Narowal, Okara, and Layyah with an allocated amount of Rs 800 million. Moreover, a new Children Hospital is to be built in Rawalpindi at a cost of Rs 6 billion, while Rs one billion has been allocated for the construction of a Teaching Hospital in Sialkot.—APP

## Call all sectors to unite for polio-free Pakistan

QUETTA: Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal on Monday urged politicians, religious scholars, academia, civil society's members, parents and media to use their influence with renewed determination by actively participating in the anti-polio campaign to help ensure a polio-free Pakistan in the near future. Addressing a press conference after chairing a review meeting on polio eradication held here which was attended by key stakeholders, including the Capt. (Retd) Anwar Ul Haq, National Coordinator for Polio, Secretary Health Balochistan Mujeeb-Ur-Rehman Pan-ezai, Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) Coordinator Balochistan Inam Ul Haq, as well as representatives from, WHO, UNICEF, and provincial health authorities, Mustafa Kamal stressed to

intensifying polio eradication efforts aimed to vaccinate the children against the crippling disease. He warned that "if we do not take things seriously, Pakistan risks becoming the last country where polio persists as the virus is remain active in only two countries." Kamal mentioned that the Afghanistan will be polio-free country as the current Afghan government is running extensive door to door anti-polio campaign in all provinces to administer the anti-polio drops to children up to five years of age. He pointed out that all Muslim countries and others around the world have eliminated polio by using the same vaccine currently being administered in Pakistan. "Due to the widespread presence of the polio virus in the environment of all districts, it can attack children. To prevent this, it is essential that

children receive both the polio drops," he added. Mustafa Kamal called the parents to administered vaccination, assuring them that these steps would help protect their families from lifelong disabilities and even death. Syed Mustafa Kamal announced that no polio cases have been reported from Balochistan so far this year. He credited the ongoing robust efforts under the leadership of the Prime Minister for the encouraging development. Minister Kamal emphasized that both federal and provincial governments are united in their commitment to eradicating polio from Pakistan. "Reject all negative narratives and ensure that every child is vaccinated," he urged. "The entire nation must unite against polio, and our frontline polio workers are our true heroes.—APP

# Govt committed for advancing global scientific collaboration

"Nathiagali Summer College is a jewel in Pakistan's scientific crown and a shining testament to our dedication to knowledge, inquiry, and global cooperation," Ahsan Iqbal said, adding that it symbolizes the spirit of international scientific collaboration

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, on Monday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment for contributing to the global scientific commons with dignity, discipline, and determination, emphasizing the country's resolve to share its knowledge and expertise on the international stage. Addressing the 50th International Nathiagali Summer College (INSC), the minister lauded the platform for fostering sci-

entific exchange, inspiring generations of physicists, and strengthening bonds between nations through the universal language of science. "Nathiagali Summer College is a jewel in Pakistan's scientific crown and a shining testament to our dedication to knowledge, inquiry, and global cooperation," Ahsan Iqbal said, adding that it symbolizes the spirit of international scientific collaboration. Reflecting on the transformative power of science and technology, he stated, "Throughout history, few forces have

reshaped humanity more profoundly — from the domestication of crops to the industrial revolution, from electricity to the digital age, and now into the domains of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology. Each leap has redefined the way we live, think, and connect with each other." "In today's techno-economic era, knowledge is power, data is currency, and innovation is national security," he remarked. "Those who lead in science will lead the world. Those who lag will be left behind."

As the world faces pressing global challenges — including climate change, the ethical implications of AI, pandemics, and water scarcity — Iqbal underscored the urgent need for critical thinking, interdisciplinary research, and ethical innovation. "We must usher in a new intellectual renaissance — one grounded in faith, reason, and responsibility," he said. Highlighting Pakistan's recent scientific advancements, the minister announced the approval of two major initiatives by the Planning Commission. The first is the Dr.

A.Q. Khan Materials Research Institute, established in collaboration with the University of Cambridge, which will focus on frontier research in advanced materials vital for energy, security, and high-tech manufacturing. Additionally, the NILOP-PIEAS Emerging Technologies Center, with an investment of Rs. 3.385 billion, has been approved to build national capacity in Industry 4.0 and 5.0 technologies. The center will specialize in robotics, artificial intelligence, additive manufacturing, and digital transformation.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02/Italy National/ Independence Day

June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day

June 06/Sweden National Day

June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)

June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution& Army Day

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

June 12/Philippines Independence Day

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

June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day


June 17/Iceland National Day

June 18/Seychells National Day

June 25/Croatia National Day

June 25/Mozambique National Day

June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

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

Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4


RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# PM for advanced IT trainings for youth employability

Instructing the formulation of clear Terms of Reference (TORs) for consultancy regarding the training system and setting a timeline for its establishment and implementation, the prime minister said the training programs should be positive and constructive, enabling youth to ensure their productivity at an international level

**MAHNOOR ANSAR**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the authorities concerned to formulate modern training programs for the youth to ensure their employability and develop Pakistan as a regional hub of information technology. The prime minister, chairing a review meeting on IT training for youth and establishment of training ecosystem in Pakistan, said that a sustainable and advanced ICT (Information Communication Technology) system would be established to position Pakistan as a central hub for the IT sector in the region, according to a PM Office press release. In this regard, local companies will be provided with a skilled workforce to enable them to meet international standards and generate foreign exchange. Instructing the formulation of clear Terms of Reference (TORs) for consultancy regarding the training system and setting a timeline for its establishment and implementation, the prime minister said the training programs should be positive and constructive, enabling youth to ensure their productivity at an international level. Calling the talented young workforce a valuable asset for Pakistan, he directed the Ministry of Federal Education, Higher Education Commission, and NAVTTC to collaborate with the Ministry of IT to provide IT training in schools, colleges, and universities, besides ensuring IT training in summer camps during the ongoing summer vacations. During the briefing, it was informed that work on establishment and implementation of advanced IT training system was in progress, with Terms of Reference for hiring consultancy firms in the final stage. It was told that with Huawei's collaboration, 20,000 students have already received advanced IT training. Last year, trained Pakistani students not only excelled across China but also secured the top three positions globally in three IT categories, competing against 200,000 candidates worldwide. Prime Minister Shehbaz commended the students for bringing pride to Pakistan through their achievements. The participants of the meeting were told that through collaboration between the HEC and Huawei, efforts were underway to provide IT training to an additional 80,000 students in major cities, and through online classes in remote areas like Balochistan and Turbat. Moreover, 50,000 trainers will be trained in modern technology and contemporary requirements in Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Islamabad. Additionally, through the integration of training programs into bachelor's degree programs and the launch of artificial intelligence programs, the target is to train 300,000 students in the IT sector. It was informed that during the ongoing summer vacations, 146,000 children will receive IT training through collaboration between the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, the Ministry of Information Technology, and Huawei. Under the Prime Minister's Youth Program, 2,000 students will soon be trained in advanced IT courses to become employable. The prime minister directed to accomplish all the said initiatives as per defined timelines. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ahsan Khan Cheema and Shazia Fatima Khawaja, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Program Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission, and relevant senior officials.

## Naqvi praises security forces for eliminating indian-sponsored terrorists in KP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has paid tribute to Pakistan's security forces for their successful operations against Indian-sponsored terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Commending the forces for their professionalism, Naqvi lauded the elimination of five terrorists linked to "Fitna-e-Hindustan" and said the swift operations were a reflection of the forces' commitment and bravery. "The timely and effective operations of our security forces have sent five Indian-sponsored terrorists to hell," said the Interior Minister. Naqvi expressed pride in the courageous sons of the nation, stating that every Pakistani is proud of the brave security personnel. "We highly appreciate the successful actions taken against Indian-sponsored terrorists and their facilitators," he added. The Interior Minister stressed that the fate of all terrorists and their supporters would be a humiliating death and affirmed that, with the full support of the nation, all such elements would be eliminated. "With the nation's support, we will wipe out Indian-sponsored terrorism completely," Naqvi said.—APP

## Senate extends privilege report deadline

ISLAMABAD: Senate on Monday extended the time for presentation of a report by the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges on a privilege motion filed against an official of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication Senator Syed Waqar Mehd, Chairman of the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges, moved the motion under Rule 194(1) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012, seeking a 60-day extension with effect from June 17, 2025. The motion relates to a privilege issue raised by Senators Palwasha Mohammed Zai Khan, Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan, Saifullah Sarwar Khan Nyazee, Nadeem Ahmed Bhutto, Mohammad Humayun Mohmand and Anusha Rahman Ahmad Khan against the Deputy Secretary (Council), Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication for allegedly misleading the committee. Meanwhile, Senator Mohsin Aziz, on behalf of Senator Umer Farooq, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Petroleum, presented the committee's report on a point of public importance raised by Senator Kamil Ali Agha on March 11, 2025, regarding unannounced Sui gas load shedding in Lahore. The report contains findings and recommendations to address the issue of gas supply disruptions in the city.—APP

## Lotus Lake at Shakarparian offers scenic charm

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Lotus Lake, popularly known as Kanwal Jheel, located in the tranquil hills of Shakarparian in federal capital, offered scenic beauty but still unknown for many visitors. Inaugurated in late 2020 as part of a "natural family park" project, the site features a 100-foot-long lotus pond, surrounded by wooden seating areas and a place designated for barbecue. The surroundings have been covered with lattices for security purpose, also aiming to preserve the natural beauty of the area. Despite its scenic appeal, the lake remains largely unnoticed and receives few public attention. A visitor, Haris Eman told, "We are always concerned about safety while deciding a spot to visit with family, this place is ideal and silence with beautiful views around." It is the perfect place to views with family, he added.

## ICCI urges CDA to modernize markets for economic growth

ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, has called on Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa to allocate sufficient funds and initiate immediate development work in commercial markets of Islamabad. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi expressed serious concern over the deteriorating state of markets, noting that no significant development work has been carried out for a long time. He pointed out several pressing issues, including non-functional streetlights, broken footpaths, lack of clean drinking water, absence of public toilets, choked sewerage lines, and poor sanitation. He said such conditions do not reflect the image of the federal capital and must be addressed on a priority basis. Talking to various trader delegations at the Chamber House here on Monday, President Qureshi reaffirmed ICCI's strong commitment to resolving the issues of the business community. He emphasized that the Chamber is actively working to remove hurdles, promote business-friendly policies, and push for improved infrastructure. He added that ICCI is striving to turn Islamabad into a model city for ease of doing business and a prime destination for local and foreign investment. He said that the Industrialists and traders are paying various taxes to the CDA and are making significant contributions to its revenue, therefore, it is the responsibility of the civic body to develop markets on modern lines for smooth growth of trade activities adding the business community is the main stakeholder in the revenue generation of the CDA thereby the civic body should compensate them by ensuring better development of all the markets. President Qureshi concluded by reminding that the business community had fully cooperated with the CDA in removing encroachments from the markets. Now, he said, it is the responsibility of the civic body to reciprocate by initiating long-overdue development work and restoring the markets to a respectable and functional condition.—DNA

## BISP, Pakistan Post join hands for digital payment solutions

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Pakistan Post have agreed to collaborate on introducing digital payment solutions aimed at enhancing the efficiency and security of stipend disbursements to BISP beneficiaries across the country. Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid, met with Director General Pakistan Post, Samiullah Khan, at BISP Headquarters on Monday to discuss modalities for launching a pilot project based on biometric verification. The initiative seeks to facilitate over 10 million beneficiaries with convenient and secure digital payment options. During the meeting, it was decided that technical teams from both organizations would soon convene to assess system integration possibilities and move forward with the pilot phase. Chairperson Rubina Khalid underlined the importance of the collaboration in expanding financial inclusion and ensuring timely assistance to deserving families. "Our goal is to simplify the payment process while ensuring transparency and accessibility, particularly in remote areas," she stated. DG Pakistan Post Samiullah Khan expressed full support and proposed continuous technical consultations to streamline the process.—DNA

## Chief Editor of Daily Islamabad POST/CENTRELINE meets Romanian Ambassador



ISLAMABAD: Chief Editor of Daily Islamabad POST and CENTRELINE Ansar Mahmood Bhatti held a meeting with H.E. Dan Stoenescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of mutual interest, with a focus on enhancing bilateral relations. Ambassador Stoenescu expressed Romania's keen interest in expanding cooperation with Pakistan across multiple sectors, particularly emphasizing the importance of strengthening people-to-people contacts. He noted that Romania values its partnership with Pakistan and continues to welcome skilled workforce from the country, recognizing their potential and contribution to Romania's economy and society.

## Twin cities savor sweetness as Mangoes take center stage

Whether it's the sweetness of Chaunsa or the tanginess of Sindhri, the people of twin cities are enjoying every bite of the King of Fruits

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi revelled in the sweet bliss of mangoes, aptly hailed as the "King of Fruits," as the juicy delights brought joy to residents of all ages. In local markets, vibrant displays of mangoes greet shoppers, with vendors showcasing everything from the renowned Chaunsa, Sindhri, and Anwar Ratol to the prized Langra, Fajli, and Dusehri, every popular variety is readily available. Mango enthusiasts can relish the sweetness of Chaunsa, the tanginess of Sindhri, or explore other unique flavors, making the twin cities a haven for mango connoisseurs. Sara Ali, a mango enthusiast from Islamabad said "Mangoes are a summertime staple for us as there's nothing like biting into a ripe, juicy Chaunsa on a hot summer day." She commented that Mangoes are more than just

a fruit and they are a part of our culture adding that every one look forward to the season all year round. For many residents, mangoes evoke memories of childhood summers spent savoring the fruit under the shade of trees. The variety of mangoes available has also sparked a sense of adventure among consumers. A desident of Rawalpindi said "I love trying different types of mangoes as last week, I had Sindhri, and this week, I am trying Anwar Ratol. Each variety has its own unique taste." Mangoes are her favorite summer treat and she love trying different varieties and the vendor's mangoes are always fresh, and the prices are reasonable, she told. "I am stocking up on mangoes for the week. They're perfect for snacking, smoothies, or desserts," she commented. As people enjoy the mango season, vendors are working hard to meet the demand.

Muhammad Ali, a fruit vendor in Islamabad's F-6 market shared that "We are importing mangoes from the best orchards in Sindh and Punjab to ensure top quality and flavor. He told that Mangoes are flying off the shelves and they are having a great season so far, with Chaunsa and Sindhri being the top sellers. He further said he has been selling mangoes for years, and this season's batch is one of the best. Saying that they are seeing a lot of repeat customers, which is great to see, people love their mangoes, and they are happy to deliver quality and taste. "Mangoes are a summer staple, and we are proud to offer a wide variety to our customers, from sweet to tangy, we have got something for everyone," he stated. Whether it's the sweetness of Chaunsa or the tanginess of Sindhri, the people of twin cities are enjoying every bite of the King of Fruits.

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## Briefs

IRSA releases  
254,300  
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 254,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 293,992 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1450.85 feet which was 48.85 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 177,400 cusecs and 151,800 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1167.20 feet, which was 117.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 31,750 cusecs and 17,658 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 186,304, 137,105, 90,219 and 33,560 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 23,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 30,417 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Saba Talpur  
takes oath  
as MNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Saba Talpur took oath as a Member of National Assembly (MNA) on Monday following her victory in NA-213 Umerkot-I by-election. The oath was administered by Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah, after which she signed the assembly's registration roll. Talpur won the seat by defeating independent candidate Lal Chand Malhi, who was supported by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), and others.—APP

ICT anti-  
encroachments  
operation in  
Blue Area

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has carried out an anti-encroachment operation in Blue Area where vendors had occupied public space outside electronics market and authorities cleared the footpaths and arrested 12 violators. The spokesman of ICT administration said in an operation led by Assistant Commissioner City, several encroachments set up on footpaths in Blue Area's electronics market, were removed. According to the district administration teams, vendors had extended their shops illegally onto the pedestrian walkway, affecting public movement. During the operation, 12 shopkeepers were taken into custody for violating public space regulations. These individuals were shifted to the local police station for further legal proceedings. The action was part of ongoing efforts to reclaim public space and ensure compliance with municipal rules. The Assistant Commissioner, along with enforcement teams, monitored the entire operation. Staff ensured that shop extensions, display racks, and stalls set up outside the allotted shop areas were dismantled. Items, placed unlawfully the footpaths, were seized and shifted to storage by the enforcement team.—APP

Lawmakers laud budget amid  
economic strain, post-India conflict

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers from various political parties, speaking during the National Assembly debate on the 2025-26 federal budget, praised the government for presenting what they described as the best possible fiscal plan under severe economic constraints and in the aftermath of conflict with India.

Cautioning against continued hostility from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, they stressed the need for a robust budget that safeguards Pakistan's sovereignty and strengthens national resilience.

During the ongoing budget debate in the National Assembly, Javed Hanif of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) commended the government's economic team for presenting what he described as the best possible budget under challenging conditions set by the Interna-

tional Monetary Fund (IMF). He noted that most economic indicators were showing positive trends and emphasized that a strong and stable Pakistan was essential for preserving national sovereignty, particularly in light of recent tensions with India. Supporting this sentiment, Anjum Aqeel stated that the budget was drafted in the aftermath of a conflict with India and warned that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi continued to pose a threat.

He stressed the need for a comprehensive fiscal strategy that reinforces sovereignty and national defense. Aqeel also appreciated the budget's focus on supporting low-income groups, with provisions for salary and pension increases, but called for the removal of the tax on solar energy systems. Usman Badini, of JUI (F) in his remarks, underscored

the urgent need to improve basic infrastructure in Balochistan, particularly in water supply, education, and road networks. He urged the government to increase allocations for these sectors under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). Aqeel also praised the role of the Pakistan Army, expressing confidence in the armed forces' continued ability to defend the country. He also called for the abolition of taxes on solar energy systems to promote renewable energy adoption. In addition, he emphasized the need to equip the country's youth with modern skills through training in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. Highlighting gaps in public health, he urged the government to improve healthcare infrastructure and ensure access to quality medical facilities at the grassroots level.

Pakistan People's Party's Abdul Qadir Patel highlighted that the budget was formulated amid ongoing global conflicts. Stressing the importance of national unity, he asserted that solidarity is crucial to overcoming unforeseen challenges.

Patel also voiced concerns over the broad powers granted to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and criticized the imposition of an 18 percent General Sales Tax (GST) on solar panels. Khurshheed Junejo, from Pakistan People Party, urged the government to explain how performance of different indicators of economy has boosted. He lamented that the agriculture, which was backbone of the country's economy, did not perform well. He paid tribute to Pakistan military for taking bold stand on Kashmir, Water and other pressing issues.—DNA

Pakistan keen to expand  
ties with Japan, says Dar

The DPM/FM also advised to extend all possible support to the Pakistani diaspora in Japan, with a focus on enhancing consular services and ensuring the welfare of the community

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Japan, Abdul Hameed Bhutta, paid a farewell call on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. The DPM/FM congratulated Amb. designate on his new assignment and conveyed his best wishes for a successful tenure. He emphasized the importance of further expanding Pakistan-Japan bilateral relations, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, IT, & industrial cooperation. The DPM/FM also advised to extend all possible support to the Pakistani diaspora in Japan, with a focus on enhancing consular services and ensuring the welfare of the community.

Afghan transit trade  
gains traction via  
Gwadar Port

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The second vessel under the Afghan Transit Trade has arrived at Gwadar Port, carrying 20,000 metric tons of Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertilizer, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The development marks a significant step toward regional connectivity and economic integration, enhancing Afghanistan's access to global markets through Pakistan's deep-sea port. "Gwadar is emerging as a dependable maritime gateway. This milestone reflects international confidence in Pakistan's port infrastructure and reaffirms our commitment to making Gwadar a hub of regional trade," said Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs. Gwadar Port was first operationalized for Afghan transit trade in April 2020 under the Afghan-

istan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA 2010), with the arrival of SIBULK TRADITION carrying 16,000 tonnes of urea in May 2020. The cargo was bagged and transported in sealed trucks to Afghanistan, marking the start of seaborne trade to the landlocked country. Between July and April of FY 2024-25, Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan surged to USD 1.138 billion, a 31% increase from the previous year; while imports from Afghanistan rose 14% to USD 557 million, according to the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP). Tahir Khan, a senior journalist and Pak-Afghan affairs expert, told Gwadar Pro that Gwadar offers Afghan traders a shorter and more cost-effective route compared to Karachi ports. "Gwadar is closer to Chaman and experiences less traffic congestion than the Karachi-Torkham corridor,

saving both time and cost," he said. According to Tahir Khan, "Since both Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) into Afghanistan, the recent use of Gwadar Port by Afghan traders should be seen as an important development in this context." Pakistan has also replaced the requirement of bank guarantees with insurance guarantees for bulk cargo in Afghan transit trade through Gwadar. This move specifically benefits imports of DAP, wheat, sugar, and other essential commodities. "This measure will help the Afghan business community and consumers and is a step towards ease of business through Pakistan," said Muhammad Sadiq, Pakistan's Special Representative in Afghanistan, in an earlier statement posted on his official X.

Parliamentarians hail govt's  
stance over Iran-Israel war

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Khel Das Kohistan here on Monday said that Pakistan always played a major role for the peace, prosperity and development in the region. Talking to the mediapersons outside of the Parliament House, he said that Pakiatan will keep continue its fully support to Iran. Commenting over the new increase on petroleum products, he said that the government has increased the prices of petroleum products due to the increase at international market. He said that the government has taken various steps to make this budget low income friendly budget. MNA JUI-F Shahda Akhtar said that it is the need of hours all Muslims countries should unite against Israel and full support to Iran as western countries openly supporting to illegal state Israel. She said that his party will talk to the government to bring some changes in the budget. Senior leader of PMLN MNA Tahira Aurangzeb said that no doubt Pakistan is fully supporting to Iran against Israel in this current war. She urged that all Islamic countries should show the

unity and play effective role against Israel. She said that Israel is a terrorist country who is killing innocent powerless people of Gaza and now Israel has attack on Iran. Day by day Israel is enhancing it's aggression against Muslims states which is very alarming situation for all Muslim states. She has suggested that Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) to play all Muslims their role and stop this war.

MNA PTI Fouzia Arshad suggested that the Government should increase the budget of Education, health and welfare sector for prosperity and development of the state. She said that general public facing the price hike in daily commodities and number of unemployment increasing day by day the incumbent regime should focus on these issues to give the relief to them. Fouzia said that no country could not developed without the promotion and development of the Health and education sector. Unfortunately the population of the country uncontrolled while the ratio of resourced development is very slow to the ration of increasing population.—DNA

Immediate  
and full  
revision  
of budget  
demanded

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Renowned economic analyst and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, has stated that the current budget suffers from multiple flaws, prioritizing short-term revenue targets over long-term economic stability. He emphasized the urgent and critical need for comprehensive reforms, including expansion of the tax base, documentation of the informal economy, and a clear shift toward export promotion to steer the country out of its economic crisis. Addressing members of the business community, Dr. Butt said that instead of offering relief to existing taxpayers, the government has further burdened them while failing to take adequate measures against non-filers and unregistered business segments. The incentives announced in the budget are insufficient and ineffective in stimulating economic activity. He warned that the continuous increase in tax burden is eroding business confidence. The extension of the super tax, he noted, is not only damaging the export sector but also discouraging industrial investment, an outcome detrimental to long-term growth.—

SIMOSA by Jazz  
featured in Levy  
Publishing

ISLAMABAD: SIMOSA, Jazz's flagship SIMCare, digital lifestyle and community platform, has been featured in a business case study titled "Jazz World to SIMOSA: A Blueprint for Digital Transformation from App to Ecosystem", authored by students of NUST Business School and published by Ivey Publishing—one of the world's leading publishers of business case studies used by universities and businesses globally.

The case traces how Jazz evolved its traditional self-care app, Jazz World, into SIMOSA (SIM One Stop App)—a user-first digital platform now serving about 21 million monthly active users. What began as a basic account tool has grown into a lifestyle ecosystem offering seamless SIM management, multi-network bundles, recharges, in-app chat, tax certificates, complaint resolution, and features like prayer tools, shopping discounts, horoscopes, music, and forex—now further enhanced by a built-in social network. "It's encouraging to see SIMOSA spark academic curiosity and be studied as a model of local innovation," said Aamer Ejaz, President Digital Platforms, Jazz. "This journey from Jazz World to SIMOSA reflects our broader ambition to build platforms that go beyond utility and create meaningful digital experiences. Being featured in Ivey Publishing validates the potential of locally developed tech to solve real-world problems at scale." This evolution reflects Jazz's broader digital strategy of placing users at the center of a connected lifestyle. With its scale, design, and impact, SIMOSA stands out as a model for how telecoms can reshape user engagement and digital access in emerging markets. Its inclusion in global business school curricula highlights growing academic interest in locally relevant, scalable innovations—and offers students a real-world case of digital transformation from Pakistan. As part of Jazz's broader ServiceCo vision, SIMOSA exemplifies how digital platforms can enhance everyday life. Jazz now serves over 100 million users through a portfolio that includes JazzCash (fintech), Tamasha (entertainment), Garaj (cloud), SIMOSA (SIMCare and lifestyle), GameNow (gaming), and FikrFree (InsurTech)—using technology to improve lives and livelihoods across Pakistan.—DNA

38th death  
anniversary of  
sufi singer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 38th death anniversary of renowned sufi singer Sain Akhtar is being observed on Monday. He was born in 1945 in Lahore. Sain Akhtar began his musical journey at a young age and quickly gained recognition for his powerful voice and deep connection to sufi poetry. He became widely known for his performances of the works of great Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah and Shah Hussain, bringing spiritual messages to life through music. Over the course of his career, Sain Akhtar earned numerous accolades for his unique singing style, including the prestigious Pride of Performance award from the Government of Pakistan in recognition of his services to folk and Sufi music.—APP

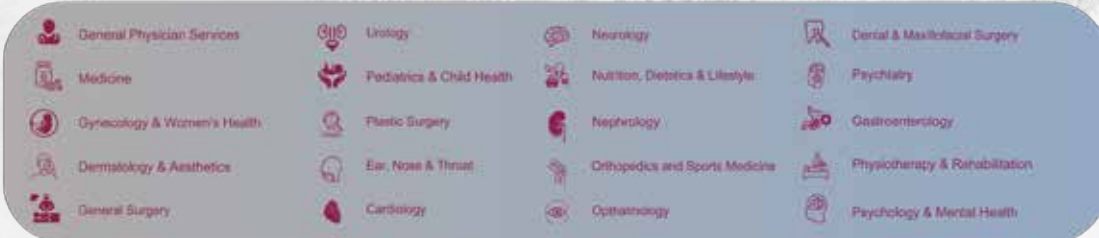
Huawei to  
spotlight AI,  
5G-A  
integration

ISLAMABAD: The upcoming Mobile World Congress (MWC) Shanghai 2025, scheduled to take place from June 18 to 20, will place a strong emphasis on accelerating intelligent industry transformation through the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 5 G-Advanced (5 G-A) technologies Organised by the GSMA, the global event will feature Huawei as a key participant under the theme "Accelerating the Intelligent World", reflecting its strategic commitment to enabling digital intelligence across industries. The core objective of this year's MWC is to explore how AI can unlock business value, drive innovation, and equip enterprises for a smarter, more connected future. In collaboration with telecom carriers and industry partners, Huawei will showcase cutting-edge demonstrations highlighting the convergence of AI and 5 G-A technologies. These will illustrate how the combined capabilities can enable new business models, enhance monetisation, and support comprehensive digital transformation across sectors. Attendees will have access to over 20 high-level summits, roundtables, and forums covering the latest trends, challenges, and breakthroughs in digital intelligence. The event will serve as a global platform for knowledge exchange, featuring insights from leading experts and industry pioneers. MWC Shanghai 2025 aims to foster meaningful collaboration among stakeholders from the telecom, technology, and enterprise ecosystems, providing actionable strategies—APP

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## BRICS and its role in global development

THE BRICS alliance—comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—was formed with the vision of creating a multipolar world order and offering an alternative to Western-dominated financial and political institutions. Over the years, BRICS has emerged as a powerful platform for economic cooperation, political dialogue, and South-South collaboration. Together, its member nations represent more than 40% of the world's population and nearly a quarter of global GDP. As such, BRICS plays a pivotal role in shaping the direction of global development.

In this context, recent rumors suggesting that India may be excluded from BRICS raise serious concerns. Though unconfirmed and possibly speculative, such reports have sparked significant debate about the unity, future, and geopolitical balance of the alliance. India's potential exclusion—or even the suggestion of it—could destabilize the core purpose of BRICS and undermine the very foundations upon which it was built.

India, with its large economy, youthful population, and expanding technological and industrial base, has been a cornerstone of the BRICS bloc. It brings strategic balance, especially in a grouping where China and Russia have increasingly deepened bilateral ties that sometimes run counter to Indian interests. India's presence provides ideological diversity and a critical voice representing democratic values within the group. Removing or sidelining India would not only harm the alliance's credibility but could also shift it dangerously toward a one-sided geopolitical alignment, particularly tilted toward Chinese and Russian influence. BRICS has made significant strides in recent years. The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB), aimed at financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects in member countries and beyond, is a testament to the alliance's potential. The group has also been advocating for reforms in global institutions like the United Nations, World Bank, and IMF, calling for greater representation of the developing world. With emerging economies facing increasing economic and geopolitical pressures, BRICS serves as a vital platform to advocate collective interests and ensure a more equitable global governance structure. The idea of excluding India—if indeed being considered—would not only weaken BRICS internally but also send a negative message to other developing nations that have been looking to the bloc as a symbol of inclusive global partnership. It could also damage regional cooperation in Asia, where India plays a central role, and undermine joint efforts on issues like climate change, counter-terrorism, and digital development.

Rather than fragmentation, BRICS should focus on expansion and strengthening cooperation among existing members. New potential entrants like Argentina, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and others are showing interest in joining. This indicates global trust in the platform's relevance and potential. The current members, particularly China and Russia, must work to preserve unity and transparency within the group.

## Middle East on the Brink – A Call for Urgent Diplomacy

THE Middle East stands on the edge of a dangerous precipice as the escalating tensions between Israel and Iran threaten to spiral into a full-scale regional war. The recent strikes and counter-strikes, including the Israeli attack that reportedly killed top Iranian military commanders and nuclear scientists, have set off alarm bells across the globe. The implications of a direct military confrontation between these two regional heavyweights are too grave to ignore—not just for the Middle East, but for the entire world. If this war expands, it will not be limited to Israeli and Iranian borders. The region's volatility, with ongoing unrest in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, provides fertile ground for conflict spillover. Proxies supported by both Iran and Israel could become active participants, drawing in other countries either directly or through sectarian affiliations. A wider war would destabilize oil routes, fuel global inflation, cripple supply chains, and create humanitarian catastrophes across the region.

It is imperative that the United States, Russia, China, the European Union, and other global stakeholders immediately take notice of the looming crisis. The lack of a unified global response so far has been disheartening. The United States, a long-standing ally of Israel, bears special responsibility. Washington must exercise restraint and diplomacy rather than blind support. Enabling unchecked Israeli military actions, especially those targeting civilian areas or key national infrastructures of another sovereign state, only accelerates the march toward chaos.

At the same time, Israel must reconsider its current strategy. While it claims self-defense and the need to eliminate existential threats, prolonged conflict with Iran will neither bring peace nor ensure long-term security. Israeli interests themselves could suffer immensely in the event of a drawn-out regional war. Israel's economy, international image, and internal stability could be severely compromised. It is in Israel's own interest to listen to calls for mediation—from Russia, from neutral European nations, and even from former U.S. President Donald Trump, who repeatedly claims that he alone can broker peace in the Middle East.

Whether one agrees with Trump's policies or not, there is no denying his past involvement in facilitating agreements like the Abraham Accords. If he still believes in his peacemaking potential, this is the time to act. The region needs bold and immediate diplomacy. Trump—and any other global leader willing to prioritize peace over politics—must use their influence to bring both sides to the table. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Arab League, and the United Nations also have vital roles to play. The silence or passivity of these organizations will be judged harshly by history if war erupts on a broader scale. The people of the Middle East, exhausted by decades of bloodshed, deserve peace, development, and a future free from the shadow of war.

# Israel's Narrative War: Laying the Groundwork to Attack Pakistan's Nuclear Assets

Qamar Bashir



The urgency of caution became even more pronounced after President Donald Trump fired his National Security Advisor, Mike Waltz, on allegations of collusion with Israeli interests. Waltz was reportedly briefing Israeli officials from within the White House and encouraging the impression that the United States was fully backing Israel's military operations. His dismissal revealed how deeply Israel's influence has penetrated not just Congress, but the American executive and intelligence establishment

IN the fog of war, truth is often the first casualty. As the Israel-Iran conflict intensifies, a dangerously false narrative is being pushed by Israeli-linked media outlets—one that falsely accuses Pakistan of issuing nuclear threats and aligning militarily with Iran. It alleges that Pakistan warned the United States and France that it would retaliate if Iran is attacked with nuclear weapons. These claims have no basis in reality—no official statements, no credible sources, no historical precedent. Yet, amplified by a sophisticated propaganda network, these unsubstantiated claims are being given the weight of fact, threatening to create justification for future aggression. This narrative collapses under strategic scrutiny. Pakistan's missile program is regionally focused, designed only to counter threats from India. Its delivery systems are not capable of reaching Israel, and Pakistan has never developed the long-range missile capability or refueling infrastructure needed for such operations. Furthermore, Pakistan lacks the aerial refueling capacity to sustain long-range missions, making any such threat logistically impossible. The very suggestion that Pakistan could or would launch nuclear weapons toward Israel is not only implausible—it is militarily impossible.

Likewise, comparing Pakistan to the United States as a strategic threat is absurd. Pakistan is a struggling economy with limited global influence, whereas the U.S. remains a superpower. By any metric—military strength, economic capacity, or diplomatic reach—Pakistan is not in a position to challenge U.S. interests. These claims are not only false; they are constructed to incite fear, provoke conflict, and shift the global narrative in Israel's favor.

What we are witnessing is not misinformation—it is information warfare. For the first time in modern history Iranian missiles rained down on major Israeli cities, shattering the long-held illusion of invincibility. In response, Israel pivoted toward narrative control. By framing itself as a victim and targeting Pakistan with baseless accusations, it seeks to expand the war narrative and preemptively neutralize any potential Muslim voice of dissent. Pakistan's record stands in direct opposition to this manufactured threat. Time and again, it has

demonstrated military restraint and strategic maturity. From the Kargil conflict to the Pulwama-Balakot standoff and the recent standoff between Pakistan and India after Pahalgam terrorists attack, Pakistan has shown that it acts defensively—even when provoked. The capture and swift return of an Indian pilot in 2019 reflected its desire to de-escalate, not inflame, conflict. Its nuclear doctrine is deterrence-based and region-specific. It has never engaged in offensive nuclear signaling beyond the India-Pakistan context. Pakistan does not seek global military entanglements; its entire military posture is defensive and grounded in regional stability. Internally, Pakistan faces serious challenges—economic volatility, inflation, political instability, and a worsening poverty crisis. These conditions alone make foreign military engagement an untenable proposition. Pakistan is focused on survival, not strategic adventurism. The idea that it would involve itself in a Middle Eastern war—especially one involving Israel, the U.S., and possibly NATO—is not just far-fetched, it is suicidal. It lacks the resources, alliances, and intent to fight such a war. The urgency of caution became even more pronounced after President Donald Trump fired his National Security Advisor, Mike Waltz, on allegations of collusion with Israeli interests. Waltz was reportedly briefing Israeli officials from within the White House and encouraging the impression that the United States was fully backing Israel's military operations.

His dismissal revealed how deeply Israel's influence has penetrated not just Congress, but the American executive and intelligence establishment. This same covert lobbying network that engineered political consent for Israel's attack on Iran could easily be redirected against Pakistan. The machinery that shaped U.S. perception of Iran can be repurposed to vilify Pakistan, manufacturing a threat where none exists. In light of this, Pakistan must tread with extreme care—strategically, diplomatically, and rhetorically. Despite Trump's official distancing from Israel's unilateral strikes, his language betrays alignment. He reminded the world that the United States possesses “the most lethal weapons on earth” and add-

ed that Israel has “plenty of them.” While claiming non-involvement, the United States continues to support Israel with funding, military hardware, intelligence, and diplomatic protection. The public stance of neutrality contrasts sharply with the reality of strategic complicity.

It is within this shadow war of narratives that Pakistan is being framed. Its historic support for oppressed Muslim populations is being twisted into alleged military threats. Sympathy is being rebranded as hostility. Moral clarity is being turned into strategic posturing. This narrative war is not only aimed at distraction—it is laying the foundation for potential aggression.

The real threat to regional and global peace is not from Pakistan's imaginary long-range nuclear capacity, but from Israel's disinformation offensive and the West's silent acquiescence. This manipulation of global opinion—via planted stories, distorted facts, and fabricated threats—is a deliberate campaign to manufacture consent for unjust wars. The world must recognize it, confront it, and reject it. In these dangerous and volatile times, words can be more destructive than weapons. Pakistani leadership—civilian and military—must exercise extreme caution in public messaging. Statements made in Parliament, at press conferences, or in international forums can be manipulated and reframed by hostile actors. Pakistan must not rise to this bait. It must remain anchored in its own national interest, grounded in realism, and focused on internal consolidation. The cost of strategic miscalculation at this juncture could be catastrophic. Diplomacy, backchannel engagement, and regional coordination should remain Pakistan's only tools of influence. There is neither the space nor the mandate for military signaling. Power without truth is tyranny. Military strength without accountability is chaos. In this dangerous moment, Pakistan's most potent weapon is not force—but restraint, neutrality, and unwavering commitment to the truth.

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

# The US-China strategic confrontation over Taiwan

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The application of game theory specifically the Chicken Game—provides a robust analytical lens through which to interpret U.S.-China tensions over Taiwan. Asymmetric stakes, incomplete information and high risks of escalation define the scenario. While war is not inevitable, the cost of strategic missteps is immense. As the authors conclude...

THE geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) over Taiwan has emerged as one of the most perilous fault lines in contemporary international politics. As Taiwan's de facto independence persists, China's irredentist claims and America's security commitments have evolved into a volatile security dilemma. Agata Ziętek et al.'s 2025 study applies classical game theory—specifically the Chicken Game to dissect the strategic calculations of Washington and Beijing in this unfolding contest.

Game theory, a mathematical framework for modeling strategic interactions, is used in the article to evaluate decision-making under conditions of mutual interdependence. The key assumption is rational behavior by both players (states), who must consider not only their own strategies but also anticipate the other's moves. In the Taiwan context, the United States and China are the principal players. Each has a set of strategies ranging from cooperation to defection—and corresponding payoffs that depend on the choices made by both. The authors argue that the U.S.-China rivalry over Taiwan conforms to the dynamics of the Chicken Game, where both players risk catastrophic loss if neither yields. This model is apt for describing situations of brinkmanship, where demonstrating resolve may compel the opponent to back down, but miscalculations could lead to war.

Ziętek et al. delineate a clear asymmetry in preference hierarchies between the two players. For China, the most favorable outcome is peaceful unification with Taiwan, achieving

the “Great Rejuvenation” and restoring historical prestige. For the United States, the hierarchy is inverted. The most favorable outcome is Taiwan's resistance (4), preserving regional stability and reinforcing U.S. credibility with allies. This inverse alignment of preferences establishes an inherent tension: what is a strategic necessity for one actor is a significant loss for the other. The game's structure ensures that any deviation from the status quo threatens to escalate into mutually destructive conflict, yet neither side fully benefits from simply maintaining the status quo indefinitely. The security dilemma exacerbated by the lack of trust and the presence of strategic ambiguity, particularly on the part of the U.S. Since 1979, the U.S. has adhered to a policy of ambiguity—neither recognizing Taiwan's independence nor ruling out military intervention. This deliberate vagueness aims to deter both Chinese aggression and Taiwanese provocation. However, as both sides modernize and expand their military capabilities, ambiguity may no longer suffice. Misinterpretations and overreactions could push the players from the realm of calculated posturing into open conflict. The Chicken Game thus aptly captures the rising tension between fear of escalation and the temptation to assert strategic dominance. An important insight from the Chicken Game is that credibility and irrationality may paradoxically enhance a player's bargaining position. If one player appears willing to accept massive costs (even irrationally), the other may yield. This brinkmanship, while potentially effective, is inherently unstable.

In this context, both the U.S. and China may resort to mixed strategies oscillating between firm rhetoric and diplomatic overtures to keep the other side uncertain. The paper suggests that empathy understanding the opponent's preference structure could enable more stable outcomes. However, empathy is often constrained by nationalist narratives and domestic political considerations. Ziętek et al. argue that preserving the status quo though suboptimal for both players may be the most rational equilibrium, given the catastrophic costs of war. The United States must invest in credible deterrence by strengthening alliances and enhancing Taiwan's asymmetric defense capabilities. Yet, it must simultaneously maintain diplomatic channels to avoid hardening China's resolve to the point of provocation. Domestic factors also play a role. The U.S. public's willingness to support war over Taiwan is uncertain, especially in the wake of war fatigue from Afghanistan and Ukraine. Future U.S. presidential administrations may significantly shape the contours of this strategic game. The application of game theory specifically the Chicken Game—provides a robust analytical lens through which to interpret U.S.-China tensions over Taiwan. Asymmetric stakes, incomplete information and high risks of escalation define the scenario. While war is not inevitable, the cost of strategic missteps is immense. As the authors conclude, only by internalizing the logic of the game and adopting policies that balance deterrence with de-escalation can both powers avoid driving off the metaphorical cliff.

– *University of Okara*



## Briefs

Punjab  
presents  
Rs5.3 trillion  
'zero-tax'...

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estimated at Rs828.2 billion for financial year 2025-26. Regarding provincial receipts, he mentioned, Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) has been given a revenue collection target of Rs340 billion for the next fiscal year, Board of Revenue Rs135.5 billion, and Excise Department Rs70 billion. Terming the provincial budget as "tax-free, progressive and pro-business", Mujtaba added that during the financial year 2025-26, a total of Rs2,706.5 billion would be spent on under heads of provincial government employees' salaries, pension, PFC transfers and service delivery, asserting that these expenditures are reduced by 6%. Similarly, Rs590.2 billion under the head of Current Capital Expenditures is made part of the budget. He said that Rs764.2 billion fund of provisional PFC Award (Provincial Finance Commission) have been allocated to empower the local governments, while Rs150 billion and Rs 20 billion have been allocated as special grants for waste management and municipal corporations, respectively. As per welfare state vision of Quid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he said, the Punjab government has set aside Rs70 billion package to provide social protection to the people. While maintaining the fiscal management, he mentioned, Rs470 billion EPS under the agreement between the federal government and the IMF, has been incorporated in the budget, adding that the completion of this provincial surplus is subject to the achievement of the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue) revenue target. Ahead of the assembly session, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz approved the provincial budget.

Iran ready  
for talks if  
Israel halts  
attacks...

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Since Friday, Israel has launched large-scale strikes on Iran, targeting military bases, nuclear sites and residential areas across the country. The attacks have killed at least 224 people in the Islamic Republic, including top military commanders, nuclear scientists and civilians. Iran has retaliated with barrages of drones and missiles that have killed at least 24 people in Israel, according to the latest figures from the prime minister's office. Iran does not recognise Israel and has long accused it of carrying out sabotage operations against its nuclear facilities, as well as assassinating its scientists. Speaking on the floor of the upper house, Dar said that Pakistan has played a constructive role in supporting diplomatic channels, adding: "Our intention was always to see successful negotiations between the United States and Iran." He noted that the foreign ministers of both Oman and Iran had been in regular contact with him throughout the crisis. "I spoke to Iran's foreign minister both before and after the Israeli attack," he noted. Dar added that the Iranian foreign minister made it clear after the first attack that "this act will be responded to."

Israel  
attacks  
Tehran...

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also threatened the citizens of Tehran, telling them to leave Iran's capital. "We are taking action." Meanwhile, Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee posted an evacuation order for citizens in Tehran on his X account. The post ordered citizens living in a specific area of the Iranian capital to "leave immediately", warning that Israel would attack Iran's military infrastructure in the area. "Dear citizens, for your safety, please leave the mentioned area in the third district of Tehran immediately," the order read, enclosing a map of the city. "Your presence in this area endangers your life."

## Pakistan Triumph over Japan 3-2 in Nations Cup hockey tournament

*Notable performances came from Hanan Shahid and Rana Waheed, whose aggressive play and skillful coordination kept constant pressure on the Japanese defense. Pakistan significantly upped the tempo in the last two quarters, demonstrating tactical superiority and physical endurance*

## DNA

KUALA LUMPUR: In a thrilling encounter at the National Cup Hockey Tournament in Malaysia, Pakistan edged past Japan with a 3-2 victory, showcasing a spirited comeback and dominant performance in the latter stages of the match. The match began with both teams exhibiting strong defensive strategies and swift counterattacks. Japan initially took the lead, but Pakistan responded effectively with exceptional teamwork and determination. Notable performances came from Hanan Shahid and Rana Waheed, whose aggressive play and skillful coordination kept constant pressure on the Japanese defense. Pakistan significantly upped the tempo in the last two quarters, demonstrating tactical superiority and physical endurance. The match-defining moment came when

Pakistan was awarded a penalty corner late in the final quarter. M. Sufiyan successfully converted it into the third and decisive goal. However, the decision was met with controversy. Japan requested a video referral, and the third umpire ruled against the penalty corner. In an unusual turn, the field umpire did not concur with the third umpire's decision and upheld the original call, allowing the penalty corner to proceed – much to the frustration of the Japanese side. Despite the contention, Pakistan maintained composure and held off Japan's attempts to equalize in the dying minutes. The match concluded with Pakistan emerging victorious 3-2, marking an important win in their campaign. This victory boosts Pakistan's morale and positions them strongly as the tournament progresses. The team is set to face its next opponent with renewed confidence and national pride.



## Budget neglect fuels sports decline in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The Annual Development Program (ADP) for province includes only two new sports-related projects that is a gymnasium in Buner district and indoor sports facilities for women in divisional headquarters

## DNA

PESHAWAR: Once a cradle of sporting legends, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has started grappling with a decline in athletic activities—a reflection of years of administrative apathy and chronic underinvestment. The recently announced KP budget has come under heavy fire from opposition figures and civil society alike for its meager allocation to the sports sector and broader developmental shortcomings. Despite tall claims about youth engagement and sporting revival, the PTI government has earmarked just Rs. 11.6 billion for the Sports and Youth Affairs Department in the 2025-26 budget. This figure, critics say, is

emblematic of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) declining focus on sports development during its third consecutive term in the province. The Annual Development Program (ADP) for the province includes only two new sports-related projects that is a gymnasium in Buner district and indoor sports facilities for women in divisional headquarters. The minimal scope of these initiatives, according to former MNA Shahgee Gul Afridi, reflects the PTI-led government's "jugglery of words" rather than any sincere commitment to sports revival. "Talks of promoting sports in KP ring hollow when you consider the reality in the 35 districts, including merged tribal areas, where sports infrastructure is either absent or decay-

ing," Afridi said. "Even after establishing a separate Directorate of Sports for Merged Districts, the lack of funding and vision has rendered sports ineffective." He further criticized the sports administration's approach of hastily organizing events in June, seemingly to exhaust remaining funds rather than foster long-term sports culture. "Is sports development now reduced to fuel receipts, office meetings, and unused funds?" he asked. Another sore point is the continued delay in completing the Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium in Peshawar. Sahibzada Hamza Khan, PML-N Nowshera President, alleged that instead of prioritizing its completion, the PTI government attempted to rename the

stadium—an act met with public resistance. "The cost has ballooned due to delays, and the youth of Peshawar remain deprived of a vital facility," Hamza said. Hamza also took aim at the overall fiscal policy of KP, questioning the basis for a Rs. 2,119 billion budget when actual provincial revenues are estimated at just Rs. 129 billion. He called it "hypothetical budgeting" built largely on the assumption of receiving over Rs. 1,500 billion from the federal government. He challenged PTI's claims of financial self-reliance and surplus budget, pointing out that even basic financial promises—such as net hydro profit arrears and gas royalties—were not fulfilled during PM Imran Khan's federal tenure.

## Bayern thrash Auckland at Club World Cup

LOS ANGELES: Paris Saint-Germain laid down an ominous marker on their march towards global domination at the FIFA Club World Cup on Sunday as Bayern Munich showed no mercy to Auckland's amateurs with a ruthless 10-0 walloping. The first full day of action at the inaugural edition of the 32-team club tournament saw newly crowned European champions PSG produce a scintillating 4-0 rout of Atletico Madrid after Bayern's double-digit drubbing of Auckland City. The New Zealand minnows are one of the Cinderella stories of the tournament, made up of amateur players who had to take unpaid leave to travel to the United States. But Bundesliga Bayern were in no mood to be charitable and duly ran riot in Cincinnati. Jamal Musiala scored a second-half hat-trick after coming off the bench while Kingsley Coman, Michael Olise and Thomas Mueller all netted twice. Sacha Boey scored the other goal in a Group C game that amounted to target practice for Bayern, who will face tougher tests against Boca Juniors and Benfica. "We have to remain modest but it was important to be able to say that we took the game seriously," said Bayern coach Vincent Kompany. "It was a good first match at the tournament, but of course challenges are going to grow and it's going to become more difficult." Auckland's interim coach Ivan Velicich admitted that his team had run into the "reality of football against one of the world's top teams." "It is a dream for players coming from an amateur level to play in this environment," Velicich said. – Agencies

Iran-Israel  
conflict  
triggers...

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down, essential supplies are stuck, and the wheels of daily life are grinding to a halt. In Qetta, over 70% of petrol stations have already closed, with long, chaotic queues forming at the few that remain operational. Panic is spreading as fuel shortages deepen, and there are fears that within the next 24 hours, all petrol pumps in the city could completely cease operations. However, the crisis is not limited to Qetta as the situation is worsening at an increased rate across Makran and Chagai divisions. The Balochistan government has sealed all border crossings with Iran indefinitely, including critical trade and fuel routes in Turbat, Panjgur, Gwadar, and Chagai. The decision, taken in light of escalating regional security threats, has cut off the province's primary supply of Iranian petrol, which meets Balochistan's fuel demand.

SBP keeps  
key policy  
rate...

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driven by the lagged impact of earlier policy rate cuts. "At the same time, the Committee noted some potential risks to the external sector amidst the sustained widening in the trade deficit and weak financial inflows. "Moreover, some of the proposed FY26 budgetary measures may further widen the trade deficit by increasing imports. In this regard, the Committee deemed today's decision appropriate to sustain the macroeconomic and price stability," according to the statement. The MPC also cited the following: "First, the real GDP growth for FY25 is provisionally reported at 2.7%, and the government is targeting a higher growth of 4.2% for next year.

UK appoints  
first woman  
head of...

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when the work of our intelligence services has never been more vital," Starmer said. "The United Kingdom is facing threats on an unprecedented scale – be it aggressors who send their spy ships to our waters or hackers whose sophisticated cyber plots seek to disrupt our public services," he added. The MI6 chief is the only publicly named member of the organisation and reports directly to the Foreign Secretary. The person in the post is referred to as "C" – not "M" as in the James Bond franchise, which already had a woman, played by Judi Dench, in the role. Metreweli will take over from outgoing MI6 head Richard Moore in the autumn.

## Gary Kirsten breaks silence on sudden exit as Pakistan's coach

Former South African cricketer says he's open to returning, but only "under right circumstances"

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Former Pakistan white-ball head coach Gary Kirsten has opened up on the circumstances surrounding his premature departure from Pakistan cricket team, citing a lack of authority and external interference as key reasons for his decision to step down. Speaking on the Wisden Cricket podcast, the South African cricket coach described his short tenure with Pakistan as "tumultuous" and admitted that he quickly realised he had little influence over key cricketing matters, particularly team selection. "It was a tumultuous few months," Kirsten said. "I realised quite quickly I wasn't going to have much of an influence. Once I was taken off selection and asked to take a team and not be able to shape the team, it became very difficult as a coach to have any sort of positive influence on the group." However, Kirsten has not ruled out a return to coaching Pakistan but stressed that it would have to be under significantly different conditions. "If I got invited back to Pakistan tomorrow, I would go," Kirst-



en stated. "But I would want to go for the players, and I would want to go under the right circumstances." He underlined the importance of cricketing matters being handled by professionals with relevant experience and criticised the external influences that impacted the team environment during his tenure. "Cricket teams need to be run by cricket people," he said. "When that's not happening, and when there's a lot of noise from the outside - very influential noise - it's very difficult for leaders within the team to walk a journey that you feel like you need to walk in order to take this team to where it needs to go.

## Pak-made Fifa 2025 ball receives global acclaim

*Sam Handy, Adidas' general manager for football, describes ball as culmination of 18 months of meticulous development*

## DNA

SIALKOT: As the Fifa Club World Cup 2025 kicks off in the United States this weekend, all eyes aren't just on the competing teams but also on a crucial piece of equipment: the official match ball. Unveiled earlier this year by Adidas, the Fifa Club World Cup 25 Pro Ball is garnering significant attention not only for its striking stars-and-stripes design but also for its remarkable performance, advanced engineering, and notably, its "Made in Pakistan" label. Sam Handy, Adidas' general manager for football, described the ball as the culmination of 18 months of meticulous development. The aim, he stated, was to create something "bold, loud, iconic—and unmistakably American." However, behind its patriotic aesthetic lies a testament to Pakistan's manufac-

turing excellence and high-performance engineering, with the ball proudly produced in the South Asian nation. Beyond its origins, the 2025 Club World Cup ball also marks a step towards greater sustainability as it is crafted entirely from polyurethane, this iteration is composed of 61% polyurethane, 30% recycled polyester, and 9% viscose, unlike previous versions. It also features Adidas' innovative PRECISIONSHELL technology – a 20-panel, thermally bonded structure with strategically placed debossed grooves designed to improve airflow control and enhance flight consistency. This construction is carried out in Pakistan, where the majority of the world's footballs are manufactured. Testing conducted at Loughborough University, a leading sports research institution in the UK, demonstrated the ball's superior performance. Using both human players and a robotic kicker, researchers compared the new

Adidas model with balls from the Premier League (Nike Flight), Carabao Cup (Puma Orbita 1), and FA Cup (Mitre Ultimix Pro). While robot testing showed similar speed and spin across all models, player testing revealed "noticeable differences," according to Professor Andy Harland, who oversaw the analysis. Players achieved their fastest strikes and higher spin rates with the Club World Cup ball—one even recorded more than double the spin compared to the Nike ball. One player remarked the ball "hits truer for professionals," suggesting its design caters well to high-level, precision-based play. Players observed that the ball felt firmer and had a smaller sweet spot, demanding more precise contact. However, they appreciated its consistency during open play, particularly for delivering long, accurate ground passes. Despite the limited sample size, all three players registered their fastest strikes us-

ing the Club World Cup ball. "It hits truer for the professionals," one player remarked afterward. "You had to hit it more precisely," the players noted, highlighting that the Club World Cup ball has a smaller 'sweet spot' compared to others. In contrast, robot testing—which Harland explained "should give a near-identical kick each time" due to the "fixed" leg speed and ball placement—did not show the Club World Cup ball as the fastest. The players also described the distinct feel when striking the ball: "Especially the Adidas (Club World Cup) ball, that felt rock-hard," one player said. "It has no grip. Because you have the little grooves, you spin it more," another added. Two players shared a similar verdict on where it excels: "Probably better in open play. It would be good to hit a long pass with, a grasscutter (a long pass, kept low to the floor) would be perfect."



## Briefs

38  
Palestinians  
killed in new  
shootings

KHAN YOUNIS: Gaza's Health Ministry says 38 Palestinians have been killed in new shootings in areas of food distribution centers in the south of the territory.

The toll Monday was the deadliest yet in the near-daily shootings that have taken place as thousands of Palestinians move through Israeli military-controlled areas to reach the food centers. Witnesses say Israeli troops open fire in an attempt to control the crowds.

There was no immediate comment by the Israeli military on Monday's deaths. It has said in previous instances that troops fired warning shots at what it calls suspects approaching their positions.—APP

Price of gold  
declines by  
Rs 700 per  
tola

LAHORE: The price of gold on Monday decreased in local and global markets. According to local Sarafa Association sources, the rate of gold per tola fell by Rs700 to Rs362,300, while ten grams of gold fell by Rs600 to Rs310,613. In addition, the price of one tola of silver remained at Rs3787. There has been a decrease in local and international gold prices. Gold in the global market declined by \$18 to \$3414 per ounce. Business.—APP

Rupee sheds  
21 paisa  
against US  
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 21 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 283.17 against the previous day's closing of Rs 282.96. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.5 and Rs 285.15 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.46 to close at Rs 327.85 against the last day's closing of Rs 326.39, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.96, whereas an increase of Rs 0.92 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 384.60 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 383.68. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 07 and 82 paisa to close at Rs 77.11 and Rs 75.45, respectively.—APP

## GB has vast investment opportunities in different sectors

Major infrastructure projects are under construction to improve transportation, including the Gilgit-Chitral Expressway, Skardu-Astore Road, and Darail-Tangir Expressway



the Prime Minister's announced 100-megawatt solar power project in a short period. In addition, several other mega power projects are also under construction. The construction of an international airport in Skardu has led to a significant increase in both domestic and international tourism to Baltistan. The government is also striving to construct an international airport in Gilgit and is inviting major investors in this

regard. On this occasion, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan for Information Technology Muhammad Ali Qauid, Chairman Board of Investment Fatehullah Khan, Provincial Secretary Tourism, Provincial Secretary Agriculture and Additional Secretary Minerals gave a briefing on investment opportunities in Gilgit-Baltistan. Speaking on the occasion, UB Chief Minister SM Tanveer said that

the vision of the Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan regarding investment is commendable. The future of Gilgit-Baltistan looks bright. He said that due to the steps taken by the provincial government to attract investors, big investors will turn to Gilgit-Baltistan in the future. UBG will play its role in the construction of an international airport in Gilgit. Land reforms by the provincial government are a very important initiative that will

remove obstacles to investment. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari said that the expansion and modernization of Gilgit Airport has been declared essential for the development and promotion of investment in Gilgit-Baltistan. He stated that due to the limited number of flights and frequent cancellations at Gilgit Airport, investors are hesitant to invest in the region. If Gilgit Airport is upgraded to accommodate larger aircraft, similar to Skardu, it would not only boost tourism but also strengthen the local economy. Zafar Bakhtawari cited the example of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce, which successfully established its own airport and airline through a public-private partnership. He said this model could also be replicated in Gilgit-Baltistan. He urged both the government and the private sector to work together to improve Gilgit Airport in order to promote investment and tourism in the region. He further mentioned that during Ahsan Bakhtawari's tenure as president of the chamber, he led a large delegation to Gilgit-Baltistan, which significantly boosted tourism in the area.—DNA

## China sees surge in culture-driven tourism

BEIJING: A large-scale VR immersive experience, "The Recluse Dongpo," premiered at the Hainan Museum in May, attracting eager fans of the iconic Song Dynasty poet Su Shi to embark on a virtual journey through millennia of Chinese history. Wearing VR headsets, participants came face-to-face with a digital rendition of Su Shi (also known as Su Dongpo), who vividly recounted his dramatic life — from political exile to literary legend — in an interactive narrative. This fusion of technology and tradition exemplifies China's ongoing reinvention of cultural tourism. Alongside its iconic landscapes, the country is witnessing a surge in heritage-driven travel, where films, live performances, and immersive experiences spawn compelling new destinations. According to a recent China Tourism Academy survey, travelers show growing interest in cultural activities: Nearly 29.2 percent of respondents prioritize cultural experiences in their itineraries, while 78.3 percent express general enthusiasm for such engagements during trips. Cultural spaces can serve as new settings for tourism experiences and consumption, while tourism spaces can also function as new platforms for cultural display and dissemination, said Li Xinjian, executive dean of the Capital Institute of Culture and Tourism Development at Beijing International Studies University. In a major government reshuffle in 2018, China merged two government agencies to form a new ministry — the Ministry of Culture and Tourism — "to promote the integrated development of cultural undertakings, cultural industries, and tourism," according to an official document. The development of culture-driven tourism has since picked up speed. A 2023 high-level meeting on cultural development underscored the need to promote the "creative transformation and innovative development of China's fine traditional culture." Government at all levels have been tapping into local cultural resources to enhance tourist appeal and boost the economy. During the Dragon Boat Festival holiday from May 31 to June 2, the city of Beijing held more than 1,700 cultural tourism events, including dragon boat carnivals, intangible cultural heritage markets, and Hanfu (traditional Chinese attire) workshops.—DNA

## EV policy crucial to reduce dependence on oil: SAPM

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Monday emphasized that the National EV Policy is a crucial step toward reducing dependence on oil and ensuring environmental sustainability. The minister held a meeting with Mosharrar Zaidi to discuss the Electric Vehicle (EV) policy. The meeting was also attended by the Secretary of Industries and Production Saif Anjum, CEO of the Engineering Development Board Khuda Bakhsh, and Additional Secretary Asif Saeed Lughmani, said a news release. During the meeting, key discussions were held on the approval of the National Electric Vehicle Policy, its promotion at the international level, and strategies to attract investment in the EV sector. Haroon Akhtar said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif envisioned increasing the market share of electric vehicles — including two, three, and four-wheelers — to 30% by the year 2030. Mosharrar Zaidi highlighted the importance of introducing the Electric Vehicle Policy on global scale, in line with the Prime Minister's vision. He expressed his support for promoting Pakistan's EV potential internationally.—DNA

## Great Wall museum opens in north China

SHIJIAZHUANG: The Shanhaiguan Museum of the Great Wall of China on Sunday opened to the public in the city of Qinhuangdao, north China's Hebei Province. A first-tier national museum, it covers 7 hectares and has a floor area of 30,000 square meters, featuring five permanent and three temporary exhibition halls. Housing over 11,000 cultural artifacts, the museum is a modern, multifunctional hub integrating cultural conservation, exhibition, education, research, and leisure experiences. Current exhibitions on historical artifacts, Shanhaiguan's role in the Great Wall, and ancient Chinese armor and weaponry are open to the public. The museum is dedicated to safeguarding and sharing the heritage of the Great Wall, to advancing its global reach through cultural programs, and to academic cooperation and digital displays, said Guo Ying, deputy curator of the museum. Meandering over mountain ridges across north China, the Great Wall was built during more than 2,000 years of continuous construction — from the Spring and Autumn Period (770 B.C.-221 B.C.) to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The sections of the world wonder that exist today have a total length of over 21,000 km. China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism has required 15 provinces and municipalities along the Great Wall to formulate specific plans for the construction of a national Great Wall culture park, in accordance with local conditions.—APP

## India, Cyprus to step up defense, maritime and cybersecurity coop

NICOSIA: India will step up its defense ties with Cyprus through collaboration between the two countries' respective defense industries, the Indian prime minister said Monday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi didn't offer details, but he said talks would begin on boosting bilateral maritime and cybersecurity cooperation. He said after talks with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides that the two countries would also set up an information exchange mechanism geared toward combatting the threat of terrorism. Modi's two-day visit to Cyprus, ahead of his trip to Canada for the G7 summit, is the first by an Indian prime minister in more than two decades. In a joint declaration, the two countries also pledged to expand maritime cooperation through more frequent Indian navy calls to Cypriot ports and looking at enhancing joint maritime training and search and rescue operations. Modi underscored the role of the envisioned India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) as a means to usher peace and prosperity in the Middle East. Cyprus figures to act as the linchpin between India, the Middle East and Europe in the trade, energy and digital connectivity corridor, given the island nation's geographical location as the nearest European Union country to the Middle East and India. Christodoulides said Cyprus was India's "gateway into Europe" as a base for Indian businesses.—APP



ISLAMABAD: President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh presents FPCCI Shield to Chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lt Gen (Retd) Nazir Ahmad Butt on his visit to FPCCI in Federal Capital.

## Urgent need for a national policy to prevent &amp; manage forest fires

During fire incidents, they enter hazardous zones without fireproof gear, helmets, gloves, or boots. As a result, forest guards are frequently martyred or seriously injured in the line of duty

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



FOREST fires have become an annual menace in Pakistan, wreaking havoc across ecologically sensitive and economically important forest regions. Despite their increasing frequency and intensity, they remain one of the most under-addressed environmental disasters in the country. Forest fires in Pakistan are not only an environmental issue; they are symptomatic of systemic institutional neglect, poor public awareness, and under-resourced forest departments. Forest fires in

Pakistan are most commonly reported in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Balochistan, and parts of Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan. Each year, with the arrival of the dry season, these regions witness dozens of fire incidents, many of which spiral out of control due to the lack of timely response, inadequate equipment, and poor coordination between relevant agencies. These fires not only result in loss of valuable timber, biodiversity, and ecosystem services but also threaten the lives and livelihoods of local communities. Fires in high-altitude forests contribute to glacier melting by depositing black carbon on snow, accelerating climate change and water insecurity in downstream regions. At the heart of Pakistan's forest fire crisis is an institutional failure to equip and empower the forest departments. Despite their critical role in protecting the country's green assets, forest departments across all provinces operate with minimal resources. Forest departments are not provided with even the most basic firefighting gear. Fire beaters,

helmets, fire-retardant suits, water backpacks, drones, or thermal imaging tools are virtually nonexistent in most districts. Forest guards often resort to using tree branches to douse the flames—a method that is not only outdated but dangerous and ineffective. One of the tragic and often overlooked realities is the lack of protective clothing for forest workers. During fire incidents, they enter hazardous zones without fireproof gear, helmets, gloves, or boots. As a result, forest guards are frequently martyred or seriously injured in the line of duty.

This loss of human life underscores the urgent need for reform and resource allocation. Administrative support from provincial governments is often limited to paper formalities. While forest departments submit reports, request equipment, and document fire incidents, little action is taken beyond bureaucratic processes. This has bred a culture of neglect, where the urgency of fire response is not reflected in actual decision-making or resource distribution. Debunking Myths — Are Forest Employees to Blame? A persistent myth that forest department employees are responsible for setting fires intentionally to cover

up illegal logging or corruption has gained traction among sections of the public and even some officials. This allegation lacks credible evidence and does grave injustice to forest personnel, many of whom risk their lives every year to save forest lands. Diverts attention from the real structural problems such as underfunding and lack of training. Demoralizes the forest workforce and weakens their commitment. Prevents the implementation of rational, evidence-based fire management strategies. There is an urgent need to challenge and debunk such misconceptions through factual reporting and independent investigations.

The real culprits, in many cases, are human negligence, unregulated tourism, slash-and-burn agriculture, and climate-related changes—not the forest guards. One reason for the fire is the old belief among local communities that burning old grass will grow new grass for animals. From the missteps of local communities forest fires threaten local communities, particularly those dependent on forests for their livelihoods. Pakistan's fire season typically spans from April to August, depending on regional weather

patterns. Timber worth billions of rupees is destroyed annually, along with valuable medicinal plants and biodiversity. Smoke from large fires can cause respiratory issues in nearby populations. Even in the 21st century, firefighting in Pakistan's forests remains primitive. Forest guards use branches to beat out the flames or dig firebreaks manually. There are almost no water tankers, helicopters, or fire-retardant chemicals used at the provincial level. This reflects a broader neglect where forests are not seen as critical infrastructure worth protecting with modern tools. In contrast, countries with comparable or even fewer resources such as Nepal or Bhutan have implemented community-based firewatch programs, real-time fire monitoring apps, and drone surveillance—all of which are lacking in Pakistan. Government funding for forest departments, especially for fire preparedness, remains negligible. There is no clear national policy that mandates firefighting infrastructure or lays out the responsibilities of local administrations, tourism departments, and police during fire emergencies. Tourists visiting forest areas, especially in KP, Murree, and the Mar-

galla Hills, are often unaware of the fire risks their actions pose. Carelessly discarded cigarette butts, campfires left unattended, and barbecues in dry grasslands have started numerous fires over the years. Awareness campaigns should be launched on social media, TV, and at tourist checkpoints. Tourist guidelines and penalties should be enforced through eco-tourism regulations. Volunteer fire brigades composed of local youth can also be trained to act as first responders. To address the forest fire crisis in Pakistan, a multi-pronged approach is required, equipped all forest divisions with water backpacks, drones, fire beaters, flame-retardant suits, and radios. Establish fire lookout towers and early warning systems. Regularly train forest personnel in fire response, safety, and first aid. Conduct joint drills with local emergency services and the army. Draft and implement a national forest fire management policy. Include forest fires in the National Disaster Management Authority's (NDMA) annual risk reduction strategy. Allocate separate budgets for fire prevention, response, and rehabilitation. Offer compensation, insurance, and medical support for

injured forest guards and families of the martyred. Create community firewatch committees. Incentivize locals to report early signs of fire. Penalize negligent tourists and illegal slash-and-burn farmers. Use television, radio, print media, social media, and school programs to educate the public. Celebrate "Forest Fire Awareness Week" annually. Collaborate with international institutions like NASA, FAO, and UNDP to access satellite fire monitoring data. Australia uses predictive fire models and satellite imagery to anticipate fire outbreaks. California has invested in both aerial and ground firefighting equipment, with extensive training programs. India has a Forest Fire Alert System (FIRE) that provides early warnings based on satellite data, accessible to forest officers via SMS. By adapting such practices to local contexts, Pakistan can significantly reduce the damage caused by wildfires. The forest departments, often portrayed as weak and underperforming, are in fact trying to function under severe constraints. Empowering them with equipment, training, and institutional support is not just a policy necessity—it is a moral obligation.



## Briefs

Army chief  
Munir in  
Washington  
for high-  
level talks

DNA

WASHINGTON: Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir arrived in Washington on Sunday for a five-day official visit aimed at reinforcing military and strategic ties between Pakistan and the United States, diplomatic sources confirmed. The visit, which sources described as "primarily bilateral in nature", is not officially linked to the US Army's 250th anniversary celebrations on June 14, despite its timing. Field Marshal Munir did not attend the military parade, but some sources speculated that he spent the last two days at the US Central Command's headquarters in Tampa, Florida. The Pakistani embassy in Washington, however, refused to confirm or deny this claim. The sources said the army chief's visit aims to reinforce military and strategic ties between Pakistan and the US, with meetings expected with senior US officials, including the Secretaries of Defence and State and senior US military commanders. Meanwhile, several PTI supporters staged a protest outside the Pakistan embassy on Saturday afternoon, calling for the restoration of what they described as "unfettered democracy" in Pakistan.

Chinese team  
explores  
opportunities  
in Pakistan  
housing sector

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Chinese business delegation, led by Mr. Yao Yu, CEO of DongKai International Investment and representing a consortium of leading construction and technology firms, called on Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, at the Ministry today. Senior officials, including Secretary Housing and Works Mr. Hamid Yaqub Sheikh, Additional Secretary, CEO Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation (PHAF), and Director General Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), were also present during the meeting. The visit aimed to explore collaborative opportunities in Pakistan's housing sector, particularly in adopting new construction technologies and building materials. Minister Pirzada warmly welcomed the delegation and reaffirmed the strong bonds of Pak-China friendship. He emphasized the government's commitment to innovation in the housing sector, underscoring the importance of prefabricated and modular construction technologies, which are essential for ensuring sustainability, reducing costs, and speeding up project delivery.

Khawaja Asif  
hails FATF  
'snub' to  
Indian designs

BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) decision not to place Pakistan back on its "grey list", despite a concerted effort by India and Israel, was a major win. In a post on X on Sunday, Mr Asif said that the FATF had decided against re-listing Pakistan following a meeting of its International Cooperation Review Group a day earlier. "It is a big victory for Pakistan that despite all the conspiracies of India and Israel, Pakistan has not been included in the grey list," Mr Asif wrote. He credited the decision to strong support from key allies. "China took a clear stance and supported relief for Pakistan, while Turkey endorsed China's stance," Asif said. "Japan also fully supported Pakistan as it is the co-chair of the Asia Pacific Group (APG)."



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar @MishaqDar50, today received a high-level UAE delegation led by Deputy Minister of Cabinet Affairs for Competitiveness and Knowledge Exchange, Abdullah Nasser Lootah. - DNA

PM Shehbaz Sharif calls blue  
economy economic frontier

Premier stresses need to transform maritime sector into driver of inclusive, sustainable economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday stated that the blue economy is Pakistan's "new economic frontier," calling for a unified national effort to unlock its vast potential. Speaking at the soft launch of the 2nd Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PIMEC 2025), the prime minister laid out the vision for transforming Pakistan into a

regional maritime powerhouse. "It is a great pleasure to see the Pakistan Navy, under the patronage of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and in collaboration with key partners, organising the second edition of PIMEC," said the prime minister. He lauded the leadership of Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf and Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry for their strategic foresight and dedication in steering this important initiative.

Highlighting the critical role of the Navy in national defence and regional security, he said, "The Pakistan Navy has been a formidable force through all conflicts and remains a strong pillar of our national security." Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to international peace and maritime law, he cited the AMAN Exercise, featuring participation from over 50 countries, as a symbol of Pakistan's global engagement and cooperative maritime posture. With over 1,000 kilometres of coastline

and a position at the crossroads of vital sea lanes, Pakistan, the premier said, was uniquely positioned to harness the trillion-dollar global blue economy. "Even tapping a fraction of this economy could be a real game-changer," he asserted. "Our coastal trade already brings in nearly \$7 billion a year and just imagine the potential if we fully develop this sector," he added. He urged the nation to take inspiration from global success stories such as Japan, which rose from limited maritime resources to become a global leader in marine infrastructure and regional trade. "Let there be open competition," he added, emphasising the importance of resilience, innovation, and strategic investment.

Nearly 38,000  
parents  
refused polio  
vaccination

District East recorded the highest number of refusals, with 9,433 parents opting out, says EOC

DNA

KARACHI: The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) reported on Monday that vaccination refusal rate was on the rise in Karachi, with at least 37,711 parents turning down polio vaccine in the month of May. This marks an increase in refusal cases as parents in the port city continue to decline vaccinating their children against polio. In May, the District East recorded the highest number of refusals, with 9,433 parents opting out. The District Central had 7,141 refusals, while Kemari saw 7,111 parents refusing the vaccine. Additionally, at least 3,453 parents in District Korangi and 4,606 in District Malir refused vaccination. The EOC also noted that 3,145 parents from the District South and 2,922 from the District West declined vaccination in May. In April, 37,360 parents refused the anti-polio vaccination, according to the EOC. The centre stated, "The refusal rate during the anti-polio campaign remains a constant challenge. Polio eradication requires ongoing support from parents."

India  
relocates  
students  
within Iran

DNA

NEW DELHI: New Delhi said on Monday its diplomats were helping some Indian students relocate out of harm's way in Iran, which has come under days of deadly Israeli bombardment. Tehran has hit back with strikes against Israel since it unleashed waves of attacks against Iran on Friday, sparking global alarm that the conflict could erupt into a regional war. New Delhi, which has relations with both countries, has sought to relocate its citizens within Iran after Tehran closed its airspace. "The Indian Embassy in Tehran is continuously monitoring the security situation and engaging Indian students in Iran to ensure their safety," a foreign ministry statement said.

France blocks access  
to Israeli arms stands

PARIS: France on Monday blocked access to the stands of five Israeli arms manufacturers at the Paris Air show for displaying "offensive weapons", according to a French government source. A black wall blocked off stands run by IAI, Rafael, Uvision, Elbit and Aeronautics for showing "offensive weapons", including those used in Gaza, which allegedly violated terms made with Israel, said the source. Rafael, Elbit and IAI produce guided bombs and missiles, while Uvision and Aeronautics produce drones. Israeli President Isaac Herzog condemned the move on Monday as "outrageous" and called for it to be "immediately corrected". "Israeli companies have signed contracts with the organisers...it's like creating an Israeli ghetto," he said on French television channel LCI. The Israeli Ministry of Defence also denounced the decision in a statement, calling it a form of "segregation" against the Israeli companies. "This outrageous and unprecedented decision reeks of policy-driven and commercial considerations," it added. Some 75 companies related to weapons production were set to participate at the show which opened on Monday, with military jets, helicopters and drones on display. - Agencies

Senate panel asks FBR  
to establish slabs for  
allowing arrests

*FBR proposes that there should be a limit of Rs10m maximum for allowing arrest*

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Finance has asked the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) to define a threshold and establish slabs for allowing arrests on tax frauds and imprisonment of up to ten years under the proposed Finance Bill 2025-26. The FBR has proposed drastic powers, including the sealing of business premises, the seizure of movable property, or the appointment of a receiver for the management of the taxable activity of persons who fail to register themselves. It also proposes to bar operations of bank accounts and transfers for immovable property owners who prefer not to get registered for the sales tax. On the threshold of tax frauds, the FBR proposed that there should be a limit of Rs10 million maximum for allowing ar-

rest. Without taking stern actions, FBR Chairman Rashid Mehmood Langrial stated that tax fraud cannot be tolerated at all. Senator Anusha Rahman stated that e-commerce was brought into the tax net and proposed that the FBR differentiate for low-income and poor segments of society. A heated debate occurred among senators and FBR high-ups over whether the arrest in tax fraud to be allowed during the inquiry or after completion of the investigation. Senator Farooq H Naek from the PPP stated that the arrest could only be allowed by the FBR after permission from the judge. The Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenues continued to scrutinise the Finance Bill 2025-26 for finalising its recommendations. After getting assent of the Upper House of Parliament, the recommendation will be forwarded to the National Assembly. It is yet to be seen how many substantial recommendations of the Senate are going to be made part of the Finance Bill to convert into an Act. Senator Farooq H Naek argued that the NAB law was amended because earlier, the arrest was allowed during the inquiry, and now the FBR was proposing sweeping powers.

interests and ensuring market stability during a time of heightened international uncertainty. The committee has been entrusted to closely monitor the forward/ futures prices of petroleum products and the predictability of supply chain in view of the current conflict in the region, besides determine forex implications of price volatility for the short and medium term. The committee tasked to suggest a plan (if required) to ensure that there are no supply disruptions and the market is well supplied and carry out detailed analysis of the fiscal impact, in the event of a protracted conflict. The committee expressed satisfaction that Pakistan currently holds adequate stocks of petroleum products and there is no immediate risk of supply disruption. Nonetheless, members emphasized the need for continued vigilance given the rapidly changing regional context. To ensure timely response and effective coordination, a working group will monitor developments on a daily basis, and the full committee will meet weekly to review the situation and submit recommendations to the Prime Minister. The Petroleum Division has been designated to provide secretarial support and ensure effective implementation of the committee's mandate. The government remains fully committed to maintaining energy security, stabilizing markets, and protecting the national interest during this critical time. - DNA

Finance Minister  
chairs meeting  
to monitor  
petroleum prices

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday chaired the inaugural meeting of high-level committee formed to monitor petroleum prices amid regional tension, which conducted a detailed assessment of the global and domestic petroleum market situation. In response to the evolving geopolitical situation following Israel's recent attack on Iran and the resulting volatility in the international oil markets, the Prime Minister has constituted a high-level committee to monitor petroleum product pricing and supply dynamics, said a press release. The committee is chaired by the Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, and includes senior representatives from key federal ministries, regulatory authorities, and energy sector experts. The formation of this committee reflects the government's proactive approach to safeguarding national energy

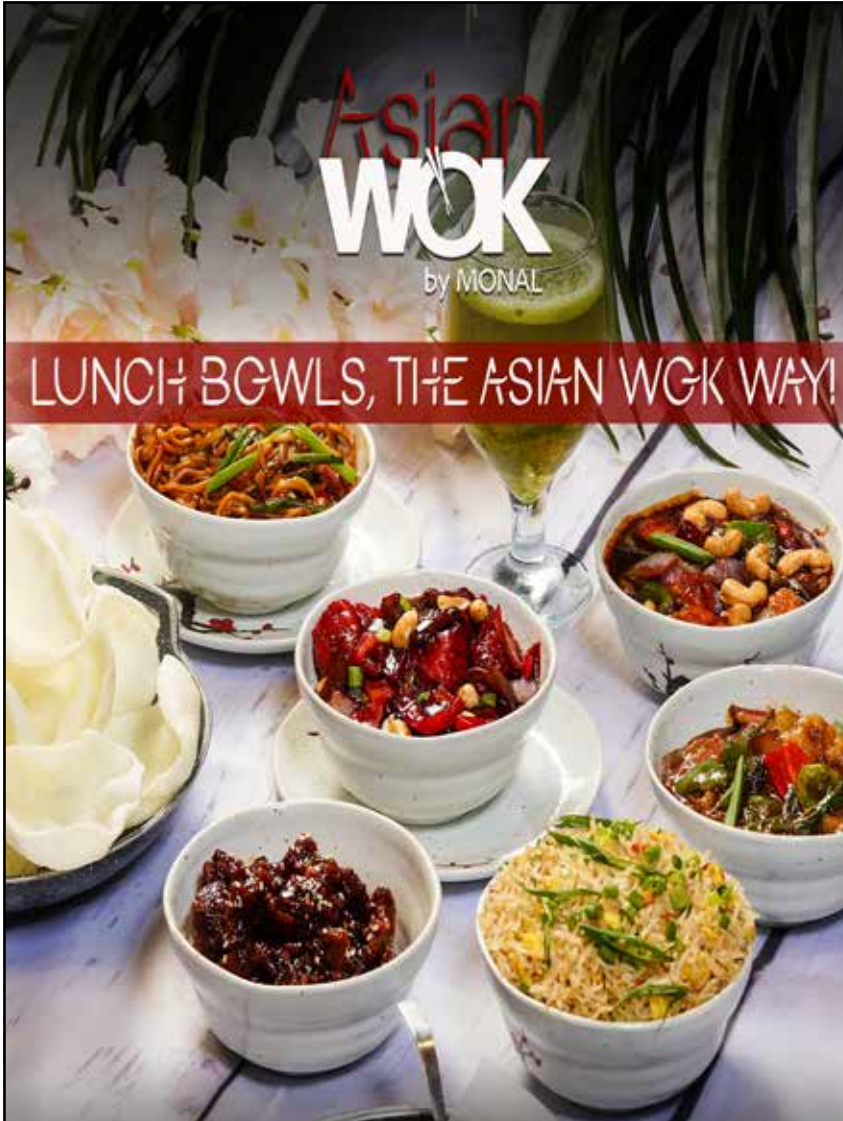
Air India Dreamliner returns to  
Hong Kong after technical issue

Incident comes days after Air India flight to London, using same type of Boeing aircraft, crashed in Ahmedabad

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: An Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner plane bound for New Delhi returned to its origin of Hong Kong as a precautionary measure on Monday after a technical issue was suspected mid-air, the latest incident affecting the airline in recent days. AI315 "returned to Hong Kong shortly after take-off due to a technical issue. The flight landed safely ... and is undergoing checks as a matter of abundant precaution," Air India said in a statement. The incident comes days after an Air India flight to London, using the same type of Boeing aircraft, crashed in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad moments after take-off, killing 241 of the 242 people on board.

AI315 made a return to Hong Kong International Airport after requesting local standby at around 1pm (0500GMT) and "landed safely at around 1:15pm", the spokesperson of Airport Authority Hong Kong said. The airport operations were not affected, the spokesperson added. Flight AI315 took off from Hong Kong at around 12:20pm and landed just around an hour later. It reached an altitude of 22,000 feet, and then started descending, according to flight tracking website AirNav Radar. The plane was 7 years old. Boeing and Air India did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Hong Kong-New Delhi flight. Last week's crash brings a new challenge for both Air India, which has for years been trying to revamp its fleet, and Boeing, which is trying to rebuild public trust following a series of safety and production crises.



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