



# Islamabad POST

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**Countering hate speech key to global harmony: Pakistan**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Nawaz Sharif 'fully backs' hybrid setup'**

Detailed News On Page-08



**England's Sam welcomes Babar Azam to BBL**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Regime change also on agenda**

## Trump may take 'further action' against Iran nukes

Tehran launches new wave of offensive against Israel

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump may decide that "further action" is needed to stop Iran's nuclear program, Vice President JD Vance said Tuesday, responding to speculation that the United States could intervene in the conflict. "The president has shown remarkable restraint in keeping our military's focus on protecting our troops and protecting our citizens. He may decide he needs to take further action to end Iranian enrichment," Vance said in a post on X. Meanwhile, Iranian forces have launched a new wave of missiles and drones at Israel "minute ago", Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday. Earlier today, a spokesperson for the Defense Ministry of Iran said that the Iranian Armed Forces employed a new missile in the latest round of retaliatory strikes against the Zionist regime. Brigadier General Alireza Talaei Nik, in a televised interview, said that Iran will fully exploit its offensive capacities against the Zionist enemy after it imposed a war against the country. Lauding the successful retaliatory strikes by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and highlighting the advanced homegrown weapons at Iran's disposal, he claimed that the Israeli enemy failed to intercept the advanced Iranian missile that was employed for the first time. In a related development, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Tuesday that the leadership in Tehran has been weakened by Israel's attacks in the past few days and will likely not return to its former strength. "This regime is very weakened and will probably not return to its former strength, making the future of the country uncertain. We will have to wait and see," Merz said in an interview with broadcaster Welt at the G7 summit in Canada. He added that the Europeans' offer of diplomatic assistance, should talks resume, still stood as they did before the attacks.

### Trump may send US officials to Iran

Washington has said Trump was still aiming for a nuclear deal with Iran, even as the military confrontation unfolds

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said he wanted a "real end" to the nuclear problem with Iran and indicated he may send senior American officials to meet with the Islamic Republic as the Israel-Iran air war raged for a fifth straight day. He made the comments during his midnight departure from Canada, where he attended the Group of Seven nations summit on Monday, according to comments posted by a CBS News reporter on social media platform X. Washington has said Trump was still aiming for a nuclear deal with Iran, even as the military confrontation unfolds. Khorramabad city MP Reza Sepahvand told the Iranian labour news agency that most incidents happening in Iran are due to "infiltrators" rather than direct action from Israel, adding that 21 people were killed in the western province of Lorestan. Sources told Reuters that Tehran had asked Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia to urge Trump to pressure Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to an immediate ceasefire. In return, Iran would show flexibility in nuclear negotiations, according to two Iranian and three regional sources.

## NATIONAL DAY OF PORTUGAL



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guests Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Speaker National Assembly and Khalid Maqbool Siddique Federal Minister for Professional Education, Ambassador of Portugal Frederico Silva and others cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of Portugal, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. The event also marked 75 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. DNA

### Pakistan, US resolve to finalise trade deal

Fin Min Aurangzeb, US commerce secretary discuss reciprocal tariffs, ongoing negotiations for trade deal

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United States have resolved to carry forward their negotiations through a constructive engagement to finalise the trade deal at the earliest, according to a statement released on Tuesday. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb held a virtual meeting with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Monday (June 16) to discuss US reciprocal tariffs and advance ongoing negotiations toward a trade deal. The discussions, held at 2100 hours (PST), centred on engagement in trade and investment cooperation.

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### 47 officers get awards

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: On behalf of the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Deputy Chairman Development Control Committee / Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC), conferred Civil Awards to the eminent Scientists and Engineers working under National Command Authority for their meritorious services at the Investiture Ceremony held at Chakala Garrison, Rawalpindi.

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### Trump leaves in haste

## G7 urges Middle East de-escalation

"We urge that the resolution of the Iranian crisis leads to a broader de-escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, including a ceasefire in Gaza," said the joint statement released by Canada

CENTRELINE REPORT

KANANASKIS: G7 leaders on Monday called for "de-escalation" in the Middle East starting with the Israel-Iran conflict, as US President Donald Trump hastily left the group's summit. Trump, who was making his return to the international diplomatic calendar, departed the gathering in the Canadian Rockies a day early as ally Israel pounded Iran.

Editorial on Page 5

After a day of statements backing diplomacy, Trump ominously took to social media to sound a warning to people in the Iranian capital, whose population is nearly 10 million. "Everyone should immediately evacuate Tehran!" he wrote on his Truth Social platform. Having earlier hesitated at backing a joint statement on the crisis,

Continued on Page 06

### US President proposes Russia, China to join G7

OTTAWA: During his participation in the G7 Summit in Canada, US President Donald Trump proposed the inclusion of Russia, and possibly China in the group. The US President expressed his preference for having a G8 or G9, adding that Russia's suspension from the G8 back in 2014 was a big mistake. Trump said that the war would not have happened had Russia not been suspended and were he US President four years ago. The US President added that not having Russian President Vladimir Putin on the stable makes life more complicated. - APP

## Briefs

**Pakistan, UAE DPMs discuss Iran-Israel issue**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday received a call from the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. During the telephonic conversation, the two leaders discussed the evolving regional situation in the wake of Israel's military strikes against the Islamic Republic of Iran, according to a foreign ministry press release. They expressed deep concern over the escalating tensions and underscored the urgent need to support efforts to ensure regional peace and stability.

**Imran Khan 'postpones' nationwide protest**

Ex-PM says Pakistan needs unity amid ongoing tensions

ABID RAZA

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan has decided to postpone his planned nationwide movement for two weeks due to ongoing global developments following the Iran-Israel conflict, his sister Noreen Niazi quoted the former prime minister as saying on Tuesday. During her interactions with journalists outside Central Jail Adiala, Noreen Niazi said that Imran has decided to delay the protest movement in light of the current global situation. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was booked in multiple cases ranging from corruption to terrorism since his ouster from power via the opposition's no-trust motion in April 2022.

### Non-essential staff also to come back

## Pak decides to evacuate families of diplomats

FO official says Pakistani Embassy in Tehran and consulates will continue to operate normally

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Amid heightened regional tensions following the Iran-Israel war, Pakistan has decided to evacuate the families of its diplomats and other non-essential staff stationed in Iran, a senior official at the Foreign Office confirmed on Tuesday. In a statement, the FO official said that the families are being relocated as a precautionary measure, while certain members of non-essential diplomatic personnel are also being recalled. However, the Pakistani Embassy in Tehran and its consulates in the country will continue to operate normally, the official clarified, adding that Pakistan's diplomatic missions in Iran remain fully functional. Israel launched its air war after saying it concluded Iran was on the verge of developing a nuclear weapon. Its surprise attack has killed nearly the entire top echelon of Iran's military and its leading nuclear scientists. The attacks have also killed more than 220 people in the Islamic Republic.

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### PM for linking Rekodiq with railway network by 2028

APP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed the relevant authorities to link the Rekodiq with the Pakistan railway line network by 2028 to meet the requirements of future transportation and cargo services. Chairing a meeting regarding Pakistan Railways upgradation and linking Rekodiq with Railways network, the prime minister directed to form an inter-ministerial committee to look after the financing matters for the up-gradation and development of Pakistan Railways. The committee will present recommendations with regard to financing required for development

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## Field Marshal lauds overseas Pakistanis role in development

The diaspora warmly appreciated the outstanding performance of the Armed Forces during Operation Bunyanum Marsoos / Marka-e-Haq, showcasing their bravery and professionalism

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), is on an official visit to United States. During the visit, COAS interacted with the



Overseas Pakistani community in Washington DC. The COAS received a warm reception and welcome from the overseas Pakistanis, who gathered in large numbers to meet with the Chief of Army Staff. The diaspora warmly appreciated the outstanding performance of the Armed Forces during Operation Bunyanum Marsoos / Marka-e-Haq, showcasing their bravery and professionalism. During the interaction, the COAS expressed his deep appreciation for the vital and most significant role being played by overseas Pakistanis for being ambassadors of Pakistan. He acknowledged their contributions to the Pakistan's economy, and global reputation by contributing actively through remittances, investments and higher achievements in other domains. The overseas Pakistanis shared their experiences and suggestions with the Army Chief. He emphasized the importance of engagement with the overseas Pakistanis, highlighting the need for continued collaboration and cooperation to address common challenges and promote cooperation. The interaction concluded with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment, as the COAS and the overseas Pakistanis pledged to work together towards a more secure, prosperous, and resilient Pakistan.





# Governor KP, Australian HC discuss various project coop

PESHAWAR: Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins, called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, at the Governor House on Tuesday. They had a detailed discussion on a wide range of issues including the law and order situation, the socioeconomic conditions of merged districts, environmental challenges, and promotion of sports particularly women participation Governor Kundi apprised the High Commissioner on the province's longstanding struggle with terrorism, saying that while security forces and police were performing their duties commendably, the provincial government's lack of seriousness on maintaining peace remains a concern. Highlighting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's natural resource wealth, the Governor emphasized that pending issues

between the province and federal government can be resolved through strategic planning and dialogue. He also asked the High Commissioner to support the increase of scholarships for the province's talented youth in Australian institutions, especially in modern and technology-driven education sectors. "Education is the fundamental tool for building a peaceful society," Governor Kundi stated, adding that he was taking active steps to promote both education and sports among youth across the province. He further shared ongoing efforts to expand the services of the Red Crescent Society in KP, including the launch of a free ambulance service in Peshawar, which will soon be extended to all districts including the newly merged areas. Discussing climate concerns, the

Governor pointed out that due to a large number of glaciers, KP was one of the most vulnerable provinces to environmental changes, which have caused significant damage through floods in recent years. High Commissioner Neil Hawkins appreciated the Governor's vision regarding modern education and technology. He reaffirmed Australia's commitment to expanding cooperation in education, offering merit-based scholarships, and promoting sports, especially women participation. He also lauded the sacrifices made by the people, police, and security forces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the fight against terrorism. The meeting reflected mutual intent to strengthen bilateral cooperation across key development sectors in the province.—DNA



Islamabad: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan, State and Frontier Regions Engineer Ameer Maqam called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Federal Minister for Public Affairs Unit Rana Mubashar Iqbal and Special Assistant to the PM Talha Barki also present.

## Crack down on fraudulent parking contractor, upholds public interest

ISLAMABAD: The Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA) has terminated its contract with AJCL, the company responsible for digitizing Islamabad's parking system, due to repeated violations, negligence, and financial irregularities. The decision follows AJCL's failure to meet its contractual obligations, compromising public safety and causing significant revenue losses. Investigations revealed that AJCL failed to install the promised digital payment systems, engaged in unrecorded cash transactions, and neglected essential security measures, leading to thefts and public inconvenience. Despite multiple warnings, the company refused to rectify these issues, forcing the DMA to take legal action. An FIR has been registered at Kohsar Police Station, and the contract has been revoked. Since taking over parking operations directly, the DMA has seen a notable increase in revenue, demonstrating the benefits of transparent management. AJCL has since filed a lawsuit against the DMA, which the administration will contest firmly in court. The DMA remains committed to ensuring fair, secure, and efficient parking services for Islamabad's residents and will take strict action against any entity that violates public trust.—APP

## KP education program "ILMpact" benefiting 80,000 students

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is preparing to launch a new education initiative titled "ILMpact" that aims to improve access to quality education and reduce the number of out-of-school children across the province. Provincial Minister for Education Faisal Khan Tarakai announced that the program will be officially inaugurated soon by Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur. The ILMpact program is expected to benefit around 80,000 students in eight districts: Battagram, Mansehra, Swabi, Buner, Shangla, Khyber, Mohmand, and Dera Ismail Khan. The initiative will focus on early childhood education (KG), as well as grades one and two, and will also

target other primary classes. Special attention will be given to children who have never enrolled in school or who dropped out, ensuring that they are brought back into the education system. Speaking at a steering committee meeting for the program, Minister Tarakai highlighted that the project has been designed to provide not only access to education but also to improve its quality. Thousands of teachers in the selected districts will receive modern training tailored to meet today's educational needs. Master Trainers and Lead Master Trainers will be developed to support the initiative, and the training will be extended to all participating schools. In addition to improving teaching standards, the program will strengthen the role of Parents-Teachers

Councils (PTCs) and School Management Committees (SMCs). Their capacity will be enhanced to ensure more effective school governance and community engagement. The British Council has been selected as the lead partner for ILMpact, while various other partner organizations will implement the program at the district level. Work has already begun on developing training materials and teaching methodologies. During the meeting, which was attended by Secretary Education Masood Ahmed, Special Secretary Education Khwaja Faheem Sajjad, MD Merged Areas Education Foundation Mian Ainullah, Additional Secretary Reforms Faiz Alam, and other senior officials and partner organizations.—APP

## FDA for 100 percent recovery of outstanding dues from defaulters

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Director General Muhammad Asif Chaudhry has issued a stern warning to the field staff who failed to meet revenue recovery targets by end of current fiscal year. He stressed the need for indiscriminate action against the defaulters to ensure 100 percent recovery of outstanding FDA dues. He also directed FDA Additional Director Kaiser Abbas Rind to supervise the recovery campaign for achieving daily targets besides monitoring performance of the field staff. In this regard, ADG Kaiser Abbas Rind convened a meeting to review updates regarding

revenue recovery. Deputy Director Finance Humaira Ashraf, Deputy Director Estate Management FDA City Mian Izzar-ul-Haq, Deputy Director Kutchi Abadi Afzal Ansari, Assistant Director Revenue One Window Counter Mian Akhtar, and other officials were present on the occasion. The ADG expressed deep concern over slow pace of recovery campaign and warned that the staff demonstrating poor performance would be held accountable. He urged the officials to issue final notices to the defaulters and contact them immediately for dues recovery. He said that buildings belonging to those who had

not paid their commercialization fee should be sealed until total recovery of outstanding dues. He also directed the officers of One Window Counter to closely monitor recovery of fees, fines and other dues. He highlighted the importance of meticulous scrutiny of the accounts to ensure that there were no discrepancies or deficiencies in financial assessments. The ADG also directed for achieving better results of special campaign against defaulting allottees in FDA City and said that in this connection a comprehensive strategy should be adopted to achieve 100 percent recovery targets.—APP

# PFA discards over 2,000 litres adulterated milk

MUZAFFARGARH: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Tuesday foiled an attempt to supply a large quantity of adulterated milk in Muzaaffargarh. According to a spokesperson, the operation was led by Director Operations South, Shehzad Khan Magi, who along with his team inspected four vehicles at Bhutta Pur Flyover. During the inspection, 2,000 litres of substandard milk was discarded on the spot, while one vehicle was seized. In addition, fines amounting to Rs 17,000 were imposed on two vehicle owners and FIRS were registered against two milk suppliers, and two persons were taken into custody, the spokesperson said. Director General Punjab Food Authority, Muhammad Asim Javed, stated that laboratory analysis revealed low fat content and lack of essential nutrients in the seized milk. He said the supply of adulterated milk is a serious offence and will not be tolerated under any circumstances. He mentioned checkpoints have been set up at entry and exit points of cities to curb the transportation of contaminated dairy products.—DNA

## Summer Fiesta 2025 kicks off at ICG

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT), in partnership with the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), launched the Summer Fiesta 2025 with a grand inauguration ceremony at Islamabad College for Girls (ICG), F/6/2. In his keynote address, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, highlighted the pivotal role of education, noting, "Education is the only way to bring a revolution across generations. He stated "we can empower our youth through training and skills," and that "in a society like Pakistan, where women share half the sky, their education and skill development are equally vital." Reflecting on emerging technological trends, he remarked that "Understanding and adapting to AI and advanced technologies is essential saying that the next 25 years are crucial for Pakistan to embrace global advancements". He concluded by saying, "The smiles on these children's faces bring peace to our hearts. We will do everything possible to ensure a bright future for them because they are our future." Director General FDE, Mr. Syed Junaid Akhlaq, reiterated the significance of skill-based education and appreciated the support of partner organizations and host institutions. Minister of State Ms. Wajha Qamar praised the initiative, reaffirming the government's commitment to educational empowerment. It is pertinent to mention here that the Summer Fiesta 2025 will continue for two weeks, providing a unique blend of learning, creativity, and fun, free of cost for students during their summer vacation.—APP

## IFA inspects salt units, shuts down three for poor quality

ISLAMABAD: In an ongoing drive to ensure safe and clean food products in the federal capital, the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) has inspected 11 salt units operating across the city to verify whether the salt being produced meets safety standards and out of these, nine units passed the inspection, while three failed to meet the required standards. Following lab tests and physical assessments, the IFA teams sealed the three units whose salt samples were found to be substandard. According to officials, these actions were taken under food safety laws after confirmation that the salt did not meet the quality criteria set by the authority. Talking to APP, Deputy Director of the Islamabad Food Authority, Dr. Tahira Siddique, said

that salt is a basic element in all meals and cannot be compromised. She stated that the salt quality directly affects public health, and ensuring its standard is a top priority. Dr. Siddique also announced that salt unit inspections will now be carried out every week. The move aims to maintain constant oversight of salt manufacturing and packaging processes across the city. "We are working to make sure that consumers get quality salt, whether for domestic use or in restaurants and food businesses. Strict monitoring and regular checks will continue," she said. The inspection campaign is part of the IFA's broader initiative to improve food safety across Islamabad. Over the past few months, the authority has increased its field visits

and sampling from various food businesses, including bakeries, dairy shops, hotels, and now salt units. Officials added that salt samples from the inspected units were tested for iodine levels, contaminants, and processing quality. The three units that failed were sealed on the spot, and legal action will follow. The IFA has urged all salt manufacturers to follow proper hygiene practices, ensure the use of iodized salt, and comply with packaging and labeling regulations. The authority has also advised consumers to buy salt from reliable sources and check packaging for approval markings. Islamabad Food Authority plans to expand these inspections to other food production sectors.—DNA

## Zong wins 'Best Digital Campaign award

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading digital technology innovation company, has been honored with the Best Digital Campaign (TikTok) award at the Pakistan Digital Awards 2025. Recognized as one of Pakistan's most credible platforms for digital excellence, the Pakistan Digital Awards are judged by an independent panel of industry leaders, and celebrates the innovation that delivers both creative resonance and tangible positive outcomes. More than just an accolade, this award reinforces the brand's strategic direction and strengthens the market positioning of Zong as a frontrunner in Pakistan's digital ecosystem. It reflects how the company is delivering on its brand promise of "Let's Get Digital", not just in words, but through measurable impact and effective use of platforms that matter to today's audiences. At the heart of the campaign was the notion of bringing convenience closer to users; seamlessly, intuitively, and at scale. By harnessing the immersive potential of TikTok's short-form content and pairing it with Google UAC's algorithmic targeting, Zong positioned My Zong App as more than just a utility, it became a daily digital companion for millions. The campaign's success was further amplified on the global stage when it was spotlighted in an official TikTok case study, a testament to its exceptional execution and measurable business impact. Sajid Munir, Head of Marketing at Zong, shared his thoughts on the win: "We are grateful to the Pakistan Digital Awards for this recognition. This award is a meaningful milestone that reflects not only on our belief in bold storytelling, but also on our efforts towards user-first thinking, and smart, locally grounded innovation. Our team's passion for reimagining digital experiences continues to shape how millions engage with technology every day." This recognition reaffirms Zong's ongoing journey to transform Pakistan's digital landscape, where intelligent solutions, high-impact campaigns, and inclusive access go hand in hand. With every milestone, Zong remains committed to crafting experiences that are not only efficient, but also empowering, intuitive, and uniquely relevant to the evolving needs of the Pakistani user.—DNA

## Appointing bureaucrats over professionals threatens to dismantle Punjab forest deptt

The time to act is now, before the Punjab Forest Department is irreparably damaged. The negative impacts of these changes extend beyond the Forest Department to Punjab's broader environmental and socioeconomic landscape

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

Islamabad : Forestry is a highly specialized field requiring in-depth knowledge of ecology, silviculture, biodiversity conservation, and environmental management. Professional foresters undergo rigorous training and acquire years of field experience to address the complex challenges of forest conservation and sustainable development. Elimination of posts like the Chief Conservator of Extension and Research—a role critical for advancing forest management practices and research—has stripped the department of vital technical expertise. Replacing such positions with bureaucrats, who often lack do-

main-specific knowledge, compromises the department's ability to implement scientifically sound policies and practices. The systematic elimination of professional posts and the appointment of bureaucrats raise concerns about a deliberate effort to weaken the Punjab Forest Department. This "well-thought-out conspiracy," as some observers describe it, appears to prioritize administrative control over environmental stewardship. By consolidating power within the bureaucratic elite, the department is being stripped of its ability to function as a scientifically driven institution. This trend not only undermines the department's credibility but also jeopardizes public trust in the government's commitment to

environmental conservation. To reverse the damage and restore the Punjab Forest Department's effectiveness, immediate action is needed. The Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, must prioritize reinstating professional posts, particularly the Chief Conservator of Extension and Research, to ensure that specialized expertise guides the department's operations. The post of Director General should be abolished. The elimination of professional posts and the appointment of bureaucrats in the Punjab Forest Department represent a grave misstep with far-reaching consequences. The erosion of expertise, compromised decision-making, demoralized workforce, and long-term

environmental risks underscore the urgency of reversing these decisions. By prioritizing professional leadership and restoring key posts, the Punjab government can salvage the department and reaffirm its commitment to environmental sustainability. Failure to act will not only jeopardize Punjab's forests but also undermine the province's ability to address climate change, protect biodiversity, and support sustainable development. The time to act is now, before the Punjab Forest Department is irreparably damaged. The negative impacts of these changes extend beyond the Forest Department to Punjab's broader environmental and socioeconomic landscape.

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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

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June 25/Mozambique National Day

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Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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G 14/1: Landowners seek NAB intervention against FGEHA

As the matter now lands on NAB’s table, all eyes will be on whether the accountability watchdog can uncover the truth behind the alleged manipulation of compensation mechanisms – and if justice can finally be delivered to the rightful stakeholders of Islamabad’s evolving urban landscape

ISLAMABAD: As the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) moves forward with settling compensation claims in Sector G-14/1 – one of Islamabad’s oldest localities encompassing the villages of Chellow and Jhangi Syedan – a wave of discontent has emerged among local landowners, who have now approached the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) over alleged irregularities in the process. Established initially as a cell under the Ministry of Housing and Works in 1989, the Federal Government Employees Housing Foundation (FGEHF) was elevated to the status of an authority through a presidential ordinance in July 2019. This transformation was subsequently formalized by the passage of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority Act in January 2020. Although develop-

ment work in Sector G-14 began more than 15 years ago, the authority only recently initiated work in G-14/1. The sector, like others in the capital, is divided into four sub-sectors: G-14/1, G-14/2, G-14/3, and G-14/4. Development in the first three has progressed steadily, but G-14/1 lagged behind, primarily due to land acquisition disputes. The FGEHA has now reportedly disbursed compensation cheques totaling Rs518.98 million across 32 property assessments. However, local residents claim that a majority of these payments were made to non-resident investors rather than to original landowners who have lived in the area for decades. Several individuals received multiple cheques, and in some cases, multiple recipients belonged to the same family. In addition to cash payments, plots valued between Rs25 million to Rs30 million were also allotted to these beneficiaries. This perceived favoritism has sparked

outrage among around 300 local landowners, who allege they were unfairly excluded from the compensation process. Many claim that investors – in collusion with FGEHA officials – purchased claims from original landowners at nominal rates and later profited massively through a flawed compensation mechanism. A local landowner, stated: “This is not the first time the FGEHA has marginalized genuine locals. Time and again, we see a pattern where outside investors are given preferential treatment.” He added that these practices compelled local landowners to file a formal complaint with NAB, demanding a full investigation. They have also submitted grievances to the FGEHA, seeking redressal. When approached for comment, FGEHA Director (Land) Ihsan Ilahi confirmed receiving applications from aggrieved parties. However, he noted

that the matter primarily falls under the jurisdiction of the Land Acquisition Collector and thus referred the complainants to the appropriate authority. Meanwhile, FGEHA spokesperson Nasir Mahmood defended the authority’s actions, asserting that compensation was awarded strictly on merit and in accordance with established criteria. “The allegations of cherry-picking are entirely baseless,” he said. Nonetheless, the controversy has drawn the attention of the National Assembly’s subcommittee on housing and development, headed by local MNA Anjum Aqeel Khan. Khan acknowledged the discontent among local landowners and vowed to address their concerns in the committee’s next session. “The villagers of Chellow and Jhangi Syedan have lived here for generations and deserve fair and transparent treatment. We will question FGEHA officials, including the Director General, in the upcoming meeting,” said MNA Khan.

He also congratulated the Ministry of Information, under the leadership of Federal Minister Attaullah Tarar, for its effective role in projecting Pakistan’s stance during the recent armed skirmishes with India, but emphasized that domestic accountability must remain a priority. This latest episode adds to the long-standing concerns about transparency and equity in Islamabad’s urban expansion. While authorities claim to operate within legal frameworks, repeated grievances from genuine landowners highlight the need for enhanced oversight and stronger institutional checks. As the matter now lands on NAB’s table, all eyes will be on whether the accountability watchdog can uncover the truth behind the alleged manipulation of compensation mechanisms – and if justice can finally be delivered to the rightful stakeholders of Islamabad’s evolving urban landscape.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Spain in a meeting with Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on Tuesday. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. DNA

National symposium held on food safety

ISLAMABAD: IMPACT Research International, Gallup Pakistan, Nestle Pakistan and Friesland Campina Institute on Tuesday jointly organized the national symposium to raise public awareness about critical food safety challenges and their health implications. Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani embarked the discussions emphasizing the role of parliament in food safety and security with the use of modern scientific acumen. The symposium was organized to raise public awareness about critical food safety challenges and their health implications, showcase practical measures to prevent illness through safe food handling, preparation, and consumption, discussing collaborative approaches to

improve food safety across the sectors, promoting evidence-based, scalable solutions to ensure safe and nutritious food for all. Brands and food outlets such as Cheezious and Tehzeeb Bakers also participated in the event. More than 75 participants including academics, traders, food processors, civil society activists participated in the symposium. On the occasion, speakers said that food safety saves lives. It is not only a crucial component to food security, but it also plays a vital role in reducing foodborne disease. Every year, 600 million people fall sick as a result of around 200 different types of foodborne illness. The burden of such illness falls most heavily on the poor and on the young. In addition,

foodborne illness is responsible for 420,000 preventable deaths every year. Children under 5 years of age carry 40 percent of the foodborne disease burden, with 125,000 deaths every year. With healthcare professionals playing a pivotal role in disease prevention and nutritional guidance, this year’s World Food Safety Day places a special focus on engaging the medical and clinical community. Safe and nutritious food must go hand in hand—there is now a global consensus that no food can be considered nutritious unless it is safe. The economic burden of foodborne diseases is also enormous. US \$ 110 billion is lost each year in productivity and medical expenses resulting from unsafe food

in low- and middle-income countries. In addition, foodborne diseases impede socioeconomic development by straining health care systems and harming national economies, tourism, and trade. In this context, World Food Safety Day (WFSDD) is an important way of raising awareness, prevention, collaboration, and promotion of food safety. Food borne illness is a common issue of Pakistan like other developing countries. The diseases are transmitted either through microbial contamination and/or by chemicals exposure. There is microbial food borne outbreaks of a wide range such as hepatitis, typhoid, animal contact, and salmonella being the most common pathogen.—DNA

Wajiha to grace National Peace Festival

ISLAMABAD: The National Peace Festival 2025, a flagship event that highlights youth-led peacebuilding and civic engagement, will take place from June 18 to 20, 2025, at the Al-Mukhtar Auditorium, National Skills University, in Islamabad. Organized by the Shaoor Foundation for Education and Awareness (SFEA) in collaboration with National Skills University Islamabad, the festival is supported by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and funded by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) under the PACE Project. Ms. Wajiha Qamar, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, will grace the event as Chief Guest, acknowledging and encouraging the pivotal role youth play in building peace and preventing violent extremism across Pakistan. The three-day festival is expected to gather students, faculty members, and peacebuilders from across the country, offering a dynamic platform for dialogue, creativity, and collaborative action. A special emphasis will be placed on the revival of Peace Societies in universities, empowering students to lead initiatives rooted in inclusion, interfaith harmony, and civic responsibility. The festival will highlight key milestones achieved under the PACE Project, including the training of over 850 students and faculty in peacebuilding, dialogue facilitation, and conflict resolution. The Unity in Diversity Campaign, led by student Peace Societies, has already engaged over 5,000 students through peace rallies, storytelling events, and interfaith dialogues across Pakistani campuses. Key Highlights of the Festival include A Peace Forum and Leadership Dialogue, where university vice-chancellors and academic leaders will engage directly with youth to explore how peace education can be integrated into institutional policies.—DNA

Muqam lauds pro-people budget, urges political unity

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam Tuesday praised the government for presenting a pro-people and balanced federal budget, despite facing serious economic challenges. Speaking during the National Assembly’s budget debate, he emphasized the need for political maturity, unity and a rejection of divisive rhetoric. Muqam commended the government’s targeted relief measures, particularly for employees and welcomed the increased allocation for defense, calling it essential to maintaining a strong and capable military. “Our armed forces have effectively responded to recent Indian aggression, demonstrating their readiness and resolve,” he said. Highlighting the unity within the coalition government, the minister acknowledged the efforts of the economic team for incorporating parliamentary feedback and steering the country away from financial instability. He also lauded PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his effective diplomatic engagements during recent visits to Western nations, praising his efforts in representing Pakistan on the global stage. Muqam called for resolving internal disagreements through dialogue rather than airing them in the media or the National Assembly. He expressed concern over repeated calls from PTI for protests and armed marches toward Islamabad, saying, “Such threats undermine Pakistan’s democratic image and global standing. Responsible leadership does not glorify violence.—APP

Meeting to finalize Muharram security plan

ISLAMABAD: Superintendents of Police (SPs) have held meetings with Imambargah organizers and peace committee members to ensure security, promote religious harmony, and maintain law and order during the holy month of Muharram. An official told APP on Tuesday that the meetings aimed to reinforce coordination with local religious leaders and community stakeholders to ensure comprehensive security arrangements for Imambargahs, mourning processions, and Majalis. The Zonal SPs briefed their respective teams and emphasized proactive policing and strong community engagement during the sacred period. Zonal SPs said that no negligence or lapse in security arrangements would be tolerated, and all officers have been directed to maintain close coordination with Imambargah administrators and ensure implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for Muharram processions. They said that special instructions were issued to ensure proper lighting during Majalis and to maintain strict adherence to scheduled timings for religious gatherings. They said that all police officers must perform their duties with integrity and patriotism to uphold peace in the federal capital during Muharram.—APP

Pak stands with Iran against Israeli aggression

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Affairs Rana Qasim Noon has said that the government will continue to support brotherly country Iran against Israeli aggression on Iran. Talking to the media outside the Parliament House, he said that the Muslim ummah will have to unite in support of Iran against the aggression.—APP

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## Briefs

## Parliamentary Secretary briefed about Eman murder

ISLAMABAD: The Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of Human Rights, MNA Saba Sadiq, was briefed on Wednesday about the brutal murder of a student, Eman Afroz, in Islamabad.

MNA Saba Sadiq was briefed by SP Sadar zone Kazam Naqvi that the suspect involved in the killing had been arrested after an investigation. According to SP Sadar Zone Kazam Naqvi, the suspect, Feroze, a resident of Jhang, was taken into custody after escaping from the place of incident.

The victim Eman Afroz, a 23-year-old student at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), was shot inside her private hostel room in Sector G-10/1.

SP Naqvi said the incident took place on April 19. The accused entered the hostel premises by climbing the wall with a weapon. Accused waited in the courtyard for about an hour before entering the room where Eman and three other girls were present. He threatened them and opened fire on Eman, causing serious injuries. She was taken to the hospital but could not survive.

The suspect fled the scene by jumping over the wall. A case was registered by Rana police on the complaint of Eman's brother. The police launched an investigation and later arrested the suspect. SP Naqvi also shared that the accused had a previous criminal record, including charges of rape and motorcycle theft.

Parliamentary Secretary for Human Rights MNA Saba Sadiq stressed that the incumbent government is having zero tolerance policy about such gruesome and violent incidents against innocent women.—APP

## Iconic broadcaster Tariq Aziz remembered

ISLAMABAD: The fiftieth death anniversary of the iconic voice of Pakistan Television, renowned host, actor, poet, and politician, was observed on Tuesday.

He was born on April 28, 1936, in Jalandhar, British India. After the Partition, his family migrated to Pakistan and settled in Sahiwal, where he received his early education. He began his career at Radio Pakistan and later became the first male announcer of Pakistan Television (PTV) in 1964. Aziz gained nationwide fame with his long-running television quiz show "Neelam Ghar," which was later renamed the "Tariq Aziz Show." Apart from television, he also acted in several Pakistani films and was known for his poetic writings. He served as a member of the National Assembly from 1997 to 1999. In recognition of his contributions to media and culture, the Government of Pakistan awarded him the Pride of Performance in 1992. Tariq Aziz passed away on June 17, 2020, in Lahore and was laid to rest in Garden Town, beside his mother's grave.—APP

## Visit of UBG delegation to GB focus on promoting investment

ISLAMABAD:

United Business Group (UBG) Patron-in-Chief, S.M. Tanveer, has said that Gilgit-Baltistan is the bright future of Pakistan. The region has immense potential in affordable electricity, tourism, food processing, and the gems and jewelry sector. "We want to transform Gilgit-Baltistan into a business paradise," he stated during a reception held in his honor by the Gilgit Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He emphasized that they want to take everyone along for the betterment of traders, and that solving the problems of the business community is their top priority. Highlighting that Pakistan faces an annual trade deficit of \$8 billion, he said they aim to promote local industries like food processing and gemstone cutting to save valuable foreign exchange. UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, in his speech, said the business community of Gilgit-Baltistan holds a special place in their hearts. "We have longstanding ties with the Raki family, which are growing stronger with time," he said.



He assured that UBG will raise the concerns of GB's business community at the federal level, including with the Ministry of Commerce and other relevant forums. This region is a pride of Pakistan, and we will highlight its issues at the national level, he stated. Their goal, he added, is to establish direct links between the GB business commu-

nity and national institutions to effectively resolve their challenges. Zafar Bakhtawari said that in the coming years, development projects and a network of motorways in Gilgit-Baltistan will play a crucial role in the region's progress. He also emphasized the need for rapid execution of energy projects along with infrastructure de-

velopment so that their benefits can reach the public. Gilgit Chamber President Ashfaq Ahmed Khan said that while the region holds great potential for business and industry, negligence from the government, lack of support from institutions, and collusion with mafias are damaging business prospects. He urged UBG to

highlight these issues at the national level and engage with the federal government to find solutions. On this occasion, UBG Islamabad Region Senior Vice President Johar Ali Raki, former Gilgit Chamber President Nasir Hussain Raki, UBG General Body Member Ghazanfar Akram, Aamir Atta Bajwa, and others also addressed the gathering.

## Inauguration of NUML Information &amp; Facilitation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI(M) (Retd), Rector, National University of Modern Languages, formally inaugurated the newly established NUML Information & Facilitation Centre (NIFC) today at the

university's main campus. The state-of-the-art facility is designed to provide a centralised support system for students and prospective applicants. The centre houses multiple dedicated counters to address queries related to admissions, scholarships, transportation, examinations, hostel affairs, finance, and other key student ser-

vices. The inauguration ceremony began with a ribbon-cutting ceremony by the Rector, followed by a dua. He was accompanied by DG NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir and other senior university officials, who visited various service counters at the centre. On the occasion, the Rector emphasised the importance of providing timely and

efficient services to students and aspiring applicants. He urged the staff to fulfil their responsibilities diligently and ensure a supportive environment for all stakeholders. The NUML Information & Facilitation Centre is a major step forward in enhancing student experience and operational efficiency at the university



## PIA employees join bidding process to acquire flag carrier

FFC also has submitted EoI to Privatisation Commission for a stake in PIACL

ISLAMABAD: Employees of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) have formally submitted a joint offer to acquire the national flag carrier, entering the competitive bidding process just days before the June 19 deadline for expressions of interest, the officials from the Privatisation Commission confirmed on Monday. The joint bid was filed by Hidayatullah Khan, president of the CBA-affiliated People's Unity, and Aqeel Siddiqui, head of the PIA Senior Staff Association (Sasa). The employee groups assert their right to be given preference in purchasing the airline, particularly as the federal government moves forward with privatisation after a previous attempt faltered. Adding to the list of contenders, Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited (FFC), a major player in Pakistan's fertiliser industry, also announced on Monday that it has submitted an Expression of Interest (EoI) and prequalification documents to the Privatisation Commission for a stake in Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL). Sources familiar with the matter confirmed FFC's offer to acquire PIA. At a board meeting on June 13, FFC approved the move and plans to conduct full due diligence as Pakistan's government works to sell 51%-100% of its shares to shore up its \$7 billion IMF-backed reform programme. Last month, the government extended the EoI deadline to June 19, following a failed first attempt last year when only one bid — well below the Rs85 billion asking price — was received from Blue World City consortium. Previously, prominent business groups including Mian Mansha Group, Arif Habib Group, and the Tabba Group had also expressed interest in acquiring the debt-laden airline. PIA's privatisation is part of a broader government strategy to offload loss-making state-owned enterprises and stabilise public finances amid mounting economic challenges.—DNA

## Pak narrative gained ground during foreign mission

ISLAMABAD: Senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and member of Pakistan's parliamentary diplomatic delegation, Sherry Rehman, on Tuesday said that Pakistan had effectively presented its case on global forums during a high-level diplomatic mission led by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Talking to a private news channel about the 15-day diplomatic outreach, she said that Pakistan's narrative was shared with clarity and confidence in meetings with world leaders, think tanks, media, and parliaments. The delegation engaged in back-to-back sessions to highlight Pakistan's position on Kashmir, cross-border water issues, and regional stability, she added. "We remained focused on presenting Pakistan's case. Chairman Bilawal led from the front. This level of targeted diplomacy in such a short time has not happened before," she said. The delegation clarifies its stance about India's actions regarding river water flows and the state of the Indus Waters Treaty. "We told them clearly that India's manipulation of water releasing or stopping flows at will is a dangerous development," she said. She stressed that while Pakistan stayed committed to peaceful engagement, the global community must take notice of rising tensions caused by unilateral and provocative actions by regional powers.

## Chairman Senate welcomes Romanian Ambassador

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani on Tuesday welcomed the Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, H. E. Dan Stoenescu, during his visit to the Senate, where he also witnessed the ongoing proceedings of the Senate. The Chairman extended warm greetings to Ambassador Stoenescu and appreciated the longstanding diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Romania. He expressed hope for continued parliamentary cooperation and stronger bilateral engagement.

## Yango issues clarification

DNA

ISLAMABAD: These claims would constitute clear violations of Yango's strict protocols and safety guidelines and we take these matters very seriously. However, we have not received any official complaints via our official channels nor notification or inquiries from law enforcement authorities from users mentioned in this article regarding formal complaints or active investigations related to these claims. It is also important to note that as of today, 99.9% of trips on Yango are complaint-free, reflecting the overall safety and reliability of our service. Yango strongly condemns

any unlawful behavior that compromises passenger safety. We urge anyone with genuine concerns or incidents to report them directly to us via our official support lines or to the relevant authorities so that appropriate legal action can be taken. Yango remains fully committed to cooperating with authorities and providing all necessary support whenever required. We also encourage passengers to utilize the in-app Support Center to report any issues before, during, or after their ride. Safety is a shared responsibility, and Yango has implemented an array of safety measures comprehensive of over 25 safety features, including: Real-time trip monitoring

for enhanced security. An SOS button and trip-sharing features to ensure users feel safe throughout their journey. A free and comprehensive ride insurance that covers an array of incidents of unforeseen circumstances. At the same time, we urge users to share only verified and factual information, as misinformation can harm the livelihoods of honest drivers who rely on ride-hailing services. Yango remains unwavering in its commitment to providing a safe, reliable, and transparent service while adhering strictly to Pakistan's laws and regulations. Our focus is and will always be on ensuring the best and safest ride-hailing experience for all our users.

## Lawmakers acknowledge economic gains, urge regional development

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle on Tuesday acknowledged economic improvements but voiced concerns over urban neglect, power shortages, and tax burdens and urged the federal government to prioritize regional development, energy relief, and increased funding for education.

On the fourth day of the budget debate, lawmakers called for fair wages, greater support for low-income groups, and the removal of tax on solar panels. Overall, they viewed the budget as people-centric, with promising potential for economic growth and job creation.

Resuming the budget debate on fourth day, Mian Khan Bugti of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) commended Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for allocating sub-

stantial funds to improve Balochistan's road infrastructure. Highlighting the importance of youth involvement in national progress, he called for policies to empower them and demanded immediate action to end load shedding in his constituency. Syed Amin ul Haque of the Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) welcomed key economic indicators such as a decline in inflation, rupee stabilization, and a 31% rise in remittances. However, he criticized the provincial government's neglect of urban centers and called for a dedicated development package for Karachi and Hyderabad. He also urged the federal government to increase the Higher Education Commission's budget to optimum possible level.

Shahida Akhtar Ali of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan (MMAP) demanded a special risk allowance for fighter pilots and called for greater relief measures for low-income groups. She also stressed the need to reduce income tax for the salaried class. Shazia Marri of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) condemned Israel's aggression against Iran. She praised Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and his team for effectively representing Pakistan on the international stage and conveying a message of peace to the world. Additionally, she criticized the failure to announce minimum wages for workers and called for a reasonable increase in government employees' salaries. She demanded repeal of the 18 percent

General Sales Tax (GST) on solar panels. Malik Ibrar of PML-N commended the finance bill, describing it as a people-friendly budget focused on economic revival amid challenging circumstances. He highlighted its efforts to curb inflation and expressed confidence that it would create employment opportunities in the country in the coming years. Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that no major development scheme was announced in this budget. He demanded that people earning up to 2,200,000 should be exempt from tax. He also said that the budget should allocate funds for emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence, as it is essential given the needs of the time.

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## Why the US and Israel want Iran weakened – The BRICS factor and Geopolitical designs

THE Middle East stands on the brink of a wider conflagration, with tensions between Iran and Israel reaching dangerous heights. The recent Israeli attacks deep into Iranian territory, reportedly killing high-ranking military officials and nuclear scientists, are being seen not merely as acts of self-defense or retaliation, but part of a calculated strategy with much broader geopolitical implications. While many analysts attribute the hostilities to Iran's regional influence and nuclear ambitions, there is a growing belief among global observers that Iran's rising role in BRICS is an equally crucial factor in the Israel-US agenda to isolate and destabilize Tehran.

The United States and Israel, long-time strategic allies, have consistently opposed Iran's rise—politically, militarily, and economically. Iran's entry into BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) marked a significant turning point in the geopolitical order. For decades, the US has maintained global hegemony through military bases, economic sanctions, and international institutions. However, BRICS challenges this unipolarity by offering a counterbalance rooted in economic cooperation, multipolar diplomacy, and alternative financial systems like the proposed BRICS currency.

Iran's inclusion in BRICS was not just symbolic; it was strategic. Sitting at the crossroads of Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia, Iran is rich in natural resources, particularly oil and gas, and holds a key geographical position on the global trade routes, including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Iran also enjoys deep ties with Russia and China, both founding members of BRICS and strong advocates for a multipolar world.

With Iran in BRICS, the bloc not only gains energy security and a pivotal trade node, but also a strong political voice in the Muslim world. Iran is one of the few countries that actively defies the West's dictates and survives despite harsh sanctions. For China and Russia, Iran represents a vital bulwark against US-led interventions and regime change policies in the region.

Now consider the scenario that the US and Israel seek: A regime change in Tehran. If the current government is overthrown and replaced with a Western-aligned leadership, it would effectively insert a Trojan horse within BRICS. This new Iranian regime, possibly more compliant to Washington's directives, could subtly undermine BRICS from within, leaking sensitive information, obstructing multilateral economic plans, and ultimately disrupting the alliance's cohesion.

Such a regime would also facilitate normalization of relations with Israel and possibly support the Abraham Accords, thus weakening resistance axes across



Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. It is not hard to see why the idea of a pro-West Iran is appealing to Tel Aviv and Washington.

Understanding the gravity of the situation, both China and Russia appear to be acting preemptively. Their support for Iran in the face of Israeli aggression signals that they will not allow Iran to fall, at least not without a significant global cost. Both powers understand that if Iran collapses, it could destabilize the broader Eurasian integration efforts led by BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has even issued warnings to its citizens to leave Israel, indicating that Beijing is preparing for possible escalation and may even get directly involved diplomatically or otherwise.

Russia, already entangled in a war with Ukraine and facing off NATO pressure, cannot afford to lose Iran—its key regional ally and partner in counter-Western narratives. There are reports of increased defense cooperation between Moscow and Tehran, including arms supplies and strategic advisory roles.

It would be remiss not to mention the nuclear issue. While Israel and the US loudly oppose Iran's nuclear ambitions, it is equally true that China and Russia also do not want a nuclear-armed Iran. The difference is in approach. While the West pushes for pressure, sanctions, and military threats, Beijing and Moscow prefer engagement, diplomacy, and regional integration as tools to moderate Iranian behavior. They believe that a cornered Iran is more likely to seek nuclear deterrence, while an empowered, economically integrated Iran has more to gain from global cooperation. It is critical for the US and Israel to recognize that Iran is not Gaza, not Syria, and not Lebanon. It is a nation of nearly 90 million people with a landmass of 1.6 million square kilometers, making it the 17th largest country in the world by area—over 75 times larger than Israel. It has a well-established state apparatus, indigenous military-industrial capabilities, a well-educated population, and strategic depth that allows it to absorb and respond to foreign aggression in a way smaller nations cannot.

An open war with Iran would not be a short, surgical strike campaign. It would unleash region-wide chaos. Iran has the capability to disrupt oil shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, strike US bases across the Middle East, and unleash its network of allied non-state actors in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The human, political, and economic toll of such a conflict would be catastrophic—not just for the region, but for the world economy.

The G7 summit in Canada recently called for restraint and a ceasefire, reflecting growing unease among Western allies. President Donald Trump, despite his many controversies, continues to claim he can broker peace in the Middle East. If he truly seeks a legacy of peace, now is the time to act. He must engage with all parties, not just Israel, and offer an inclusive diplomatic track. A broader war will not only destroy Iran or Israel—it will damage US credibility and expose its declining ability to enforce global order.

The Middle East has suffered enough. Decades of war, foreign interventions, and authoritarian misgovernance have made it a graveyard of peace initiatives. The new geopolitical landscape demands maturity. If BRICS is to be a serious contender to Western hegemony, it must stand firm against efforts to sabotage its unity through regime change and destabilization. Likewise, the US and Israel must realize that not every defiant state can be bombed into submission. Iran, with its size, population, and geopolitical value, is not a pushover. War will not bring regime change; it will bring chaos.

## 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 demon-

strated military restraint and strategic maturity. From the Kargil conflict to the Pulwama-Balakot standoff and of 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 added that Israel has “plenty of them.” While claim-

ing 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**

## Depalpur: An Ancient Kingdom

Afshan Kanwal



In contemporary times, Depalpur has evolved into a populous and administratively significant region. With a population estimated at around 1.4 million, it stands as one of the largest tehsils in Pakistan and comprises five union councils. Besides its immense historical value, the region is agriculturally rich and fertile. There is an urgent need for government and heritage conservation...

DEPALPUR is one of the most ancient cities in present-day Pakistan, located approximately 25 kilometers from the district headquarters of Okara in the Punjab province. It holds significant historical importance, with records and archaeological evidence pointing to its continuous habitation from ancient times to the present day. The city's origins are traced back to approximately 200 BCE, placing its foundation contemporaneously with the declining phase of ancient Egyptian civilization.

According to local tradition, the original settlement was established by a figure named Seri Chand, who named it “Srinagar.” Legend holds that Seri Chand was initially childless and it was only after his spiritual guide, Jandarmani, performed a prolonged ascetic ritual—standing on one leg for five months and twenty-seven days—that he was blessed with two sons, Bheem and Lalu Jarai. Seri Chand brought them to the region now known as Depalpur. The current name of the city is attributed to Raja Depal, a Rajput prince and the son of Raja Salwa Han, who is believed to have reconstructed the city, bestowing upon it the name Depalpur. The antiquity of Depalpur is further attested by ancient Indian texts such as the Rigveda, wherein the city is recognized as one of the oldest continuously inhabited urban centers in the Indian subcontinent. Over the centuries, despite suffering repeated devastation, the city was consistently rebuilt upon its ruins, retaining its historical and cultural vibrancy. Historically, the fortified area of the city spanned approximately 100 acres.

Depalpur was situated within the region known as Sapta Sindhu, or “the land of seven rivers”—Ravi, Sutlej, Chenab, Jhelum, Indus, Beas and Kabul—a term used to describe the fertile territory where the early Aryan settlements took root. Alongside cities such as Ajodhan (modern-day Pakpattan) and Qabula, Depalpur was a prominent urban center of that era. The strategic importance of Depalpur became particularly pronounced during the 14th century CE, when it served as a critical defensive outpost for the Delhi Sultanate against Mongol invasions. It was considered the last fortified city between the Khyber Pass and Delhi. Throughout the reigns of the Tughlaqs, Mughals, Sikhs and eventually the British, the city remained on the principal route connecting Delhi and Lahore. Notably, during the reign of Emperor Akbar in the 16th century, the

Mughal sovereign halted at Depalpur Fort en route to Pakpattan to pay homage at the shrine of Baba Farid. During the era of Sikh dominance, Depalpur functioned as a taluqa (an administrative unit). The fort of Depalpur, characterized by rare red-brick walls as wide as 25 feet, still bears remnants of its former grandeur. Its defensive infrastructure included guard posts and a large water-filled moat, which served as an effective barrier against invasions.

In the 13th century, Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq, who was then the governor of Depalpur, defended the fort from Tatar incursions. The fort sustained damages during the siege, but restoration was undertaken in 1244 under Ghiyas-ud-Din's command. In 1526, during his conquest of the Indian subcontinent, Babur encountered stiff resistance at Depalpur Fort, an event he mentioned in his memoirs, Tuzk-e-Babri. Earlier military campaigns by Muhammad bin Qasim were also said to have reached Depalpur, albeit without success. Sultan Balban utilized the city as a strategic point to halt Mongol advances and it was during this period that the celebrated poet Amir Khusrau was briefly imprisoned in the fort. When the conqueror Tamerlane invaded the region, Depalpur was noted for its eighty-four towers, eighty-four mosques and eighty-four wells a symbol of its architectural and cultural prominence. Uniquely among regional forts, Depalpur was constructed on a high elevation, rising approximately 300 feet above the surrounding plains. The fort was accessible through four main gates, each named according to its orientation: Delhi Gate (east), Multani Gate (west), Lahori Gate (north) and Bikaneri Gate (south). Today, only the eastern and western gates survive; the others have succumbed to time. Within the fort, a remarkable tunnel was constructed with provisions for air and light, reportedly wide enough for two horses to pass side by side. A royal mosque, still standing, also exists within the fort's boundaries. In the Lalu Jarai colony, traces of a former Hindu temple remain. Prior to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947, members of the Khatri Hindu community used to frequent this temple for traditional head-shaving rituals. Local lore recounts the story of a child named Lalu who, according to legend, sank into the earth due to his mother's curse; the temple was erected at this site. Although the temple structure no longer stands, a

small stone marker still commemorates the location. Nearby, the sealed entrance of a tunnel, allegedly constructed by Firoz Shah Tughlaq, still exists. Firoz Shah, appointed governor of Depalpur by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, implemented several administrative reforms but is also remembered for his authoritarian rule. Local folklore narrates his unrequited love for the daughter of Raja Raman of Talwandi. Following her rejection, he imposed harsh taxes that caused widespread migration. Eventually, the princess accepted his proposal to alleviate her people's suffering. Due to this controversial episode, he is still referred to in oral tradition as Nait Molub a man who coerced love through power. Firoz Shah was the last significant ruler to renovate Depalpur Fort. Portions of the fort's sarai (inn) are still intact, with some rooms occupied by local inhabitants while others remain sealed. The area once contained several Hindu temples visited by pilgrims from across India. However, following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, local retaliatory sentiment led to destruction of these temples and the sites were repurposed for residential use.

In contemporary times, Depalpur has evolved into a populous and administratively significant region. With a population estimated at around 1.4 million, it stands as one of the largest tehsils in Pakistan and comprises five union councils. Besides its immense historical value, the region is agriculturally rich and fertile. There is an urgent need for government and heritage conservation authorities to take active measures to preserve and restore the fort of Depalpur, its remaining temples, Haveli Lakha, Bloom Shah's shrine and other cultural landmarks to safeguard their architectural and historical legacy for future generations. In the last, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Muhammad AkramZaheer for his invaluable support and encouragement in guiding me to write an insightful write-up about Okara Cantonment. His unwavering motivation, constructive feedback and deep understanding of the subject matter played a vital role in shaping my ideas and strengthening my research. It was through his mentorship that I found the confidence to explore this topic with depth and originality. I am truly thankful for his generous help and academic inspiration

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## Briefs

## G7 urges Middle East de-escalation

FROM PAGE 01

Trump relented during a dinner at a forested lodge under the snow-capped mountains in Kananaskis. "We urge that the resolution of the Iranian crisis leads to a broader de-escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, including a ceasefire in Gaza," said the joint statement released by Canada. The statement said Israel "has a right to defend itself" and stressed "the importance of the protection of civilians," as the growing attacks kill civilians on both sides. The leaders of the club of industrial democracies – Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States – stated their conviction that Iran "can never have a nuclear weapon."

Trump for weeks said he favored diplomacy, and his envoy Steve Witkoff met five times with Iranian envoys, but he quickly backed Israel's strikes and said Tehran's clerical state should have agreed to his terms.

At a group photo with fellow G7 leaders before the dinner, Trump said: "I have to be back as soon as I can. I wish I could stay for tomorrow, but they understand, this is big stuff."

French President Emmanuel Macron suggested the United States was ready to make a diplomatic overture. "There was an offer made for a meeting and an exchange," Macron told reporters. "If the United States can obtain a ceasefire, it is a very good thing," he added. Soon after his early exit, Trump rebuked his French counterpart, accusing Macron of mischaracterizing the reason for his departure. "Publicity seeking President Emmanuel Macron, of France, mistakenly said that I left the G7 Summit, in Canada, to go back to D.C. to work on a 'cease fire' between Israel and Iran," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

"Wrong! He has no idea why I am now on my way to Washington, but it certainly has nothing to do with a Cease Fire. Much bigger than that. Whether purposely or not, Emmanuel always gets it wrong. Stay tuned!" Before his decision to leave early was announced, Trump had told reporters: "As soon as I leave here, we're going to be doing something."

He has repeatedly declined to say if the United States would participate in Israeli military action, although he has said Washington was not involved in initial strikes and the White House said US forces remained in a defensive posture.

## Pak decides to evacuate families of diplomats

FROM PAGE 01

Iran has retaliated with barrages of drones and missiles that have killed more than 20 people in Israel. Israel claims that it now has control of Iranian airspace and intends to escalate the campaign in the coming days. Iran has so far fired 400 ballistic missiles and hundreds of drones towards Israel, said an Israeli military official. Trump has consistently said the Israeli assault could end quickly if Iran agreed to US demands that it accept strict curbs on its nuclear programme.

Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons and has pointed to its right to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, including enrichment, as a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Israel, which is not a party to the NPT, is the only country in the Middle East widely believed to have nuclear weapons. Israel does not deny or confirm that.

"Hundreds of Pakistanis return from Iran" Meanwhile, the federal government is taking measures to bring back Pakistanis, including students, from war-hit Iran, with nearly 714 nationals arriving in Pakistan from Iran via buses through the Taftan border, immigration officials said on Monday. The passengers included citizens, traders, and drivers, officials said, adding that special security arrangements had been put in place due to the Iran-Israel conflict.

## PSB increases Naseer Bunda hockey ground charges by 300%

The clubs emphasized that this move directly contradicts the government's declared commitment—especially by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Minister Sanaullah, and Secretary Mohyuddin Wani—to promote and revive hockey at the grassroots level

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The government's ongoing efforts to revive Pakistan's national sport, hockey, have taken a major hit as the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has sharply increased usage charges for the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium—shifting focus from athlete development to revenue generation. According to details, the PSB has raised the daily usage fee for the stadium in Islamabad from Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 5,700—a staggering hike of nearly 300%—affecting registered hockey clubs in the federal capital.

In response, affiliated clubs under the Islamabad Hockey Association (IHA) have written to the Advisor to Prime Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Rana Sanaullah and IPC Secretary Mohyuddin Wani, urging them to intervene and reverse the increase. They warned that the steep fees pose a serious financial burden on young players and grassroots training programs. The clubs emphasized that this move directly contradicts the government's declared commitment—especially by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Minister Sanaullah, and Secretary Mohyuddin Wani—to promote and revive hockey at the grassroots level.

The Rising Stars Hockey Club along with other clubs, have been actively promoting hockey by offering free training sessions for schools and colleges boys and girls over the past several years. The club stressed that such initiatives are crucial for youth development and for rebuilding Pakistan's legacy in international hockey. "The youth are the future of Pakistan," the letter stated, "and engaging them in structured, healthy activities like hockey is essential—not just for personal growth but also for restoring the sport's national pride."

The letter concluded with a plea for immediate action, stressing that easing the financial burden on local clubs is key to sustaining the momentum for a national hockey revival. "The facility should ideally be free or heavily subsidized," said a former international player. "The government should invest in the sport instead of commercializing it to the point of extinction." The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) is also being urged to take up the matter with PSB officials, advocating on behalf of players who rely on regular training sessions to maintain form and fitness.

## ICC faces backlash for Jay Shah-centric WTC Final highlights

Promotional video draws widespread mockery for prioritising administrator over athletes who decided match

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The International Cricket Council is facing intense criticism after releasing World Test Championship Final highlights that disproportionately featured chairman Jay Shah, overshadowing South Africa's historic victory over Australia at Lord's. The 45-second promotional video has drawn widespread mockery for prioritising the administrator over the athletes who decided the match. The controversial video opens with a panoramic shot of the Lord's before abruptly cutting to Shah's grand entrance. An analysis reveals the chairman appeared 11 times in the 23-shot sequence, including multiple close-ups of him clapping and observing. In contrast, Player of the Match Aiden

Markram was shown just twice, while Australian captain Pat Cummins appeared only briefly. South Africa's winning captain Temba Bavuma featured five times – fewer than half of Shah's appearances. "How many runs did Jay Shah score in this final? How many wickets?" asked Sri Lankan journalist Andrew Fidel Fernando, capturing the prevailing sentiment. Indian reporter Kuldeep Lal called the video "unbelievable," while British analyst Aatif Nawaz quipped it appeared "self-edited on a mobile phone" by Shah himself. The editorial choices seemed particularly misguided given the match's drama. Kagiso Rabada's nine-wicket match haul and Markram's fourth-innings century – both pivotal to South Africa's maiden Test championship title – received less emphasis than

Shah adjusting his jacket. "Blink during this video and you'll miss Cummins completely – but Jay Shah? Impossible," noted Australian journalist Andrew Wu. UAE-based sports writer Paul Radley observed the video made it appear "Jay Shah was player of the match," while UK journalist Charlie Reynolds pointed out Shah's 11 appearances matched the combined screen time given to South Africa's entire team. The controversy follows other questionable ICC decisions under Shah's leadership, including last year's Champions Trophy relocation and an increasingly India-centric tournament schedule. Notably, the ICC social media team had days earlier posted a separate video focused solely on Shah's activities at Lord's during the opening day of the final.

## UN reduces humanitarian program for 2025

GENEVA: The United Nations announced a significant reduction of more than a third in its global humanitarian program for 2025, as the humanitarian sector faced "the deepest funding cuts ever", threatening to exacerbate the fragile conditions of tens of millions of people in need. Tom Fletcher, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said in a statement the UN is now seeking \$29 billion to support 114 million people, noting that the scale of donor spending cuts has been so significant that it has forced a prioritization of people's survival. He added: "The math is cruel, and the consequences are heartbreaking. Too many people will not get the support they need, but we will save as many lives as we can with the resources we are given." Fletcher said: "All we ask is one per cent of what you chose to spend last year on war. But this isn't just an appeal for money – it's a call for global responsibility, for human solidarity, for a commitment to end the suffering." In a related context, the United Nations said in a statement that its request prioritizes and does not replace a previous appeal for more than \$47 billion launched in 2024, before US President Donald Trump announced a significant cut in foreign aid, which he himself described as "devastating." It added that funding provided in response to the previous humanitarian appeal was less than 13 percent of the amount requested around the middle of the year. – APP

## Kazakh capital to hold II Central Asia – China Summit

Following the summit, the Astana Declaration and the Treaty on Eternal Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation will be signed

ASTANA: The Kazakh capital is set to host today the II Central Asia-China Summit, Kazinform News Agency reports. The summit is expected to be attended by the Heads of Central Asian countries and President of China Xi Jinping, who is visiting Kazakhstan. Those gathered are to focus on strengthening regional cooperation, expanding the political dialogue, deepening trade and economic ties, developing transport and transit integration, energy, innovations and sustainable development. Utmost attention is to be paid to ensuring regional security, coordination of joint efforts in combating transnational threats, and promotion of cultural and humanitarian exchange. Following the summit, the Astana Declaration and the Treaty on Eternal Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation will be signed. As earlier reported, the I Central Asia-China Summit took place on May 19, 2023, in Xi'an, China. Addressing those present, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev outlined the key directions for further cooperation between Central Asian states and China and put forward several initiatives. As reported earlier, Kazakh leader Kassym-Jomart Tokayev warmly welcomed President of China Xi Jinping at the Akorda Presidential Palace, as the latter arrived in Astana on Monday. – Agencies

## Shandur Polo Festival to be held from June 20

## DNA

ASTORE: The annual Shandur Polo Festival would be organized from June 20 to 22 in collaboration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan governments and Fortier, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North), the official sources said on Tuesday. The Shandur Polo Festival is an annual three-day event held at Shandur Top, known as the "Roof of the World," in the Hindu Kush mountains of Pakistan, specifically between Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. The festival, typically featured traditional, freestyle polo matches between teams from Gilgit and Chitral, they said, adding beyond the polo, the festival also included cultural performances, music, and paragliding. A great number of local and foreign tourists is expected to attend the festival.

## DC inaugurates DHT sports complex

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner (DC), Abdul Akram has inaugurated the Divisional Hockey Tournament (DHT) Kohat Sports Complex. At the opening ceremony, the Deputy Commissioner formally inaugurated the tournament by releasing the hockey ball. Speaking on the occasion, he said that hockey was our national game and all available resources would be utilized for its promotion. The deputy commissioner further said that all possible steps were being taken to encourage young players and provide them with sports opportunities. Various teams are participating in the tournament, and a large number of fans were present on the occasion, which is a welcome step for the promotion of hockey. –APP

## Empty seats as Chelsea win opener at Club World Cup

PHILADELPHIA: Chelsea began their Club World Cup campaign with a 2-0 victory against Los Angeles FC in a largely empty stadium on Monday as Brazilian giants Flamengo also got off to a winning start and a Benfica comeback denied Boca Juniors in a stormy encounter. As the inaugural 32-team tournament gradually kicks into gear in the United States, Chelsea followed fellow European heavyweights Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich by claiming three points in their first group outing. Yet while UEFA Champions League winners PSG were ominous against Atletico Madrid on Sunday, and Bayern put 10 past Auckland City, the Premier League team were more solid than spectacular against LAFC in Atlanta.

Pedro Neto and Enzo Fernandez got the goals for Enzo Maresca's side in the Group D match before nearly 50,000 empty seats at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium – not a great look for the tournament organisers. New signing Liam Delap made his debut as a substitute and helped set up Fernandez's strike, with Chelsea hoping to reestablish themselves among the elite after their recent UEFA Conference League triumph and Champions League qualification. Maresca said it was a "very good result" and was happy with Delap's display following his recent arrival from Ipswich Town. "The good thing about Liam is he knows the way we want to play, so the process is quite quick," said the Italian. "The envi-

ronment was a bit strange, the stadium was almost empty, not full," added Maresca when asked about the crowd, as just over 22,000 attended the 71,000-capacity venue for a game played at 3:00 pm local time on a Monday. LAFC were late qualifiers for the tournament, beating Club America in a play-off last month to replace banned Mexican side Club Leon. Chelsea went ahead just after the half-hour mark when Nicolas Jackson released Neto and the Portuguese winger turned inside LA defender Ryan Hollingshead before beating goalkeeper Hugo Lloris with a powerful strike. Former Chelsea striker Olivier Giroud came on at half time for the Americans and Steve Cherundolo's team improved in the second half. – Agencies

## PM for linking Rekodiq with railway network by 2028

## FROM PAGE 01

of Pakistan Railways and its extension to Rekodiq. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on the up-gradation of ML-1 and ML-3 railway and the overall development of Pakistan Railways to meet the requirements of future transportation and cargo services. The prime minister noted that Pakistan Railways served as a backbone for the country's economy and communication. Pakistan Railways is a cheap, fast and environmentally friendly source of transportation," the prime minister said adding that the mines and mineral sector of Balochistan will develop and new employment opportunities for the people of the area will also be created after linking railways with Rekodiq. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Minister of State for Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi and high government officials.

## Pakistan, US resolve to finalise trade deal

## FROM PAGE 01

with both sides agreeing that detailed technical-level discussions would follow soon, based on a mutually agreed roadmap. The meeting was part of sustained efforts to deepen economic ties between the two countries. Both sides expressed confidence in advancing these negotiations to a successful conclusion at the earliest. Speaking at an event in Islamabad on Tuesday, the finance minister said he had a constructive and positive conversation with the US commerce secretary last night. He said that both countries are moving in the right direction and are stepping ahead to strengthen their strategic partnership.

The talks come against the backdrop of US-announced reciprocal tariffs in April, citing Pakistan's \$3 billion trade surplus with the United States. These tariffs, which could amount to 29% on Pakistani exports, were suspended for 90 days to allow space for negotiations. Finance Minister Aurangzeb and US Trade Representative Ambassador Jameson Greer initiated the formal dialogue with a telephonic conversation on May 30. Earlier in May, Pakistan proposed a zero-tariff bilateral trade agreement to the United States, offering wide-ranging economic concessions. Commerce Minister Jam Kamal told Reuters that Pakistan was prepared to extend incentives to American firms, particularly in the mining sector in Balochistan, through joint ventures with local companies. These concessions include lease grants and investment facilitation. Additionally, Pakistan has offered to increase imports from the United States, especially cotton and edible oils, which are in short domestic supply. The developments come amid a broader strategic thaw, with US President Trump recently stating that Washington is working on "big deals" with both Pakistan and India.

## 47 officers get awards

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A total of 47 officers received awards. Among these, 10 officers received Sitara-Imtiaz, 21 officers received President's Award for Pride of Performance and 16 officers received Tamgha-Imtiaz.

## England's Sam Billings welcomes 'King' Babar to BBL

"He's been such a world-class performer for such a long time," says wicketkeeper batter

## DNA

LONDON: England wicketkeeper-batter Sam Billings has lavished praise on Pakistan's premier batter Babar Azam, who has been signed by the Sydney Sixers for the upcoming 15th season of the Big Bash League (BBL). In a recent interview, Billings hailed Babar as a "King" acknowledging his stature in world cricket, and voiced enthusiasm about the prospect of seeing the prolific right-hander feature in the tournament. "He is King Babar Azam, as they call him. He's been such a world-class performer for such a long time. Any competition featuring a player like Babar Azam benefits not only the Sixers, as you said, but the tournament as a whole," Billings said. "I've played a lot against him, and I'd much rather have him on my side than against me. I'm definitely looking forward to those Sydney derbies again," he added. The 34-year-old cricketer has been a regular feature in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) since 2022, representing Lahore Qalandars. He also praised the depth of talent in Pakistan cricket. "I've played a lot of PSL cricket. The talent they have—the talent pool—is off the charts," he noted. Babar's signing has already created a buzz in the cricketing



world. Former England captain Michael Vaughan also reacted to the news with a brief yet impactful post on X (formerly Twitter), calling Babar's signing a "Great signing." It is pertinent to mention that the Sydney Sixers officially announced Babar's signing on Friday, marking one of the most high-profile acquisitions in BBL history. The 30-year-old batter, who has scored over 10,000 international runs across formats, is widely regarded as one of the most consistent and prolific performers in world cricket. Under BBL regulations, each team is allowed to sign one international player ahead of the official BBL 15 Draft, scheduled for Thursday, June 19. The Sixers capitalised on this opportunity to secure the services of the Pakistan maestro. A key figure in Pakistan's national side for more than a decade, Babar captained the team in all three formats from 2019 to 2024. Under his leadership, Pakistan reached the semi-finals of the 2021 ICC T20 World Cup and finished as runners-up in the 2022 edition. Sharing his excitement in a video message released by the franchise, the former skipper expressed his enthusiasm for joining the Sixers and playing alongside Australian greats. "Hey guys, super pumped to be joining the Sydney Sixers. Can't wait to share the dressing room with my favorite batter, Steve Smith, and world-class bowler, Josh Hazlewood," Babar said.



## Briefs

## India warns citizens to leave Tehran as some flee Iran

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday urged its citizens to leave Tehran, while some nationals have already fled across the Iranian border as the country comes under Israeli bombardment. With Israel vowing to keep up its attacks four days after launching its assault on Iran, which has launched retaliatory strikes, New Delhi said Indian students have already left Tehran. "Residents who are self sufficient in terms of transport have also been advised to move out of the city in view of the developing situation," the foreign ministry said in a statement. The warning came after Israel's ally US President Donald Trump said "everyone" should "immediately" leave the Iranian capital, which is home to nearly 10 million New Delhi said "some Indians have been facilitated to leave Iran through the border with Armenia," hundreds of kilometers (miles) northwest of Tehran. The foreign ministry did not detail how many of its citizens have been affected in Iran, where there are around 10,000 Indians according to government data last year. Thousands of Indians are also in Israel, and New Delhi has issued warnings for its citizens there to "stay vigilant.—APP

## Despite law, US TikTok ban likely to remain on hold

SAN FRANCISCO, United States: US President Donald Trump is widely expected to extend the Thursday deadline for TikTok to find a non-Chinese buyer or face a ban in the United States. It would be the third time Trump put off enforcing a federal law requiring its sale or ban, which was to take effect the day before his January inauguration. "I have a little warm spot in my heart for TikTok," Trump said in an NBC News interview in early May. "If it needs an extension, I would be willing to give it an extension. Trump said a group of purchasers is ready to pay TikTok owner ByteDance "a lot of money" for the video-clip-sharing sensation's US operations. Trump has repeatedly downplayed risks that TikTok is in danger, saying he remains confident of finding a buyer for the app's US business. The president is "just not motivated to do anything about TikTok," said independent analyst Rob Enderle. "Unless they get on his bad side, TikTok is probably going to be in pretty good shape." Trump had long supported a ban or divestment, but reversed his position and vowed to defend the platform after coming to believe it helped him win young voters' support in the November election. "Trump's not really doing great on his election promises," Enderle maintained. "This could be one that he can actually deliver on.—Agencies

## Nigerian state signs peace pact with criminal gangs

KANO, Nigeria: Authorities in Nigeria's northwestern Katsina state struck a peace deal at the weekend with criminal gangs to try to end years of violence, a government official said Monday. Katsina is one of several states in northwestern and central Nigeria terrorized by criminal gangs that the locals refer to as bandits. The gangs raid villages, kill and abduct residents as well as torch homes after looting them. The gangs maintain camps in a huge forest straddling Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna states in the northwest region and Niger state in the country's central zone and have carried out mass kidnappings of students from schools in recent years. On Saturday, a dozen bandit kingpins met with local officials and community leaders in the town of Danmusa, where they renounced violence and pledged to turn a new leaf, Nasiru Mu'azu, Katsina state internal commissioner said.—APP

## Exporters urge PM to save value-added industry

SOS call to the PM over budget wreckage, FTR removal, EFS distortion

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan's \$11 billion value-added export-oriented industry—contributing nearly one-third of the country's total exports—has issued a strong SOS appeal to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, warning that recent budgetary measures are set to derail the export-oriented sectors at a critical time. In a joint statement, Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA), in collaboration with the top export-oriented associations including PHMA, SIMAP, PSGMEA, PGMEA, PLGMEA, PCSUMEA and Sialkot Chamber of Commerce, demanded the immediate revival of the Final Tax Regime (FTR) and restoration of the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) to its original structure. The appeal was endorsed by industry stalwarts including PRGMEA Chairman Dr. Muhammad Ayyaz Uddin and former Central Chairman Sohail A. Sheikh,

Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Ikram ul Haq, PSGMEA Chairman Khawaja Masud Akhtar—whose company's footballs are used in FIFA World Cup tournaments — SIMAP Chairman Zeeshan Tariq, PLGMEA Chairman Syed Ahtisham Mazhar, PHMA Chairman Abdul Hameed and former chairman Khawaja Mushraf, PGMEA Chairman Anas Raheel Barlas, PCSUMEA Chairman Muhammad Jamal Bhutta, Majid Bhutta, Ansar Aziz Puri, Sheikh Luqman Amin and other prominent exporters and business leaders. They expressed deep concern that despite government slogan of "export-led growth," the reality on the ground is entirely opposite. The Government always talks about promoting exports, but in practice, no department seems to be on board. They pointed out that in the entire budget speech, the finance minister uttered the word "export" only once — and that too in a negative context while imposing duties on imported yarn

under EFS. Addressing the Prime Minister directly, the joint statement said: "Honourable Prime Minister, we urge you to intervene immediately. Please convene an emergent meeting with the leading export associations and the Sialkot Chamber before this budget is passed. If this situation persists, Pakistan's most reliable foreign exchange earning sector will suffer irreparable damage." They stressed that in such a policy environment, the government's vision "URAAAN PAKISTAN" of taking exports to \$100 billion is simply not possible. The industry leaders were clear: "We're not asking subsidies, exemptions, or special treatment—just a level playing field to compete globally. Unfortunately, the current policies have drastically raised the cost of doing business and severely impacted ease of doing business. Work must begin on a war footing to restore confidence and streamline processes. International buyers are actively

seeking long-term clarity and stability in the EFS framework, as Pakistan stands at a strategic moment to attract business being diverted from China. This opportunity must not be missed. They said the abolition of FTR and the breakdown of EFS have created chaos in the industry. The Final Tax Regime, which once offered a simple and predictable tax mechanism, has now been replaced by complex procedures, audits, and refund hurdles, particularly hurting small and medium (SMEs) exporters. Meanwhile, the EFS—once a vital mechanism for importing essential raw materials not produced locally, or required by buyers to use their nominated suppliers to meet international quality standards, such as specialized materials and technical fabrics — has been bogged down by unnecessary conditions, limiting access to critical inputs and undermining export competitiveness. Business leaders emphasize that it is time for Pakistan to strategically move

beyond cotton and adopt a more diversified, innovation-driven approach to value-added apparel exports. "We don't have time for delays and paperwork when international buyers are waiting. These policy changes are making us uncompetitive, increasing costs, and pushing us out of global markets," they said. The result, they warned, will be cancelled export orders, closed factories, and mass unemployment. The exporters reiterated that restoring the original FTR and EFS mechanisms will not cost the government anything but will directly help grow exports and attract more foreign exchange. This is not just about industry survival—it's about Pakistan's economic stability. We stand united and ready to engage, but we need urgent and serious action from the government. "Pakistan is at a crossroads. With the right policy support, our exporters can help drive growth, jobs, and stability. But the clock is ticking—and the damage is already being felt."

## Thailand to prepare planes to evacuate nationals from Israel

DNA

BANGKOK: The Thai government has ordered its military to prepare planes to evacuate citizens from Israel and Iran, a spokesman said Tuesday, as the two sides exchanged missile fire for a fifth day. There are an estimated 40,000 Thais currently living in Israel, most working on farms under a government labour scheme, and around 300 nationals living in Iran. "We are ready to evacuate people and have coordinated with the military to prepare planes to bring them home from Israel and Iran," government spokesperson Jirayu Houngsub told reporters after a cabinet meeting. Jirayu said Thai embassies in both countries have prepared evacuation plans for nationals. The Thai embassy in Tehran announced on its official Facebook page that it had set up a temporary shelter for citizens outside the capital.—APP

## Leaders of UAE, Turkiye discuss regional developments during phone call

DUBAI: UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed received a phone call from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday during which they discussed regional developments. Sheikh Mohammed and Erdogan discussed continued cooperation between both of their countries and joint action in all areas that serve the mutual interests. They also reviewed and exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual concern, most notably developments in the Middle East and the repercussions of the Israeli military targeting of Iran on regional security. They also stressed the need to intensify efforts to de-escalate tensions, and also affirmed their countries' support for promoting regional peace and stability.—APP

## Black boxes from India plane crash to ascertain cause of the disaster

NEW DELHI: Investigators in India are studying the black boxes of a Boeing 787 Dreamliner after recovering them from the aircraft wreckage to ascertain the cause of last week's plane crash that left at least 270 people dead. The black boxes will provide cockpit conversations and data related to the plane's engine and control settings to investigators and help them in determining the cause of the crash. The London-bound Air India aircraft, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, crashed on a medical college hostel soon after taking off from the western city of Ahmedabad. Only one passenger survived the crash, while 241 people on board and 29 on the ground were killed in one of India's worst aviation disasters in decades. Experts from India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau are probing the crash with assistance from the UK, the US and officials from Boeing. Black box data is crucial Amit Singh, a former pilot and an aviation expert, said the recovery of the flight data and cockpit voice recorders, or black boxes, are crucial to piece together the sequence of events. The cockpit voice recorder records pilots' conversation, emergency alarms and any distress signal made before a crash. The plane's digital flight data recorder stores information related to engine and control settings. Both devices are designed to survive a crash. "The data will reveal everything," Singh said, adding that the technical details could be corroborated by the cockpit voice recorder that would help investigators know of any communication between air traffic control and the pilots. India's aviation regulatory body has said the aircraft made a mayday call before the crash.—APP



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Bangladesh, Md. Iqbal Hussain Khan, today called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. The DPM/FM underscored the importance Pakistan attaches to its brotherly relations with Bangladesh. Appreciating the positive trajectory of bilateral ties, he emphasized the need to further expand cooperation- especially in trade, tourism, & people-to-people exchanges.—DNA

## WHO says Gaza health care at breaking point as fuel runs out

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Tuesday pleaded for fuel to be allowed into Gaza to keep its remaining hospitals running, warning the Palestinian territory's health system was at "breaking point." "For over 100 days, no fuel has entered Gaza and attempts to retrieve stocks from evacuation zones have been denied," said Rik Peepkorn, the WHO's representative in the Palestinian territories. "Combined with critical supply shortages, this is pushing the health system closer to the brink of collapse." Peepkorn said only 17 of Gaza's 36 hospitals were currently minimally to partially functional. They have a total of around 1,500 beds — around 45 percent fewer than before the conflict began. He said all hospitals and primary health centers in north Gaza were currently out of service. In Rafah in southern Gaza, health services are provided through the Red Cross field hospital and two partially-functioning medical points. Speaking from Jerusalem, he said the 17 partially functioning hospitals and seven field hospitals were barely running on a minimum amount of daily fuel and "will soon have none left." "Without fuel, all levels of care will cease, leading to more preventable deaths and suffering." Hospitals were already switching between generators and batteries to power ventilators, dialysis machines and incubators, he said, and without fuel, ambulances cannot run and supplies cannot be delivered to hospitals. Furthermore, field hospitals are entirely reliant on generators, and without electricity, the cold chain for keeping vaccines would fail. The war was triggered by an unprecedented Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, according to official Israeli figures.—APP

## Iraq treads a tightrope to avoid spillover from Israel-Iran conflict

BAGHDAD: In Iraqi airspace, Iranian missiles and drones have crossed paths with Israeli warplanes, forcing Baghdad to step up efforts to avoid being drawn into the region's latest conflict. But with Baghdad both an ally of Iran and a strategic partner of the United States, Israel's closest supporter, it may struggle to avoid the fighting spreading to its territory. "There is a sizable risk of a spillover escalation in Iraq," said political analyst Sajad Jiyad. "Iraqis have a right to be worried," he added. With warnings of all-out regional war intensifying following Israel's surprise assault on Iran last week, fears are growing over an intervention by Iran-backed Iraqi factions, which have been calling for the withdrawal of US troops deployed in Iraq as part of an anti-jihadist coalition. A senior Iraqi security official told AFP on condition of anonymity that among pro-Iran actors "everyone is cooperating with the government to keep Iraq away from conflict." But Jiyad warned that if the US supports Israel's attacks, it "may lead to pro-Iran elements inside Iraq targeting US troops" or other American interests like the embassy in Baghdad or the consulate in Irbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdistan region. This could lead to the US and Israel taking retaliatory actions within Iraq, Jiyad added. Iraq, which has been for years navigating a delicate balancing act between Tehran and Washington, has long been a fertile ground for proxy battles. In 2020, during US President Donald Trump's first term, Washington killed Iran's esteemed Revolutionary Guards general Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad. Most recently, amid the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, Iraq was on the brink of being drawn into the conflict after pro-Iran factions launched numerous attacks on US troops in the region, as well as mostly failed attacks on Israel, in support of Palestinians. Washington retaliated by hitting the armed groups. In recent days, Baghdad has been working diplomatic channels to prevent the latest violence from spreading onto its turf. It has called on Washington to prevent Israeli jets from using Iraqi airspace to carry out attacks against Iran. It also asked Iran not to strike US targets in its territory, and was promised "positive things," according to a senior Iraqi official. Israel's use of Iraq's airspace has angered pro-Iran groups, who accused US troops of allowing it. Powerful armed faction Kataeb Hezbollah stressed that Iran does not need "military support," but it said that the group is "closely monitoring" the US military in the region. It warned that if Washington intervenes in the war, the group "will act directly against its interests and bases in the region without hesitation." A US official urged the Iraqi government to "protect diplomatic missions, as well as US military personnel." "We believe Iraq will be more stable and sovereign by becoming energy independent and distancing itself from Iran's malign influence," the official told AFP, referring to Iraq's dependency on gas imports from Iran. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, warned that Iran-backed groups "continue to engage in violent and destabilising activities in Iraq." Israel's surprise attack on Iran targeted military and nuclear facilities and killed many top commanders and atomic scientists. Iran responded by unleashing barrages of missile strikes on Israel. Tamer Badawi, an expert on Iraqi armed groups, said "the more Iran struggles to sustain its firepower against Israel, the likelier it becomes that Iraqi paramilitary actors will be drawn in." For now, "Iran is trying to avoid collateral damage to its network by keeping its regional allies on standby. But this posture could shift," he added.—Agencies

## How Israel used spies, smuggled drones and AI to hobble Iran

JERUSALEM: Israel stunned and hobbled Iran last week when it pulled off an intelligence and military operation years in the making that struck high-level targets with precision. Guided by spies and artificial intelligence, the Israeli military unleashed a nighttime fusillade of warplanes and armed drones smuggled into Iran to quickly incapacitate many of its air defenses and missile systems. With greater freedom to fly over Iran, Israel bombarded key nuclear sites and killed top generals and scientists. By the time Iran mustered a response hours later, its ability to retaliate — already weakened by past Israeli strikes — was greatly diminished. This account is based on conversations with 10 current and former Israeli intelligence and military officials, some of whom spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss

clandestine operations. It was not possible to independently verify some of their claims. But the former head of research at Israel's spy agency, the Mossad, confirmed the basic contours of the attack, saying she had inside knowledge of how it was planned and executed "This attack is the culmination of years of work by the Mossad to target Iran's nuclear program," said Sima Shine, the former Mossad research director who is now an analyst at the Institute for National Security Studies. Israel's element of surprise was enhanced by Iranian officials' apparent assumption that Israel wouldn't attack while talks over its rapidly advancing nuclear program were ongoing with the US. A sixth round of talks had been planned for last Sunday in Oman, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu activated "Operation Rising Lion"

on Friday — after his country first notified President Donald Trump. Netanyahu has for years said neutralizing Iran's nuclear program was vital for Israel's security, and Israel had previously taken steps to set back Iran's ability to enrich uranium to weapons grade. But Netanyahu said a more aggressive attack proved necessary, as Iran kept advancing its enrichment program despite US diplomatic efforts and warnings from UN watchdogs. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has repeatedly called for Israel's destruction. Iran's political leaders say their nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, though it was the only country without the bomb to enrich uranium close to weapons-grade levels. Smuggling drones into Iran

The Mossad and the military worked together for at least three years to lay the operational groundwork, according to a former intelligence officer who said he had knowledge of the attack. This person spoke on condition of anonymity given the sensitivity of the subject. The attack built off knowledge Israel gained during a wave of airstrikes last October, which "highlighted the weakness of Iranian air defenses," said Naysan Rafati, an Iran analyst at the International Crisis Group. To further diminish Iranian air defenses and missile systems at the start of last week's attack, Mossad agents had smuggled precision weapons into Iran that were prepositioned to strike from close range, according to two current security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the missions. Those weapons included small, armed drones, which agents snuck into the country in vehicles, according to the former intelligence officer. Mossad agents stationed weapons close to Iranian

surface-to-air missile sites, Shine said. The agency works with a mix of people, both locals and Israelis, she said. Using AI and human intelligence to select targets To analyze information gathered from various sources, Israel used the latest artificial-intelligence, or AI, technology, said an intelligence officer involved with selecting individuals and sites to target. He said AI was used to help Israelis quickly sift through troves of data they had obtained. That effort began last October according to the officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media; it was one month before Netanyahu said he had ordered the attack plans. An investigation by The Associated Press earlier this year uncovered that the Israeli military uses US-made AI models in war to sift through intelligence and intercept communications to learn the movements of its enemies.—Agencies



## Briefs

## European powers call on Iran to return to nuclear talks

PARIS: Top diplomats from Britain, France and Germany have called on Iran to quickly return to the negotiating table over its nuclear programme, a French diplomatic source said on Tuesday as the conflict between Israel and the Islamic republic raged. The countries' foreign ministers spoke late Monday with the EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas and "called on Iran to return, as soon as possible and without preconditions, to the negotiating table" over its nuclear programme, the source said on condition of anonymity. France's Jean-Noel Barrot, Britain's David Lammy and Germany's Johann Wadephul also "called on Iran to avoid any headlong rush against Western interests, any regional expansion and any nuclear escalation" such as non-cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the source said. The comments came after US President Donald Trump abruptly left a G7 summit in Canada a day early, without spelling out a reason. Before his departure, the leaders of the club of industrial democracies – Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States – had called for "de-escalation" and stated their conviction that Iran "can never have a nuclear weapon". – Agencies

## SBP expects profit to hit Rs2.4tr

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has said that it expects profit to reach Rs2.4 trillion in outgoing fiscal year 2024-25 ending in June, The News reported on Tuesday. Speaking to analysts at a briefing following the rate cut decision the bank is on track to meet the government's estimated target of Rs2.4 trillion. The central bank's profit projection is lower than the record profit of Rs3.42 trillion in the last fiscal year (FY24) due to higher interest rates and exchange gains. According to the SBP, its profits will be transferred to the government after an audit and approval from the board in the early fiscal year 2026 (FY26). This amount has been validated by the SBP and is included in the FY26 budget. Following the amendment to the SBP Act in 2022, profits are now transferred annually instead of quarterly. The SBP, on Monday, kept the policy rate unchanged at 11%, flagging the risk of accelerating inflation amid rising geopolitical tensions. It warned that the conflict between Israel and Iran added uncertainty to Pakistan's economic outlook.

## Flights with evacuees from Israel reach Slovakia

DNA

TEL AVIV: Flights carrying evacuees from Israel has reached Slovakia and the Czech Republic amid the war between Iran and Israel, authorities said on Tuesday, making these countries among the first to get their citizens out of the Middle East. Slovak authorities said that the first evacuation flight with 73 people, including 25 Slovak tourists and five family members of Slovak diplomats working in Tel Aviv, had arrived in the capital Bratislava late on Monday. Foreign Minister Juraj Blanar said Slovakia had also helped bring citizens of other countries to Europe, including 15 Poles, 14 Czechs, nine Austrians, two Slovenians and one citizen each of Estonia, Spain and Malaysia. "Our partners are contacting us and we are preparing another flight on Tuesday, which should include citizens of the Slovak Republic, as well as citizens of the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Latvia, and France," Blanar said.

## Russian strikes kill 14, wound dozens in Kyiv

Moscow has kept up its attacks on Ukraine despite efforts by the United States to broker a ceasefire



KYIV: A Russian attack on Ukraine killed at least 14 people and wounded dozens in the capital, authorities said Tuesday, with more wounded reported in the Odesa and Chernigiv regions. Interior Minister Igor Klymenko wrote on Telegram: "27 locations in different districts of the capital came under enemy fire tonight". He added that "residential buildings, educational institutions and critical infrastructure facilities" had all been hit. "The death toll has risen to 14

people. As of now, 44 people have been injured in Kyiv," Klymenko said. He added that six others had been injured in Odesa and another in Chernigiv. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko had earlier reported the death of a US citizen in a Russian attack on the capital's Solomiansky district. "During the attack on Kyiv... a 62-year-old US citizen died in a house opposite to the place where medics were providing assistance to the injured,"

Klitschko said on Telegram.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, slammed the new Russian strikes on "residential buildings in Kyiv," saying on Telegram that Moscow was "continuing its war against civilians". Moscow has kept up its attacks on Ukraine despite efforts by the United States to broker a ceasefire. Talks have stalled. Moscow has rejected the "unconditional" truce demanded by Kyiv and its Eu-

ropean allies, while Ukraine has dismissed Russia's demands as "ultimatums".

On Monday, Zelensky had said he hoped to speak with his US counterpart Donald Trump on the sidelines of the G7 summit. But the Ukrainian leader was expected to arrive at the G7 after the departure of the American president, who cut short his stay in the Canadian Rockies as Israel pounded Iran. Meanwhile, Russia's security chief Sergei Shoigu arrived on Tuesday in North Korea to meet leader Kim Jong Un for a second time in less than two weeks, Russian news agencies reported.

North Korea has become one of Russia's main allies during Moscow's more than three-year-long Ukraine offensive, sending thousands of troops to help the Kremlin oust Ukrainian forces from its Kursk border region. Pyongyang is also arming Russia, according to various reports.

Shoigu, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, "arrived in Pyongyang on special orders from Russian President Vladimir Putin to exchange with North Korean officials in the framework of putting in place the agreements reached during his last visit on June 4", news agencies quoted a council statement as saying. During the early June meetings, when Shoigu met with Kim and senior military officials, the two sides said they wanted to expand and develop Russia-North Korea ties into "the powerful and comprehensive relations of strategic partnership", according to North Korea's state news agency KCNA. Shoigu also visited North Korea in March. Russia and North Korea signed a sweeping military deal last year, including a mutual defence clause, during a rare visit by Putin to the nuclear-armed North. – Agencies

## China accuses Trump of 'pouring oil' on Iran, Israel conflict

BEIJING: China on Tuesday accused President Donald Trump of "pouring oil" on the mounting conflict between Iran and Israel, after the US leader warned Tehran residents to "immediately evacuate".

Following decades of enmity and a prolonged shadow war, Israel launched a surprise aerial campaign last week against targets across Iran, saying it aimed to prevent its arch-foe from acquiring atomic weapons – an ambition Tehran denies. The sudden flare-up in hostilities has sparked fears of a wider conflict, with Trump urging Iran back to the negotiating table after Israel's attacks derailed ongoing nuclear talks. Trump also issued an extraordinary warning on his Truth Social platform: "Everyone should immediately evacuate Tehran!" Asked about Trump's remarks, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said: "Fanning the flames, pouring oil, making threats and mounting pressure will not help to promote the de-escalation of the situation, but will only intensify and widen the conflict. "The Chinese side calls on all relevant parties, especially countries with special influence on Israel, to shoulder their responsibilities, take immediate measures to de-escalate tensions, and prevent the conflict from expanding and spreading." China's embassy in Israel on Tuesday also urged its citizens to leave the country "as soon as possible", after Israel and Iran traded heavy strikes. "The Chinese mission in Israel reminds Chinese nationals to leave the country as soon as possible via land border crossings, on the precondition that they can guarantee their personal safety," the embassy said in a statement on WeChat. "It is recommended to depart in the direction of Jordan," it added. – Agencies

## Countering hate speech key to global harmony

"To drown out the voices of hate, we need partnerships at every level: among governments, civil society, private companies and religious and community leaders," the UN chief said

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for "urgent and collective response" to the rise in hate speech, disinformation and violent extremism, saying such narratives fracture societies and endanger peace and stability. "All of this is targeting people of different faiths, including Muslims, and also individuals based on race, gender, and nationality," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told a high-level event marking International Day for Countering Hate Speech. He said that Monday's meeting, organized by Morocco and the Office on Genocide Prevention, served as a reminder of "our shared responsibility to counter intolerance, uphold dignity, and safeguard pluralism." In a message, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called hate speech a "poison in the well of society." Ethnic and religious minorities, he said, often bear the brunt – facing discrimination, exclusion and harm. "To drown out the voices of hate, we need partnerships at every level: among governments, civil society, private companies and religious and community leaders," the UN chief said. "We need to counter toxic narratives with positive messaging and empower people to recognize, reject and stand up to hate speech. The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech guides the way." In his remarks, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar, the Pakistani envoy said, "The surge in Islamophobia—through discriminatory laws, defamation of religious symbols, and orchestrated vilification are particularly alarming trends." – Agencies



ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari visited the Air Headquarters and met with the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Babar Sindhu. – DNA

## Starving people' in besieged Gaza still being killed

UNITED NATIONS: Israeli occupation forces killed at least 40 people, half of them near an aid distribution site operated by the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation on Monday, the war-shattered enclave's health ministry said, as U.N. officials denounced Israeli-backed aid delivery arrangements. Medical workers 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. Philippe Lazzarini, the head of UNRWA, stated Monday that "starving people" are still being killed in Gaza, and that the current aid distribution system as a "death trap". He cited reports of mass casualties among starving civilians at distribution points, including injuries and deaths from gunshots.

"This system forces desperate people to walk long distances to access aid, often to areas heavily impacted by bombardment, excluding those unable to travel or living far away," Lazzarini said. He argued that aid deliveries and

distribution should be conducted by the UN and UNRWA for safety and effectiveness. Call to lift the siege:

In this regard, the UNRWA chief urged Israel to lift the siege on Gaza and allow safe, unhindered access for humanitarian aid to prevent mass starvation. In Geneva, the UN rights chief issued his sharpest criticism toward the suffering inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza by Israel, saying: "Israel's means and methods of warfare are inflicting horrifying, unconscionable suffering on Palestinians in Gaza." High Commissioner Volker Turk, the UN rights chief, accused Israel of "weaponizing food and blocking life-saving aid," and called for "immediate, impartial investigations into deadly attacks on desperate civilians trying to reach food distribution centers." He expressed alarm at the "disturbing, dehumanizing rhetoric from senior Israeli government officials," warning that such language is "reminiscent of the gravest of crimes." Turk also criticized Israel's restrictions on press access in Gaza, stating that its refusal "to allow international journalists to report from Gaza has helped its armed forces and Hamas to avoid transparency and accountability." – Agencies

## Nawaz 'fully backs hybrid setup'

PML-N supremo has no reservations about role of the establishment in national affairs

## MONITORING REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif is reportedly fully satisfied with the current political arrangement – commonly referred to as the "hybrid system" – and has no reservations about the role of the establishment in national affairs. According to PML-N sources, Nawaz Sharif, while largely staying away from the media and direct political activity, remains a strong supporter of PM Shehbaz Sharif-led federal government and the Punjab administration under his daughter, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. "Nawaz Sharif has no issues with the current system. In fact, he understands its boundaries and accepts its functioning without complaint," a senior party source said, adding that rumours suggesting Nawaz's unease with the outside influence in governance are "entirely baseless."

Despite being less politically visible than in the past, largely due to personal reasons, Nawaz is occasionally seen attending official meetings of the Punjab government and holds sessions with selected foreign dignitaries and diplomats at his residence, often accompanied by Maryam Nawaz. Sources said he frequently shares political advice with her to strengthen her leadership. The PML-N leader is said to be pleased with the performance of both Shehbaz and Maryam, and does not interfere in day-to-day federal matters. "He trusts Shehbaz completely and is content with his governance," a party official stated.

During the 2024 general elections, although the PML-N campaign slogan focused on making Nawaz prime minister for a fourth time, a source said that Nawaz had already informed his closest ones that he had no intention of assuming the office again.

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