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## Iran has 'legitimate' right to self-defence, says Turkish President

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## Digital Sales tax stays with provinces: Dar

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## Govt committed to promotion of sports: Rana

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### Two Iranian centrifuge production sites destroyed

"Both sites were previously under IAEA monitoring and verification as part of the JCPOA"

APP

VIENNA: Two buildings housing manufacturing sites for centrifuge components for Iran's nuclear programme have been destroyed at Karaj, just outside the capital Tehran, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Wednesday. The UN agency's announcement came hours after Israel's military said it had carried out a series of air strikes in and around Tehran. "The IAEA has information that two centrifuge production facilities in Iran, the TESA Karaj workshop and the Tehran Research Center, were hit," said the IAEA in a post on X. "Both sites were previously under IAEA monitoring and verification as part of the JCPOA," it added, referring to a 2015 deal on Iran's nuclear programme. In another strike on a site in Tehran, "one building was hit where advanced centrifuge rotors were manufactured and tested", the agency added in a post on X.

### Israeli army says one of its drones downed over Iran

APP

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military said Wednesday that one of its drones had been downed while operating over Iran, the first such loss it has acknowledged since the start of hostilities last week. An army statement said the drone had gone down in Iran after being hit by a surface-to-air missile. "No injuries were reported and there is no risk of an information breach," it added. Iranian state television broadcast pictures of the wreckage of what it said was an armed Israeli Air Force Hermes drone in the central city of Isfahan. The Israeli air force has been launching daily raids on Iran since last Friday, with the country targeting missile sites in particular along with other military and nuclear-related sites.

### Careem to end service in Pak from July 18

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Careem will suspend its ride-hailing service in Pakistan from July 18, 2025, marking the end of a decade-long chapter that helped shape the country's digital mobility landscape, the company's CEO Mudassar Sheikh said on Wednesday. In a LinkedIn post, Sheikh said the decision to exit the market was an "incredibly difficult" one, driven by Pakistan's macro-economic challenges, stiffening competition, and shifting global capital priorities. "It's the end of an iconic chapter - one built with purpose, grit and a ton of relentless hustle," he wrote. Careem, which launched its services in Pakistan in 2015, quickly became a pioneer of app-based ride-hailing in the country, creating thousands of jobs and bringing digital payment and mobility solutions into the mainstream. Sheikh recalled the early days of resistance to the idea of women travelling with strangers and using smartphones for daily commuting - challenges the company overcame through what he described as its "brilliant and fearless" Pakistan team.

### Israel 'attacks' N. sites

# Iran uses hypersonic missiles

Iranian Supreme leader Khamenei vows 'no mercy' as Israel 'running low' on defensive missile interceptors

AGENCIES

TEHRAN: Israel said it struck a nuclear site near Tehran on Wednesday, while Iran said it fired hypersonic missiles as the arch foes traded fire for a sixth day. Hours after US President Donald Trump demanded Iran's surrender, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed his country would show "no mercy" towards Israel's leadership. Trump insists the United States has played no part in ally Israel's bombing campaign, but also warned his patience was wearing thin. The long-range blitz began Friday, when Israel launched a massive bombing campaign that prompted Iran to respond with missiles and drones. After the Israeli military issued a warning for civilians to leave one district of Tehran for their safety, Israeli warplanes hit the capital early Wednesday. "More than 50 Israeli Air Force fighter jets... carried out a series of air strikes in the Tehran area over the past few hours," the Israeli military said, adding that several weapons manufacturing facilities were hit. "As part of the broad effort to disrupt Iran's nuclear weapons development programme, a centrifuge production facility in Tehran was targeted." Centrifuges are vital for uranium enrichment, the sensitive process that can produce

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### Putin eyes peace making role in war

APP

WARSAW: Vladimir Putin is eyeing the conflict between Israel and Iran as an opportunity to thrust himself to the forefront of the international stage, more than three years into his invasion of Ukraine. The Russian president has pitched himself as a possible mediator - though Moscow's closeness to Iran and Russia's invasion of Ukraine raise doubts about what kind of role he can play, experts say. The assault on Ukraine and the war in Gaza have strained Moscow's traditionally good relations with Israel, home to a large Russian-born community. At the same time, Russia has deepened military ties with Iran. But while Moscow was quick to condemn Israel's strikes on Iran last Friday, Putin also wasted little time phoning

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### Amidst Israel-Iran issue

# G7 summit minus Trump rallies behind Ukraine

But the G7 summit stopped short of issuing a joint statement, unlike in past years under Trump's predecessor Joe Biden when the club of major industrial democracies denounced Russian "aggression"

APP

KANANASKIS: Group of Seven leaders on Tuesday vowed greater support for Ukraine but stopped short of joint condemnation of Russia for its growing attacks, at a summit missing Donald Trump. The US president had been due to speak at the G7 summit with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with whom he has had a volatile relationship, but flew back Monday over the Israel-Iran conflict. Zelenskyy met the remaining leaders at a remote lodge in the Canadian Rockies hours after Russia hit Kyiv with one of the worst bombardments since it invaded in February 2022, killing at least 10 people in the capital. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney welcomed Zelenskyy and announced Can\$2 billion (\$1.47bn) of military support, including drones and helicopters, for Ukraine. But the G7 summit stopped short of issuing a joint statement, unlike in past years under

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### India and Canada return ambassadors

APP

KANANASKIS: India and Canada agreed Tuesday to return ambassadors to each other's capitals, turning the page on a bitter spat over an assassination as Canada's new leader welcomed counterpart Narendra Modi. Prime Minister Mark Carney, who took office in March, invited Modi to the Canadian Rockies as a guest at the summit of the Group of Seven major economies. Carney's predecessor Justin Trudeau last year publicly accused India of involvement in the assassination of a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil and expelled

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# IHC judges transfer case enters into significant phase

Advocate General Punjab Amjad Pervez, Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder's counsel Idrees Ashraf appeared before the court

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Hearing of the petitions regarding transfer of judges to Islamabad High Court entered into a significant phase as Advocate General Punjab concluded his arguments and the parties expressed to conclude their rebuttal in a short while. The Court then adjourned further hearing for tomorrow. The five member Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, was hearing the petitions against transfer of judges to Islamabad High Court. Advocate General Punjab Amjad Pervez, Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder's counsel Idrees Ashraf appeared before the court. Advocate General Amjad Pervez presented a historical and constitutional background on the issue of judicial transfers and seniority. He cited the 1955 One Unit formation under the Governor General's order, where multiple high courts were merged into a single court while retaining judges' previous service records and determining their seniority based on appointment dates. He further

explained that after the dissolution of the One Unit in 1970, judges were reassigned to various high courts while preserving their past service. Similarly, when Sindh and Balochistan high courts were separated in 1976, judges' seniority was again maintained during the transition. However, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan remarked that the present case differs significantly as no new court was created nor was any high court dissolved. He said the IHC judge transfers do not involve such fundamental institutional changes, making past precedents less directly applicable. Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan asked whether a judge's transfer under Article 200 of the Constitution is considered permanent or temporary. The Attorney General responded that such transfers are permanent. Amjad Pervez elaborated the duration of transfers and the constitutional authority of the President in such matters. Justice Shakeel Ahmed also noted that the transfer summary lacked any mention of "public interest." Pervez responded that the term "public interest" is not mentioned in Article 200 either. After the Advocate General concluded

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WAH CANTT: President Asif Ali Zardari being briefed during his visit to Pakistan Ordnance Factories Wah, on 18th June, 2025. - DNA

### Russia fears another loss in Middle East

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: When Israel launched Operation Rising Lion, officials in Russia described the current escalation in the Middle East as "alarming" and "dangerous." Still, Russian media were quick to stress the potential positives for Moscow. A rise in global oil prices which is forecast to boost Russia's coffers. The distraction of global attention away from Russia's war on Ukraine. "Kyiv has been forgotten" was a headline in Moskovsky Komsomlets And if the Kremlin's offer to mediate in the conflict was accepted, Russia could portray itself as a key player in the Middle East and as a peacemaker, despite its actions in Ukraine. However, the longer Israel's military operation goes on, the greater the realisation that Russia has much to lose from current events.

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### Trump's Iran dilemma exposes bitter split

DNA

WASHINGTON: The dilemma of whether the US should join Israel in attacking Iran, or stay out of the offensive altogether, has exposed divisions among US President Donald Trump's supporters. The Republican president reportedly is considering helping target the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities, following a meeting with his national security advisers in the White House Situation Room on Tuesday. On the campaign trail,

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### PM Shehbaz says

# Iran-Israel conflict poses threat to regional, global peace

The prime minister reiterated Pakistan's complete solidarity with brotherly country Iran and its people against Israeli aggression and called upon the international community to make efforts for ensuring immediate ceasefire in the ongoing armed conflict

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday termed the regional situation very alarming due to escalated armed conflict between Iran and Israel and said it posed threat not only to the regional but also to the global peace.

The prime minister reiterated Pakistan's complete solidarity with brotherly country Iran and its people against Israeli aggression and called upon the international community to make efforts for ensuring immediate ceasefire in the ongoing armed conflict. Addressing a meeting of the cabinet which was telecast on national TV channels, the prime minister said that Pakistan had strongly condemned the Israeli aggression

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### Field Marshal Asim Munir meets President Trump

DNA

WASHINGTON: Field Marshal Asim Munir met President Donald Trump over lunch at the White House, in what is being seen as a 'positive step' towards the enhancement of bilateral relations between Islamabad and Washington. The rare one-on-one meeting between Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Munir and Trump is being held at the White House Cabinet Room.

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## Punjab presented historic budget: Abrar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League (N) Member of National Assembly Malik Abrar has said that the Punjab government presented the best budget in history. He has appealed to Federal Finance Minister Aurangzeb Khan to immediately withdraw the 18 percent tax imposed on solar. Talking to journalists outside the Parliament House on Wednesday, Malik Abrar said, "Despite being a part of the government benches, I am appealing to the Finance Minister in the public interest. I had also taken the same stand during my speech in the National Assembly that tax on solar should be withdrawn so that relief can be given to the poor people. He further said that solar energy is an important means of environmental protection and dealing with the energy crisis; therefore, tax should not be imposed on it, and the poor people who are benefiting should get it in any case. He said that he paid tribute to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for presenting the best budget of Punjab province.—APP

## CM reviews progress on Nawaz Sharif IT city project

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, chairing a meeting here on Wednesday, reviewed progress on the Nawaz Sharif IT City project, Punjab's flagship initiative for technological advancement. During the meeting, it was highlighted that the Nawaz Sharif IT City has become the first project in Punjab to be formally approved by the Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA). The STZA has granted official approval for the establishment of the "NSIT Silicon Block," marking a major milestone for the project. It was further revealed that globally renowned IT conglomerates have shown strong interest in becoming part of the Nawaz Sharif IT City. As many as 23 prominent IT companies have expressed willingness to establish their offices and facilities within the Silicon Block. Plots have already been acquired for this purpose. The meeting was informed that the prestigious Imperial College London, in collaboration with Novicare, will establish a state-of-the-art medical college and hospital within the IT City. NetCol is set to launch Pakistan's first comprehensive IT university at the site, while the Roots Group is entering into a joint venture with the University of Warwick, UK. Additionally, leading tech firms DataFort and MariTech will jointly establish Tier 3 and Tier 4 data centres, while Data Rocks has shown interest in setting up Punjab's first FTA-approved laboratory. CEO Central Business District (CBD) Punjab Imran Amin provided a comprehensive briefing on the progress of the project. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed all departments concerned to accelerate work on the project and to take all necessary measures for the timely establishment of Nawaz Sharif IT City. She emphasized the importance of proactive, efficient, and coordinated efforts to transform the IT City into a hub of innovation, investment, and employment.

# Pakistan, Philippines ties poised for a quantum leap

Chief Guest of the ceremony was Director General Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Irfan Soomro, who talked about the Pakistan-Philippines bilateral relations, and 127th declaration of independence of Re-Public of Philippines

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The 127th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence was commemorated by The Honorary Council General of Philippines in Karachi Dr. Imran Yousuf S.I led by the Ambassador H.E Emmanuel R Fernandez Philippines embassy in Islamabad along with his spouse Mme. Alicia Kalaw-Fernandez hosted a grand reception here in Karachi.

A large number of dignitaries, ambassadors, diplomats, Pakistani officials, diplomatic corps, Journalists community, civil society representatives, and fellow Filipinos residing in Pakistan. On the occasion, Chief Guest of the ceremony was Director General Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Irfan Soomro, who talked about the Pakistan-Philippines bilateral relations, and 127th declaration of independence of Re-Public of Philippines. He assured the good relationship of Pakistan on trade International and Diplomatic level. Pakistan authorities would initiate business and technology development on both sides, he also thanked the Ambassador of the Phil-



ippines and to promote bilateral relations with the Philippines on national independence celebration. Philippines Ambassador H.E Emmanuel R Fernandez paid rich tributes to the forefathers of the Philippine independence movement, the ambassador said the occasion was not only to honor

their sacrifice but also to renew a national commitment. He also spoke high about the historical significance of June 12, 1898 — the day when the Filipino people declared their independence after a prolonged and painful struggle against colonial oppression.

The ambassador also highlighted that the Philippines

was among the first nations to recognize the newly independent Pakistan in 1947. Since then, he said, the two countries have cooperated extensively across sectors including education, culture, trade, and climate change resilience. "Indeed, the Philippines has every reason to consider Pakistan its abiding

friend." He discussed historical narrative as the foundation of a strong and enduring bilateral relationship between the two countries. "I believe that it is our common experience of having to fight long and hard for our freedom that makes Pakistan and the Philippines natural friends.

## Dispensation of justice top priority, vows CJP Afridi

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi, has pledged that every action taken would be aimed at upholding the rule of law and delivering justice to the people. Speaking at a ceremony organized for the oath-taking of the newly elected cabinet of the Peshawar High Court Bar here on Wednesday, Chief Justice Yahya Afridi congratulated the new members and emphasized the strong relationship between the Bar and the Bench, stating that the two cannot be separated. He urged young lawyers to follow in the footsteps of their seniors, support developmental projects and take on greater responsibility, saying that such initiatives would benefit everyone. Justice Afridi also stressed upon lawyers to discharge their responsibilities with honesty and within the ambit of constitution. He also mentioned the ongoing construction of a new court complex in Peshawar "Our top priority is to address public grievances," the Chief Justice stated, adding, "We have had great lawyers who served as role models for us." He paid tribute to senior legal figures including Abdul Latif Afridi, Barrister Zahoor ul Haq, and others for their contributions. Justice Afridi further noted that steps are being taken to improve facilities for lawyers and judges alike and acknowledged the challenges faced by the lower judiciary.—APP

## Kundi for collaboration with Russia, Kyrgyzstan in various fields

PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Russian Education and Science in Pakistan and President of the Kyrgyzstan Trade House, Dr. Shahid Hassan, along with Engineer Iftikhar Ali, called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi here at Governor House on Wednesday. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on promoting higher education, scientific cooperation, and strengthening trade relations in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Dr. Shahid highlighted educational opportunities for Pakistani students in Russian and Kyrgyz universities, including scholarships and research programs. Governor Kundi emphasized the importance of strengthening ties with international educational institutions to

open new avenues for the province's universities and students. He particularly stressed the need to provide focused attention to the youth of the merged districts, stating that preventing the spread of despair in those areas is crucial. The Governor appreciated the role of the Russian Ambassador and embassy for their continued efforts in fostering strong relations with Pakistan, including humanitarian assistance sent to Kurram district affectees. He said that Russia and neighboring states offer significant potential for enhancing business and trade. Welcoming the proposal to boost bilateral trade and investment through the Kyrgyzstan Trade House, Governor Kundi assured full support and cooperation from the Governor House in

such initiatives. Meanwhile, Central Secretary General of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and former Chairman Senate, Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, Usman Khan Tarakai, Biland Khan Tarakai, Salim Khan Chitrali met separately with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi. Senior party leader and former MNA Murtaza Satti, PPP Provincial General Secretary Shuja Khanzada alias Shazi Khan, and Vice Chairman of Red Crescent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Farzand Ali Wazir were also present on this occasion. The meeting focused on party organizational matters and the current political situation in the province. Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari praised the party for successfully organizing the "Save the Province" protest on May 26.—APP

## Sindh imposes complete ban on plastic bags

SUKKUR: The Sindh government has imposed a complete ban on the manufacturing, use, and sale of plastic bags across the province, following a cabinet decision. To enforce this ban, the Environment, Climate Change & Coastal Development Department Secretary Agha Shah Nawaz Khan and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Sindh Director General Waqar Hussain Phuloto have directed EPA Sukkur to conduct inspections at various locations. A monitoring team led by EPA Sukkur Regional Head Ajmal Khan on Wednesday visited wholesale and super stores on Darakh Road Sukkur, raising awareness among shopkeepers about the ban and emphasizing strict compliance with the cabinet decision.—APP

## Aafia case

# Govt seeks more time from IHC for consultations

KARACHI: Additional Attorney General of Pakistan has sought more time from Islamabad High Court (IHC) so that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) consults with the Attorney General of Pakistan whether the government of Pakistan should sign the amicus brief to be filed with the American courts regarding the case of Dr Aafia Siddiqui. As per details, the single bench of the IHC comprising Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaque Khan here Wednesday heard the constitutional petition of Dr Fowzia Siddiqui regarding the release of her sister Dr Aafia Siddiqui. Her lawyer, Imran Shafique Advocate, after the hearing told media

outside the IHC premises that Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaque Khan had inquired from the government about its position on the proposed amicus brief to be filed in the American courts on the issue of Dr Aafia Siddiqui. He said at today's hearing the additional attorney general maintained before the court that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has sought comments from the attorney general of Pakistan whether the government should file the amicus brief in the US court on the issue of Dr Aafia. He sought a time of ten days. However, the court granted him time of seven days and now the hearing in this case would be held on June 25.

He said that interestingly previously the attorney general of Pakistan himself had assured the honourable court that the government would support the amicus brief but later the government took a U-turn and filed an application with the court to dispose of the petition as it's purpose had already been served. He said that during the previous hearing the court told the government lawyer that the matter of the proposed amicus brief to be filed in the US court is the same that had already been adopted in the letter of the Prime Minister to the US president regarding the release of Dr Aafia.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry talking to Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, Rector of Bahria University, who called on the Minister on Wednesday.

# AJK presents more than Rs 300b budget

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government on Wednesday presented its more than 300 billion Rupees budget for the next fiscal year 2025-26 with a development outlay of Rs. 49 billion. Finance Minister Abdul Majid Khan presented the budget estimates for the fiscal year 2025-26 and revised estimates for the current fiscal year in the Legislative Assembly session chaired by the speaker Ch. Latif Akbar. Finance Minister said that the total estimate for the upcoming fiscal year—including development and non-development expenditure was set at Rs. 310.20 billion, while the revised total for the

current fiscal year 2024-25 was Rs. 224 billion. He mentioned that due to the efforts of the current government and the support of the federal government, an increase of Rs. 86.20 billion was being made for the next fiscal year. "The current government has been in power for over two years and has not only ensured the availability of significant financial resources but has also maintained fiscal discipline—considered a major achievement. By allocating Rs. 49 billion in development funds for the upcoming year, the government aims to accelerate the pace of progress and has prioritized productive and social sectors," Khan maintained.

Following the footsteps of federal government, an increase of ten percent in the salaries of government employees and 7 percent in the pension of retired government employees has also been announced in the next fiscal year budget. Elaborating the statistics of the budget, Khan said that estimated total income for FY 2025-26 was fixed as Rs. 261.20 billion while estimated total non-development expenditure will be Rs. 261.20 billion and Development expenditure Rs. 49 billion will be provided by the federal government. While giving the income breakdown, he said Inland Revenue Department will collect Rs.

85 billion, Land Record & Settlement Rs. 180 million, Stamps: Rs. 500 million, AJK Transport Authority: Rs. 70 million, Armed Services Board: Rs. 40 million, Law & Order (Administration of Justice) Rs. 320 million, Police (Home): Rs. 256 million, Prisons: Rs. 2.5 million, Communication & Works: Rs. 625 million, Education: Rs. 290 million, Health: Rs. 250 million, Food: Rs. 550 million, Agriculture: Rs. 120 million, Wildlife/Fisheries: Rs. 90 million, Livestock & Dairy Development: Rs. 50 million, Forests: Rs. 5 billion, Electricity Department Rs. 19.58 billion, Printing Press: Rs. 1.2 billion, Industries Rs. 555 million, Labour

department Rs. 6.5 million, Sericulture Rs. 6.5 million, Minerals: Rs. 1.3 billion, Tourism: Rs. 150 million, Social Welfare: Rs. 200,000, Religious Affairs: Rs. 900 million and Rs. 12.64 will be generated in Miscellaneous head. He said the government will receive Rs. 104.90 billion in the head of Federal Variable Grants, Rs. 1 billion in the head of water use charges and will collect Rs. 1.2 billion in the head of loans and advances from the government employees. Highlighting the expenditure, he said the biggest amount of Rs. 9.2665 had been allocated for Services & General Administration department.—APP

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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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Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

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CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Pak embraces global uplift initiative as pillar of national strategy: Romina

Romima Khursheed commended China’s leadership in creating tools like the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund and the GDI Implementation Framework at the UN

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Wednesday expressed that Pakistan sees the Global Development Initiative (GDI) not merely as a global framework but as an intrinsic element of its national development strategy—one that emphasizes public accountability, equity, and ownership by the people through their elected representatives. Addressing a seminar on “Global Development Initiative in Pakistan: A Parliamentary Roadmap for Shared Prosperity,” she underscored the significance of the event as the realization of a long-held vision. She described it as the embodiment of years of commitment as a legislator, development advocate, and a dedicated partner in the evolving parliamentary diplomacy between Pakistan and China. Reflecting on the origins of the GDI, she recalled the powerful moment when Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced the initiative at the United Nations General Assembly in 2021, calling for development to be a universal right rather than a selective privilege. That message, she said, deeply resonated with her, especially in her capacity as a woman parliamentarian from the Global South, where development needs are acute and the aspirations of people are high. As both Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Convener of the Pakistan-China Parliamentary Friendship Group, she embarked on extensive consultations with stakeholders including policymakers, youth leaders, international experts, and civil society. The outcome of these engagements made it clear that for the GDI to be truly effective in Pakistan, it must be grounded in parliamentary processes and democratic institutions. As Pakistan approaches 75 years of diplomatic relations with China, she highlighted how the relationship has matured into a comprehensive partnership that not only strengthens bilateral ties but also serves as a beacon of solidarity in the Global South. This enduring friendship, she noted, has transitioned from strategic cooperation to practical collaboration, as demonstrated by initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the solar-powered Parliament, projects that have tangibly uplifted institutions and communities. The GDI now marks the expansion of this partnership into new domains of development cooperation, education, digital access, climate justice, and public health. She emphasized, GDI stands as a global platform for South-South cooperation and a practical response to the development challenges that many nations face, particularly those with aspirations but limited means. Romima Khursheed commended China’s leadership in creating tools like the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund and the GDI Implementation Framework

## Call for collaborative efforts to address twin cities’ issues

RAWALPINDI: Federal Secretary for Interior Captain (R) Khurram Agha has directed to resolve long-standing issues between Islamabad and Rawalpindi through joint efforts. He emphasized enhanced collaboration between the administrations of the twin cities for immediate resolution of bilateral matters. During a high-level meeting which was jointly chaired along with Commissioner Rawalpindi, Engr Amir Khat-tak, the secretary has also directed immediate clearance of CDA’s pending payments to Rawalpindi Waste Management Committee (RWMC). During the meeting which was held at Commissioner Rawalpindi Office, the Secretary further ordered Capital Development Authority to settle all outstanding dues with Rawalpindi Waste Management Company without further delay. He also directed strict monitoring to prevent Islamabad-based housing societies from creating waste dumping sites in Rawalpindi’s territory, and ordered for strict action against illegal waste dumping by the housing societies. It was further directed to dismantle illegal bus stands at Chungi No. 26, with instructions to prepare alternative arrangements for affected transporters. The Secretary also reviewed plans for new tube wells to address water shortages, stressing the need to utilize monsoon rainfall through storage initiatives. Officials were directed to immediately implement rainwater harvesting projects following the Murree’s water pilot project model, including construction of underground reservoirs in public parks “Boundary disputes between Islamabad and Rawalpindi cannot be allowed to compromise public service delivery,” said the Secretary. He emphasized the twin cities were becoming “one integrated urban entity” requiring seamless coordination between the two administrations. Additional measures decided during the meeting included intensified anti-dengue operations in Social Security and Sabzi Mandi areas, with orders to deploy extra sanitation staff. Commissioner Amir Khat-tak confirmed the establishment of permanent joint teams to implement all decisions, highlighting the administrations would now meet weekly to resolve coordination issues.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan Mr. Alisher Tukhtaev called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House.

# Govt releases Rs1,035.87b uplift funds in 10 months

ISLAMABAD: The government has authorized the utilization of development funds amounting to Rs1,035.87 billion, out of a total allocation of Rs1,096.00 billion, for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects of the federal ministries and divisions during the 10 months (July-May) of the fiscal year 2024-25 under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). Out of the total authorized/dispensed amount, the total amount spent so far on the development projects during the corresponding period stood at Rs596.610 billion, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. The detail showed that Rs169.639 billion, out of a total allocated amount of Rs265.854 billion, has been disbursed to corporations including National Highway Authority (NHA), National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) and Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO). For the Aviation Division, funds amounting to Rs5.042 billion have been disbursed and Rs405.30 million for the Board of Investment, similarly, the government authorized Rs48.971 billion to the Cabinet Division, Rs 3.535 billion to the Ministry of Climate Change, Rs 254.80 million to the Ministry of Communications (other than NHA), Rs4.578 billion to the Defence Division, Rs2.176 billion to the Defence Production Division, Rs758.00 million for the Establishment Division, Rs20.751 billion to the Federal Education and Professional Training Division. Under the development program, an amount of Rs7.108 billion released to the Finance Division, Rs217.663 billion to Provinces and Special Areas, Rs61.115 billion to the Higher Education Commission, Rs4.109 billion to the Housing and Works Division, Rs104.00 million to the Human Rights Division, Rs3.414 billion to the Industries and Production Division. The government has authorized Rs3.780 billion to the Information and Broadcasting Division, Rs11.375 billion to the Information Technology and Telecom Division, Rs1.950 billion to Inter Provincial Coordination Division, Rs9.780 billion to the Interior Division, Rs930 million to the Law and Justice Division, Rs1.760 million to the Maritime Affairs Division, Rs59.33 million to the Narcotics Division, Rs8.374 billion to the National Food Security and Research Division. An amount of Rs21.037 billion was released to the National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Division, Rs355.25 million to the National Heritage and Culture Division, Rs256.33 million to the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Rs3.225 billion to the Petroleum Division, Rs8.492 billion to the Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Division. The government has released Rs35.00 billion to the Railway Division, Rs175 million to the Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Division, Rs14.96 billion to the Revenue Division, Rs6.649 billion to the Science and Technological Research, Rs313.85 million to Special Investment Facilitation Council Division, Rs 710.44 million to the States and Frontier Regions Division and Rs770.017 billion to the Water Resources Division.—APP

# Lawmakers advocate for agri zones to empower youth

ISLAMABAD: Legislators from both opposition and treasury benches on Wednesday called for the establishment of Special Agriculture Zones, IT Facilitation Centers nationwide, increased farmer support, and funding for churches and temples to promote economic growth and social inclusion. Resuming general budget discussions on the fifth day in the National Assembly, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) stressed the need to develop rural areas and strengthen the agricultural sector. He proposed the establishment of Special Agriculture Zones nationwide, equipped with all necessary facilities to enhance agricultural productivity. He also advocated for providing incentives to farmers. Additionally, he called for the creation of IT facilitation centers in rural regions and the implementation of skill development programs for youth, particularly in these areas, to promote self-sufficiency. Fateh Ullah Khan of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) strongly denounced Israel’s aggression against Iran. Drawing attention to the suffering of flood victims in his constituency, he urged the government to provide compensation to those affected. Awais Haider Jhakar of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) highlighted the challenges faced by farmers and criticized government policies that have contributed to a decline in agricultural production. Sanjay Parwani of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) criticized the government for failing to allocate what he described as even a single penny for the country’s churches and temples in the 2025-26 federal budget. Abdul Ghafoor Haideri of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) urged the Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah to issue a ruling demanding strict punishment for the miscreants involved in the attempted abduction of Maulana Fazl ur Rehman’s son and called for the immediate arrest of those responsible. Zulfiqar Ali Behan of the Pakistan People’s Party called for the imposition of an agricultural emergency in the country and the removal of taxes on fertilizers to boost agricultural production. He also urged the establishment of a university in Naushahro Feroze. Chaudhry Mubeen Arif Jatt of SIC called for the immediate withdrawal of the proposed 18 percent GST on solar panels. He also highlighted the hardships faced by farmers, noting that their produce is being sold at prices lower than their production costs. Chaudhry Riaz Ul Haq of PML-N demanded a review of the Federal Board of Revenue’s (FBR) excessive powers and emphasized the need to lower fertilizer prices. Ejaz Hussain Jakhani of the PPP said that the Gambat Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) is providing excellent services in liver transplantation. He also stated that the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway is a vital need of the people and urged the authorities to pay attention to the project. MNA Sohail Sultan said that it is the government’s duty to provide relief to the people. He urged the government to increase the monthly income of laborers and suggested including youth programs in the current budget. Parliamentary Secretary Sajid Mehdi lauded the armed forces and their chiefs for performing outstanding performance against the Indian aggression against Pakistan. He applauded the former Prime Ministers Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (Late) and Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in their efforts to achieve the honor of first atomic power in muslims worlds. He said that Pakistan is far behind in modern agriculture, lamenting that even we cannot produce seed of any crop. He linked the development of the country with agriculture sector, adding, we cannot progress unless we develop agri sector. “Our allocation is much less for research sector” he said and requested the authorities concerned to pay special focus on the agriculture and live stock sectors. “Cotton is major source of economy of any country and Pakistan has much exposure in this crop but unfortunately it is being neglected.”—DNA

## Crackdown on indoor Sheesha Cafés ICT admin seals 17 on violations

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad district administration has intensified operations against illegal indoor sheesha cafés across the Federal Capital and sealed 17 cafes at various locations of the city. According to spokesman of ICT administration here, indoor sheesha cafés have been declared illegal under Islamabad High Court orders. Any business found violating this ban will face strict legal action. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon has directed all assistant commissioners to take immediate action. He warned that any officer who fails to act against violators in their jurisdiction will be held accountable. “No indoor sheesha café will be allowed to operate, and all those found on the spot during raids, including customers, will face legal consequences,” he stated. In the latest move, the administration sealed 17 indoor sheesha cafés in G-6’s Civic Centre, known as the ‘Safa Gold Market’ area. The operation was led by Assistant Commissioner Rural, with teams inspecting several locations across the city. Earlier, two illegal sheesha cafés were sealed in Sector F-6 and one in Sector B-17. According to district administration officials, the owners of these cafés will now face police cases for operating in violation of the law. Customers present inside these cafés during the raids were also taken into custody. DC Islamabad reiterated that operating indoor sheesha cafés without legal approval is a violation of court orders and city regulations. He added that even outdoor sheesha cafés are not allowed to function without formal permits from the concerned assistant commissioner. “From tomorrow, all indoor café owners found running illegal set-ups will face FIRs,” said DC Memon, adding that enforcement teams will also arrest customers smoking sheesha indoors. He appealed to residents to avoid visiting such places and not participate in any unauthorized activity. This city-wide crackdown is part of efforts to enforce court orders and maintain public health standards. The administration has urged the public to report illegal sheesha activity, promising strict action against all violators regardless of location. The operation will continue across all zones of Islamabad with random inspections and on-the-spot legal proceedings. The district administration has clarified that there will be no leniency for anyone running or visiting indoor sheesha cafés without clearance.—DNA

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## Briefs

## Hot, dry weather to prevail across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast mainly hot and dry weather across most parts of the country on Wednesday, with severe heat expected during the daytime, particularly in plain areas. Isolated rain-thunderstorms are, however, likely in Kashmir and adjoining hilly regions. The Met Office has issued a warning for very hot weather conditions in the plain areas of the country from June 18 to 21. Citizens, especially children, women, and the elderly, are urged to take precautionary measures. The authorities advise the public to avoid direct sunlight between 11:00 AM and 4:00 PM, stay indoors as much as possible, and keep hydrated to minimize heat-related risks.

In Islamabad, hot and dry weather is expected with intense heat during the day. In Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, most districts will experience hot and dry conditions, with very hot weather in plain areas during the daytime. Sindh will face mainly hot and humid conditions, with extreme heat expected in upper and central parts of the province. In Balochistan, hot and dry weather is likely in most parts, with very hot temperatures in southern and eastern districts. Kashmir is expected to see partly cloudy skies with chances of isolated rain-wind/thunderstorms, while Gilgit-Baltistan will remain generally dry with partly cloudy conditions. Hot and dry weather prevailed across most regions during the past 24 hours, with intense heat in the plains. —APP

## Youth leaders come together for peace at NPF

ISLAMABAD: In a vibrant celebration of inclusion, dialogue and creativity, the National Peace Festival has begun at the National Skills University here Wednesday, uniting more than 150 young peace advocates from all corners of Pakistan. In a three-day event that runs until June 20 and organized by the Shaor Foundation for Education and Awareness (SFEA), marked a significant milestone in empowering youth to combat violent extremism and foster peace. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajiha Qamar emphasized the need for a unified national peace narrative, urging youth to leverage digital platforms constructively. She said, "We must all unite to promote a national peace narrative that transcends political divisions saying despite our differences, we stand as one for our beloved country". She stated that peace was not just the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, empathy and shared values. She urged young leaders to harness digital platforms constructively, promoting positivity and countering misinformation to foster a culture of peace and tolerance in Pakistan. Chairperson of SFEA, Syed Ali Hameed reaffirmed his commitment to inclusive peace building, stating.—APP

## Senate body reviews CAREC, corridor development Program

The committee was given a comprehensive briefing on the CAREC Tranche-3 project, which spans over 330 kilometers, covering the Rajanpur–Dera Ghazi Khan–Dera Ismail Khan corridor. Although the project was approved in 2020, implementation has yet to commence

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, The Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, on Tuesday convened to review the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Corridor Development Investment Program – Tranche 3. The meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Senator SaifullahAbro, convened today in Islamabad to review the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Corridor Development Investment Program – Tranche 3, along with bilateral and multilateral development projects undertaken by the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with UN agencies and international development partners. The meeting was attended by Senators Syed Waqar Mehdi, Haji Hidayatullah Khan, FalakNaz, and RahatJamali. The committee was given a comprehensive briefing on the CAREC Tranche-3 project, which spans over 330 kilometers, covering the Rajanpur–Dera Ghazi Khan–Dera Ismail Khan corridor. Although the project was approved in 2020, implementation has yet to commence. The total estimated cost is Rs. 85 billion, comprising a 121.5 km stretch from Rajanpur to D.G. Khan with six bypasses, and a

208.2 km section from D.G. Khan to D.I. Khan with five bypasses. Officials from the National Highway Authority (NHA) informed the committee that a consultancy firm had been hired to finalize the bidding procedures for the project. In response, the Chairman directed the NHA to submit a detailed report outlining the standard procedure followed for hiring consultancy firms. While discussing the tendering of Lot-1 (Rajanpur–Jampur section, 58 km), it was disclosed that six companies had submitted bids, out of which five were technically qualified. The committee expressed serious concerns over the award of the contract to a company that had previously failed to complete the Multan - Lodhran project, valued at Rs. 6 billion. Senator SaifullahAbro questioned the rationale behind awarding a Rs. 172 billion project to a company with a history of non-performance. The Chairman further ordered that strict action be taken against both the NHA and the Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) for their alleged role in manipulating the contract award process. He instructed that matter be referred to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for necessary legal action against the reported violation of rules. The members voiced deep dissatisfaction over the NHA's apparent negligence in

awarding such a critical infrastructure project to a disqualified bidder. The Chairman Committee directed the NHA to submit the complete bidding details of CAREC- II and CAREC- III projects along with number of bidders participated (both qualified & disqualified) within two days to the Committee. He also criticized the absence of the Secretary, M/o Communications, stating that Committee cannot operate effectively without the presence of senior representatives from key implementing departments. The officials were unable to brief and satisfy the Committee. Senator Abro highlighted that several complaints had been received regarding ADB funded road projects in the D.I. Khan region. He emphasized the consistent oversight of all projects sponsored by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. After a detailed discussion, the Committee concluded that the NHA Board, in its meeting held on January 6, 2023, had determined that company was not eligible to apply for the project. Notably, the decision to terminate the company's contract had already been taken by the NHA Board on December 23, 2022. The Committee expressed concern over how the NHA had previously allowed the company to commence work on the CAREC-II project, despite having achieved only 8% progress on a contract worth Rs. 6.8 bil-

lion. It further questioned how the same company was again favored and deemed qualified for the CAREC-III project, valued at Rs. 172 billion. The Committee also discussed the implementation status of the recommendations made during its previous meetings regarding the EAD and its related department, the Power Division, including NTDC projects. After detailed deliberations, the Committee recommended that the Power Division take action against the officials involved in awarding the contract for ADB 401B-2022 Lot-IIA (ACSR Bunting Conductor) to the third lowest bidder. The Committee further recommended that Power Division provide a copy of the inquiry report prepared by the three-member Inquiry Committee, headed by Muhammad Ali, former Caretaker Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division), pertaining to the fact-finding investigation of the ADB 401B-2022 Lot-IIA tender. Additionally, the Committee recommended the Power Division to write a letter to the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Power and share a copy of the letter with the Committee. The Power Division was also directed to write to the FIA and NAB regarding the issuance of fake letters by the Engineering Development Board (EDB) in relation to the ADB 401B-2022 Lot-IIA (ACSR Bunting Conductor) tender.

## Foreign Secy emphasizes need for AI development

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch on Tuesday underscored that innovation in artificial intelligence (AI) must be guided by principle; human control and judgment must remain paramount. The Foreign Secretary inaugurated the Regional Consultations on Responsible AI in Military Domain (REAIM) here, a news release said.

In her keynote remarks, the Foreign Secretary underlined, "Military AI is transforming warfare, but legal and political frameworks are lagging behind. This transformation was unfolding in a deeply fragile international landscape and was lowering threshold for use of force.

Ambassador Baloch pointed out that in South Asia, autonomous weapon capabilities were used for the first time in a nuclear environment and was compressing decision time during crises. She added that global governance must remain anchored in the UN system whereas REAIM offered a valuable complement.

Developing States, she said needed capacity-building and regional dialogue to ensure inclusive rule-making. Some 17 States from West, Central and South Asia are participating in the two-day Regional Consultations of REAIM, being held in partnership with the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands and Spain.—APP

## DG Radio delivers session to 43rd MCMC

ISLAMABAD: Director General of Radio Pakistan, Saeed Ahmad Shaikh, delivered a comprehensive briefing session to the officers of the 43rd Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC) of the Information Group at the Information Service Academy, Islamabad. The session focused on Radio Pakistan's roadmap for revival through a robust commercial business plan, administrative efficiency, and digital transformation. Shaikh shared that Radio Pakistan is moving decisively toward financial sustainability, with sales targets set for each station to generate over Rs. 1 billion in advertisement revenue. He elaborated on efforts to monetize under-utilized assets such as buildings and open lands, with landmark projects in the pipeline under Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A), including the establishment of pre-fabricated warehouses in Landhi, Karachi. Highlighting administrative reforms, Shaikh revealed that Radio Pakistan has become the first public sector broadcaster to develop an indigenous Digital Pension Management System, aimed at eliminating ghost pensioners and ensuring transparency. Cost-saving initiatives like an energy conservation campaign and optimal use of internal engineering capabilities have significantly reduced operational expenditures. He also emphasized Radio Pakistan's drive toward technological transformation and outreach (TTO). Key developments include antenna realignment, the conversion of Murree Repeater Station into an FM Complex, and the installation of a 300 KW solar grid station. These measures are geared toward enhancing transmission quality and energy efficiency. Shaikh further outlined the integration of digital media platforms into Radio Pakistan's content strategy. From live global streaming to active engagement on Facebook, X, and TikTok, and the development of podcast studios nationwide, Radio Pakistan is repositioning itself to connect with a younger, tech-savvy audience. The session concluded with an expression of optimism for Radio Pakistan's future as a financially viable, administratively efficient, and digitally integrated national institution.—DNA

## Benazir Hunarmand Program timely response to eco challenges

ISLAMABAD, Jun 18 (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, has termed the upcoming Benazir Hunarmand Program (BHP) a timely and strategic intervention to address Pakistan's growing employment challenges and unlock economic opportunities for underprivileged communities. She expressed these views during a meeting with the Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, at his office in Islamabad. Senator Rubina Khalid briefed the Minister on the vision and scope of BHP and extended a formal invitation for its launch ceremony, scheduled to be held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on June 21. Highlighting the importance of skill development, Senator Rubina Khalid said with a rising young population.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq attending the National Day of Portugal. DNA

## Senate committee concludes fifth consecutive session

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, under the chairmanship of Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, held its fifth consecutive session to deliberate on the Finance Bill 2025 and the Annual Budget Statement laid before Parliament. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, Chairman FBR Rashid Mahmood Langrial, and senior officials of attached departments participated in the session. The committee acknowledged the presence of both ministers sitting together in the sessions – a development hailed as unprecedented and reflective of increased government responsiveness during this year's budgetary process. A notable number of senators actively participated in the proceedings, demonstrating what Chairman Mandviwalla termed "a powerful and democratic health of budget scrutiny where views cut across party lines for the public good." He

further added, "I value the contributions of all senators, their opinions and recommendations are vital, as the budget process should be transparent and in the public's interest." The committee discussed a range of critical recommendations and policy matters and strongly recommended withdrawing the proposed 18% GST on solar panels. Members observed that ahead of the budget, certain stakeholders had imported and dumped solar equipment in anticipation of the tax hike. The chairman emphasized the discriminatory nature of the move, saying, "The committee rejects the sudden imposition of GST on solar imports and urges immediate withdrawal." In meeting 7 percent pension increase for retired government employees was proposed and also proposals were put forward to extend the duration of family pensions. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) was recommended for additional funding allocations.—APP

## FPCCI body to negotiate on law regarding businessmen's arrest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Tuesday rejected the law permitting arrest of businessmen and constituted an eight-member committee led by its President Atif Ikram Sheikh to engage in negotiations with relevant authorities in this regard. Atif Ikram Sheikh, along with Patron-in-Chief of United Business Group (UBG) S.M. Tanveer, FPCCI Vice Presidents Zaki Ajiz and Tariq Jadoon, and other prominent business leaders, disclosed this to media at press conference here at FPCCI Regional Office. They announced to shut down all industrial operations in protest, besides giving a seven-day deadline to address these concerns. Referring to the introduction of Section 37AA, they said, if businessmen are arrested, they could not continue to operate their factories. While reaffirming their commitment to cooperate with the government, they emphasized that the business community has consistently supported national revenue objectives. However, they made it clear that harassment of businessmen would not be tolerated. They reiterated their longstanding demand to reduce electricity tariffs to 9 cents per unit, noting that despite a drop in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), interest rates remain high. They also objected the imposition of 18 percent sales tax on solar energy solutions. Additionally, they called for the immediate reinstatement of the Final Tax Regime (FTR) and the full restoration of the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) in its original form.

## Commerce Ministry launches nationwide consultative drive

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce has launched a nationwide campaign of awareness and consultative sessions aimed at updating the Trade Organizations Rules (TOR), 2013. In a major stride towards modernizing Pakistan's trade governance and aligning it with contemporary economic realities, the Ministry of Commerce has launched a nationwide campaign of awareness and consultative sessions aimed at updating the Trade Organizations Rules (TOR), 2013, said a release issued on Tuesday. This landmark initiative, being undertaken under the direct guidance of the Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, reflects the government's commitment to forging a transparent, inclusive, and future-ready regulatory framework. Speaking about the initiative,

Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan emphasized the importance of engaging the business community directly in shaping the rules that govern them. "For more than a decade, the Trade Organizations Rules remained unchanged, leading to rising litigation, weakening corporate governance, and diminishing the influence of trade bodies in national policymaking," said the Minister. "This consultative process is a golden opportunity for stakeholders to not just raise their voices but to become co-authors of a regulatory framework that mirrors Pakistan's economic ambitions." The Directorate General of Trade Organizations (DGTO), operating under the Ministry of Commerce, has embarked on this transformative exercise in collab-

oration with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI). The reform agenda is not just about revising legal text but ushering in a new era of corporate transparency, digital compliance, electoral accountability, and gender inclusion. With more than 300 licensed chambers and associations forming the backbone of Pakistan's trade landscape, the move is expected to enhance trust between the state and business entities—one of the core objectives highlighted by the Minister. "This is not a cosmetic update; it is a comprehensive overhaul rooted in our vision of participatory governance and economic democratization," Jam Kamal Khan added. "We are embedding international best practices, supporting the digital economy, and

fostering a regulatory environment where even the smallest voices can shape the biggest policies." initiative aligns with Pakistan's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions). Special emphasis is being placed on institutional alignment with the amended Trade Organizations Act, 2013 and the Companies Act, 2017, under which trade organizations are registered as Section 42 companies. The DGTO has also ensured that voices from remote and resource-constrained areas will be heard through a hybrid model, allowing online participation from stakeholders unable to attend in person.—APP

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## G7 summit and the Israel-Iran crisis

THE recently concluded G7 Summit in Canada, held amid rising global tensions, took on an unexpectedly urgent tone as the Israel-Iran conflict cast a long shadow over the agenda. Originally scheduled to address climate change, economic growth, and global trade, the summit was quickly overtaken by concerns about a potential war spiraling out of control in the Middle East. After intense negotiations, the G7 countries issued a joint statement calling for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Iran, warning of devastating consequences should the hostilities continue. Interestingly, the statement almost never saw the light of day. U.S. President Donald Trump, who attended the summit in a controversial return to the global stage, initially refused to endorse the draft communique. He reportedly objected to language he considered too critical of Israel, with whom he has maintained a strong political alliance. Eventually, after the text was modified to emphasize “de-escalation by all parties” rather than solely calling on Israel to exercise restraint, Trump agreed to sign the final statement. However, his departure from the summit halfway through – rushing back to Washington reportedly at the behest of Israeli officials alarmed by looming Iranian retaliatory strikes – left many wondering if the spirit of the summit’s unity was already fraying at the seams. The G7, composed of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, remains one of the most influential blocs in global politics. Yet its response to the growing Middle East crisis must now go beyond words. As a collective, the G7 must assume the moral and diplomatic responsibility of preventing another all-out war in a region already fractured by decades of conflict, displacements, and economic hardship. The G7’s relevance has often been questioned in a rapidly multipolar world, with China, Russia, and regional blocs like BRICS gaining prominence. But its ability to still shape economic narratives and geopolitical decisions remains undeniable. A unified G7 approach to the Israel-Iran conflict – particularly if backed by meaningful diplomatic and economic initiatives – can act as a powerful deterrent to further escalation. This is not merely a matter of regional stability. A full-scale war between Iran and Israel would not remain confined to their borders. The risk of spillover into Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and even the broader Gulf region is immense. Such a conflict could choke global energy supplies, disrupt trade routes, spark refugee crises, and fuel extremism. The world, already grappling with post-pandemic recovery and climate challenges, simply cannot afford another war. President Trump’s controversial stance during the summit should not be ignored. His close ties to Israel’s leadership are no secret. During his presidency, he recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, brokered the Abraham Accords, and withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal. His presence at the G7 was always going to be polarizing. By resisting the initial draft, Trump once again signaled his unwavering support for Israel – a stance that may serve him politically among certain voter bases at home but complicates international diplomacy. His abrupt departure also raises questions about behind-the-scenes coordination with Tel Aviv, especially as reports emerge that Israeli officials requested urgent U.S. support in anticipation

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of retaliatory strikes from Tehran. If Trump seeks to portray himself as a global peacemaker – a claim he has made repeatedly – this is the moment to prove it. He has the channels, the relationships, and the spotlight. But peace requires more than posturing. It demands a commitment to balanced diplomacy, respect for international law, and empathy for civilian lives on both sides of the divide. Adding to the complexity, China has issued a travel advisory asking its citizens in Israel to leave the country immediately. This is no routine measure. Beijing’s warning suggests serious concern over a rapidly deteriorating security environment. More significantly, it may hint at China’s potential involvement – whether diplomatically, economically, or even militarily – should the conflict spiral further. China has significant economic stakes in the Middle East, particularly in Iran through the China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) also crosses through many conflict-prone zones. If Israel continues to act unilaterally and ignores international appeals, Beijing may feel compelled to take a more assertive role, not out of ideological alignment, but to protect its strategic interests. Should China choose to engage more directly – even if only through stronger diplomatic mediation – it would mark a significant shift in the geopolitical dynamic of the region, potentially sidelining Western-led efforts. That, in turn, would further erode U.S. influence and potentially increase tensions between major powers. Beyond diplomacy, the human cost of continued violence must not be forgotten. Iran has suffered major losses, with reports confirming the deaths of several top military officials, including its army chief and prominent nuclear scientists. Israel, meanwhile, is preparing for potential retaliatory strikes, and its civilian population remains under constant threat. The conflict has also intensified the debate about whether Israel’s intelligence and security apparatus is operating without sufficient oversight. While its ability to conduct precise, high-impact strikes is undisputed, the question arises – is Israel’s aggression inviting broader instability and backlash? Is it creating more enemies than it can handle? On the other hand, Iran too has to reflect on its own choices. Its involvement with proxy groups and its anti-Israel rhetoric has often been counterproductive. While Tehran now seeks global sympathy in the face of Israeli aggression, it must also demonstrate a willingness to de-escalate and engage with the international community in good faith. The G7’s statement, though late and diluted, is a starting point. But real peace cannot come from communiqués alone. It requires action. The G7 nations must urgently set up a mediation platform that includes regional stakeholders – including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey, and Egypt – and work in concert with the United Nations and other global bodies. Israel, for its part, must realize that military dominance does not equate to long-term security. It needs to heed calls from allies like France, Germany, and now even Russia, to halt operations that could trigger a regional war. At the same time, Iran must tone down its militant rhetoric and focus on diplomacy, especially given its internal vulnerabilities. Most importantly, world powers – especially the United States – need to step out of partisan shadows and prioritize peace over politics. Former President Trump has repeatedly claimed he can “broker peace.” Now is his opportunity. If he, along with the G7, can prevent a devastating war, that would be a legacy worth leaving. The G7 Summit in Canada has once again highlighted how fragile global peace truly is – and how urgently world leaders must act to preserve it. The time for half-measures is over. The world needs statesmanship, not showmanship. As the drums of war beat louder, it falls on the shoulders of the powerful to ensure that reason, diplomacy, and humanity prevail.

## The Collapse of Netanyahu’s Greater Israel Dream

Qamar Bashir



Yet, it is Iran, and Iran alone, that has finally brought Israel to a position of humiliation and vulnerability. With precise retaliatory strikes, Iran has shattered the illusion of Israel’s invincibility, breaking through the Iron Dome and exposing Israel’s weaknesses to the world. This act has not only rattled Tel Aviv, but also shocked Washington into recalibrating its unflinching loyalty to Israel. Now imagine a scenario where Egypt, strengthened militarily and economically, joins hands with Iran. Imagine Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Pakistan setting aside political differences and joining the cause. What would unfold is not a regional war—it would be a pan-Islamic resistance against a rogue nuclear power that has, for decades, dictated war and peace in the Middle East on its own terms. Why would such unity be justified? Because Israel has always initiated conflict. Since its inception in 1948, it has never been Iran or any of these Muslim countries that launched aggressive wars, occupied foreign lands, or imposed sieges. Iran has not invaded anyone. Iran has not annexed territory. Iran has not built settlements on foreign land. In contrast, Israel has been in constant war with nearly every nation around it—with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and of course, the Palestinians.

What Netanyahu truly wants is not security, peace, or diplomacy—it is the realization of Greater Israel, a dangerous vision that seeks to subjugate all neighboring nations and occupy any territory perceived as a threat. This concept, deeply rooted in biblical scripture and Zionist extremism, envisions Israel stretching from the Nile in Egypt to the Euphrates in Iraq, covering not only Palestine but parts of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and even Saudi Arabia. Though not officially declared by the Israeli government, this ideology has been pursued relentlessly through military campaigns, illegal settlements, and wars under Netanyahu’s watch. Already, Israel has occupied parts of Syria, including the Golan Heights; Southern Lebanon, through repeated invasions; the West Bank and Gaza, under siege and colonization; and violated Jordanian and Egyptian sovereignty under the banner of security. Now, Netanyahu has turned his guns toward Iran, the last standing regional power that has refused to bow to Israeli-American pressure. Yet, it is Iran, and Iran alone, that has finally brought Israel to a position of humiliation and vulnerability. With precise retaliatory strikes, Iran has shattered the illusion of Israel’s invincibility, breaking through the Iron Dome and exposing Israel’s weaknesses to the world. This act has not only rattled Tel Aviv, but also shocked Washington into recalibrating its unflinching loyalty to Israel. Now imagine a scenario where Egypt, strengthened militarily and economically, joins hands with Iran. Imagine Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Pakistan setting aside political differences and joining the cause. What would unfold is not a regional war—it would be a pan-Islamic resistance against a rogue nuclear power that has, for decades, dictated war and peace in the Middle East on its own terms. Why would such unity be justified? Because Israel has always initiated conflict. Since its inception in 1948, it has never been Iran or any of these Muslim countries that launched aggressive wars, occupied foreign lands, or imposed sieges. Iran has not invaded anyone. Iran has not annexed territory. Iran has not built settlements on foreign land. In contrast, Israel has been in constant war with nearly every nation around it—with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and of course, the Palestinians.

Historically and practically, Iran’s actions have been defensive, while Israel’s aggression has always been pre-emptive and expansionist. The evidence lies in decades of occupation, illegal wars, and the horrifying genocide in Gaza. Netanyahu’s Israel kills with impunity, bombards hospitals and schools, displaces millions, and justifies it by blaming Hamas—a group that does not represent the children, elderly, women, journalists, or medics slaughtered in this campaign. Now, what is the solution to this deepening crisis, this unending quagmire that threatens not only the Middle East but global peace? The first step is global recognition that Israel’s current course is unsustainable and destructive. The United Nations and all its member states must acknowledge that the concept of Greater Israel, coupled with unconditional military backing from the United States, is a recipe for regional catastrophe. Millions of lives are at risk. Entire cities are being flattened. Peaceful coexistence is being erased. Netanyahu is not a conventional leader. He is a possessed man, obsessed with a vision that defies logic, humanity, and international law. He speaks a different language—a language of domination, annihilation, and religious entitlement. His every action is governed by the fantasy of Greater Israel, which he believes to be divinely mandated. He expects the world to support him while he reigns with fire and blood across the Middle East. But the world is not blind, and it is rapidly changing. The Middle East is no longer a region of weak, divided nations. It has become a commercial, financial, and strategic hub for the West. Countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Egypt host massive investments from the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Their economies are now intertwined. If war breaks out and expands across the region, the global economy will suffer, Western investments will vaporize, and energy supply chains will collapse. Israel does not seem to comprehend this. It continues to kill thousands of innocent women and children, flatten homes, starve civilians, and justify this massacre by pointing fingers at Hamas. But Hamas is not the face of Gaza. It is not the identity of Palestinians. It is not the elderly woman dragged from her destroyed house, not the

infant crushed under rubble, not the paramedic shot while rescuing the wounded. Israel’s campaign has now exited the domain of warfare and entered the domain of genocide. The international community must act, and act decisively. The first measure must be to strip Israel of the illegitimate power it has accumulated unchecked over decades. Its military expansion must be halted. It must be forced back to its original 1948 boundaries through diplomatic isolation, sanctions, and enforcement by a global coalition. The dream of Greater Israel must be shattered, permanently. Second, the world must restore the two-state solution, not as an empty promise, but as an enforceable reality. Israel must withdraw from occupied territories in Jordan, Egypt, and Syria. There must be strict surveillance over Israeli military activities and an end to its nuclear opacity. Israel is the only nuclear-armed state in the region that has never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or subjected its arsenal to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections. That must change immediately. Third, the world must realize that Netanyahu today is not different from Adolf Hitler of yesterday. Just like Nazi Germany brought Europe to its knees, Netanyahu’s Israel is bringing the Middle East to the brink. And just as Germany was defeated, disarmed, and transformed into one of the most peaceful and lawful nations on earth, Israel too must be reformed—not by destruction, but by dewatering, reintegration, and reeducation. This is not anti-Semitism. This is not Islamic fanaticism. This is history demanding justice. This is the world telling Israel that it cannot destroy humanity to fulfill a mythological map drawn in scripture and conquest. Israel, without its arrogance, without its nuclear weapons, and without U.S. impunity, will be far more secure. It can become a peaceful country among equals, respected and protected not by fear, but by trust. Only then can Palestinians live with dignity. Only then can children in Gaza and Tel Aviv play under the same sky, not drones. The Middle East deserves peace, not permanent war. And the world deserves a future free from genocide, occupation, and imperial fantasies. Let this be the turning point. Let this be the fall of Greater Israel—and the rise of true humanity.

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The terrifying implication is stark: In an eternally enduring universe heading towards heat death, it is statistically infinitely more likely for a single, isolated, conscious brain to spontaneously fluctuate into existence with a complete. Then utterly false, perception of reality, than for the entire complex, 13.8-billion-year history of our universe with its

THE 19th-century physicist who revolutionized our understanding of entropy the tendency of systems towards disorder. Boltzmann recognized that while disorder is overwhelmingly probable, rare fluctuations back to lower entropy (more ordered) states must occur statistically, given enough time. A classic example: molecules of air in a room are far more likely to be randomly distributed than spontaneously gathered in one corner. But, given infinite time, the improbable corner-gathering will happen, however briefly. Now, scale this up to the cosmic level. Current cosmological models, particularly those involving an accelerating expansion driven by dark energy, suggest a future “heat death.” In this scenario, the universe expands forever, matter and energy become increasingly dilute, stars burn out, black holes evaporate, and everything approaches a state of uniform, maximum entropy – a cold, dark, featureless equilibrium. This state, known as the “de Sitter space,” is expected to persist for timescales vastly exceeding anything we can meaningfully comprehend, effectively eternal. Here lies the seed of terror. In an eternal universe in a maximum entropy state, Boltzmann’s principle dictates that any fluctuation away from equilibrium, no matter how complex, must occur. This includes fluctuations that assemble a fully formed, conscious brain, complete with false memories of an entire life and a seemingly complex universe. This is a “Boltzmann Brain.” The terrifying implication is stark: In an eternally enduring universe heading towards heat death, it is statistically infinitely more likely for a single, isolated, conscious brain to spontaneously fluctuate into existence with a complete. Then utterly false, perception of reality, than for the entire complex, 13.8-billion-year history of our universe with its galaxies, stars, planets, life, and civilizations to have occurred as we believe. Because creating one brain, even a complex one, requires a vastly smaller and statistically more probable fluctuation away from equilibrium than creating the entire ordered cosmos we observe. Our universe, with its intricate structures and incredibly low entropy past (like the smooth early conditions of the Big Bang), represents a state of such astronomically low probability that, over infinite time, it

becomes overwhelmingly likely that isolated, illusory brains vastly outnumber real, embedded observers like ourselves. This is where the theory earns its “terrifying” label. It pulls the rug out from under objective reality: 1. The Solipsistic Nightmare: Your consciousness, your sense of self, your memories of childhood, your feelings, your perception of the world around you – all of it could be an elaborate, transient hallucination generated by a brain that popped into existence a nanosecond ago, floating alone in the infinite void. There is no external universe, no past, no future. Only the illusion. 2. The Undermining of Science and Memory: Science relies on consistency, observation, and the reliability of memory. If Boltzmann Brains are the dominant form of “observer,” then all scientific data, all historical records, all personal experiences are fundamentally unreliable. They are merely part of the illusory narrative generated by the fluctuation. How could we ever trust any observation or memory if it’s statistically more likely to be false? 3. The Pointlessness of Existence: If we are likely Boltzmann Brains, then life, struggle, achievement, love, loss – all human endeavors – are meaningless flashes in an eternal void, signifying nothing and leading nowhere. The vast cosmic story we perceive collapses into a brief, fraudulent spark. Physicists are acutely aware of this paradox and find it deeply troubling. It’s not considered a true description of reality, but rather a powerful reductio ad absurdum argument highlighting a potential flaw in our cosmological models or our understanding of statistical mechanics. Several avenues are explored to resolve it: The Universe is not Eternal: Perhaps our cosmological model is wrong. Maybe the universe does not last forever in a de Sitter state. A “Big Crunch,” a cyclic universe, or some other end state that doesn’t allow infinite time for these fluctuations might solve the problem. If time is finite for the high-entropy state, the probability of complex fluctuations like brains becomes negligible compared to the probability of our actual universe’s history. New Physics: Our understanding of quantum gravity (e.g., via String Theory) or the nature of dark energy might impose fundamental constraints that prevent such fluctuations or alter the probability calculations drastically. Perhaps the vacuum of de Sitter space isn’t as “fluctuation-friendly” as simple thermodynamics sug-

gests. The Anthropic Principle (Weak): We observe a universe consistent with our existence. If Boltzmann Brains were the dominant observers, we wouldn’t be having coherent thoughts about cosmology – we’d be isolated, illusory entities incapable of sustained reasoning or science. The fact that we are coherent observers embedded in a seemingly stable, low-entropy past universe suggests that scenarios allowing Boltzmann Brains to dominate (like eternal de Sitter space) might simply be incompatible with our existence as observers, hence ruled out. We find ourselves in a universe where our type of ordered existence is possible. Denial of Consciousness: A more radical approach questions whether a spontaneously fluctuated brain, even if structurally identical, could truly be conscious without an evolutionary history or an embedded context within a real universe. However, this ventures deeply into the unresolved hard problem of consciousness. Despite these potential resolutions, the Boltzmann Brain hypothesis remains profoundly unsettling. It forces us to confront the sheer improbability of our existence within the vast, indifferent canvas of cosmic time and entropy. It exposes the fragile foundation upon which we build our understanding of reality, reminding us that our senses and memories, the very tools we use to navigate the world, are potentially vulnerable to cosmic-scale statistical tricks. The terror of the Boltzmann Brain is not visceral, but existential and intellectual. It’s the quiet horror of realizing that the universe, governed by impersonal laws of physics and probability, might be fundamentally indifferent to truth, meaning, or the coherence of our experience. It suggests that the greatest threat isn’t annihilation, but pervasive, undetectable illusion. While physicists work to exorcise this particular demon from our cosmological models, the Boltzmann Brain paradox stands as a chilling monument to the limits of our knowledge and the profound, unsettling questions that arise when we push our understanding of reality to its logical extremes. It forces us to ask: in an infinite, entropic void, is anything we perceive truly real, or are we all just momentary ghosts, dreaming elaborate dreams in the eternal dark? The search for an answer to this question is perhaps the most profound, and terrifying, scientific endeavor of all.



## Briefs

## Iran uses hypersonic missiles

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fuel for nuclear reactors or, in highly extended form, the core of a nuclear reactor. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had launched hypersonic Fattah-1 missiles at Tel Aviv. "The 11th wave of the proud Operation Honest Promise 3 using Fattah-1 missiles" was carried out, the Guards said in a statement broadcast on state television. Hypersonic missiles travel at more than five times the speed of sound and can manoeuvre mid-flight, making them harder to track and intercept. Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Esmaeil Baghaei, has said that Tehran trusts its Arab neighbours will not permit the United States to launch attacks from their territories. Speaking to Al Jazeera on Wednesday, Baghaei emphasised Iran's current focus on defending itself against Israel's "war of aggression" by targeting "military bases, security bases inside the occupied lands."

## Putin eyes peacemaking role in war

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both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to offer his role as a peacemaker. "By positioning itself as an indispensable intermediary, Moscow aims to reassert diplomatic relevance despite its pariah status in Europe," said Nicole Grajewski, an analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It also wants to protect its ally Tehran, facing a potentially existential military clash. "Russia does not want to see regime change in Iran, especially if it results in a pro-Western government," she added. Moscow and Tehran in January inked a far-ranging strategic partnership agreement to broaden military ties, and Kyiv and its allies have long accused Iran of supplying Russia with drones and short-range missiles.

## G7 summit minus Trump rallies...

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Trump's predecessor Joe Biden when the club of major industrial democracies denounced Russian "aggression." A Canadian official, backtracking on an earlier account of the United States trying to water down a proposed statement, said there was never an attempt to issue one due to Trump's continued hopes of mediating with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"It was clear that it would not have been feasible to find detailed language that all G7 partners could agree to in that context," the official said on condition of anonymity. Carney dismissed suggestions of friction, saying that all G7 leaders agreed to be "resolute in exploring all options to maximize pressure on Russia, including financial sanctions."

## India and Canada return...

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the Indian ambassador, triggering a furious reciprocal response from India. Carney and Modi agreed that the two countries would name new high commissioners, as ambassadors are known between Commonwealth nations. The two leaders made the decision "with a view to returning to regular services to citizens and businesses in both countries," the Canadian prime minister's office said in a statement. The row had severely impeded diplomatic services between the two countries, which traded \$9 billion in 2023 and have close cultural ties due to the vast Indian diaspora in Canada. Canada was obliged to suspend in-person services at all missions in India outside its embassy in New Delhi. Modi took a conciliatory tone as he met Carney at the mountain resort, saying that both Canada and India were "dedicated to democratic values."



ISLAMABAD: Winner team of the Interfaith Harmony Cricket Tournament posing for a group photo with the chief guest. Organizer of the event Sadaf Shan, CEO of Creative Minds organization also seen in the picture. The tournament was jointly organized by the Life Bridge Foundation and Creative Minds Organisation. – DNA

## Pakistan's Semi-Final Hopes Dim

## New Zealand outclass Pakistan 4-3 in Nations Cup thriller

Pakistan's performance deteriorated significantly in the third and fourth quarters. The team looked disjointed and struggled to maintain structure both in defense and attack

DNA

KUALA LUMPUR: In a high-octane encounter at the FIH Nations Cup Hockey in Malaysia, New Zealand edged past Pakistan with a 4-3 victory, dealing a serious blow to Pakistan's hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals. Despite a spirited performance in the early phases of the match, the Green Shirts faltered in the crucial final quarters, allowing the Black Sticks to seize the advantage and ultimately clinch the game. Pakistan started the match with intensity and purpose, displaying aggressive play and creating early scoring opportunities. However, it was New Zealand who drew first blood, capitalizing on a swift counter-attack to take a 1-0 lead. The setback did lit-

tle to rattle the Pakistani side, as young forward Abdul Rahman stepped up to level the score through a brilliantly executed penalty corner. Riding high on the momentum, Pakistan continued to press forward. Abdul Rahman struck again, scoring his second goal of the match, showcasing excellent stickwork and composure in front of goal. Soon after, Rana Waheed added a third for Pakistan, giving them a well-deserved 3-2 lead by the end of the second quarter. But the tide turned dramatically in the latter half of the match. New Zealand regrouped effectively and launched a relentless assault on the Pakistani defense. Demonstrating clinical precision in converting penalty corners, the Black Sticks punished Pakistan's defensive lapses with two quick goals, taking the lead once again.

Pakistan's performance deteriorated significantly in the third and fourth quarters. The team looked disjointed and struggled to maintain structure both in defense and attack. Miscommunication, unforced errors, and poor positioning plagued the Green Shirts, who failed to mount any serious comeback in the dying moments of the match. Much of the blame also falls on Pakistan's goalkeepers, who were unable to rise to the occasion. Both custodians failed to stop New Zealand's drag flicks and close-range attempts, leaving the defense exposed and under pressure. New Zealand, on the other hand, maintained discipline, composure, and tactical awareness throughout the match. Their ability to convert all their penalty corners proved to be the decisive factor in the outcome. With this victory, New

Zealand strengthens their position in the tournament and inches closer to the semi-final stage. For Pakistan, the loss is a significant setback. With just one match remaining in the group stage, their chances of progressing to the semi-finals now depend not only on their own performance but also on the outcomes of other fixtures. The defeat also raises serious concerns about team coordination, fitness, and goalkeeping – all areas that require urgent attention from the coaching staff. As the Nations Cup progresses, Pakistan will now have to regroup quickly and deliver a flawless performance in their next match, while hoping for favorable results elsewhere. Otherwise, what began as a promising campaign may soon end in disappointment.

## World Games 2025

## Panda-shaped medals unveiled as Chengdu marks 50-day countdown

ISLAMABAD: Organisers of The World Games 2025 on Tuesday revealed the official medals for the international multi-sport event, marking 50 days to go before the opening ceremony in Chengdu, China. Shaped like a panda's head, the medals were hailed as a fusion of global athleticism and local identity, honouring the city's iconic symbol and rich cultural heritage, according to a press release issued by the organisers. Crafted in gold, silver and bronze, the medals feature bamboo designs on the front and the hibiscus flower – Chengdu's city flower – on the back. Each bears bilingual English and Chinese inscriptions reflecting the Games' theme: "Boundless Sports, Countless Wonders." "These medals are more than just awards; they are a heartfelt tribute to Chengdu and the unifying spirit of The World Games," said International World Games Association (IWGA) President José Perurena. "The panda-inspired design strikes a beautiful balance between playfulness and meaning." More than 4,000 athletes from nearly 120 countries and regions are set to compete in 34 sports and 60 disciplines, with a total of 255

medal events scheduled from August 7 to 17. Organisers also touted the city's readiness, highlighting world-class venues equipped with cutting-edge technology and a robust transportation plan that includes exclusive lanes and streamlined systems for athletes, officials, and fans. Volunteer preparations are well underway, with nearly 10,000 volunteers undergoing training since May. In a show of intergenerational enthusiasm, a 100-year-old participant has joined the programme, becoming a symbol of the Games' inclusive spirit. For the first time in its history, The World Games will host a torch relay, scheduled for July 26. A total of 120 torchbearers will carry the flame across Chengdu, in a gesture organisers hope will unite communities and spark global excitement. Ticket sales have gained momentum, with the latest round launched on June 10, offering over 80,000 tickets across 229 matches in 52 disciplines. The TWG 2025 Chengdu is shaping up as a celebration of both sporting excellence and cultural vibrancy, with organisers promising an unforgettable experience for athletes and spectators alike. – APP

## Pakistan edge past Tajikistan 2-1 in Billie Jean King Cup tie

Ushna and Meheq's dominant doubles win secured Pakistan's comeback against Tajikistan  
KARACHI: Pakistan defeated Tajikistan 2-1 in their Group A tie of the Billie Jean King Cup Asia/Oceania Zone Group III on Tuesday in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Despite an early setback in the opening singles match, Pakistan bounced back strongly to claim the tie. Amna Ali Qayum, playing the first singles rubber, was forced to retire after an injury in the deciding set against Tajikistan's Anisa Yakhyayeva after leading early in the match. The final score was 6-1, 5-7, 0-1 (retired), giving Tajikistan a 1-0 lead. Amna was leading 2nd set 5-3 after winning the first set 6-1 when she got injured, she decided to complete the match but withdrew in the third set. However, Ushna Suhail levelled the tie with a commanding straight-sets win over Saiyora Rajabalieva, 6-3, 6-1, in the second singles match. In the deciding doubles rubber, Ushna Suhail partnered with Meheq Khokhar to deliver a dominant 6-0, 6-1 win over the Tajik pair of Yakhyayeva and Sumaya Tukhtaeva, sealing the tie 2-1 in Pakistan's favor. The result boosts Pakistan's hopes of advancing in the tournament with their next match scheduled against Turkmenistan on Thursday. – Agencies

## President of Uzbekistan proposes initiatives

ASTANAL: The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, took part in the second "Central Asia – China" summit in Astana. The event, chaired by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, was also attended by the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping, President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Japarov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, and President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov. In accordance with the summit agenda, the participants discussed prospects for expanding mutually beneficial cooperation between the Central Asian countries and China in priority areas, as well as pressing international and regional issues. At the beginning of his address, the President of Uzbekistan emphasized the key role of President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping in strengthening friendship and cooperation with the Central Asian states and in supporting the region's sustainable development through concrete projects and programs. – DNA

## PBSA appeals federal government to release long-pending special grants

Despite successes on global stage, snooker association receives no financial assistance since July 2024

DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Billiards & Snooker Association (PBSA) has appealed to the federal government to release long-pending special grants, warning that the country's participation in upcoming international events is in jeopardy due to a severe financial crisis. In a press release issued on Tuesday, the PBSA said it has received no financial assistance from the Pakistan

Sports Board since July 2024, despite the national team's success on the global stage, including a gold medal at the IBSF World Men's Snooker Championship in Doha in November 2024. "The Association is just around the corner to start its Snooker season for the fiscal year 2025-2026 with a critical financial situation," the statement said. It added that the PBSA had to self-finance Pakistan's participation in four international events over the past year, including tournaments in Mongolia, Qatar, Sri Lanka,

and the IBSF World Championship. Citing ongoing financial constraints, the PBSA said it may not be able to send its players to key international events lined up this season, including the Asian Team & 6 Red Championship in Sri Lanka later this month, the Commonwealth Championship in Mauritius in July, and the World Games in China this August. "Due to the present situation prevailing, the PBSA foresees difficult times ahead to fulfill its international commitments for the year 2025-2026," the statement warned, highlighting the challenge of maintaining both domestic circuits and the secretariat's operations.

## Rana Mashhood vows end to sports favoritism

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a decisive push to reform Pakistan's sports landscape, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP), Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, declared that the era of favoritism in sports is coming to an end. Emphasizing the government's unwavering commitment to youth development, including a high-level meeting to be held soon with all stakeholders regarding the Arshad Nadeem Center of Excellence and its allocated funding. He expressed these views on Wednesday during a meeting with a delegation of the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RISJA), led by its President Abu Bakar bin Talat at the Prime Minister secretariat.



Rana Mashhood stated that the government is actively working on infrastructure development, departmental sports revival, and talent hunting. Under the Prime Minister Youth Program, player development

initiatives are being implemented this year across nine different sports. "We have immense talent in the country, and we must provide opportunities based on merit," he emphasized. He further said that on

the Prime Minister's directive, a meeting will soon be held to finalize plans for the Arshad Nadeem Center of Excellence. A significant amount of funds has been allocated for this project, and a master plan

will be developed in consultation with all stakeholders, including the Pakistan Olympic Association. Rana Mashhood also criticized internal elements within the Pakistan Sports Board, stating, "A mafia exists within the PSB, but we are working to fix the system of sports in the country." He added that academies will be established to support talented players and highlighted the need to continue the positive sports culture previously initiated in Punjab. Commending the media's role, Rana Mashhood said, "The media has always played a constructive part, and I am committed to supporting the welfare of the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association." He concluded by noting that the government is actively working to create employment opportunities for the youth.

## IHC judges transfer case enters into...

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his arguments, PTI counsel Idrees Ashraf began his submissions. Toward the end of the hearing, the court asked how much more time the parties would require. Ashraf requested 15 minutes, as did the Attorney General. Justice Afghan recalled the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto case, noting that prolonged arguments in that matter led to significant delays, even resulting in judges retiring and the bench composition changing. The court then adjourned the case until Thursday, June 19. Idrees Ashraf will continue his arguments, followed by the Attorney General concluding his submissions.

## Iran-Israel conflict poses threat to...

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against Iran in which hundreds of Iranian people lost their lives and a larger number of others were injured. "The global community should ensure a ceasefire," he stressed and expressed the optimism for lasting peace. He informed the cabinet that during the conflict, he had talked to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and condemned Israeli aggression besides expressed nation's solidarity. The prime minister said that he had also held discussion with President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan over the evolving situation. About Gaza situation, he said scenes there were heart-wrenching and painful as over 50,000 innocent Palestinians had been martyred. "The brutality is being unleashed but when will the world's conscience wake up!" he questioned.

## Russia fears another...

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"The escalation of the conflict carries serious risks and potential costs for Moscow," wrote Russian political scientist Andrei Kortunov in business daily Kommersant on Monday. "The fact remains that Russia was unable to prevent a mass strike by Israel on a country with which five months ago [Russia] signed a comprehensive strategic partnership. "Clearly Moscow is not prepared to go beyond political statements condemning Israel, it's not ready to provide Iran with military assistance." The Russian-Iranian strategic partnership deal which Vladimir Putin and President Masoud Pezeshkian signed earlier this year is not a military alliance.

## Trump's Iran dilemma...

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Trump often railed against "stupid endless wars" in the Middle East, but also maintained that Iran "can't have a nuclear weapon". The possibility that he might draw the US into another foreign entanglement has pitted the isolationist and hawkish wings of his party bitterly against one another. On Tuesday, conservative Republican congressman Thomas Massie of Kentucky sided with Democrats to introduce a bill that would block Trump from engaging US forces in "unauthorised hostilities" with Iran without congressional approval.

## Field Marshal Asim Munir..

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This development came after both countries witnessed an increased bilateral engagement at the government level this year. The US president also brokered a ceasefire between Pakistan and India following days of hostilities and offered to resolve the long-standing Kashmir dispute. Islamabad is eyeing strengthened ties with Washington based on geopolitical realities, mutual trust, and a development-oriented partnership. COAS Munir is also expected to meet Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth on his US trip. Former foreign minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari termed the upcoming meeting between COAS Munir and President Trump "a positive step in Pakistan-US relations".



## Briefs

## Rupee sheds 14 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 14 paise against the US Dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs 283.55 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.41. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 283.5 and Rs 285.6 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1 to close at Rs 326.48 against the last day's closing of Rs 327.48, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.95, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.67 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 381.72 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 384.39. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 04 paise to close at Rs 77.20 and Rs 75.57, respectively. —APP

## Gold prices decrease by Rs 2,245 per tola

ISLAMABAD, Jun 18 (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.2,245 and was traded at Rs.359,055 on Wednesday as compared to its sale at Rs.361,300 on the last trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.1,925 to Rs.307,831 from Rs.309,756 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it came down by Rs.1,765 to Rs.282,188 from Rs. 283,953.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver went up by Rs.22 and Rs.19 to Rs.3,878 and Rs.3,324 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$20 to \$3,378 from \$3,398, whereas that of silver went up by \$0.22 to \$37.20, the Association reported. —APP

## Israeli forces kill young Palestinian, arrest 60 during night raids

LONDON: Israeli forces killed a 21-year-old Palestinian and arrested at least 60 people during night raids on Tuesday across various towns in the occupied West Bank, including a woman, children, and former political prisoners. The Palestinian Authority's affiliated groups, the Commission of Prisoners' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner's Society, announced on Wednesday that Israeli forces have arrested 160 Palestinians in the West Bank so far this week. Some of those arrested were later released following interrogation. Moataz Al-Hajjleh, 21, from the town of Al-Walaja village near Bethlehem, was killed during an Israeli raid of the area overnight. Israeli forces conducted arrests and investigations during raids in several Palestinian governorates, including Nablus, Jenin and Ramallah. Israeli forces have turned dozens of Palestinian houses into military points after forcibly expelling their inhabitants in the Jenin environs, the Wafa news agency reported. At the same time, several villages had their entrances closed with earth mounds or gates. The prisoners' groups added that ongoing mass detention operations by Israeli forces "continue to be the most prominent, consistent, and systematic policies employed by the occupation to undermine any escalating resistance against it." —APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding promotion of Cashless Economy and Digitization.

## Dozens of Bali flights canceled after Indonesia volcano erupts

Volcanic ash rained down on several villages around Lewotobi Laki-Laki and forced the evacuation of at least one village late Tuesday, the country's disaster mitigation agency said

SIKKA, INDONESIA, ): Dozens of flights to and from Indonesia's resort island of Bali were cancelled on Wednesday, authorities said, after a volcano in the archipelago's east erupted, shooting an ash tower 10 kilometres (six miles) into the sky.

Lewotobi Laki-Laki, a 1,584-metre (5,197-foot) volcano on the tourist island of Flores, erupted on Tuesday, with authorities raising its alert status to the highest level of a four-tiered system.

"Due to volcano activity of Lewotobi Laki-Laki in East Nusa Tenggara, several flights at I Gusti Ngurah Rai Airport are cancelled," airport operator Angkasa Pura Indonesia told AFP in a statement.

The flights cancelled included

Jetstar and Virgin Australia services to cities across Australia, with Air India, Air New Zealand, Singapore's Tigerair and China's Juneyao Airlines also cancelling flights "due to volcano", Bali's international airport website said. Jetstar confirmed cancellations to and from Bali in a statement on its website Wednesday.

"Forecasts show the ash cloud is expected to clear by later tonight. As a result, this afternoon's flights will be delayed to operate later this evening," it said.

AirAsia said it had cancelled or rescheduled "a number of flights" to and from Bali, neighbouring island Lombok and Labuan Bajo on Flores and was providing assistance to affected passengers.

Bali's Ngurah Rai airport said 32

flights in and out of the island had been cancelled on domestic and international routes.

An airport customer service agent told AFP the aviation hub was still operating normally despite the cancelled flights.

"It depends on the route and also the airline," the agent, who declined to give her name, said.

The Fransiskus Xaverius Seda Airport, a relatively smaller airport in nearby Maumere on Flores was closed until Thursday morning, its authorities said on social media. Indonesia's transportation ministry said two more local airports on Flores were temporarily shuttered on Wednesday. It said around 14,000 passengers were affected by cancellations

or delays caused by the eruption. Volcanic ash rained down on several villages around Lewotobi Laki-Laki and forced the evacuation of at least one village late Tuesday, the country's disaster mitigation agency said.

Agency spokesman Abdul Muhari said in a statement that tremors and eruptions were still being detected on Wednesday morning. "No less than 450 families from affected villages... have settled in temporary housing equipped with electricity and clean water facilities," he said. The geology agency said residents and tourists should avoid carrying out any activities within at least seven kilometres of the volcano's crater. It warned of the possibility of

hazardous lahar floods – a type of mud or debris flow of volcanic materials – if heavy rain occurs, particularly for communities near rivers. There were no immediate reports of damages or casualties.

In November, the volcano erupted multiple times, killing nine people, cancelling scores of international flights to Bali, and forcing thousands to evacuate. Laki-Laki, which means "man" in Indonesian, is twinned with a calmer volcano peak named after the Indonesian word for "woman". Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire." —Agencies

## Smartphones banned from schools in Afghan Taliban's heartland

AFGHANISTAN: A ban on smartphones in schools issued by Taliban authorities in southern Afghanistan came into force, students and teachers confirmed to AFP on Wednesday, over concerns of "focus" and "Islamic law."

The directive by the provincial Education Department in Kandahar applies to students, teachers and administrative staff in schools and religious schools. "This decision has been made to ensure educational discipline, focus," the statement said, adding that it was taken from a "sharia perspective" and that smartphones contribute to "the destruction of the future generation." The policy, which has already taken effect in schools across the province, has divided opinion among teachers and students "We did not bring smart phones with us to school today," Saeed Ahmad, a 22-year-old teacher, told AFP. "I think this is a good decision so that there is more focus on studies," he added. Mohammad Anwar, an 11th grader, said "the teachers are saying if anyone is seen bringing a phone, they will start searching the students." Another 12th-grade student, refusing to give his name, said the ban would hinder learning in a country where girls are barred from secondary school and university as part of restrictions the UN has dubbed "gender apartheid." "When the teacher writes a lesson on the board, I often take a picture so I could write it down later. Now I can't. This decision will negatively affect our studies." The ban has also taken root in religious schools known as madrassas. "Now there's a complete ban. No one brings smartphones anymore," Mohammad, 19 years old madrassa student said. A number of countries have in recent years moved to restrict mobile phones from classrooms such as France, Denmark and Brazil. The Taliban authorities have already introduced a ban on images of living beings in media, with multiple provinces announcing restrictions and some Taliban officials refusing to be photographed or filmed. The Taliban's Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada called last week on officials and scholars to reduce their use of smartphones. "This is the order of the leaders, and we must accept it," a 28-year-old security forces member told AFP without giving his name as he was not authorized to speak to the media. —APP

## New industrial policy to revitalize industrial sector: SAPM

He mentioned that macroeconomic indicators are showing resilience and the government has demonstrated a firm resolve to reduce corporate disadvantages to the levels we saw just a few years ago

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday said the new industrial policy will revitalize industrial sector in the country besides it create employment opportunities, boost exports and foster innovation and inclusive economic growth. Addressing the National Regulatory Reforms Conference, Haroon said this policy aligns closely with the broader mission of the Prime Minister economic initiative, to transform and advance Pakistan and make it an investor's hub. At present, three key factors affect our economic competitiveness, which include power tariffs, high interest rates and

elevated tax burdens, he observed.

"We are actively addressing each of these to create a more business-friendly and export-driven economy, a exporters are our lifeline. We must ensure that our exporters become competitive", he added. Once we build up our exports and restore the confidence of our business community and investors, capital will begin to flow into Pakistan—first from domestic investors, and then, naturally, foreign investors, he added. He said that government taking steps making it easier for investors to bring in capital. Haroon Akhtar said that the national industrial policy is a central pillar of the Prime Minis-

ter's broader economic initiative for the transformation and advancement of the country. He said that the incumbent government inherited a fragile economic situation. Inflation was at 38 percent, the policy rate stood at 22 percent, foreign exchange reserves were drastically low, and corporate taxes had surged to unsustainable levels. Due to the prudent structural reforms agenda of the current government now, the country is on the path of stabilization as inflation has dropped to a minimal 1.5 percent, the policy rate has been reduced to 11 percent, and foreign reserves have improved significantly. He said that the government was working on a mechanism to make the local indus-

try more competitive and enhance exports.

The current federal budget reflects further progress. Corporate tax rates have been reduced and the super tax has been reduced signaling that this tax is a temporary measure. He mentioned that macroeconomic indicators are showing resilience and the government has demonstrated a firm resolve to reduce corporate disadvantages to the levels we saw just a few years ago. Now, we need to witness the trickle-down effect. It's time to turn the economy around. We must move toward realizing our dream of achieving a GDP growth rate of 7%—and sustaining it for at least a decade, he added. —DNA

## CPEC varsities forge stronger ties at Shenzhen moot

BEIJING: In an aim to discuss bilateral education cooperation, nearly 100 higher education institutions from China and Pakistan attended the 5th Exchange Mechanism Conference of the CPEC Consortium of Universities at Shenzhen University from June 15-16, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday.

In his opening remarks, Shenzhen University President Mao Junfa stated that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has expanded from an economic project into a platform for educational and technological exchange. Bazai Zahoor Ahmad, leader of the Pakistani delegation and Vice Chancellor of the University of Balochistan, said that the consortium has grown to 134 member institutions (91 Pakistani and 43 Chinese) since its 2017 establishment. "Our partnership... must now deepen collaboration in AI, agriculture, and healthcare," he said.

Discussions among scholars from institutions such as Pakistan's National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) and Abdul Wali Khan University focused on applied talent development, agricultural cooperation, and AI education. —APP

## Pakistan to showcase products at China-South Asia expo

KUNMING: Pakistan will maintain a strong presence at the 9th China-South Asia Exposition and the 29th China Kunming Import and Export Fair from June 19 to 24, building on its success as one of the honored countries with a national pavilion last year, Pakistani Consul General in Chengdu, Tanvir Ahmad Bhatti, told China Economic Net (CEN) in an interview. "For the past several years, Pakistan has been fortunate enough to have one of the largest numbers of booths of any country at the Expo," the Consul General told CEN. This year's event will feature about 100 Pakistani companies and over 180 business representatives showcasing products including classical wooden furniture, gemstones, brass fixtures, handmade carpets, and traditional clothing. "We will be showcasing some of the best products Pakistan has to offer — Pakistani high-quality craftsmanship, design, and finesse," the Consul General said. He noted that sales per booth typically reach "tens of thousands of RMB" during the event. The expo underscores the growing significance of China-South Asia trade, which reached nearly \$200 billion in 2024, double the figure from a decade ago. —APP

## China's net FDI to Pak jumps 32 pc

ISLAMABAD: China remained the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan for the first 11 months of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, with its net investment rising 32.04% from the same period a year earlier, the central bank said, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. Net FDI from China stood at \$790.4 million between July 2024 and May 2025, up from \$598.6 million in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year, data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed. Chinese investment accounted for about 40% of Pakistan's total net FDI of \$1.978 billion. Total inflows reached \$2.893 billion, with outflows of \$914.3 million. Gross FDI from China was \$1.118 billion, offset by outflows of \$327.6 million. For the month of May 2025 alone, China's net FDI was \$79.9 million, making it the top investor with a 26.1% share of the month's total net inflow of \$193.9 million. Other significant contributors in May were the United Kingdom (\$19.3 million), Hong Kong SAR of China (\$17.9 million), Switzerland (\$16.1 million), and the United States (\$12.4 million). Pakistan's power sector attracted the most investment during the 11-month period, with a net FDI of \$391.5 million. The financial business sector followed with \$312.3 million, the food sector with \$292.5 million, and oil and gas exploration with \$139.1 million. —APP

## Seminar held on Indus Waters Treaty, future of regional stability

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Centre for Law and Security (CLAS), hosted a joint seminar titled "Weaponizing Water: The Indus Waters Treaty and Future of Regional Stability." The seminar brought together eminent experts, diplomats, legal scholars, and policymakers to discuss the deteriorating regional water security landscape in the aftermath of India's unilateral and illegal holding of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) 'in abeyance.' Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI delivered welcome remarks. Others speakers included: Ambassador Tardar Masood Khan, President, TMUC, MiTE & Centre for Law and Security (CLAS); Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Member Board of Governors, SDPI; Mr Ashfaq Mahmood, Former Federal Secretary, Ministry of Water and Power; Mr Rehman Azhar, Executive Director, Centre for Law and Security

(CLAS); and Dr. Bushra Bibi, Head of Department, Bahria Law School, Bahria University, Islamabad.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stated that the weaponization of water is a grave regional threat, particularly following India's unilateral and illegal step to hold the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) 'in abeyance.' He linked India's actions to the ideolog-

ical underpinnings of the BJP-RSS, manifest in the notions of Hindu Rashtra and Akhand Bharat. He described this as part of New Delhi's so-called 'muscular' approach and pan-securitization of the India-Pakistan relationship. He highlighted that India's blockage of water and construction of several dams in the past years had not only violated the

Treaty terms but also affected ecosystems and endangered the lives of millions. Ambassador Masood Khan underlined that India has carefully timed its actions, building a cascade of dams that give it strategic advantage. He warned that Pakistan's legal position needs to be firmly grounded in international principles. He pointed out potential obstacles in bringing India to arbitration, including provisions in the Vienna Convention and India's ability to avoid ICJ jurisdiction on issues related to Commonwealth nations. Ambassador Masood recommended Pakistan to apply pressure through the World Bank, the UN Security Council, and key powers like the P5. Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel highlighted the crucial link between Kashmir and water, emphasising that Pakistan's rivers flow through the disputed region. He reminded that the IWT was not a water-sharing agreement but a river division arrangement heavily

influenced by Indian demands. India, he claimed, enjoys uncontested control over the eastern rivers, while seeking to maximize its use of the western ones while ignoring Treaty constraints. Ambassador Kakakhel dismissed the claim that Pakistan opposes all Indian projects and pointed to India's non-compliance with the Court of Arbitration's decisions. Mr. Ashfaq Mahmood focused on the strategic objectives behind India's moves, arguing that India seeks to both hegemonize water and prevent third-party involvement by insisting on bilateralism. He underscored the dangerous narrative linking terrorism with water rights. Mr. Ashfaq recommended a stronger legal posture from Pakistan, including strict enforcement of the IWT and referral to the Court of Arbitration. He called for improved water data collection, climate-related research, and internal technical preparedness. —DNA





## Briefs

Over 4.9  
mln mobile  
SIMs to be  
deactivated  
in phases

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Interior, on the recommendation of National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), has directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to initiate a phased process for deactivation of all mobile SIMs issued on Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) that have been cancelled, expired, impounded or declared deceased.

According to a letter issued by the Ministry of Interior to the PTA, NADRA has provided comprehensive data identifying such CNICs along with a schedule for the blocking of associated mobile SIMs. The process will commence on June 30, 2025, with the deactivation of SIMs registered against CNICs that expired in 2017. In the subsequent months, SIMs linked to CNICs expired in 2018 will be deactivated on July 31, 2025, followed by SIMs linked to CNICs expired in 2019 on August 31, 2025.

The process will continue with the deactivation of SIMs registered on CNICs that expired in 2020 on September 30, 2025, those expired in 2021 on October 31, 2025, and those expired in 2022 on November 30, 2025. In the final phase, mobile SIMs registered on CNICs that expired in the years 2023, 2024, and 2025 will be deactivated on December 31, 2025.

US closing  
embassy in  
Jerusalem  
until Friday

WASHINGTON: The United States said it will close its embassy in Jerusalem until Friday amid the growing military conflict between Israel and Iran, as speculation mounts about possible American intervention. "Given the security situation and in compliance with Israel Home Front Command guidance, the US Embassy in Jerusalem will be closed tomorrow (Wednesday, June 18) through Friday (June 20)," the embassy said in a statement posted Tuesday to its website. On the fifth day of conflict between the Middle Eastern foes, officials also directed that all US government employees and their family members continue to shelter in place in and near their residences until further notice.

President Donald Trump met with his National Security Council Tuesday after calling for Iran's surrender and warning that the United States could assassinate its supreme leader if it wanted. The embassy statement said there was no current announcement about helping Americans leave the "crisis area." – APP

Malaria cases  
surge in  
Karachi and  
Hyderabad

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Uzma Hameed said on Wednesday that malaria cases are on the rise in Karachi and other parts of Sindh, with more than 55,000 cases reported so far this year. According to a private news channel, she said that Hyderabad has been hit the hardest, with over 20,000 cases recorded. Dr. Uzma said that different variants of malaria are spreading, each showing slightly different symptoms. "Common signs include high fever, chills, body aches, nausea, and fatigue," she explained. She emphasized the importance of prevention, urging people to use mosquito nets, apply insect repellents, and avoid stagnant water where mosquitoes breed. "Early diagnosis and proper treatment are key to recovery," she added. She advised the public to stay alert and take precautionary measures as the monsoon season increases the risk of mosquito-borne diseases. – Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan Dan Stoenescu met with Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani. Bot sides discussed matters of mutual interest. – DNA

## Contrary to Trump's stance

There was no US mediation  
in Pak-India ceasefire: Modi

PM Modi emphasised India has not accepted mediation "in the past and will never do"

## CENTRELINE REPORT

NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, contrary to US President Donald Trump's stance, has denied Washington's involvement in brokering a ceasefire with Pakistan last month. "PM Modi told President Trump clearly that during this period, there was no talk at any stage on subjects like India-US trade deal or US mediation between India and Pakistan," Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said in a press statement while referring to the telephonic conversation between the two leaders. "Talks for ceasing military action happened directly between India and Pakistan through existing military channels, and on the insistence of Pa-

kistan. PM Modi emphasised that India has not accepted mediation in the past and will never do," the diplomat claimed.

Misri said the two leaders spoke over the phone – for 35 minutes – at the insistence of Trump on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Canada which Modi attended as a guest. The White House, however, did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the Modi-Trump call. The Indian PM's denial comes after President Trump said last month that the nuclear-armed South Asian neighbours agreed to a ceasefire after talks mediated by the US and that the hostilities ended after he urged the countries to focus on trade instead of war. Meanwhile, Islamabad had previously said that the ceasefire happened after its military returned a call the Indian military had

initiated on May 7. New Delhi's latest claim refers to the 87-hour-long conflict between the two countries – which erupted in the aftermath of a terrorist attack on tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and included cross-border strikes by both countries – left 40 civilians and 13 armed forces personnel martyred in Pakistan. In response to India's cross-border strikes, Pakistan had launched Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos after downing six Indian Air Force jets, including three Rafales in response to Indian aggression.

The two countries, following four days of armed conflict, agreed on a US-brokered ceasefire on May 10. Although Pakistan has time again praised and credited President Trump for his role in the ceasefire, which he himself has highlighted on mul-

tiples occasions, India has denied any US involvement whatsoever.

However, the US president is on record reiterating his stance and has even offered to mediate the longstanding Kashmir dispute between the two countries – a stance also highlighted by the US State Department as well. Separately, speaking at a press briefing in Washington on Tuesday, US State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce said that President Trump could only offer help and it was up to whoever he's offering it to "whether or not they'll accept it". "I would not speak to the nature of another country's decision-making. That's up to them. But I think all of us are grateful that we have a president who is willing to help and wants to help," the spokesperson remarked.

PSX  
extends  
slide

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The capital market extended its decline on Wednesday as investors remained cautious amid regional tensions and economic uncertainty. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index touched a low of 120,860.64, reflecting a drop of 1,110.4 points, or -0.91%, and climbed to an intraday high of 121,905.49, falling 65.55 points, or -0.05%. "The market is likely to remain choppy for couple of weeks until clarity is noticed on regional tensions between Iran and Israel and its possible repercussion on Pakistan's geopolitical alignment," said independent investment and economic analyst AAH Soomro.

NA finance  
committee  
rejects 18% tax  
on solar panels

## FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly finance committee has unanimously rejected a controversial proposal to impose an 18% sales tax on solar panels. This move was part of an effort by tax authorities to meet fiscal targets backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The proposed tax would have generated an estimated Rs20 billion (\$71 million). The decision was made during a meeting chaired by MNA Syed Naveed Qamar on Tuesday. He stated: "Solar is not a luxury; it's a necessity. We won't allow taxation that discourages clean energy." The decision signals growing political resistance to the stringent fiscal consolidation required under Pakistan's new \$7 billion IMF programme.

Digital Sales Tax stays  
with provinces, Solar  
GST cut to 10%: Dar

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday said that the digital sales tax on services would remain within the jurisdiction of provinces, while the proposed 18% GST tax on solar panels had been reviewed and revised down to 10% following consultations. Speaking in the National Assembly, Senator Dar stated that after detailed discussions with coalition partners and relevant stakeholders, consensus had been reached on resolving several contentious budgetary issues. As part of the revisions, it was agreed that the imposition of digital sales tax on services falls under the constitutional domain of provincial governments. "The concerns regarding digital taxation were valid. We held in-depth consultations with all stakeholders, including the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), and it has been decided that the matter will be clearly addressed in the Finance Minister's budget winding-up speech," he said. Dar further clarified that the earlier proposal of imposing 18% General Sales Tax (GST) on solar panels had sparked considerable debate. Upon review, it was revealed that 54% of components used in solarization were already taxed under the existing regime, and the 18% tax applied only to the remaining 46%. However, after mutual consultations, we have now proposed reducing the solar GST from 18% to 10%, he announced. He emphasized that tax proposals are essential for revenue generation, and any relief in one area necessitates compensation elsewhere. He pointed out that when the cabinet found the initial proposal of a 6% salary increase for government employees insufficient and raised it to 10%, corresponding budgetary adjustments also had to be made. "We must move forward collectively. Our approach is rooted in consensus and cooperation," he said. – Agencies

Iran has  
'legitimate' right  
to self-defence

The long-range blitz began early Friday, when Israel launched a massive bombing campaign that prompted Iran to hit back with missiles and drones, including hypersonic missiles

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Wednesday Iran had the "legitimate" right to defend itself in the face of Israel's ongoing bombing campaign, now in its sixth day. "It is a very natural, legitimate and legal right for Iran to defend itself against Israel's thugery and state terrorism," the Turkish leader said, a day after referring to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "the biggest threat to the security of the region". The long-range blitz began early Friday, when Israel launched a massive bombing campaign that prompted Iran to hit back with missiles and drones, including hypersonic missiles. "These attacks were organised while the Iranian nuclear negotiations were taking place," Erdogan said. "Israel, which possesses nuclear weapons and does not recognise any international rules... did not wait for the negotiations to end, but carried out a terrorist act without waiting for the result," he added. Iran says at least 224 people have been killed in the Israeli attacks, which have targeted nuclear and military facilities, while Iranian fire on Israel has claimed at least 24 lives and wounded hundreds more, Netanyahu's office said. "We are closely following Israel's terrorist attacks on Iran. All our institutions are on high alert regarding the possible effects of these attacks on Turkey," Erdogan said. "We are making preparations for every kind of scenario," he said. – Agencies

At UN, Pakistan calls Gaza  
situation 'collapse of humanity'

Piloted by Spain, the resolution, co-sponsored by Pakistan and 47 other states, garnered 149 votes in favour to 12 against, with 19 abstentions. Among those opposing the resolution were the United States and Israel, while India was among the countries abstaining

## DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan voiced "profound anguish, disappointment and mounting despair" over the worsening plight of the people in besieged Gaza as the 10th UN General Assembly's session on Palestine resumed Tuesday, calling the situation not just a humanitarian catastrophe, but a collapse of humanity. "The situation in Gaza is a stain on our collective conscience," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 193-member Assembly which last week adopted a resolution – by an overwhelming majority – demanding an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Israel's war in Gaza and aid access, after the United States vetoed a similar effort in the Security Council on June 4. Piloted by Spain, the resolution, co-sponsored by Pakistan and 47 other states, garnered 149 votes in favour to 12 against, with 19 abstentions. Among those opposing the resolution were the United States and Israel, while India was among the countries abstaining. "These (the demands made in the Assembly resolution) are not aspirations – they are obligations," the Pakistani envoy said, stressing, "The international community must act with urgency to ensure their implementation." Ambassador Asim Iftikhar called the resolution a necessary assertion of international will, saying, "Pakistan is

proud to have supported and co-sponsored this initiative." Pointing out that over 55,000 lives have been lost, including 18,000 children and 28,000 women, he said that infrastructure has been razed – homes, hospitals, schools, cultural heritage, places of worship, while famine looms, with humanitarian workers and UN personnel being attacked with impunity. Against this backdrop, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar reiterated Pakistan's call for the immediate steps necessary not only to stem this horror, but to lay the foundations for a just and lasting peace. These included an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire, ending the killings; lifting of the Gaza blockade, with humanitarian aid allowed freely and safely and international agencies empowered, not hindered; full restoration of UNRWA's mandate, access, and funding and confronting the root cause: the prolonged, illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. "There will be no durable peace without justice, and no justice without the realization of the two-State solution – based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of a sovereign, independent, and contiguous State of Palestine," the Pakistan envoy told the Assembly. In this regard, he said, Pakistan looks forward to the convening of the high-level conference on Palestine and the two-state solution in coming weeks, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia. The conference was to be held this week but was postponed following the Israeli aggression against Iran that led to heightened tensions between the two Middle East rivals.

FIA launches crackdown on human  
smugglers and corrupt officials

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has intensified its nationwide operations against human smugglers and corrupt public officials, arresting a total of eight individuals in separate raids conducted in Lahore and Bahawalpur. In a major operation by the FIA Anti-Human Smuggling Circle Lahore, six illegal travel agents were arrested during a raid conducted at the Technical Training Center near Thokar Bypass. The arrested suspects include Imran Khan, Naveed Azad, Abdul Shakoor, Shafiq Ahmed, Nasir Hussain, and Zahid Iqbal. Authorities recovered 55 Pakistani passports, mobile phones, and other documents from their possession. According to FIA officials, the suspects were illegally collecting large sums of money and passports from citizens under the guise of offering overseas employment, despite not being licensed travel agents. Investigations also revealed their collaboration with two other individuals, Tariq Yaqoob and Tajammul Hussain, in running this unlawful network. The arrested individuals failed to provide satisfactory explanations regarding the seized documents. The raid was carried out under the directive of the Director FIA Lahore Zone, who stated that operations against human traffickers are being further accelerated. – DNA

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