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## Erdogan calls for permanent Iran, Israel ceasefire

Detailed News On Page-07

## Pakistan raises children plight in Gaza, at UN

Detailed News On Page-08



## Pak hockey team needs support

Detailed News On Page-06



## Opposition amends rejected

# Rs17.57tr budget for FY26 passed

For the first time in the country's history, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance has made changes to the revised Finance Bill during the parliamentary process

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday approved the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, with certain amendments to the Finance Bill, despite strong protests from the opposition. The budget, for the FY 2025-26, with a total outlay of Rs17.57 trillion was unveiled by the federal government two weeks ago. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presented the finance bill in the lower house, where it received backing from the ruling coalition, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The finance bill was approved by a majority vote following a clause-by-clause reading and the adoption of amendments through the voting process. During the proceedings, all amendments proposed by opposition lawmakers were rejected.

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## PM lauds economic team for balanced budget

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday lauded the entire economic team, particularly Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, for their hard work and dedication in preparing the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-26. He also expressed gratitude to the federal cabinet and the allied political parties for their support in finalizing the budget. Chairing the Cabinet meeting here, the prime minister also spoke on the recent regional developments and welcomed the

ceasefire between Israel and Iran, terming it a crucial step in avoiding further escalation and loss. He thanked God for the peaceful resolution and acknowledged the important role played by various countries, including Saudi Arabia, in ensuring the ceasefire. He said Iran openly thanked the people of Pakistan, its political parties, military, and political leadership for their role in the ensuring ceasefire between the two countries. "The Iranian leadership specifically named the President of Pakistan—himself, and the Field Marshal—for their contribution

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## IMF DEAL

## Gandapur says KP may cooperate with Centre

KP chief minister slams jail authorities

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: After not being allowed to meet incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan at Adiala jail, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur lambasted the federal government, signalling that his administration will not cooperate with the Centre on the upcoming IMF programme. "I am telling you [Centre] that the next matter yet to be decided with IMF," said Gandapur while speaking to journalists outside Rawalpindi's Adiala jail alongside

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## Ashura on July 6

Decision to suspend mobile and internet services will be made in consultation with provinces, says security czar

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee on Thursday announced that the moon of Moharram 1447 Hijri was sighted in the country, and Ashura would fall on July 6 (Sunday). Addressing a press conference, the committee's chairman Moulana Abdul Khabir Azad said that the meeting of the central, zonal and district Ruet-e-Hilal Committees were held simultaneously at their respective headquarters.

## US visa seekers asked to make social media accounts public

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The United States consulates in Karachi and Lahore on Thursday requested that all applicants for F, M or J nonimmigrant visas make their social media accounts public for vetting, after similar instructions were issued by the US Embassy in Delhi earlier this week. US President Donald Trump's administration on Wednesday ordered the resumption of student visa appointments but significantly tightened its social media vetting in a bid to identify any applicants who may be hostile towards the country,

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### At least 7 killed in rain incidents

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: At least seven people were killed and 39 others were injured in multiple rain-related incidents as Punjab was battered by heavy monsoon showers on Thursday, according to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and Rescue 1122. Monsoon rains fall across the region from June to September, offering respite from the summer heat and are crucial to replenishing water supplies. They are also vital for agriculture, and therefore the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security for South Asia's nearly two billion people. Earlier today, the PDMA said that four people died and 19 were injured in rain-related incidents.

### Cocaine market hits new record

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Cocaine production, seizures and use all hit record highs in 2023, the UN drug agency said on Thursday, with the illicit drug's market the world's fastest-growing. Illegal production jumped to 3,708 tons, nearly 34 per cent more than in 2022, and more than four times higher than 10 years earlier, when it was at a low, the Vienna-based UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in its annual report. The current surge is mainly due to an increase in the size of the area under illicit coca bush cultivation in Colombia and updated yield data, it added. Global cocaine seizures, too, recorded a high of 2,275 tons, marking a 68pc rise in the four years to 2023. The number of cocaine users also grew to 25 million in 2023, up from 17 million ten years earlier.

## Post-war statement

# Iranian blows crushed Israel, says Khamenei

Khamenei said the United States directly entered the conflict to prevent Israel's complete destruction but ultimately failed to achieve any results

NEWS DESK / DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said Israel was "nearly brought to its knees" under Iranian strikes, in a message published on his Telegram account, three days after a truce took place, Iran International reported. "I congratulate the great Iranian nation on the defeat of the fake Zionist regime," Khamenei said, according to his Telegram channel, with the full speech due to be published later. "Despite all its noise and claims, the Zionist regime was nearly crushed under the strikes of the Islamic Republic." Moreover, Khamenei said the United States directly entered the conflict to prevent Israel's complete destruction but ultimately failed to achieve any results. "My second congratulations go to the victory of our dear Iran over the American regime," he said.

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## Gaza war to end in two weeks

DNA

WASHINGTON: In a historic development, former U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have reportedly agreed to a plan that will see the Gaza war end within two weeks. Sources close to the negotiations reveal that Trump, who has long promised to broker peace in the region, played a key role in securing the deal following the recent de-escalation of tensions between Israel and Iran. Key Points of the Agreement: Ceasefire Implementation: A full cessation of hostilities is expected within 14 days, with both sides committing to an immediate reduction in violence. Humanitarian Pause:

Continued on Page 06

# India faces diplomatic isolation at SCO Summit

This isolation was further evident when the SCO collectively condemned Israel's aggression against Iran, a move supported by all member states except India

DNA

BEIJING: The recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit highlighted a stark contrast in diplomatic fortunes for India and Pakistan. While Pakistan secured a significant diplomatic victory, India found itself increasingly isolated, failing to garner support for its key positions and even refusing to sign the joint declaration—an unusual move signaling its discontent. One of India's major setbacks at the summit was its inability to link the Poonch incident—a recent attack on Indian security forces—to Pakistan in the SCO's joint declaration. Despite its efforts, no other member state backed India's stance, leaving it diplomatically stranded. Sources indicate that India's refusal to sign the final declaration was an attempt to mask its frustration over this failure. This isolation was further evident when the SCO collectively condemned Israel's aggression against Iran, a move supported by all member states except India. New Delhi's divergent stance on the issue underscored its growing disconnect with the regional bloc, which includes close partners of both Russia and China. In contrast, Pakistan

emerged from the summit in a stronger position. Its diplomatic efforts ensured that India's attempts to internationalize the Poonch issue were rebuffed. Additionally, Pakistan aligned smoothly with the SCO's consensus on regional security matters, including the condemnation of Israeli actions in the Middle East. The SCO's unified stance on these issues suggests that India's influence within the group is waning, while Pakistan and other members continue to strengthen their coordination. This development is particularly significant given the SCO's role as a key platform for Eurasian security and economic cooperation. India's diplomatic isolation at the SCO summit raises questions about its foreign policy strategy in the region. With ties strained with China and a neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war, New Delhi risks alienating itself further from key multilateral forums. Meanwhile, Pakistan's ability to navigate the SCO's dynamics demonstrates its growing diplomatic leverage, particularly with China's backing. The SCO summit has made it clear that India is struggling to maintain its diplomatic influence within the organization, while Pakistan has successfully consolidated its position.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif himself approaches the opposition benches in National Assembly and greets leader of the PTI Asad Qaiser. Islamabad June 26, 2025. — DNA

## Iran ends coop with IAEA

# US to offer new defense of strikes on Iran nuclear sites

After waves of Israeli attacks on nuclear and military sites and retaliatory missile fire from Iran since June 13, the United States bombed three key Iranian atomic facilities at the weekend

APP

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is set to hold a news conference on Thursday to offer a fresh assessment of strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities, following a stinging row over how much American bombardment set back Tehran's nuclear program. After waves of Israeli attacks on nuclear and military sites and retaliatory missile fire from Iran since June 13, the United States bombed three key Iranian atomic facilities at the weekend. The extent of the damage in Iran, where Israel said it had acted to stop an imminent nuclear threat, has become the subject of profound disagreement in the United States. An initial classified assessment, first reported by CNN, was said to have concluded that the strike did not destroy key components and that Iran's nuclear program was set back only months at most.

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## Fordow centrifuges 'no longer operational': IAEA

DNA

CENTRIFUGES at Iran's Fordow nuclear facility are no longer operational, sustaining "considerable, important physical damage" from recent US strikes, according to Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), IRNA reported. Speaking to Radio France Internationale, Grossi indicated that satellite imagery suggests the enrichment hall at Fordow was likely hit. He attributed the damage to the sheer force of the bombs and the delicate nature of the centrifuges, stating that the vibrations alone would render them inoperable.

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## Scholars engaged to foster harmony during Muharram

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: All necessary measures are being taken to ensure peace and promote inter-sect harmony during the holy month of Muharram, said Deputy Commissioner (DC) Dera Ismail Khan, Abdul Nasir Khan, during separate meetings with delegations of Shia and Sunni religious scholars held at the DC Office Conference Hall. The meetings were also attended by Additional DC General Adnan Jameel, Additional DC Relief Gulam Abbas Shah, and other district officers. Speaking on the occasion, the DC assured that all previously agreed-upon arrangements related to Muharram would be strictly implemented. He emphasized that no individual would be allowed to take the law into their own hands. The DC appealed to the scholars and elders of both sects to once again play their vital role in maintaining peace and brotherhood in the district, as they had done in the past. He further stated that instructions had already been issued to the TMA, WAPDA and other relevant departments to complete all necessary arrangements well before Ashura, in order to avoid any last-minute difficulties. The DC added that a comprehensive security plan had been devised in collaboration with local administration, police and other law enforcement agencies to effectively respond to any situation. Expressing hope for continued peace in the region, he urged that keeping peace in the area is very important. He asked people from all religious groups to show respect, patience, and understanding toward each other.—APP

## Cattle farmers advised on monsoon precautions

GUJRAT:The livestock and dairy development department advised cattle farmers to provide dry fodder and balanced nutrition, including Anmol Wanda, to safeguard animals from seasonal diseases during the monsoon. A department spokesperson said special care must be taken of livestock during the rainy season to prevent health issues and economic losses. Farmers were urged to ensure dry and clean shelter for animals to avoid exposure to damp conditions. The spokesperson emphasized the importance of balanced diets to reduce weather-related stress and recommended timely administration of preventive vaccines. Livestock Facilitation Centers are providing Wanda, mineral mixtures, and urea molasses blocks at subsidized rates.—APP

## 14 held for power pilfering

SARGODHA: The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) caught 14 pilferers involved in electricity theft from mainlines and meter tampering during an ongoing crackdown here on Thursday. The task force team raided various areas of the district and caught Riaz, Tahir, Sqlain, Samiullah, Abdul Qadir, Waleed Khan, Hafizullah, Farzand Arain, Tariq, Sufi Kamal and others.—APP

# Naqvi chairs high-level meeting on Muharram security

Interior Minister directed authorities that decisions regarding internet and mobile service suspensions must be made on the basis of ground realities and the security situation

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a High-Level meeting on Nationwide Muharram Security Plan at Ministry of Interior. During the meeting, security plan for all provinces, including Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Islamabad was reviewed in detail. It was decided in the meeting to launch a crackdown against elements spreading religious hatred on social media during Muharram and strict legal action will be taken against them. Moreover, it was decided to send clear recommendations to PEMRA to curb hate content on electronic and social media. Furthermore, it was also decided that all necessary measures will be taken to ensure peace and order during Muharram. It was also agreed that any decision to suspend internet or mobile phone services will be made in consultation with relevant provinces, keeping in view the security concerns. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed authorities that decisions regarding internet and mobile service suspensions must be made on the basis of ground realities and the security situation. He emphasized that all necessary measures and decisions will be taken through mutual consultation. He added that the Federal Government will extend full support to all provinces,



es, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan for maintaining law and order. Mohsin Naqvi stressed that no one will be allowed to incite violence or disrupt peace. He stated that strict enforcement of the code of conduct during Muharram will be ensured. He added that modern

technology will be used to monitor processions and gatherings. The IGP's and Home Secretaries of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Islamabad briefed the Interior Minister on their respective security plans

for Muharram. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Interior Tahir Chaudhry, Federal Secretary Interior, Acting Chairman CDA, Commandant Frontier Constabulary, DC Islamabad, DIG Islamabad Police, senior officials of the Ministry of Interior, and

law enforcement agencies. IGP's, Home Secretaries, DG Rangers Punjab, DG Rangers Sindh, and senior officers from law enforcement agencies of all provinces, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan also participated in the meeting via video link.

## Mohtasib opens new building office in Multan

ISLAMABAD: The Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has called upon the government officials to ensure implementation of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's decisions with a view to providing prompt relief to the people. He was addressing government officials and officers of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Regional Offices following inauguration of the new building of Regional Office at Multan today. He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib's office is fundamentally a poor man's court committed to providing administrative relief to the poor and moralized segments of the society. "We hear complaints against more than 200 Federal Government entities and redress the public complaints against maladministration as expeditiously as possible", he observed. Later, he held a meeting with the senior officials of the Regional Offices at Multan, Bahawalpur and DG Khan alongwith the representatives of the Federal Agencies there. He urged them to redouble their efforts for serving the people and ensure implementation of his decisions in letter and spirit. He also made it clear that his decisions have to be implemented otherwise he would be invoking provisions in the law prescribed for non-implementation as punishment. —APP

## law & order situation in Sindh improving: Murad

## DNA

LARKANA : The law and order situation in Sindh is improving, and incidents of kidnapping in the province have decreased. If there is a need to conduct an operation against criminals, the Sindh government will not bow down. This was stated by Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, while speaking to the media on Thursday after offering condolences on the death of MNA Aijaz Hussain Jakhani's mother. Chief Minister said that the Sindh government has passed its budget, while the federal government is expected to pass its budget in a day or two. He added that the PPP's federal parliamentary party has decided to vote in favor of the budget. Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah further stated that before the PPP government came into power,

the law and order situation was extremely poor, and people had to travel in convoys. However, the situation has significantly improved now. He noted that war is dangerous for the entire world and that our country itself is a victim of terrorism. Earlier, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah visited Jakhani House to offer condolences to MNA Aijaz Hussain Jakhani on the passing of his mother. On the occasion, MNA Aijaz Hussain Jakhani, MPA Mumtaz Jakhani, Provincial Energy Minister Syed Nasir Ali Shah, Provincial Minister for Prisons Haji Ali Hassan Khan Zardari, Provincial Minister for Excise and Taxation Mukesh Kumar Chawla, and Provincial Minister for Tourism and Culture Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah were also present. Earlier, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has announced extensive tax relief measures in the 2025-

26 provincial budget aimed at stimulating economic growth and easing financial burdens on citizens. In addition to the reliefs included in the Finance Bill, several incentives have been formalised through amendments to key laws. The measures span both tax and non-tax sectors, targeting agriculture, transport, education, and small businesses. To support farmers amid a 30.7% decline in cotton production, the cotton fee has been abolished. The drainage cess has also been removed to counteract erratic weather effects. A 50% reduction has been approved in fees for property transfers, certified copies, sales, solvency, and inheritance certificates.

The annual tax on commercial vehicles has been cut to Rs1,000, and professional tax has been completely abolished.

## Rain-related incidents claim 4 lives in Punjab

LAHORE: Four people lost their lives and 27 others sustained injuries in rain and storm-related incidents across Punjab on Thursday. According to Rescue 1122 spokesperson, in Okara, five-year-old Dua Fatima died when the roof of her house collapsed in Basti Riazabad while two others were injured. An incident of lightning injured a man in the district. In Depalpur, two people were injured in a roof collapse. In Sheikh Basti, a girl was injured when a roof caved in, and another injury was reported in Adda Gamber due to a similar incident. In Sohawa, Jhelum, one man drowned in a seasonal stream while two others were injured. In Kot Barkat Ali, Khanewal, a man died from a lightning and another was injured. In Bahawalnagar (Bolewala), one fatality occurred due to a roof collapse.—APP

## CJP calls for collective effort in reform process

ISLAMABAD: Justice Yahya Afridi, Chief Justice of Pakistan, while emphasizing the importance of synergy, has urged bar representatives to sensitize their respective bar associations about developments in national judiciary and to proactively engage in the reform initiatives. He further directed that all support and facilities extended to the bar associations by the Federal Government must be streamlined and structured to avoid duplication and ensure efficiency. The Chief Justice of Pakistan, who is Chairman, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP), said this while chairing a high-level meeting Thursday at the Supreme Court Branch Registry, Lahore. According to a press released issued here today, the meeting was convened to review institutional linkages between the Bar associations and the Law and Justice Commission. The

meeting was attended by Miss Justice Aalia Neelum, Chief Justice Lahore High Court; Registrar, Lahore High Court; Secretary, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan; representatives of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Pakistan Bar Council; officials from the Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of Pakistan; and Secretaries of Law and Planning from the Government of Punjab. Welcoming the participants, the Chief Justice of Pakistan acknowledged their contributions to the justice sector. He referred to the existing gap in coordination between the bar associations and the Law and Justice Commission. In order to strengthen coordination, the Commission has decided to post a senior level representative in every province who would sit in, the High Courts. These representatives will serve as liaisons to raise awareness among district bar associa-

tions, identify local priority areas, and supervise ongoing justice sector initiatives at the grassroots level. Pakistan tourism packages The Chief Justice also called upon provincial line departments to remain actively engaged with the Resident Additional Secretary of the Commission for timely and effective implementation of district-level projects forwarded by District Coordination Committee headed by the District and Sessions Judge. He noted with concern the lack of infrastructure, including solarization and digital integration, in less developed districts, and stressed the need for targeted interventions in such areas. The Chief Justice encouraged the bar representatives to ensure that their members benefit from the Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs offered by the Federal Judicial Academy.—APP

## CII calls for national unity, denounces sectarianism

ISLAMABAD: The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) on Thursday hosted its annual National Ulema and Mashaikh Peace Conference in connection with the sacred month of Muharram reaffirming its commitment to peace, unity, and inter-sectarian harmony under the framework of the "Paigham-e-Pakistan" national narrative. The conference was chaired by CII Chairman Dr. Raghib Hussain Naemi, with Federal Secretary for the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith, Dr. Syed Ata-ur-Rehman as the chief guest. It brought together leading religious scholars from all schools of thought, including Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Qari Hanif Jalandhri, Maulana Zahid Rashidi, Maulana Ahmed Ludhianvi, Allama Arif Wahidi, Allama Muhammad Hussain Akbar, Pir Naqeeb-ur-Rehman, Allama Shabbir Hassan Maisami, and others. During the conference, the Ulema and Mashaikh unanimously endorsed a code of conduct emphasizing that every sect has the right to preach its beliefs, while hate speech, incitement, and taking the law into one's own hands would not be tolerated. The scholars agreed that the authority to declare any individual an apostate (Takfir) lies solely with the courts. Condemning all forms of terrorism, the participants collectively called for protecting the sanctity of the Prophets, especially the final Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the Mothers of the Believers, the Rashidun Caliphs, the Ahl al-Bayt, and the Companions of the Prophet. They recommended incorporating the ethics of respectful disagreement into educational curricula to promote tolerance. They also emphasized the rights of women, children, the elderly, and marginalized groups. In a strong display of unity, the scholars vowed to play their role in preserving peace and curbing sectarianism throughout the holy month. Declaring Muharram as a month of sacrifice, patience, and unity, they appealed to all citizens to contribute to maintaining harmony across the nation. They also issued a strong condemnation of Israel's two-year-long aggression in Gaza and denounced recent Israeli attacks on Iran, labeling them a violation of Iranian sovereignty, human rights, and international law. The participants expressed full support for Pakistan's national stance on these matters.—APP

## Japan's assistance projects: Consulate general organises media tour

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Consulate General of Japan in Karachi organized an Official Development Assistance (ODA) Press Tour in which a group of journalists from various media houses participated. The purpose of the ODA Press Tour was to increase the people of Pakistan's awareness of Japan's contribution towards Pakistan's development in key sectors such as education, healthcare sector and human security. The journalists, accompanied by the Consulate staff, visited two project sites in Karachi that have benefited from Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) and

JICA's Technical Cooperation. GGP is a grant scheme of the Japanese Government, for the development projects aimed at improving the social well-being of the people at the grassroots level. Japan has funded more than 400 projects in Pakistan under the GGP since 1989. The first stop

was Disabled Welfare Association (DWA), located near Mazare-e-Quaid. The DWA has been providing vocational training to women with disabilities in Karachi since 2003, with a focus on underprivileged communities. Through the GGP, Japan has provided new transport vehicles and vocational training

equipment for low-income women with disability in Karachi in 2025. Along with the ODA Press Tour, a handover ceremony was held, with the Consul General of Japan, HATTORI Masaru in attendance. The second site visited by the group was the Women Skill Development Center, operated by Women De-

velopment Foundation Pakistan (WDFP), in Mariapur, Karachi. This site is part of JICA's Technical Cooperation Project for Improvement of Livelihoods and Well-being of Female Home-Based Workers (FHBWs) in the Informal Economic Sector in Sindh Province (Light-F). WDFP is an NGO that provides support to women domestic workers in Sindh and is one of the partner organizations for this technical cooperation. This technical assistance aims to improve the livelihoods and welfare standards of the informal economy in Pakistan especially for domestic workers, many of whom are low-income women, thereby promoting equitable economic growth and human security in Pakistan. The participants observed a Light-F training course, a toolkit that contributes to livelihood improvement and livelihood enhancement.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

June 02/Italy National/ Independence Day

June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day

June 06/Sweden National Day

June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)

June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution& Army Day

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

June 12/Philippines Independence Day

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

June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day

June 17/Iceland National Day

June 18/Seychells National Day

June 25/Croatia National Day

June 25/Mozambique National Day

June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

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

Emergency Ambulance.....1122

& Rescue Services.....4451122

Motorway Police.....9266044

Motorway Police.....9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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MH.....5611116

Cannt Hospital.....9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



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CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

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# Pakistan girls empowerment forum June 2025 organised

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Girl Guides Association National Headquarters organized “Pakistan Girls Empowerment Forum-Pathway to Leadership” from 21st to 26th June 2025. 110 Guides and their Leaders from AJK, Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Islamabad Capital Territory participated. The event was organized in collaboration with UNICEF Pakistan. Pakistan Girl Guides Association has recently launched 4 new badge curricula regarding Nutrition, Environment & Climate Change, Leadership, and Mental and Emotional Wellbeing. During the event, Girls experienced activities of these 4 badges and will cascade these to at least 10 more girls after returning to their home towns. Upon completion of this task, they will become Empowerment Champions. Ms. Cindy Kushner, Deputy Representative (a.i), UNICEF Pakistan, was the Chief Guest of the Event. Mrs. Maria Maud Sabri, National Com-



missioner, Pakistan Girl Guides Association, welcomed her and the other Guests. She briefed them about the program and activities of the Guiding. She said that Guiding is preparing leaders for tomorrow. While experiencing the Guide program, the girls learn to step forward whenever there is a need. Mrs. Maria Maud Sabri

also informed the guests about the new badges. She commended the tireless efforts of Guides, volunteers, and partners for their unwavering commitment to creating safe and inclusive spaces for young women and girls. A highlight of the ceremony was a compelling panel discussion moderated by Ms. Fahmida Khan,

featuring Girl Guides as panelists. The discussion spotlighted their journeys, insights, and dreams for the future, offering a powerful reflection on leadership, resilience, and the transformative power of girl-led initiatives. Ms. Cindy Kushner, Deputy Representative of UNICEF Pakistan, graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

In her inspiring remarks, she underscored the vital role of partnerships in nurturing girl-led leadership and promoting gender equality. She highlighted the potential of young girls and emphasized that empowering them should not be the responsibility of a single organization—it must be a national priority. She said: “This forum does more than just amplify girls’ voices; it reminds us that when we work together, grounded in equality and respect, we shape a future where every girl has the chance to grow, learn, and lead. UNICEF Pakistan is proud to walk this journey alongside PGGA, and together we will continue creating spaces where every girl can realize her full potential.” She also encouraged participants to stay resilient, to keep dreaming, and to use their voices as a source of strength for others. The event also included a soulful empowerment song performed by a Girl Guide, moving the audience with lyrics that echoed the Forum’s themes of strength, unity, and self-belief.

# Chairman PMYP, RCCI delegation discuss youth empowerment initiatives

RAWALPINDI: A delegation from the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), led by President Mr. Usman Shaukat and Senior Vice President Mr. Khalid Farooq Qazi, met with Mr. Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme (PMYP), at his office in Islamabad to discuss collaborative strategies for youth empowerment. The meeting focused on strengthening public-private partnerships aimed at supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs and job creators. Discussions covered key areas including employment generation, youth entrepreneurship, and the creation of a sustainable ecosystem to nurture innovation and startup culture among young Pakistanis. Chairman Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan lauded RCCI’s proactive efforts in promoting entrepreneurship and facilitating business development, especially for the youth. He briefed the delegation on PMYP’s ongoing initiatives, notably the upcoming launch of the Digital Youth Hub—a centralized platform offering information on scholarships, employment, and skills development opportunities. Both parties expressed a strong commitment to work together in advancing economic growth through youth-focused programs. The meeting concluded with a shared vision to foster innovation, create job opportunities, and empower youth to take a leading role in Pakistan’s economic development.—DNA

# Ethiopian embassy, UN coordinate for food systems

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad and the United Nations, Pakistan, have agreed to cooperate on mobilizing international participation for the 2nd United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake, taking place from July 27-29, 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The important discussion to this end held during a meeting between H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdu, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and H.E. Mr. Mohamed Yahya, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Pakistan. Both sides exchanged views on the critical importance of Pakistani leadership’s participation in the Summit, which is being co-hosted by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Italy. Ambassador Dr. Jemal briefed the Resident Coordinator on the extensive preparations underway in Addis Ababa to host the Food Systems Summit Stocktake with an aim to review progress and boost collaborations for a



global transformation of food systems. “The summit will be a great opportunity to further strengthen the bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan,” the Ambassador stated. He informed the Resident Coordinator about the visionary steps taken by Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed for climate adaptation and mitigation, green development, and food self-sufficiency, citing initiatives like the Green Legacy Initiative, the Grand

Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and the Bounty of Basket program. He highlighted the growing cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan, particularly in areas of climate change and food security. Mr. Mohamed Yahya commended Ethiopia’s significant efforts in forestation and afforestation, food security, and green development initiatives. He

assured the Ambassador of his full support to ensure the conference’s success and the achievement of its objectives. He also lauded Ethiopia’s proactive role in promoting food security, and a strong commitment to multilateralism demonstrated by Addis Ababa by hosting numerous international conferences and summits in the recent years.

# Mobile phone imports decreases 16.31%

ISLAMABAD: The import of mobile phones into the country has witnessed a decrease of 16.31 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding months of last year. Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$ 1.356 billion during July-May (2024-25) as compared to the imports of US \$ 1.620 billion during July-May (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Pakistan food delivery service. Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the import of mobile phones also dipped by 35.83 percent during the month of May 2025 when compared to the same month of last year. The import of mobiles into the country during May 2025 was recorded at \$ 101.131 million against the exports of \$157.592 million in May 2024. On a month-on-month basis, the imports of mobile phones came down by 19.61 percent during May 2025, as compared to the imports of US \$125.103 million during April 2025, according to the data. It is pertinent to mention here that the overall merchandise exports from the country increased by 5.15 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year. Exports during July-May (2024-25) were recorded at \$29.564 billion against \$28.117 billion during July-May (2023-24), according to PBS data. On the other hand, imports into the country went up by 7.50 percent by growing from \$49.815 billion last year to \$53.550 billion during the first eleven months of the current year.—APP

# Ihsaan assures full support for NTC modernization

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce Rana Ihsaan Afzal on Thursday assured full support for equipping the National Tariff Commission (NTC) with modern tools, emphasizing the need for digitization to improve efficiency and expedite processes. During his visit to the NTC, the Coordinator reviewed the Commission’s mandate, operational functions, and institutional capacity. He lauded the Commission’s efforts and reaffirmed the government’s commitment to strengthening the institution, said a news release. “The NTC must evolve into a data-driven, tech-enabled institution to effectively safeguard Pakistan’s economic interests in today’s dynamic global trade environment,” the coordinator said. Pakistan tourism packages Chairman NTC and senior officials briefed the coordinator on the Commission’s core responsibilities, which include advising the government on tariff matters and implementing trade remedy laws such as anti-dumping duties, countervailing duties, and safeguard measures. The role of NTC in protecting domestic industries from unfair international trade practices was emphasized as a critical component of Pakistan’s trade policy. The visit also served as a platform for open dialogue, where NTC officials shared institutional challenges and discussed ways to enhance performance.—DNA

# CDA clarifies news on Jinnah Square Interchange

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday issued a clarification regarding viral social media clips showing a damaged slip road near the Jinnah Square Interchange. The civic body confirmed that all main structures, loops, and operational sections of the interchange remain fully intact and functional. The minor issue stemmed from water seepage near Sui gas trenches along a small isolated slip road, which was promptly repaired by the contractor following heavy rainfall. CDA emphasized that the repair work, conducted under the contractor’s two-year defect liability period, was completed at no cost to the authority. The quick resolution reaffirms compliance with quality standards, ensuring public safety and infrastructure durability. Officials urged citizens to rely on official statements and avoid misinformation circulating on social media platforms.—APP

# Over 1,000 drug dealers nabbed

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have arrested over 1,000 suspected drug dealers and seized massive quantities of narcotics — including heroin, ice, hashish, opium, cocaine, and more than 7,000 bottles of liquor — during the ongoing year 2025. An official told APP on Thursday that the campaign is being conducted under the special direction of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, as part of the department’s commitment to eradicate drug networks in the federal capital. He said the police recovered 399 kilograms of heroin, 178 kilograms of hashish, over 52 kilograms of ice, more than 6 kilograms of opium, 50 grams of cocaine, 160 intoxicating pills, and 7,246 bottles of liquor during various operations carried out across the city. He said multiple targeted operations were launched to dismantle drug trafficking networks, particularly focusing on those involved in supplying drugs to youth. —APP

# H-8 college hope for academic improvement

ISLAMABAD: Professor Athar ul Islam has officially taken charge as the new Principal of Islamabad Model Postgraduate College (IMPC), H-8. Prior to this, he served as Principal of Islamabad Model College for Boys, F-10/4. The staff of IMPC H-8 gave him a warm welcome and expressed hope that his dynamic leadership will bring positive academic and administrative reforms. They are particularly optimistic that the declining performance of the intermediate classes will improve under his guidance and vision. They voiced their hope that the college, once considered a best institution, would regain its lost stature.—APP

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## Briefs

**PBA support for govt reforms, federal budget welcomed**

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Finance Minister Khuram Schehzad on Thursday welcomed and thanked the Pakistan Banks Association (PBA) for their strong and thoughtful support of the Federal Budget 2025-26. This endorsement, coming from the very sector most directly impacted by fiscal and financial decisions, is a powerful validation of the government's reform direction and approach toward sustainable growth, fiscal consolidation, and inclusive development, he said in a statement issued by the finance ministry. The PBA's support reflects confidence not only in the policies announced, but also in the spirit of collaboration that has enabled landmark achievements—from resolving the Rs1.275 trillion circular debt without burdening consumers, to launching first-of-its-kind digital agri-loans and outcome-based skills financing. These initiatives demonstrate that banks and DFIs are no longer just lenders, but strategic partners in driving inclusive growth, green transition, SME empowerment and rural development.—APP

**AIOU achieves prominent success**

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has achieved remarkable success in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025, a globally recognized ranking system. According to the rankings, AIOU secured the first position among federal universities in Pakistan and the second position among all public sector universities in the country for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – Quality Education. AIOU also claimed the top position among Pakistani universities in SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. Additionally, the university ranked first in the country for SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. In SDG 1 – No Poverty, AIOU stood at the third position nationwide. Expressing his pride in the university's accomplishments, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood stated that AIOU is on par with the world's leading universities. He emphasized that the university's curriculum, laboratories, faculty and all academic processes meet international standards.—DNA

**IRSA releases 301,455 cusecs water**

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 301,455 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 434,613 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.88 feet which was 71.88 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 255,600 cusecs and 154,600 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1173.30 feet, which was 123.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.—APP



ISLAMABAD: The ambassador of France Nicolas Galey had the pleasure to host at the French Residence a group of representatives from 6 French NGOs active in Pakistan, and exchanged about their projects and key priorities: —DNA

# Pak, Indonesia mull coop in health sector

In a constructive and forward-looking discussion, both sides underscored the immense potential for collaboration in areas such as vaccine production in Pakistan, the establishment of medical institutions in Indonesia, pharmaceutical development, and human resource exchange

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma, Charge d Affaires of Embassy of Indonesia to Pakistan called on the Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath, to explore opportunities for expand-

ing bilateral cooperation in the health sector. Islamabad tourism

In a constructive and forward-looking discussion, both sides underscored the immense potential for collaboration in areas such as vaccine production in Pakistan, the establishment of medical institutions in Indonesia, pharmaceutical development, and hu-

man resource exchange. Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath expressed strong commitment to advancing this partnership, emphasizing that Pakistan views its collaboration with Indonesia as a strategic priority. Travel guide He highlighted that Government-to-Government (G2G) and People-to-People (P2P) linkages are essential for building

sustainable health systems, and placed particular focus on vaccine production as a critical area of mutual interest. The Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's readiness to facilitate deeper cooperation, stating that the country looks forward to transforming these shared goals into impactful health initiatives for both nations. Travel guide.

## NDMA coordinates unified response

ISLAMABAD: General Manager Geographic Information System (GIS) and expert Ms. Zahra Hassan on Thursday said that NDMA can now predict natural disasters up to six months ahead worldwide and is coordinating with all departments for a unified response to the forthcoming pre-monsoon phase, supported by upgraded communication tools such as a mobile app and email alerts. She said NDMA is providing impact-based forecasts using climate data, with the provincial coordination cell linked to the operations cell, ensuring all departments are well connected and on the same page. She mentioned that people can access advisory and precautionary measures through the NDMA website, email alerts and the Pak-NDMA Disaster Alert mobile app, which is fully active. Zahra Hassan in her recent talk with a local news channel said that NDMA had predicted the situation six months in advance and had already issued a three-month advisory, adding, all departments are alert and actively coordinating. When asked about the regions likely to be most affected by the upcoming monsoon spell, Zahra Hassan said that northern, northeastern and central Punjab, southern Punjab, as well as cities like Lahore, Gujranwala, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Swat are expected to experience the greatest impact. Talking about Karachi, she said that Sindh, including Karachi, is expected to receive rains after mid-July and throughout August, with a mixed pattern of rainfall that could also lead to flooding.—APP

# Naran Road amid rainfall becomes dangerous

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mansehra Khalid Iqbal Thursday stressed public awareness while driving towards Naran, Kaghan and other hilly stations, urging travelers to strictly follow safety guidelines and stay in touch with facilitation centers for assistance. While in an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of public awareness and caution for travelers heading towards northern hilly areas. He stated that the district administration is actively monitoring the situation and has implemented necessary measures to ensure the safety of tourists and residents alike. "We, the stakeholders are fully alert and prepared," he said. "All relevant departments are on high alert and Rescue 1122 emergency services are fully operational to respond swiftly to any untoward incident. Our top priority is the safety and well-being of the public, especially during the busy summer season when tourist flow increases significantly." He urged travelers to strictly follow traffic rules, avoid unnecessary travel during bad weather and remain in contact with facilitation centers established along key routes.

"These centers are equipped to guide and assist visitors," the Deputy Commissioner added. "We are committed to providing a secure and smooth travel experience for everyone." Commissioner also advised travelers to exercise extra caution while driving from Mansehra to Naran, highlighting that the road is zigzag and can become particularly dangerous during rainfall. He warned that slippery conditions, sharp turns and reduced visibility pose serious risks, especially for inexperienced drivers. He urged tourists to drive slowly, use headlights during rain or fog, and avoid overtaking on blind curves. "It is crucial to remain alert and prioritize safety over speed, especially when weather conditions are unfavorable," he said. "A moment of carelessness can lead to tragic consequences on such challenging routes." The Deputy Commissioner also encouraged drivers to check weather updates and road conditions before starting their journey. "We are here to support and guide travelers at every step, but their cooperation and responsible behavior are equally essential," he added.—APP

## Social media's role acknlowged in reviving Pak's indigenous languages

ISLAMABAD :The Director General of the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL), Sultan Muhammad Nawaz Nasir, on Thursday, acknowledging social media's role for preserving Pakistan's endangered indigenous languages like Yidgha, Wakhi, Burushaski, Brahui and others, said, "It is the most relevant platform to preserve country's rich linguistic mosaic." According to the latest data from Ethnologue, there are approximately 7,159 living languages worldwide. However, 75% of the global population communicates using just 20 languages. In Pakistan alone, around 80 languages are spoken, including 68 indigenous and 12 non-indigenous ones. While Urdu is the national language and English a co-official one, regional languages remain a vital part of the country's cultural identity. Languages like Wakhi, Burushaski, Brahui and others are at risk. However, community-driven efforts are helping to preserve them. For example, the Wakhi Culture Association is using radio, social media, and cultural events to promote the language. Wakhi speakers, known as Xik, maintain a strong cultural identity across borders—from China's Tashkurgan to Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor. Burushaski, a language isolate with no known relatives, is spoken in the Hunza, Nagar, and Yasin valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan. Its speakers are increasingly turning to platforms like Facebook and TikTok to share content, promote cultural pride and keep the language alive. A 2020 article titled "Challenges and Opportunities for Brahui Journalism in Balochistan" emphasized the role of digital media in connecting people globally. Experts noted that blogs, websites, and other user-generated content platforms provide opportunities for self-expression and cultural preservation. Sonaina Hamiya, who was graduated from the National College of Arts (NCA) belongs Hunza, designed Burushaski alphabets for her thesis on preserving the language. She noted that many young Burusho, especially in cities, are shifting to dominant languages. Her work aimed to creatively preserve Burushaski by making it accessible and relevant to younger generations.—DNA

## ANF arrests seven smugglers

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting seven operations across the country, recovered as many as 416.405 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 5.188 million and arrested twelve suspects, said the ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday. He informed that 1.2 kgs of hashish were recovered from the luggage of a Qatar-bound passenger at Multan International Airport. In another operation, 9.6 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Mandara Toll Plaza and five suspects were arrested. As many as 400 kgs of cannabis were recovered from the possession of two suspects near Railway Gate Kasur, Lahore. As much as 2 kgs of ice were recovered from a motorcycle rider in Hayatabad, Peshawar. 355 grams of ecstasy pills were recovered from a passenger in public transport near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza. During another operation near the Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, 250 grams of weed were recovered from a passenger travelling in a public transport. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.—APP

## Rain continues in ICT, field teams monitor drainage

ISLAMABAD: Rainfall continued in intervals across Islamabad on Thursday, prompting the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration teams to stay in the field and ensure smooth drainage and traffic movement. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon directed all Assistant Commissioners to remain on-site during the weather activity to monitor the situation closely. According to the spokesman of ICT administration here, the federal capital witnessed intermittent rain throughout the day, raising concerns about water accumulation in low-lying areas. In response, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration deployed sanitation teams across the city to maintain drainage systems. The Deputy Commissioner instructed all Assistant Commissioners to be physically present in the field. Following these orders, officers remained stationed across various sectors, inspecting critical points including roads, underpasses, and residential zones vulnerable to flooding. According to an ICT spokesman, sanitation teams actively cleared blocked drains and ensured water did not collect in underpasses. The spokesperson confirmed that no complaints were received about water accumulation inside any underpass during the day. Monitoring teams also kept a close watch on stormwater drains and low-lying neighborhoods to respond quickly to any developing situation. The ICT administration continued coordination with its sanitation units to ensure uninterrupted flow of rainwater and prevent flooding.—APP

## Pak's role in Iran-Israel ceasefire praised globally

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Thursday that Pakistan's constructive, neutral and balanced role in the Iran-Israel ceasefire has earned international appreciation. He said Pakistan acted with wisdom to safeguard the broader interests of the Muslim Ummah, regional stability, and the global economy. Mian Zahid Hussain stated that the ceasefire has led to a noticeable decline in global oil prices, providing relief to both consumers and businesses worldwide. If the conflict had escalated, crude oil prices could have exceeded 110 dollars per barrel, severely aggravating global inflation and pushing developing economies under immense economic pressure. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader noted that the reduction in tensions would help revive shipping routes, lower insurance costs, enhance the environment for maritime trade, and mitigate disruptions in the global supply chain. Countries like Pakistan will benefit from smoother delivery of energy and essential commodities. Mian Zahid Hussain added that the recent war had exposed weaknesses in Israel's defense systems and cast doubt on its military claims. He emphasized that victory cannot be achieved solely through propaganda. Urging Iran to reassess its nuclear, defense, and foreign policies in light of current realities, he said the country should now strive to eliminate the economic sanctions that have hindered its development for four decades. By shifting its focus towards economic revival, similar to China's path, Iran can unlock sustained growth. He stressed that lasting peace in the Middle East requires sincere efforts. Iran should reconsider its ties with India in light of New Delhi's strategic alliance with Israel during the conflict. He also warned Iran to remain cautious of voices claiming that the US failed to destroy its nuclear program, as such narratives could invite further attacks.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Ms. Shezra Mansub called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif .DNA

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Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



## Pakistan Hockey must seize the Pro League opportunity

THE recent invitation extended to Pakistan's national hockey team to participate in the prestigious FIH Pro League 2026-27 season is a golden opportunity that must not be squandered. Pakistan secured this chance after New Zealand, the winners of the Nations Cup, declined due to financial constraints, leaving the door open for the runners-up, Pakistan. However, the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has expressed concerns over the lack of financial resources to accept the invitation, with a deadline to respond looming tomorrow. This situation demands immediate intervention from the government and corporate sponsors to ensure Pakistan's return to elite international hockey.

Hockey is not just a sport in Pakistan; it is a part of the nation's identity. Once a dominant force with four World Cup titles and three Olympic gold medals, Pakistan's hockey has suffered a steep decline due to mismanagement, lack of funding, and dwindling international exposure. The Pro League offers a platform to compete against the world's best teams, including Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, and India. Participation will not only help improve the team's global ranking but also provide invaluable experience to players, preparing them for future tournaments like the World Cup and Olympics.

New Zealand's refusal to join the Pro League due to financial difficulties highlights the challenges smaller hockey nations face. However, Pakistan must not follow the same path. The government, particularly the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination and the Pakistan Sports Board, must step in immediately to allocate funds. Corporate sponsors, who have previously backed cricket and other sports, should also be approached for partnerships. The Pro League is a long-term investment—it will enhance the team's skills, attract young talent, and reignite public interest in hockey.

Why the Pro League Matters

1. **Prestige & Exposure:** Playing in the Pro League means regular high-level matches, which are crucial for player development.
2. **Financial Incentives:** While participation requires funding, the league also offers financial rewards and sponsorship opportunities.
3. **Pathway to Olympics:** Strong performances can improve Pakistan's ranking, making qualification for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics easier.
4. **Revival of Hockey Culture:** Success in international events can inspire a new generation to take up hockey, reversing the sport's decline.

The PHF and the government must act swiftly. If funds are the only obstacle, emergency financial support should be arranged. The banks of Pakistan, private sponsors, and even crowdfunding initiatives can be explored. Hockey is Pakistan's national game, and its revival should be a priority. Missing this opportunity would be a huge setback, especially when the team has shown promise by finishing second in the Nations Cup.

## A Muslim Mayor in New York: Who promised to arrest Netanyahu

Qamar Bashir



Zohran Mamdani's name may be new to many beyond the political circles of New York, but his story is the American dream reborn. Born in Kampala, Uganda, to Indian-Muslim parents, Zohran immigrated to the U.S. at a young age. His mother is the acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair, and his father is an academic and professor of economics. Raised in Queens, Mamdani embraced the city's spirit, its struggles, and its people. From early on, he was not a spectator but a participant in the working-class life of New York. He studied Africana Studies at Bowdoin College and later worked...

IT is an extraordinary moment in American history. The city that never sleeps—New York, the heartbeat of the United States, its cultural melting pot, financial powerhouse, media hub, and the global face of freedom—has elected, for the first time ever, a Muslim mayor. And not just any mayor, but a progressive, articulate, and fearless voice of the people: Zohran Kwame Mamdani.

This historic development says a million things about the resilience, inclusivity, and beauty of American democracy. At a time when the world is witnessing the rise of exclusionary ideologies and identity-based politics, the United States—under the scrutiny of the world's eyes—has once again reaffirmed its core values: equality, diversity, secularism, and meritocracy. The election of a Muslim mayor in a city like New York is not merely symbolic; it is seismic.

Zohran Mamdani's name may be new to many beyond the political circles of New York, but his story is the American dream reborn. Born in Kampala, Uganda, to Indian-Muslim parents, Zohran immigrated to the U.S. at a young age. His mother is the acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair, and his father is an academic and professor of economics. Raised in Queens, Mamdani embraced the city's spirit, its struggles, and its people. From early on, he was not a spectator but a participant in the working-class life of New York. He studied Africana Studies at Bowdoin College and later worked as a foreclosure prevention counselor. But he is not just a policymaker. He is also a poet, a rapper, and a powerful speaker who knows how to move crowds with words and heart. He speaks not just from his mind but from his experience and identity. His political awakening began with grassroots organizing, and in 2020, he was elected to the New York State Assembly, representing Queens' District 36. There, he became a consistent advocate for affordable housing, better transit, climate justice, and workers' rights. When he announced his candidacy for Mayor of New York, few took it seriously. But Mamdani had a weapon stronger than institutional power—he had people. His campaign was a movement. Fueled by volunteers, energized by progressives, and supported by working-class New Yorkers, Mamdani's message resonated. His slogans were not just words—they were promises: "Justice, dignity, and opportunity for all." He didn't run to manage New York. He ran to transform it.

In a widely viewed debate with a rival Jewish candi-

date, Mamdani expressed the spirit of his campaign in a single, profound sentence: "I am a representative of every New Yorker—Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Black, Brown, White, rich or poor. This city belongs to all of us." His voice, steady but passionate, reflected the depth of his conviction. He promised to bring jobs, restore dignity to the homeless, reform policing, invest in mental health, and—above all—rebuild trust between communities. His emphasis on interfaith harmony and national reconciliation struck a chord with millions.

But Mamdani is not afraid to speak truth to power. In another interview that has since gone viral, he was asked if he would welcome Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to New York. His answer was firm and fearless: "Benjamin Netanyahu has been declared a criminal by the International Court of Justice. If he steps foot in New York, my priority as mayor would be to arrest him and implement international law." This was not a populist outburst. It was a principled stand rooted in legal accountability. When asked if he supports Israel, Mamdani replied with the nuance and clarity that defines statesmanship. He said, "Israel has a right to exist—but so does Palestine. No nation has the right to wipe out another under the illusion of a 3,000-year-old claim. This philosophy is dangerous, toxic, and has led to genocide, ethnic cleansing, and the killing of innocents. If Israel respects international law, the rights of its neighbors, and the sanctity of human life—I am with Israel. But if it continues to act with impunity under the shield of religious exceptionalism, then I cannot, in good conscience, support it." These words sent shockwaves through the political establishment, but they won Mamdani overwhelming respect among young voters, human rights advocates, and millions of Americans disillusioned by silence in the face of injustice.

His victory is a moment of pride not just for American Muslims, but for every community that believes in fairness. It also reflects the shift already seen in the United Kingdom, where cities like London, Birmingham, and Manchester have been led successfully by Muslim mayors. For ten years, Sadiq Khan served as the Mayor of London, setting an example of inclusive governance. Now, New York is set to follow suit—with Mamdani leading the way.

This development also reveals the evolving soul of America—an America that is shedding its old prejudices and embracing its pluralistic identity. The

fact that Mamdani could win despite his Muslim name, his unapologetic anti-genocide stance, and his defense of human rights shows that a new generation of Americans is voting not based on fear, but based on hope. Credit must also go to President Donald Trump. Despite having tools and authority to interfere or influence the outcome, he allowed the democratic process to run its course. The election was free, fair, and deeply representative of the will of the people. By letting the people decide, Trump contributed—directly or indirectly—to this powerful moment in American democracy. What lies ahead? Zohran Mamdani is walking into one of the most challenging roles in America. He will have to navigate budgetary constraints, corporate pressures, public safety concerns, climate adaptation, and transportation failures—while staying true to his campaign promises. But if anyone can do it, it is a man who comes from the people, speaks for the people, and fights for the people. He has pledged to cap rents, improve the subway, introduce free city buses, expand public childcare, push for a \$30 minimum wage by 2030, and bring mental health into the center of public safety. These are not just policies—they are survival strategies for working New Yorkers.

His personal demeanor—humble, accessible, sharp, and principled—has already won hearts. His intellectual clarity and emotional intelligence are rare in politics. He listens before he speaks. He acts before he brags. And above all, he respects all New Yorkers—whether they voted for him or not. This is more than a political transition. It is a social evolution. With a Muslim mayor, New York has told the world that it is not only the capital of capitalism, but the capital of coexistence.

A new chapter has begun. A new America has emerged. An America where merit defeats malice, where inclusion defeats hate, and where even the son of immigrants can sit in the highest office of the world's greatest city—not because of his background, but because of his vision.

Zohran Kwame Mamdani is not just a mayor. He is a movement. He is the soul of a new New York. And perhaps, the beginning of a new United States.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)  
Former Press Minister,  
Embassy of Pakistan to France  
Macomb, Michigan, USA

## Pakistan's demographic wake-up call

Mansoor Qaisar

The forum also endorsed a set of major policy and financial measures. These included the creation of a high-level Population Commission, revising the NFC Award to decouple population size from resource allocation, the immediate release of a Rs. 10 billion non-lapsable Population Fund, and the integration of family planning services into key social protection programs such as BISP, Mamta, and Aghosh. A cross-party Population Caucus is also being established to ensure monitoring and accountability

PAKISTAN is confronting a critical demographic reality—one that places immense strain on its health, education, employment, and environmental systems, while simultaneously destabilizing the nation's vision for sustainable development. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2025 report, "Reproductive Autonomy in a Changing World," reveals that a significant proportion of Pakistani women remain unable to make even the most fundamental decisions regarding their reproductive health.

According to the report, only one in three women in Pakistan has the autonomy to decide when and how many children to have. Alarming, 41 out of every 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19 are already mothers, and over 18% of girls are married before the age of 18. Moreover, every 45 minutes, a woman in Pakistan dies from pregnancy or childbirth-related complications. The use of modern contraceptive methods remains low—only 32% of married women utilize them, while 16% have no access to family planning services at all.

Pakistan's population is overwhelmingly young, with 67% under the age of 30. This presents both a tremendous opportunity and a significant challenge. Unfortunately, reproductive autonomy—particularly for young women and adolescent girls—remains elusive. This is not only a public health issue but a crisis of rights and equity, as acknowledged by Senator Dr. Musadik Malik at a re-

cent parliamentary forum.

A promising step forward occurred recently when the Population Council, in collaboration with UNFPA, organized the 13th session of the Parliamentary Forum on Population (PFP) at Parliament House. The event brought together representatives from all major political parties, who unanimously agreed to present a resolution in the National Assembly declaring population stabilization a national priority. Senator Sherry Rehman, Chairperson of the PFP, referred to Pakistan's rapid population growth as a "ticking time bomb" that is threatening public services and household well-being alike. She emphasized that political ownership and institutional accountability are essential to managing population growth effectively. The forum also endorsed a set of major policy and financial measures. These included the creation of a high-level Population Commission, revising the NFC Award to decouple population size from resource allocation, the immediate release of a Rs. 10 billion non-lapsable Population Fund, and the integration of family planning services into key social protection programs such as BISP, Mamta, and Aghosh. A cross-party Population Caucus is also being established to ensure monitoring and accountability. Dr. Zeba Sathar, Country Director of the Population Council, welcomed this political consensus, noting that the challenge Pakistan faces is not merely numerical—it's a collective responsibility. She urged parliamentarians to lead in legislative reform, policy

development, and public awareness campaigns. The economic and social implications of this issue are far-reaching. According to a joint UNFPA/YouGov international survey, one in five people globally believe they may never be able to form a family of their own choosing. Reasons include economic stress, job insecurity, lack of affordable housing, and the difficulty of finding a suitable partner. In Pakistan, these challenges are even more severe: 40% of children are malnourished, and many women remain marginalized from decision-making related to their own health and family life.

UNFPA's Country Representative, Dr. Luay Shabanah, emphasized the urgent need to empower individuals to make informed and autonomous decisions about their reproductive health. He stressed that achieving balance—or "Tawazun"—between population and resources is now an essential foundation for Pakistan's national survival and long-term development. The focus must shift from solely reducing fertility rates to ensuring access to reproductive rights, gender equality, and strong healthcare systems.

The time for delay has passed. Policymakers must now place population management at the center of national budgets, development strategies, and social justice agendas. Only through a coordinated, inclusive, and rights-based approach can Pakistan secure a sustainable, healthy, and dignified future for all.

— The writer is a media and communications expert at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). He can be reached at: mqaisar@pide.org.pk



## Briefs

**Rs17.57tr  
budget for  
FY26 passed**

FROM PAGE 01  
For the first time in the country's history, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance has made changes to the revised Finance Bill during the parliamentary process. The revised Finance Bill 2025-26 introduces a threshold of Rs7 million for vehicle purchases. If the invoice value for a locally manufactured vehicle or import value as assessed by the Customs Authority inclusive of all applicable taxes, duties, levies and charges exceeds this amount, the buyer will be declared as an "ineligible person". These individuals will be required to show their financial standing by presenting their last filed tax returns when applying for booking, purchase, or registration of the vehicle. Regarding an application for registering, recording or attesting transfer of any immovable property, there shall be a threshold exceeding Rs100 million as defined by fair market value.

**PM lauds  
economic  
team for...**

FROM PAGE 01  
to the ceasefire efforts", the prime minister said. As regards the attack by Iran on Qatar, the prime minister said Pakistan had also issued a condemnation statement, reiterating Pakistan's strong ties with the brotherly nation. Regarding Muharram ul Haram, Shehbaz Sharif directed the concerned authorities to ensure strict law and order during processions and majalis across the country. He also instructed the interior minister to coordinate with provincial governments, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to maintain peace and security during the month. Earlier the cabinet offered Fateha for Major Moez Abbas Shah Shaheed who embraced martyrdom in an operation against the terrorists in South Waziristan. The prime minister on the occasion, reaffirmed the nation's resolve in the ongoing war against terrorism.

**Gaza war  
to end in  
two weeks**

FROM PAGE 01  
The deal includes provisions to allow increased aid into Gaza and a temporary halt to Israeli military operations, offering relief to Palestinian civilians. Post-War Reconstruction: Discussions on rebuilding Gaza and long-term stability measures are set to begin once the ceasefire holds. Trump, who has positioned himself as a mediator in the conflict, stated, "This is a major step toward lasting peace. The suffering of innocent Gazans must end, and this agreement will bring much-needed relief." Netanyahu's office confirmed the talks but emphasized that Israel's security remains a top priority. Meanwhile, Palestinian leaders have cautiously welcomed the news, though some factions demand further guarantees.

**US to offer  
new defense  
of strikes...**

FROM PAGE 01  
Another key question raised by experts is whether Iran, preparing for the strike, moved out some 400 kilogram (880 pounds) of enriched uranium – which could now be hidden elsewhere in the vast country. The US administration has hit back furiously, with Trump repeatedly saying the attack "obliterated" Iran's nuclear facilities, including the key site of Fordo buried inside a mountain. "I can tell you, the United States had no indication that that enriched uranium was moved prior to the strikes, as I also saw falsely reported," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News. "As for what's on the ground right now, it's buried under miles and miles of rubble because of the success of these strikes on Saturday evening," she said.

# Pakistan Hockey Federation seeks support amid financial challenges

*Despite financial constraints, Mujahid expressed satisfaction with Pakistan's performance in the FIH Nations Hockey Cup. He also confirmed Pakistan's participation in the Junior Asia Hockey Cup, highlighting the importance of international exposure for young players*

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) Secretary Rana Mujahid and Director General of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Yasser Pirzada addressed the media in a press conference, discussing the financial and operational challenges facing the national hockey team. Rana Mujahid emphasized that the expenses of the Pro League are exceptionally high, making it difficult for the federation to manage without government assistance. "We hope Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will support us in the current situation," he stated. The PHF has also reached out to Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir for help in resolving these issues. Comparing Pakistan's situation to India's, Muja-

hid revealed that the Indian hockey federation receives an annual grant of 3 billion rupees, while Pakistan's funding is significantly lower. "Our grants are public knowledge, and we are doing our best within limited resources," he added. Despite financial constraints, Mujahid expressed satisfaction with Pakistan's performance in the

EDITORIAL ON PAGE 5

FIH Nations Hockey Cup. He also confirmed Pakistan's participation in the Junior Asia Hockey Cup, highlighting the importance of international exposure for young players. Regarding the senior team, he announced that head coach Tahir Zaman would soon present a strategic plan to improve performance. Mujahid made it clear that the PHF would not act



against the guidelines of the government or the Pakistan Sports Board. He also addressed concerns about potential sanctions from the International Hockey Federation (FIH), stating, "If we commit to participating in an event and then back out, the FIH could impose a ban." To avoid such consequences, the PHF has proactively engaged with FIH President Tayyab Ikram, requesting additional time to assess the situation. "We have explained our challenges to the FIH and are seeking flexibility," Mujahid said. The press conference underscored the PHF's efforts to navigate financial difficulties while maintaining Pakistan's presence in international hockey. With hopes pinned on government support and prudent planning, the federation aims to revive the country's hockey glory in the coming years.

## Naseer Bundha hockey ground charges will be reviewed: Yasser Pirzada

Rs 75 crores needed for pro League: DG PSB

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has emphasized the financial hurdles facing the revival of professional hockey in the country, with Director General Yasser Pirzada stating that \$2.5 million is required to organize the Pro Hockey League. The announcement came during a media briefing where Pirzada discussed the future of hockey and the need for greater investment in the national sport. To ease financial burdens on hockey stakeholders, Pirzada announced that the PSB would review charges for the Naseer Banda Hockey Stadium. Additionally, the board plans to reassess fee structures for hockey clubs to ensure sustainability. Pirzada confirmed that the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) will submit a formal proposal regarding the Pro League, which aims to elevate the sport's standard and provide players with competitive exposure. However, he acknowledged that funding remains a major challenge. "The expenses for the Pro League are very high, and securing financial backing is crucial," he said. "We will take this matter to the government and the Prime



Minister for support." The DG PSB pointed out the stark disparity in attention and resources between hockey and cricket in Pakistan. "Cricket cannot even be compared to any other sport in terms of funding and popularity," Pirzada stated. "Hockey is our national game and deserves priority." He stressed that while cricket dominates the sports landscape, hockey must not be neglected, especially given its historical significance for Pakistan. With the PHF struggling to meet international commitments and domestic league requirements, Pirzada assured that the matter would be presented at the highest level. "We will bring PHF's concerns before the Prime Minister and the federal government," he said, expressing hope for a favorable response. The press conference underscored the urgent need for financial and administrative support to revive Pakistan's hockey glory. While the Pro League remains an ambitious project, its success hinges on government backing and corporate sponsorship. As the PSB and PHF work towards solutions, fans await concrete steps to restore hockey's prestige in a country that once dominated the sport on world stage.

## 666mln people worldwide still lack electricity: UN report

NEW YORK: Although nearly 92 percent of the global population now has basic access to electricity, more than 666 million people still live without it, according to a report published on Wednesday by WHO and its partners. While the rate of basic energy access has improved since 2022, the current pace remains insufficient to achieve universal access by 2030, one of the United Nations' SDGs, the report warned. Despite progress, significant regional disparities persist. The report estimates that 1.5 billion people in rural areas still lack access to clean cooking solutions, while more than two billion people continue to rely on polluting and hazardous fuels such as firewood and charcoal to meet their cooking needs. "Despite progress in some parts of the world, the expansion of electricity and clean cooking access remains disappointingly slow, especially in Africa," said Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), as 85 percent of the global population without electricity access reside in sub-Saharan Africa. – Agencies

## Australia quicks hit back after strong West Indies bowling effort

BRIDGETOWN: Australia's pacers struck back with four wickets after they were dealt some of their own medicine in being dismissed for 180 by the West Indies fast bowlers on the opening day of the first Test in Barbados on Wednesday. Seeking their first Test match victory on home soil against Australia for 22 years, the Caribbean side will resume on the second morning at 57 for four at Kensington Oval. Mitchell Starc, captain Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood replicated the devastation of West Indian counterparts Jayden Seales and Shamar Joseph to bring Australia right back into the first of a three-match series. Seales capitalised on the early blows inflicted by Joseph, polishing off the lower order to finish with five for 60, his third five-wicket innings haul in his 19th Test. Joseph, who enjoyed a sensational debut series at the expense of the Australians, highlighted by a match-winning innings haul of seven for 68 in Brisbane 17 months ago, was again in devastating form against the same opponents, prising out four of the first six wickets to fall over the first two sessions. He cast aside the ordinary performances of most of the previous year and a half to claim four for 46 from 16 overs of sustained pace where he continuously challenged all batsmen and would have enjoyed greater success but for poor catching by his teammates. Debutant Brandon King was the chief culprit, missing three chances at gully. But the most expensive lapse was from new captain Roston Chase who, in his 50th Test, dropped Usman Khawaja at first slip when the opener was just on six. Khawaja battled to 47 before eventually falling to Joseph, featuring in an important 89-run fourth-wicket stand with Travis Head after the Australians had slumped to 22 for three in the morning following Cummins' decision to bat first on winning the toss. Head's top score of 59 was highlighted, as usual, by flamboyant drives and pulls, the left-hander counting nine boundaries in his 78-ball innings. Earlier, Australia's captain had caused to immediately ponder on the wisdom of his decision when Joseph dispatched Sam Konstas and Cameron Green in quick succession with the new ball and should have also accounted for Khawaja, who had another reprieve on 45. – Agencies

## Iranian blows crushed..

FROM PAGE 01  
"The US entered the war directly because it felt that if it did not, the Zionist regime would be completely destroyed. Yet it gained nothing from this war." "Here too, the Islamic Republic emerged victorious and delivered a harsh slap to the face of America," Khamenei added.

## Fordow centrifuges 'no longer...

FROM PAGE 01  
Grossi also revealed that Iran has not yet responded to the IAEA's request to resume inspections, a move he emphasized is a legal obligation under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), not a "gesture of generosity."

## Gandapur says KP...

FROM PAGE 01  
Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub and PTI Senator Shibli Faraz. "We will take decisions according to our province's situation," he said, adding that the Centre should not give the PTI a lecture on national interests as the former ruling party was not solely bearing the responsibility. Several PTI leaders, including CM Gandapur, Omar, Shibli, Muzamil Aslam, and Taimur Jhagra, were not permitted to meet ex-PM Khan at the jail today. He said that they fulfilled all formalities defined by the court for meeting ex-PM Khan at the jail. Despite this, he said the jail authorities stopped them from meeting him citing security reasons. The firebrand CM said that if not today, then someday they would manage to meet Khan, however, it was completely wrong to create obstacles in these meetings.

## US visa seekers asked to...

FROM PAGE 01  
according to an internal State Department cable reviewed by Reuters. US consular officers are now required to conduct a "comprehensive and thorough vetting" of all student and exchange visitor applicants to identify those who "bear hostile attitudes toward our citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles," said the cable, which was dated June 18 and sent to US missions on Wednesday. In Instagram posts uploaded today, the consulates said: "Effective immediately, all individuals applying for an F, M, or J nonimmigrant visa are requested to adjust the privacy settings on all of their social media accounts to 'public' to facilitate vetting necessary to establish their identity and admissibility to the US."

## India faces diplomatic..

FROM PAGE 01  
As geopolitical tensions in the region intensify, India's inability to rally support on critical issues could have long-term repercussions for its standing in Eurasian diplomacy. For now, the SCO's latest meeting has left India on the sidelines—a stark reminder of the shifting power dynamics in the region.

## Taekwondo Federation holds national junior championship

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Taekwondo Federation under the supervision of Punjab Taekwondo Association successfully organized National Junior Taekwondo Championship from 21st to 23rd June at the Women Sports Complex, Agricultural University Faisalabad. This prestigious national-level event witnessed enthusiastic participation from across the country, with teams representing all provinces Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Islamabad, GB as well as departmental teams including Army, WAPDA, Pakistan Railways, and the Pakistan Air Force. The Opening Ceremony graced by Dr. Najma Adil, Ex MNA as the Chief Guest, alongside distinguished guests including Mr. Murtaza Hassan Bangash, Secretary General of the Pakistan Taekwondo Federation, Dr. Izhar ul Haq, Secretary of Punjab Taekwondo Association, Mr. Manzoor Shah, Divisional Sports Officer Faisalabad, and Mr. Atif Bhatti, Director Sports of Agricultural University Faisalabad. The championship featured competitions in five Kyorugi categories (sparring) and five Poomsae categories (pattern performance), showcasing the immense talent and dedication of young athletes from across the nation. The Closing Ceremony marked by a vibrant medal and trophy distribution, where Mr. Atif Bhatti, Director Sports Agricultural University Faisalabad, distributed Medals to the top-performing athletes and teams by appreciating their hard work, discipline and sportsmanship. The Pakistan Taekwondo Federation extended its heartfelt congratulations to all participants and Organizing Members for their outstanding efforts in promoting Taekwondo at the grassroots level, fostering unity, discipline and competitive spirit among the youth of Pakistan. Pictures and results are attached.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Inter-Provincial Co-ordination, Rana Sana Ullah is distributing cash awards among the medal winners of various sports, in a ceremony held by Pakistan Sports Board. – DNA

## Wimbledon: England's garden Grand Slam

LONDON: Wimbledon head gardener Martyn Falconer is the only man at the All England Club who welcomes a drop of rain. While wet weather wreaks havoc with the tournament schedule, he is not disappointed with the occasional cloudburst to keep his spectacular flower displays in perfect condition. Falconer oversees the delivery of 27,000 plants for the Championships in leafy southwest London to add to thousands already in place in the immaculate grounds.

Hydrangeas and petunias in blues, purples and whites tumble over the sides of hanging baskets and window boxes, filling herbaceous borders and floral installations. Roses are scattered throughout the grounds and Boston ivy creeps over the outside walls of Centre Court to create the picture-perfect Grand Slam event. Falconer, who has worked at the All England Club for 25 years, spending 11 years in his current role, says Wimbledon's ethos is "tennis in an English

garden". He manages a team of 10 permanent gardeners and two apprentices, which expands by around 10 in the lead-up to the tournament, which this year starts on June 30. Falconer's team was this week applying the final tweaks as the club prepares to throw open its doors to thousands of tennis fans from Monday. "We're making sure it looks lovely and presentable for everyone," he said. "It's never-ending. And then from the Monday, once the public are in, we kind of take a little bit of a breath. "But then every morning it's watering and maintaining and deadheading and just making sure everything looks good for everyone coming on each day." – Agencies

## Pakistan Women's Team Heads to AFC Qualifiers

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), Syed Mohsen Gilani, visited the training camp of the Pakistan women's national football team in Islamabad ahead of their departure for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers. During his visit, President Gilani interacted with the players and coaching staff, offering his best wishes and expressing confidence in the team's performance. He also reviewed the team's training progress and preparation strategies. The training camp, led by Head Coach Adeel Rizki, concluded on Thursday after several days of intensive preparation. Following the camp, the national squad departed from Karachi for Indonesia via a private air-

line, with a transit stop in Bangkok before reaching Jakarta. Pakistan is placed in Group E alongside Chinese Taipei, host nation Indonesia, and Kyrgyzstan. The team will play its first group match on June 29 against Chinese Taipei, followed by a second match on July 2 against Indonesia, and the final group fixture on July 5 against Kyrgyzstan. The Pakistan squad for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers includes: Goalkeepers: Jennah Farooki, Nisha Ashraf, Zeeyana Jivraj; Defenders: Aliya Sadiq, Layla Banaras, Maria Khan (Captain), Nizalia Siddiqui, Sophia Qureshi; Midfielders: Amina Hanif, Azwa Chaudhry, Marsha Malik, Rameen Fareed, Sanah Mehdi, Suha Hirani; Forwards: Anmol Hira, Aqsa Mushtaq, Isra Khan, Mariam Mahmood, Nadia Khan, Zehmena Malik, Zulfia Nazir.





## Briefs

Rupee gains  
06 paisa  
against US  
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 06 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 283.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.72. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 284.85 and Rs 285.95 respectively. Pakistan travel guides The price of the Euro increased by Rs3.69 to close at Rs 332.67 against the last day's closing of Rs 328.98, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 02 pasia and closed at Rs1.97, whereas an increase of Rs3.67 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 390.04 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 386.37 The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 02 and 01 paisa to close at Rs 77.23 and Rs 75.63 Pakistan travel guides.—APP

Gold price  
increases by  
Rs 1,335  
per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,335 and was traded at Rs.356,000 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs.354,665 on the last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. Pakistan food delivery services The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs1,144 to Rs.305,212 from Rs.304,068 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went up by Rs.1,048 to Rs.279,787 from Rs.278,739. The rates of per tola and ten gram silver increased by Rs.86 and Rs.73 to Rs.3,850 and Rs.3,300 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$13 to \$3,343 from \$3,330, whereas that of silver went up by \$0.86 to \$36.66, the Association reported.—APP

New Delhi  
probes events  
leading to Air  
India plane  
crash

NEW DELHI: Efforts are underway to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to the Air India plane crash this month that killed 260 people, and identify contributing factors, India's civil aviation ministry said on Thursday.

The London-bound Boeing BA.N787 Dreamliner crashed moments after takeoff from India's Ahmedabad city on June 12, killing 241 of the 242 people on board and the rest on ground in the world's worst aviation disaster in a decade. The black boxes of the plane - the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and flight data recorder (FDR) - were recovered in the days that followed, one from the rooftop of a building at the crash site on June 13, and the other from the debris on June 16. They were transported to national capital Delhi on Tuesday, where a team led by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau began extracting their data, the ministry said in a statement. "The Crash Protection Module (CPM) from the front black box was safely retrieved, and... the memory module was successfully accessed and its data downloaded...the analysis of CVR and FDR data is underway," it said. The CPM is the core part of a black box that houses and protects data recorded during a crash. India said last week that it was yet to decide where the black boxes would be analysed. The data retrieved from them could provide critical clues into the aircraft's performance and any conversations between the pilots preceding the crash. The air disaster has also brought renewed attention to violations of norms by airlines in the country. India's aviation regulator said on Tuesday that multiple instances of aircraft defects reappearing were found at the Mumbai and Delhi airports - two of India's busiest.—APP

Italian CG, Speaker Sindh  
Assembly, discuss trade

Speaker Awais Shah was accompanied by Secretary G.M. Umar Farooq, Director General Irfan Ahmed Memon, and Ms. Huma Ikramullah

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, Syed Awais Qadir Shah, warmly welcomed His Excellency Fabrizio Bielli, Consul General of Italy in Karachi, at Sindh Assembly office here on Thursday. Speaker Awais Shah was accompanied by Secretary G.M. Umar Farooq, Director General Irfan Ahmed Memon, and Ms. Huma Ikramullah. The meeting highlighted the friendly ties between Italy and Pakistan, with discussions focusing on strengthening co-operation in trade, water management, cultural exchange, and institutional collaboration. His Excellency Fabrizio Bielli praised Sindh's hospitality and rich cultural traditions, noting his appreciation for the province's diversity and heritage. His Excellency Fabrizio Bielli shared that the core priorities of his diplomatic mission include expanding economic opportunities, promoting cultural dialogue, and supporting sustainable development. Both sides exchanged views on Pakistan's legislative system. The Speaker proposed forming a Parliamen-



tary Friendship Group to facilitate dialogue between Italian and Sindh lawmakers on areas of mutual interest, especially economic cooperation and legislative practices. Urban issues of the cities of Sindh, including Karachi, Hyderabad & Sukkur were discussed, along with po-

tential collaboration in water distillation technology, trade facilitation, and hosting joint seminars to promote mutual business opportunities and innovation. The Speaker also warmly invited the Consul General to visit Sindh's historic and cultural cities to further experience the province's in-

clusive spirit. The Italian Consul General highlighted the potential of high-quality Italian products in Pakistani markets and expressed Italy's willingness to support Pakistan's development efforts across various sectors. To mark the occasion, Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah presented the Legacy Shield

of the Sindh Assembly, along with the traditional Ajrak and Sindh Cap, as tokens of respect and hospitality. His Excellency Fabrizio Bielli thanked the Speaker for the warm welcome, meaningful exchange, and expressed his desire to continue building bridges between the people of Italy and Sindh.

Palestinians reject Israeli claims  
of Hamas looting Gaza aid

GAZA CITY: A committee representing influential families in Gaza on Thursday rejected Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's accusation that some aid entering the war-torn Palestinian territory was being looted by Hamas. After Israel imposed a more than two-month blockade on Gaza, aid began being allowed in at a trickle in late May. Rights groups say Gaza and its population of more than two million face famine-like conditions due to Israeli restrictions, with chaotic scenes and near-daily deaths marring aid distribution. In a joint statement with Defense Minister Israel Katz published late Wednesday, Netanyahu said there was "information received today indicating that Hamas is once again taking control of humanitarian aid entering the northern Gaza Strip and stealing it from civilians." He announced that he had instructed the military to draft a plan "to prevent Hamas from seizing the aid." A statement from Gaza's higher committee for tribal affairs — a non-Hamas affiliated committee created during the war — on Thursday rejected the claim that Hamas was stealing aid. "Gaza's tribal leaders affirmed that all aid is fully secured under their direct supervision and is being distributed exclusively through international agencies," the committee representing influential families said. "The securing of aid has been carried out purely through tribal efforts," it added. The statement rejected Netanyahu's comments as "false claims" and called for a United Nations delegation to determine if aid was being correctly dispatched in Gaza. AFP footage from Wednesday showed a truck convoy led by a UN vehicle carrying aid into northern Gaza after entering through the Zikim gate, south of the Israeli city of Ashkelon. Masked and armed young men could be seen riding atop the large aid bundles on the five trucks. The men told AFP they were protecting the convoy from being looted before reaching its final destination. Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir shared a video on Telegram on Thursday appearing to show masked, armed men standing on top of aid trucks. "Today, what was known all along is becoming clear: Hamas is taking control of the food and goods," the caption said, calling on Netanyahu to halt the entry of aid into Gaza. AFP could not independently verify whether the video shared by Ben Gvir showed a truck after being looted by Hamas or being protected from theft by locals. Israel began allowing a trickle of aid into Gaza at the end of May, much of it going through the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) and bypassing the UN-led distribution mechanism. An official private effort with opaque funding, GHF's operations have been marred by chaotic scenes, deaths and neutrality concerns, with the UN and major aid groups refusing to work with it. The GHF has denied responsibility for deaths near its aid points.—DNA

Stocks face profit-  
taking after 2 days  
of hefty gains

KARACHI: Stocks came under selling pressure at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday as the benchmark KSE-100 index gave up early gains and closed with a drop of over 700 points amid profit-taking. At the commencement of trading, the market extended its healthy momentum of the past two days, hitting intra-day high at 123,418 within the very first hour. However, profit-taking emerged soon afterwards, which gradually took the index to intra-day low of 122,142 before the end of trading. At close, the KSE-100 index settled at 122,046.46, down 715.18 points, or 0.58%. "After a gain of almost 6.6k points (up 5.7%) in the last two sessions post Iran-Israel ceasefire, the PSX had a profit-taking day today (Thursday). Resultantly, the KSE-100 index wrapped up the session at 122,046 by shedding 715 points," said Ali Najib, Deputy Head of Trading at Arif Habib Limited (AHL). During trading hours, the benchmark index saw some selling, with FY25 settlement falling on Monday (June 30). There are some institutional investors, who follow settlement date accounting and need to square their positions, if needed, he said. "Early gains were extended up to 123,400 before the market came off to close 0.58% lower day-on-day at 122,046," wrote AHL in its daily report. While 71 stocks declined, only 27 advanced, reflecting a broadly negative sentiment. Engro Fertilisers (+2.22%), National Foods (+8.07%) and Pakistan Petroleum (+0.79%) were the top contributors to index gains. On the other hand, Bank AL Habib (-2.84%), Lucky Cement (-1.86%) and Habib Bank (-2.59%) were the biggest drags, it said. In a key event, the Supreme Court provided a boost to the cement sector by suspending the Lahore High Court's directive that required Punjab-based manufacturers to pay 6% royalty on the ex-factory price.—DNA

Pak-China Institute  
explores Asia's role in  
tackling climate change

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan-China Institute (PCI) hosted a forum titled "Green Energy Transition in Asia: Aligning Finance, Policy & Equity" at the University of London, bringing together experts and policymakers to explore Asia's pivotal role in tackling climate change. Asia accounts for over half of global greenhouse gas emissions, making its energy transition essential to achieving global climate goals. However, progress across the region remains uneven due to differing economic contexts, financing gaps, and political challenges. According to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Thursday, speakers at the Forum emphasized that with scaled-up green finance, smart regulations, and strengthened regional cooperation, Asia can lead the global shift to clean energy. Dr. Shezra Mansab Kharal, Pakistan's Minister of State for Climate Change, outlined the country's efforts to accelerate its energy transition. Pakistan aims to generate 50% of its electricity from clean sources by 2030. New imported coal plants have been banned, and a surge in rooftop solar installations is already underway. She called for multilateral support that avoids creating additional debt burdens, and emphasized the need for greater investment in local knowledge and capacity building. "We are at a climate crossroads," she said. "Pakistan needs global solidarity to ensure a transition that protects vulnerable communities, fosters innovation, and builds long-term resilience." Suba Sivakumaran of UNESCAP warned that despite rising investment in clean energy, the Asia-Pacific region still relies on coal for 40–45% of its electricity. She called for China-style coordination between the energy and finance sectors, the removal of fossil fuel subsidies, and greater policy clarity to boost investor confidence. Dr. Ma Jun, Chair of the China Green Finance Committee, shared how China's coordinated green finance strategy is delivering results. For now, 50% of new cars sold in China are now electric. China has also set a global record in renewable energy development. For countries like Pakistan, Dr. Ma noted that transitioning away from coal is more complex. With annual power demand growing by 5% and many coal plants still under long-term debt, a sudden coal exit could be risky. He recommended a phased approach: retire debt-free coal units first, invest in energy storage to stabilize renewables, and ensure renewable projects are financially viable so as to avoid power shortages and loan defaults. Prof. Uli Volz of SOAS and Prof. Christoph Nedopil of Griffith University highlighted the need to integrate climate risk into financial systems, strengthen grid infrastructure, and invest in battery storage. They also stressed the importance of green taxonomies to mobilize domestic capital. The forum echoed a unified message: Asia's energy transition is central to the global climate fight. But it must be tailored to the local context. Aligning finance, policy, and equity is not just a technical necessity; it is a moral imperative for a just, green future.—DNA

Azerbaijan marks June  
26— Armed Forces Day

DNA

BAKU: The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was established on 28 May 1918, and one of its key tasks was army building. On 26 June, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic established its first regular army unit — a 5,000-strong Special Army Corps of Azerbaijan. The formation of the national army units together with the Caucasian Islamic Army of the Ottomans saved Baku and its surrounding provinces from the Armenian-Bolshevik occupation and played a crucial role in protecting national statehood, the inviolability of state borders and security. According to results of WWI, when the Ottoman military unit had to leave Azerbaijan, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on 1 November 1918, under which army building was entrusted to the Azerbaijani government. On 25 December of the same year, General of the artillery Samad bay Mehmandarov became minister of the military, while Lieutenant General Aliagha

Shikhinski became deputy minister on 29 December. In a short time, they did a lot in the field of army building. In March 1919, the army of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic staged a ceremonial military parade in Ganja. Following the collapse of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the Bolsheviks abolished the national army and executed 15 out of 21 generals of the Azerbaijani armed forces. The Azerbaijanis tried to master military professions even when they were not independent. During WWII, Azerbaijan produced a new grand corps of servicemen, officers and generals. Heroes of the Soviet Union such as Israil Mammadov, Gafur Mammadov, Huseynbala Aliyev, Mehdi Huseynzade displayed true heroism in the fight against fascism. It was at that time that General Hazi Aslanov, General Akim Abbasov, General Mahmud Abilov, General Tarlan Aliyarbayov and many others inscribed their names in history. Although the Ministry of Defense was established in Azerbaijan after the country restored its independence in 1991, it failed to properly fulfill

its functions and protect people's interests until National Leader Heydar Aliyev returned to power in 1993. This marked a new era in the history of the Azerbaijani armed forces. Officers who graduated from the Jamshid Nakhchivanski Military Lyceum, which was established by National Leader Heydar Aliyev in 1971, were engaged in army building. Higher military schools were reorganized and new ones were established. National Leader Heydar Aliyev always attached great importance to the glorious history of the army of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. On 22 May 1998, it was the National Leader that signed an Order proclaiming 26 June, the day when the Special Army Corps of Azerbaijan was established, as the Day of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan. Nowadays the Azerbaijani army is going through the most glorious stage of its history. The military parades held in different years since 2008 have clearly demonstrated the power of the Azerbaijani Army. The historic victory achieved in April 2016 after a counter-offensive was launched

in response to the continued provocations of the Armenian armed forces on the line of contact was further evidence of the Azerbaijani army's power and determination to win. In May 2018, a total of 11,000 hectares of land in Nakhchivan occupied by Armenians in the early 1990s were liberated as a result of a successful operation by the Nakhchivan Special General Army. On 26 June 2018, a ceremonial military parade was held in Azadlig Square in Baku on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The parade featured Azerbaijani flags raised in the lands liberated from the occupiers during the April 2016 battles and the Nakhchivan operation in 2018. Speaking at the parade, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Ilham Aliyev said the territorial integrity of the country will be restored. "The day will come when, after the liberation of the occupied territories, the Azerbaijani flag which will be raised there will be brought to Azadlig Square.

Erdogan  
calls for  
permanent  
Iran-Israel  
ceasefire

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan told leaders at a NATO summit on Wednesday that a ceasefire between Israel and Iran needed to be made permanent, his office said, and called for a ceasefire in Gaza to alleviate the humanitarian crisis there. NATO member Türkiye has been fiercely critical of Israel and its assault against Palestinian Hamas militants in Gaza, which has been reduced to rubble after two years of war and had its population displaced. Ankara has also said Israel's "state terrorism" against Iran — with which it shares a 560-kilometer border — heightened the risks of a wider conflict, and welcomed the ceasefire between the two.

At the NATO summit in The Hague, Erdogan held talks with the leaders of France, Germany and Britain on regional tensions, bilateral ties and relations with the EU, and defense industry cooperation. Erdogan met US President Donald Trump late on Tuesday. "Our President said he welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and Iran, that the de facto situation needs to turn into lasting calm as soon as possible, that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is increasingly continuing, and that a lasting ceasefire is also needed there urgently," Erdogan's office said after his meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron.—APP

29 pupils  
killed in  
Central Africa  
crush

BANGUI: Twenty-nine students taking their high school exams in the Central African Republic died in a stampede sparked by an exploding power transformer, the health ministry told AFP Thursday. Just over 5,300 students were sitting the second day of the baccalaureate exams at the time of the explosion early Wednesday afternoon in Bangui, the capital of the deeply poor nation. In the ensuing panic, supervisors and students tried to flee, some jumping from the first floor of the school. The injured were transported by ambulance, on the back of pickup trucks or by motorbike taxi, AFP journalists saw. "I would like to express my solidarity and compassion to the parents of the deceased candidates, to the educational staff, to the students," President Faustin Archange Touadera said in a video published on his party's Facebook page. Touadera, who is attending a summit of the Gavi vaccine alliance in Brussels, also announced three days of national mourning. According to a document circulating on social media and authenticated by the health ministry, 29 deaths were registered by hospitals in the city.—Agencies

16 dead,  
thousands of  
businesses  
destroyed  
after Kenya  
protests

NAIROBI: At least 16 people died in protests across Kenya on Wednesday, Amnesty International said Thursday, as businesses and residents were left to clean up the devastation in the capital and beyond. The marches had been called to mark one year since anti-tax demonstrations that peaked when a huge crowd stormed parliament and dozens were killed by security forces. The anniversary marches began peacefully Wednesday but descended into chaos as young men held running battles with police, lit fires, and ripped up pavements to use as projectiles. "What unfolded yesterday was not a protest. It was terrorism disguised as dissent," Kipchumba Murkomen, interior cabinet secretary, said in a televised speech. "We condemn the criminal anarchists who in the name of peaceful demonstrations unleashed a wave of violence, looting, sexual assault and destruction upon our people," he added. In Nairobi's business district, the epicenter of the unrest, AFP journalists found entire shopping centers and thousands of businesses destroyed, many still smoldering.—APP



## Briefs

NATO  
commits to  
spending  
hike

THE HAGUE: NATO leaders, concluding a brief summit in the Netherlands, endorsed the significant increase in defence spending long advocated by U.S. President Donald Trump. They reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to collective defense, a principle Trump had seemingly wavered on earlier in the week, much to the relief of his allies. In a joint declaration, NATO leaders said they were "united in the face of profound security threats and challenges," in particular the long-term threat posed by Russia to Euro-Atlantic security and the "persistent threat" of terrorism. "Allies commit to invest 5% of GDP annually on core defence requirements as well as defence and security-related spending by 2035 to ensure our individual and collective obligations," it continued. — Agencies

Pakistan  
faces ongoing  
challenge in  
eradicating  
zero-dose  
children

Landmark global study published by The Lancet says Covid reversed years of country's steady progress

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Despite notable progress in routine childhood immunisation over the past forty years, Pakistan remains among the eight countries accounting for over half of the world's "zero-dose" children — those who receive no vaccinations during their first year of life. According to a landmark global study published by The Lancet on Tuesday, the Covid-19 pandemic reversed years of steady progress, pushing millions of children globally — and thousands in Pakistan — into vaccine deprivation. The GBD Study 2023, which analysed trends from 1980 to 2023 and projected coverage to 2030, found that although the number of zero-dose children in Pakistan decreased significantly by 2019, the country remains among the top contributors, alongside Nigeria, India, and Ethiopia. The study shows that from 1980 to 2019, the number of zero-dose children worldwide fell by nearly 75%, yet that progress has since stalled. As of 2023, Pakistan was still home to a considerable portion of the 15.7 million global zero-dose children — those who had not received even the first dose of the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP1) vaccine.

Pak reaffirms  
commitment  
to eradicate  
torture

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: As the world observes the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on Thursday, Pakistan reiterated its solidarity with the victims of torture worldwide and reaffirmed its continued commitment to eradicating torture and upholding human dignity. "Islam upholds the sanctity and dignity of every human being. Any act of torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment is incompatible with the values of justice, mercy, and compassion that are at the core of Islamic teachings," the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a message on the Day. He said that guided by these values and its international obligations, Pakistan remained committed to eradicating torture and strengthening protections for all individuals. "Legal reforms, institutional safeguards, and oversight mechanisms continue to be strengthened by Pakistan to ensure accountability and uphold the rule of law. Measures are also being taken to provide victims with medical, legal, and psycho-social support," he remarked.

CTD arrests RAW-linked  
terrorists in Punjab

*Police officials say terrorists were in contact with RAW's  
Major Ravindra Rathore and Inspector Singh*

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) has foiled a major terror plot during a recent crackdown named "Operation Yalghar", arresting six suspected terrorists working for India's intelligence agency Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) from various districts across the province. Speaking during a press conference in Lahore, Punjab Additional Inspector General (AIG) of Operations Shehzada Sultan — flanked by CTD's SSP Operations Waqar Azim — said that the police officers disclosed that two operatives, Aslam and Akbar Ali, were arrested in Bahawalnagar while obtaining explosives directly from India's Border Security Force (BSF). The terrorists, they added, were in contact with Indian intelligence officers, identified as RAW's Major Ravindra Rathore and Inspector Singh. The CTD's action reiterates Pakistan's concerns regarding India's sub-

versive strategy in the region and New Delhi's involvement in carrying out and sponsoring terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. India has been involved in state-sponsored terrorism for the past 20 years, Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said last month during a media talk following the school bus bombing in Balochistan's Khuzdar which resulted in the martyrdom of several children. During their presser, the CTD officials revealed that the arrested individuals had planned to carry out attacks on a mosque and the railway station in Bahawalpur and explosives, detonators, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), safety fuses and confidential maps were recovered from the suspects, who confessed to receiving instructions for the attack. Additionally, three other alleged RAW agents — Azam alias Jaji, Manzoor alias Qari (both from Bahawalnagar), and Amjad from Pakpat-

tan were captured from Toba Tek Singh. Meanwhile, Zulfiqar, a key facilitator allegedly involved in funding these activities from Dubai, was nabbed in Bahawalpur. CTD Punjab has also intercepted audio conversations between the suspects and Indian intelligence officers and terrorists. These recordings reportedly include discussions about targeted killings and attacks on sensitive sites. Speaking to reporters, AIG Sultan stressed that India was attempting to destabilise Pakistan through acts of terrorism, but security agencies were fully prepared to thwart such efforts. The police officer assured that no compromise would be made on the country's security. The crackdown comes against a slight uptick in militant attacks in May 2025 with Data released by the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) reflecting a 5% increase in attacks compared to April. According to the PICSS monthly security assessment, May recorded 85 militant at-

tacks, a marginal rise from 81 in April. These incidents resulted in 113 fatalities, including 52 security forces personnel, 46 civilians, 11 militants, and four members of peace committees. The month also saw 182 individuals injured, comprising 130 civilians, 47 security personnel, four militants, and one peace committee member. Civilian injuries also witnessed a dramatic 145% increase, jumping from 53 in April to 130 in May, highlighting the growing impact of militant activities on the general populace. Conversely, injuries among security personnel decreased by 20%, falling from 59 to 47. Combining militant attacks and security operations, the overall casualty toll for May stood at 172 including 57 security personnel, 65 militants, 46 civilians, and four peace committee members. A total of 194 people were injured, comprising 130 civilians, 54 security personnel, nine militants, and one peace committee member. Militants also abducted at least 19 individuals during the month.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq receiving Ambassador of Palestine Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamdallah Zaid at Parliament House. — DNA

China hosts Iranian, Russian  
defence ministers

Meeting in Qingdao comes as fledgling Iran-Israel ceasefire holds after 12 days of fighting between arch-foes

CENTRELINE REPORT

BEIJING: China hosted defence ministers from Iran and Russia for a meeting in its eastern seaside city of Qingdao on Thursday against the backdrop of war in the Middle East and a summit of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) countries in Europe that agreed to boost military spending. Beijing has long sought to present the 10-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a counterweight to Western-led power blocs and has pushed to strengthen collaboration between its member countries in politics, security, trade and science. The Qingdao meeting of the organisation's top defence officials comes as a fledgling ceasefire between Iran and Israel holds after 12 days of fighting between the arch-foes. It is also being held the day after a summit of NATO leaders in The Hague, where members agreed to ramp up their defence spending to satisfy United States President Donald Trump. Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun framed Thursday's meeting of officials in Qingdao, home to a major

Chinese naval base, as a counterweight to a world in "chaos and instability". "As momentous changes of the century accelerate, unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise," Dong said as he welcomed defence chiefs from Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Belarus and elsewhere on Wednesday, according to state news agency Xinhua. "Hegemonic, domineering and bullying acts severely undermine the international order," he warned. He urged his counterparts to "take more robust actions to jointly safeguard the environment for peaceful development". Meeting Dong on the sidelines of the summit, Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov hailed ties between the two countries as being "at an unprecedentedly high level". "Friendly relations between our countries maintain upward dynamics of development in all directions," he said. China has portrayed itself as a neutral party in Russia's war with Ukraine, although Western governments say its close ties have given Moscow crucial economic and diplomatic support.

At UN, Pakistan spotlights children's  
plight in occupied Gaza & Kashmir

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: In the wake of "brutal surge" in violence against children in 2024, Pakistan told the UN Security Council that youths living under foreign occupation are particularly vulnerable to widespread abuses, and called for steps to ensure their safety and protection. Speaking in the 15-member Council's debate on 'Children and Armed Conflict', Pakistan's UN Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said that record high child rights violations were leaving "countless young lives maimed, starved, burned, frozen to death, or weakened by severe malnutrition." In this regard, he drew attention to, among others hotspots, the suffering of children in war-shattered Gaza and Indian-occupied Kashmir. "The Security Council has the solemn responsibility to address this disturbing state of affairs, ensure the protection of children and prevent their suffering, and ensure accountability of the perpetrators without any discrimination or political considerations." At the outset, the Pakistani envoy echoes the deep concern expressed in the UN Secretary General's latest report, which details 41,370 verified grave violations against children in 2024, representing a shocking 25% increase compared to the previous year. "This crisis is being felt with harrowing intensity in some parts of the world embroiled in devastat-

ing armed conflicts," the Pakistani envoy said, regretting that children continue to bear the cost of war. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar pointed out that it took the killing of thousands of Palestinian children in Gaza for the situation to be included in the last year's report. And while welcoming this year's removal of references to Pakistan as a situation of concern — "a long-overdue correction" — the Pakistani envoy expressed regret that the previously documented plight of children in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir was omitted without justification. "Generations of Kashmiri children have been condemned to a life of fear, violence, and repression under foreign occupation," he said, noting their plight has worsened after India's illegal measures of 5 August 2019. "We strongly urge continued reporting on the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, where human rights violations against children are, tragically, routine and continuing." Referring to the recent Indian aggression of 6-7 May 2025 against Pakistan, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar said that civilian areas were deliberately targeted, resulting in the martyrdom of 15 children in blatant contravention of the UN Charter and international humanitarian law. Pakistan, he said, calls for a thorough investigation of these grave violations against children and their inclusion in the forthcoming CAAC (Children and Armed Conflict) report. Reacting to Ambassador Asim Iftikhar's sharp words, Indian Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, while repeating New Delhi's usual allegations, claimed that Pakistan was a promoter of terrorism and was also involved in the recent attack against civilians in Pahalagam.

Cyber attack  
reveals  
sensitive  
Israeli  
military  
technology

DNA

TEL AVIV: A pro-resistance cyber unit has released classified documents exposing two advanced Israeli military systems, breaking what was once the regime's exclusive control over their technology, according to Tasnim news. The Cyber Support Front has revealed documents linked to two key Israeli military products following a targeted cyberattack. The first is HattoriX, a ground-based reconnaissance and target acquisition system for long-range precision strikes. The second is SPIKE-LR2, a fifth-generation, multi-platform, precision-guided missile system designed for modern combat scenarios. Both systems were developed by CR Casting / EXACT, a military-industrial firm in occupied Palestine, under contracts from Rafael and Elbit Systems. According to regional military-security analysts, these systems were recently deployed in the regime's assaults on Gaza, Lebanon, and Iranian territory. The documents were obtained after the Cyber Support Front infiltrated the industrial infrastructure of CR Casting / EXACT, leading to a full-scale data breach. The cyber operation is part of a wider campaign to dismantle the Israeli regime's military-industrial complex.

Mossad spy  
arrested  
in Tehran

WEB DESK

IRANIAN authorities have claimed arresting a spy working for Israeli spy agency Mossa from Tehran's metro, Iran International reported citing state-run IRIB. The alleged spy, it added, was sharing sensitive locations and military sites via electronic chip and was detained due to suspicious movements. The suspect is also said to have received instructions in Hebrew.

Imran Khan opposes  
KP's surplus budget  
on IMF diktat

Sources say Gandapur ignored PTI's political committee's decision against passing of budget sans Khan's approval

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The passing of the budget for the Fiscal Year 2025-26 by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government continues to have further complications as the former prime minister has now opposed the province's surplus budget under the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions, The News reported on Thursday. The development comes in light of the backlash received by KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and his government after the provincial assembly passed its FY26 budget sans approval from Khan — who has been behind bars at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail since September 2023. Since then, PTI activists criticised CM Gandapur calling the provincial chief executive and other MPAs "traitors" — which in fact raises the question as to why the PTI founder wanted a briefing on the KP budget and what changes he intended to make. Credible sources within the PTI told this correspondent that party's patron-in-chief was not happy with the inclusion of Rs157 billion in surplus in the KP budget as per the IMF demands. He believes that the federal government is pushing the country further into debt and that this money should be spent on public welfare. Khan has categorically opposed keeping any surplus to appease the IMF, and for this reason, he wanted a direct briefing on the provincial budget to redirect the surplus towards other development projects. Sources further revealed that during former CM Mahmood Khan's tenure, PTI had also refused to include a surplus budget. With this move, the KP government has potentially jeopardised Pakistan's ongoing negotiations with the IMF just days before the scheduled board meeting.

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