

Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-01

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Govt circles claim

No-trust move against KP regime not on the anvil

We will not resort to any tactic that could plunge Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into crisis, says PML-N senator Siddiqui

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has denied conspiring against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rebutting speculations about toppling the provincial setup via no-confidence vote. A meeting between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi and PM Shehbaz Sharif a day ago triggered speculations of the Centre mulling a plan to oust Chief Minister Gandapur.

Speaking on Geo News morning show 'Geo Pakistan', PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui said it was wrong to label the PM-governor meeting as a conspiracy. However, the senator said, the vote of no confidence was a legal option, citing the ouster of PTI founder Imran Khan from power via a no-trust motion in April 2022. He asserted that no proposal pertaining to the no-trust vote was under discussion at any level. "We will not resort to any such tactic that could plunge Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into a crisis," he maintained. As per official details available about the high-level meeting, Governor Kundi on Wednesday briefed PM Shehbaz on the tragic incident of River Swat wherein a number of tourists lost their lives. The prime minister expressed his grief over the loss of lives and directed the relevant authorities to enhance their capacity building to forestall such occurrences.

Continued on Page 06

Imran Khan to decide about talks with govt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has issued a response to the letter written by some of its leaders. PTI leader Junaid Akbar has raised questions about the transparency of the letter written by his fellow party members.

In an exclusive conversation with DNA News, Junaid Akbar said the real question is: when, how, and in what manner did the letter come? All the individuals who allegedly wrote the letter are in separate prison barracks.

He further added that the decision on negotiations will be made by the party leadership and the founder of PTI. If the talks are meaningful, there is nothing wrong with them. The PTI founder is a political person and has previously given consent for negotiations as well.

NATIONAL DAY OF EGYPT



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Food Security, Ambassador of Egypt H.E. Dr. Ihab Abdelhamid, and distinguished guests cut a ceremonial cake to mark Egypt's National Day celebrations. The event, held at the Islamabad Serena Hotel, was attended by a gathering of prominent figures from diplomatic circles, government, business, and civil society. — DNA

Initial inquiry Multiple deaths responsible for Swat tragedy

Justice Ibrahim orders swift identification of all those found responsible

DNA

PESHAWAR: The chairman of the inspection team probing the recent Swat tragedy informed the Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Thursday that multiple government departments were found negligent in the incident.

Continued on Page 06

Israel using drugs to recruit collaborators in Gaza

DNA

GAZA: Hamas security official said that the Israeli forces were working to create and prolong issues that would lead to the emergence of criminal gangs, as it directed them to destabilise security in the Palestinian enclave, Al Jazeera reported.

Continued on Page 06

Asad Qaisar says

PTI to file reference against four MNAs who joined PML-N

Party seeks disqualification of MNAs who defied 26th Amendment policy

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to send a reference against four MNAs who, despite winning seats with PTI's backing, have now joined the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). According to PTI leader Asad Qaisar, the party has finalised its plan to take action against these members for deviating from party policy during the vote on the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

The reference will be sent to the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The four MNAs named are Chaudhry Usman Ali, Muharrar Zeh, Aamir Khan Khichi, and Zahoor Qureshi. PTI accuses them of violating the party line during the amendment vote and later signing with the PML-N. "These members won their seats on PTI tickets and have now joined the PML-N. We have asked the party to send a disqualification reference to the Speaker and the ECP."

Continued on Page 06

Court reserves verdict on defamation suit against Imran

Additional Sessions Judge Yilmaz Ghani hears arguments from both parties before reserving the verdict

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A sessions court in Lahore has reserved its verdict on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's petition to make the legal notice a part of the record in his defamation suit against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan. Additional Sessions Judge Yilmaz Ghani heard the arguments from both parties today before reserving the verdict.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Russian Navy official killed in Ukraine attack

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Major General Mikhail Gudkov, the deputy head of the Russian Navy who also led a brigade fighting against Ukraine, has been killed in Russia's Kursk region, Oleg Koshenryakov, governor of a far eastern Russian region, said. Unofficial Russian and Ukrainian military Telegram channels had earlier reported that Gudkov had been killed along with 10 other servicemen in a Ukrainian attack on a command post in Kurenovo in Kursk region, which borders Ukraine.

He is one of the most senior Russian military officers to have been killed by Ukraine since Moscow launched its full-scale war against Ukraine in 2022. Koshenryakov, who said he had spoken to Gudkov a lot over the years, said in a statement that Gudkov had been killed "carrying out his duty as an officer" along with others, and expressed his condolences to the dead men's relatives.

US expert urges arms embargo on Israel

DNA

GENEVA: A UN expert on Thursday called on states to impose an arms embargo and cut off trade and financial ties with Israel, which she alleged is waging a "genocidal campaign" in Gaza. In a speech to the UN Human Rights Council, UN Special Representative on the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese said: "The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is apocalyptic." "Israel is responsible for one of the cruelest genocides in modern history," she added, in a speech that was met with a burst of applause from the Geneva council. Israel's diplomatic mission in Geneva did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Albanese's speech. Israel has rejected accusations of genocide in Gaza, citing its right to self-defence following deadly Oct 7, 2023, Hamas attack.

'Making noise during CM speech' Speaker files reference against 26 PTI MPAs

"Lawmakers violating Constitution have no right to remain part of provincial assembly," says Malik Ahmad Khan

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Thursday filed a disqualification reference against 26 PTI-led opposition MPAs with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Speaking to the media after holding a meeting with ECP officials in Islamabad, Malik said that he had already submitted the reference and today's meeting was held to seek legal advice on related matters. The disqualification reference comes just days after unrest during the Punjab Assembly budget

Continued on Page 06

Kundi warns of no-trust motion against CM KP

Governor, a leader of the PPP, says it is "our democratic right to move a no-confidence motion"

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday warned that a no-confidence motion could be tabled

Continued on Page 06

IMF target met SBP reserves reach \$14.5 bn

Expert expects forex reserves to surpass \$ 17 billion by June 2026 due to remittances, reduction in interest payments

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) reserves increased by \$5.12 billion to \$14.51 billion as of June 30 at the end of Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FY25), The News reported on Thursday. The figure exceeds the \$13.9 billion target set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The SBP's reserves stood at \$9.39 billion on June 30 last year and the increase reflects a noticeable improvement in the country's current account balance and realisation of planned inflows during the year, the SBP said in the statement.

The central bank did not provide a reason for the significant increase in reserves of more than \$5 billion in the fiscal year 2025. But according to the statement released last week, it received commercial loans of \$3.10 billion and multilateral loans totalling over \$500 million. "The SBP's reserves had fallen by \$2.66 billion as of June 20, the second biggest weekly drop on record, due to external debt repayments. According to media reports, China rolled over \$3.4 billion in loans to Pakistan over the weekend, helping to increase the nation's forex reserves, which the IMF requires. Beijing refinanced a \$1.3 billion commercial loan that Islamabad had repaid two months prior, and it also rolled over \$2.1 billion that had been in the SBP's reserves for the previous three years."

"With this level of SBP's reserves, the country has met the IMF condition set for the central bank reserves above \$13.9 billion set for June 30, 2025. This is the highest weekly increase," said Awas Ashraf, the director of research at AKD Securities Limited. The SBP's reserves are enough to cover 2.5 months of imports, Ashraf said. "We expect reserves to surpass \$17 billion by June 2026 due to strong remittances and a reduction in interest payments," he added. Two years ago, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves fell to extremely low levels.

Continued on Page 06

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NDMA warns of widespread rains, flash floods

ISLAMABAD: The National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC) of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Thursday advised vigilance as heavy rain, thunderstorms, and potential flash floods are expected to affect various parts of the country from July 6 to 10. Impact-based weather alerts from the National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC) warned that predicted monsoon activity combined with a strong westerly wave may affect multiple regions of the country from July 6 to 10, while northern areas face an elevated flash flood risk from July 7 to 12. Isolated rainfall and thunderstorms are expected in Islamabad and in Punjab, including Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Mianwali, Sargodha, Khushab, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Faisalabad, Lahore, Kasur, Okara and adjoining areas from July 6 to 10. Widespread moderate to heavy rainfall is also expected across northern and central Punjab, while southern Punjab districts including Multan, Khushab, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, and Dera Ghazi Khan may receive low to moderate rainfall. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, heavy rain and thunderstorms are anticipated in Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kohistan, Shangha, Buner, Battagram, Swabi, Nowshera, Charsadda, Malakand, Mardan, Peshawar, Mardan, Haripur, Bannu, and Kohat.—APP

Wali slams KP govt for poor handling of Swat tragedy

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Information for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Affairs, Iqbal Wali Khan criticized the Chief Minister (CM) of KP for mishandling the Swat tragedy, highlighting KP government inactivity and lack of interest in serving people. While talking at the press conference on Thursday, he stated that resorting to allegations and propaganda is the hallmark of PTT's politics, focusing that such tragic incidents could happen all over the world, but the response to those events indicated the performances of the authorities, which the KP government failed to maintain.—APP

Court Notice

In the Court of Naem Shabbaz Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) (Jhelum) suit for Dissolution of Marriage: Basis of Khulaf Case title: Shiza Tariq vs Bilal Yasin Son of Muhammad Yasin Resident of Khalspur Tehsil and Jhelum District. Currently residing in (Dubai UAE).

As there is not possible to call the defendant through summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 11.07.2025 at 08:00AM, otherwise ex parte proceedings will be initiated.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign cyclists enjoying the beautiful roads of the capital on double-paddle cycle, as no doubt the capital city has huge attractions for nature lovers.

Call for urgent reforms to digitize social protection system

Chairing the 10th session of the Committee at Parliament House, Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur emphasized the original intent behind income support mechanisms—reducing human interference to uphold dignity and ensure efficient, transparent disbursement of financial aid

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety has called for urgent reforms to ensure Pakistan's social protection system transitions to a fully transparent, technology-driven model with minimal human intervention. Pakistan travel guide Chairing the 10th session of the Committee at Parliament House, Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur emphasized the original intent behind income support mechanisms—reducing human interference to uphold dignity and ensure efficient, transparent disbursement of financial aid. He raised alarm over the country's rising poverty rate, now approaching 50 percent, and expressed dissatisfaction with persistent hardships faced by Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiaries at point-of-sale camps. The committee voiced concerns over delays in launching the much-anticipated digital banking pilot project, initially slated for June. In response, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) assured that most backend systems are ready and procedural approvals are nearing completion. The pilot is now expected to launch by the end of July, with beneficiary accounts opening by

August 15. Initially covering seven districts and Muzaffargarh, the pilot will integrate geotagged banking services, simplified account opening, and biometric verification. Debit cards will be issued only in cases where fingerprint authentication fails. The rollout will be followed by a six-month evaluation before a nationwide scale-up. To reduce congestion and enhance accessibility, SBP plans to expand ATM networks, introduce staggered payment distribution, and roll out digital wallets. API integration testing and two-factor authentication mechanisms are also in final stages. The committee members expressed concerns over treatment of beneficiaries at banks and campus branches. Pakistan travel guide The Acting Governor SBP reiterated the banking sector's commitment to maintaining dignity, security, and full service access for all beneficiaries. The Committee also urged PTA integration of mobile data repositories to improve biometric reliability in remote areas. On the institutional front, BISP revealed that of the 3,486 sanctioned posts, only 2,347 are filled, with 1,858 regular staff. The Committee noted that heavy reliance on deputation staff

undermines institutional sustainability and raises costs. The Finance Division clarified that recruitment falls under the Cabinet and Establishment Division, and must comply with IMF-imposed fiscal restrictions. The committee urged BISP to work closely with the relevant ministries to address the staffing shortfall and approved relocation of BISP offices to underserved tehsils like Munda and Balambat to improve outreach. The meeting concluded with a consensus to fast-track the digital pilot rollout while ensuring robust oversight, transparency, and protection of beneficiary rights. Those attended the meeting were: Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur, Ahmad Azeem Anwer, Asis Isahque Siddiqui, Mahtab Akbar Rashdi, Muhammad Bashir Khan, Jamshaid Ahmad, Misbah Uddin, Shahid Usman, Nawabzadeh Iftikhar, Ahmed Khan Babar, Shafiq Abbas, Muhammad Ilyas Choudhary, Mir Khan Muhammad Jamali, and Anisa Mehdi (virtually). Senior officials from the Ministries of Poverty Alleviation, Finance, Planning, and representatives of BISP, PPAF, and TVO also participated.—APP

Efforts afoot to eradicate polio from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from the Polio Oversight Board (POB) met with the Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal on Thursday. The delegation was led by Dr. Chris Elias, Chair of the Polio Oversight Board and President of Global Development at the Gates Foundation. The Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Mrs. Aysha Raza Parooq, was also present during the meeting. The minister briefed the delegation on Pakistan's ongoing efforts to eradicate polio, the challenges faced, and the strategic way forward. He emphasized that polio eradication remains a top national priority and that both the federal and provincial governments are working in close coordination to achieve this goal. Pakistan travel guide "Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Pakistan will soon be polio-free. We are utilizing all state resources to achieve this. Our health workers have sacrificed their lives in this fight against polio—a testament to our unwavering commitment," said the minister. He highlighted that poliovirus remains endemic only in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and both countries are considered a single epidemiological block for poliovirus. "We are conducting synchronized campaigns to prevent cross-border transmission and are giving special attention to mobile and migratory populations. Our goal is both Pakistan and Afghanistan to achieve polio-free status simultaneously," he added. The delegation appreciated Pakistan's polio eradication efforts and reaffirmed their continued support and collaboration with the country. The high-level delegation included Dr. Hannu Badley, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Sanjay Wijesekera, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia, Michael McGovern, Chair of the Rotary International PolioPlus Committee, and Dr. Zaid Memish, representative of KS Relief, along with other senior officials.—DNA

CDA meeting discusses digitization of civic facilities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting was held at the CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and DG Civil Defence, Muhammad Ali Banoon. The meeting was attended by Members of the CDA Board, while Chairman of Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), Faizal Tarsad, along with his team participated via Zoom link. The meeting discussed modernizing the CDA's One Window Facilitation Center, introducing a cashless system for online payments of property tax, water charges and transfer fees. It also included enabling the online submission of maps and layout plans, as well as facilitating online payments for all services

provided by the CDA under one roof. The goal is to ensure that citizens of Islamabad can access all services from home and make online payments of the relevant services hassle-free thereby saving time, reducing costs and resources, and promoting transparency. It was ap-

prised in the meeting that the CDA is in the process of digitalisation of its land records besides shifting its financial systems, from manual processes to digitalisation as well as automated system. Through e-governance, official matters will be conducted in a more effi-

cient and transparent manner. It was also highlighted that PITB has worked on various IT and digitization projects. CDA and PITB can collaborate and benefit from each other's experience particularly in order to improve and simplify online access to CDA services

through joint consultation on various digitization and IT initiatives. Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Banoon, expressed commitment to transforming CDA into a model institution using modern technology. He said that while the One Window Facilitation Center will be transformed into an upgraded, adding more facilities and services as well as efforts will be made to simplify procedures and enable online payments for various services under a cashless system. He instructed the IT wing and senior officers of CDA to coordinate and have meeting with relevant PITB officials to promote mutual cooperation, and modernize the monitoring system with CDA formations using dashboards. This will help achieve targets within timelines this generation of pop ups.



Tessori condemns Israeli aggression

KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori visited the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Islamabad and met with Iranian Ambassador Reza Amir Moghaddam to express solidarity in light of recent Israeli aggression in the region. During the visit, the Governor paid tribute to those martyred in the attacks and recorded his sentiments in the embassy's condolence book, according to a news release issued here on Thursday. He stressed condemned the Israeli strikes, calling them a serious threat to global peace, and extended his best wishes for the health and well-being of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. Ambassador Reza Amir Moghaddam congratulated the Governor Sindh on performing Hajj and hosted a luncheon in his honor. He also expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Government of Pakistan for their continued support during this critical time.—APP

Kundi visits CMH, LRH to inquire about blast victims

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faizal Karim Kundi visited the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) on Thursday to inquire about the health of security personnel injured in the recent terrorist attack in North Waziristan, by militants. During the visit, the Governor met individually with each of the injured soldiers, expressed his heartfelt sympathies, and commended their courage and commitment. He also conveyed his best wishes for their swift and complete recovery, saying, "We salute the unwavering resolve of our security forces in the fight against terrorism. The entire nation stands firmly with them in this critical battle. Governor Kundi also visited Lady Reading Hospital, where he met victims injured in the recent Bajaur blast. He checked on their well-being and offered prayers for their speedy recovery. The hospital administration briefed the Governor on the ongoing treatment of the victims, and he expressed satisfaction with the medical care being provided. Governor Kundi issued directives to the hospital authorities, emphasizing that "no effort should be spared in providing the best possible medical treatment to the injured."—APP

Foolproof security arrangements for Muharram: Sharjeel

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon, on Thursday said that the Sindh government has adopted foolproof security arrangements for Muharram. He stated that the Chief Minister of Sindh held meetings with scholars from various schools of thought and reviewed the security plan for gatherings and processions during the mourning period. Memon added that 14,546 police personnel will be deployed for gatherings and 35,116 for Muharram processions, with over 14,000 additional personnel assigned to ensure the security of all events. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon announced that a total of 49,662 police personnel will be deployed across Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas, and Shadad Benazirabad from the 8th to 10th of Muharram to prevent any untoward incidents. Sharjeel Memon stated that the Commissioner of Karachi has been implemented under the Sindh Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1965. He stated that it is the administrative authority of the government to regulate traffic and ensure convenience for citizens. He also questioned whether rickshaws operate on major highways in any other part of the country. Speaking about the education sector, Sharjeel Memon said that the Sindh government has recruited 93,118 teachers across the province, including 58,613 men and 31,075 women. He added that 2,100 teachers were appointed under the minority quota, while 1,330 positions were filled by individuals with special abilities. He said that the recruitment process carried out through the IBA test with complete transparency, leaving no room for criticism. As a result of these measures, 5,000 previously closed schools have been reopened. Currently, 5.5 million children are enrolled in government schools across Sindh, 4 million in private schools, and 1 million in Sindh Education Foundation schools. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon further stated that the Sindh government has taken revolutionary steps in key sectors such as health, energy, infrastructure, and climate change. He noted that after the devastating floods of 2022, the government successfully began achieving its target of constructing 2.1 million houses. He also emphasized that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari raised his voice on climate change at the global level.—DNA

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Briefs

IRSA
releases
279,140
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 279,140 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 423,635 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1515.15 feet which was 113.15 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 273,400 cusecs and 148,200 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1178.05 feet, which was 128.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 28,295 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalagah, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 211,763, 183,850, 108,983 and 50,590 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from Kiver Kahal, a total of 49,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 42,359 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala-APP.

Schools to
get high
speed
internet

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication will provide high-speed internet and fiber-optic connectivity to 532 schools in Islamabad.

According to an official from the Ministry, the government has declared early education in artificial intelligence (AI), computer science, and emerging technologies a national priority. This move is part of the Prime Minister's vision for a "Digital Nation Pakistan," focused on building a skilled and future-ready workforce.

The government is also working to improve the quality of education, aiming to help school and college graduates become more employable. To support this, a high-level committee has been formed to review the current IT curriculum, emphasizing job-oriented skills.

Although education is provincial, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the Ministry of Education, and the National Curriculum Council are jointly upgrading the national syllabus. As part of these reforms, the government is reviewing AI and IT curricula for students from grade 6 to 12. Over 100 model schools and colleges have already been equipped with smart classrooms, labs, and digital screens. The government also plans to expand digital education to remote areas through EdTech and hybrid learning models.

Starting this academic year, AI education will be formally introduced in all schools in the federal area. So far, over 1,000 teachers have received basic AI training, with more advanced training planned for the summer holidays.

The government also aims to include private sector EdTech startups and young entrepreneurs in the national education system to boost innovation and expand reach.—APP

‘Digital transaction system’
essential for transparency

The meeting was attended by Minister for Information Technology and Telecom Shaza Fatima, Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Prime Minister's Advisor Dr. Tauqir Shah, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, and other senior government officials

MANOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed to implement the digital transaction system across the country saying it was vital to bring transparency to the economy. He was chairing a weekly meeting on cashless and digital economy at the Prime Minister's House. On the occasion, the prime minister emphasized the need to facilitate payments between citizens and businesses and to raise awareness about the use of digital systems. He instructed the committees formed for the cashless economy to work closely with all stakeholders to present double recommendations. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed that following the previous meeting, the Digital Payments Innovation and Adoption Committee, the Digital Public Infrastructure Committee, and the Government Payments Committee had been established. A detailed briefing was given in the meeting with respect to the committee's proposals and strategies regarding the digitization of the economy. It was informed that the State Bank of Pakistan was developing a strategy to simplify and ease digital payment methods for merchants. A simplified package will be introduced to encourage and include



small businesses in digital payments. The target is to increase the number of mobile app users for digital payments from 95 million to 120 million, and the number of merchants using QR codes will be increased from 0.9 million to 2

million. The total volume of digital payments is aimed to increase from Rs 7.5 billion to Rs 12 billion. The prime minister directed that all these targets should be doubled. The meeting was further informed that the "Digital National Pakistan" project for the digital

economy had been initiated. The Islamabad City mobile application has so far recorded 1.3 million downloads, offering 15 services. Through the Islamabad City App, Rs 15.5 billion has been collected under ICT Excise and Taxation, the meeting was informed. Work is progressing rapidly on the completion of the Digital Pakistan ID project, while E-stamping facilities will also be launched in Islamabad soon. The meeting was further informed that efforts were underway to provide Wi-Fi internet services across Islamabad, particularly in hospitals, educational institutions, government offices, parks, and metro bus lines. The prime minister instructed that all these facilities should also be introduced in all federal areas, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The meeting was attended by Minister for Information Technology and Telecom Shaza Fatima, Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Prime Minister's Advisor Dr. Tauqir Shah, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, and other senior government officials.

Gwadar Port functions at
int'l standard expanding
trade corridors

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Azeem Khan, addressed the 12th Meeting of Ministers of Transport of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States held in Tianjin, China, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to strengthening regional connectivity, trade, and transport cooperation. In his remarks, Khan highlighted Pakistan's progress in road infrastructure, particularly under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), according to a report carried by Gwadar Port on Thursday. He noted the completion of the country's north-south transport link from Gwadar to Karachi and Khunjerab Pass, emphasizing that both Karachi and Gwadar ports are now operating at international standards, offering significant potential for regional trade integration. The minister stressed the importance of expanding trade corridors with Afghanistan and Iran, calling them "potential lifelines for economic stability." He stated that Pakistan fully supports China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), describing it as a "transformative force for regional cooperation." Khan also shared that Pakistan is rapidly transitioning towards smart transport solutions and is actively working on the digitalization of its transport systems. He added that "visa on arrival facilities are now available for citizens of 128 countries, reflecting Pakistan's openness and commitment to regional tourism and trade." He emphasized that "transport is not just a means of travel, but a tool for economic development and prosperity" and that "connectivity lies at the heart of sustainable regional growth." He further stated that Pakistan is working on creating a network of integrated transport systems with SCO countries, anchored in mutual trust and cooperation. Reiterating Pakistan's strong engagement with the SCO since becoming a full member in 2017, Khan assured the forum of Pakistan's full implementation of all decisions made at the SCO platform. He concluded by saying, "The path to regional development lies in enhanced cooperation—and SCO remains the most vital platform to achieve it."—DNA

Ali Gohar
Baloch
criticizes PTI
leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) senior leader Ali Gohar Khan Baloch Thursday criticized Ali Amin Gandapur, stating that PTI leadership should focus on developing a clear strategy and adopt a more mature leadership style instead of making lofty claims. In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, Gohar Khan Baloch sharply criticized PTI leadership, calling their recent press conference "directionless and devoid of any serious

political roadmap. According to him, the attitude of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has remained aggressive and its leadership has made it a habit to challenge and attack the federal setup. He said the party is relying on loud rhetoric instead of offering practical solutions and accused PTI of deliberately misleading the public to hide its internal confusion and lack of leadership maturity. He added that repeated tall claims without substance only expose the party's desperation and failure to act responsibly. He also issued a

stern warning regarding PTI's protest threats, stating that while peaceful protest is a democratic right, any attempt to challenge state authority or incite unrest will be met with the full force of the law. "We will not allow anyone to destabilize the country under the pretense of protest," he said, adding that the state is fully prepared to deal with any unlawful activity. He urged PTI to abandon confrontation and instead come forward with a clear agenda if they are serious about dialogue. Addressing the issue of a no-confidence motion, he stated that although no decision has been made so far, the constitution allows for such moves at both federal and provincial levels. As for the numbers, he said, time will determine the reality and there is no need to jump to conclusions prematurely. He said the matter is currently confidential, but things will become clearer in the coming days.

Special drive
against active
criminal
gangs

ISLAMABAD: Dolphin

Force Superintendent of Police (SP) Khalid Mahmood Awan chaired a high-level meeting on Thursday to review and enhance measures for crime prevention, particularly focusing on curbing vehicle theft and street crimes in the capital. A public relations officer told APP that the meeting was attended by officers posted at Rescue 15. During the session, SP Khalid issued directives to form special police teams to apprehend active gang members involved in car and motorcycle theft and street robberies. SP Khalid instructed officers to intensify crackdowns against criminal elements and make patrolling more effective and purposeful across all areas of the city. "Every officer must actively target and dismantle these criminal gangs," he said, adding that all patrolling and emergency response units must enhance their vigilance to prevent crimes and maintain public safety. SP Khalid emphasized that protecting the lives and property of citizens and ensuring peace in the city remains the foremost priority of Islamabad Police.—APP

Senator Siddiqui
criticizes
Gandapur's
press conference

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)

Senator Irfan Siddiqui on Thursday criticized Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur's press conference as poorly planned and emphasized that while peaceful protest is a democratic right, any actions that disturb public order will be dealt with firmly. Talking to a local news channel, he criticized PTI leadership, including Ali Amin Gandapur, for using the issue of access to Jalal Khan as a mere excuse to avoid constructive dialogue. He said that these excuses reflect PTI's unwillingness to engage seriously with the government. "If PTI truly wants to resolve the ongoing political tensions, they should come to the table with clear plans and meaningful proposals instead of resorting to hollow justifications and empty threats," he added. He asserted that PTI's capacity to command street power and lead civil disobedience has waned, cautioning that protests must be peaceful and abide by the law. Responding to a query about the Governor's role, he said that they would never take any step that could create a crisis in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He emphasized that protest is the democratic right of any political party and should be respected as such. To another question, Siddiqui said that describing the Governor's meeting with the Prime Minister as a conspiracy is incorrect. After all, he even meets the Prime Minister, and so do many other political figures as part of normal political processes. He also added that Imran Khan underwent a no-confidence motion and recalled that in 2013, PTI was allowed to form the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that PTI's apprehensions about another no-confidence motion are mere fears, as there have been no concrete developments on this front yet, while emphasizing that the no-confidence motion is a constitutional and legal right which they fully reserve the right to pursue if necessary.—DNA

UNESCO
re-elects
Pakistan to
Executive
Council

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has been re-elected to the Executive Council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the 2025-2027 term. According to Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the election took place during the 33rd Session of the IOC General Assembly, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The IOC of UNESCO fosters international cooperation in marine sciences to enhance the management of oceans, coasts, and marine resources. It also develops scientifically-based services for sustainable ocean economies and establishes effective early warning systems for tsunamis and other ocean-related hazards. The commission is responsible for coordinating the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 (The Ocean Decade). Pakistan's re-election to the Executive Council is a testament to its positive contributions to ocean-related scientific initiatives within UNESCO. The Executive Council convenes annually to review progress on the Commission's work plans and prepare for the General Assembly.—APP

Traffic plan
reviewed

ISLAMABAD: Chief Traffic

Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider, visited the San Botta Innambargah to review traffic arrangements ahead of Muharram processions. An official told APP Thursday that the CTO Zeeshan accompanied by officers of the district administration, also inspected the designated procession routes to ensure effective traffic flow and public safety. CTO Zeeshan directed that all illegal parking in the vicinity of the procession routes be removed immediately and instructed that parking zones should be allocated at a distance of 100 meters from all entry and exit points. He said strict action would be taken against vehicles found parked illegally near the procession routes. CTO Zeeshan appealed to citizens to park their vehicles only in the officially designated areas to avoid disruption and assist in maintaining order. He said concrete barriers and barbed wire fencing must be installed along the procession routes to enhance security and prevent any untoward incidents.—APP

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Pak for deepening digital city
collaboration under CPEC

Nowadays, the Pakistani government has established an inclusive service fund to strengthen the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, and under the framework of the Six One One Foundation, the fund is playing its role

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Digital city collaboration should be deepened under CPEC, said Aslam Chaudhary, Economic Minister, Pakistan Embassy Economic Wing, at the ongoing Global Digital Economy Conference held here. "The theme of our conference, build a digitally friendly city, highlights the harmonious coexistence between people and technology in the city, which is what we need in a people-oriented in the digital age, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Thursday. We also highly agree with this in Pakistan's nation-

al development strategy," Aslam Chaudhary added. In his Address, he pointed out that building digitally friendly cities is not just about technology, but about creating an environment where all citizens, whether urban or rural, could use safe and reliable digital technologies. Given this, Pakistan is fulfilling its national commitment to continuously expand the scope of the digital economy services and try to cover every remotest area. Nowadays, the Pakistani government has established an inclusive service fund to strengthen the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, and under the

framework of the Six One One Foundation, the fund is playing its role. "Through this, we have laid optical cables in large areas of the country, connecting about 22,000 villages." "By building digital-friendly cities, different cities are able to recognize each other's data standards. At the same time, cooperation agreements between countries are an indispensable boost to the digitalization of developing countries," Chaudhary stressed. In April, the Secretary-General of the Riyadh-based Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), Deemah AlFaiyaz, noted Pakistan's forth-

coming presidency of the multilateral body is part of ongoing efforts to position the country as a regional and global digital leader. Pakistan is scheduled to assume the DCO presidency in 2026, following Saudi Arabia's term in 2025. The 2026 presidency will see Pakistan hosting the Digital Future Development Initiative (DFDI) forum in Islamabad, marking a significant step in Pakistan's digital transformation journey. "On this occasion, I am going to have three major initiatives," the Minister appealed. "First, strengthen cross-border data flows and interoperability.

The future of BRICS: Can Pakistan join?

THE BRICS alliance—comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—has emerged as a significant economic and geopolitical bloc, challenging Western-dominated institutions like the IMF and World Bank. With recent expansions, including Egypt, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia, BRICS is positioning itself as an alternative to the G7. This raises critical questions: What is the future of BRICS? Can Pakistan join? If yes, how? If not, why? Additionally, how does BRICS compare to other regional blocs like ASEAN and NAFTA (now USMCA)?

BRICS represents 45% of the world's population and 30% of global GDP (PPP). Its future hinges on: De-Dollarization Efforts – BRICS is pushing for trade in local currencies, reducing reliance on the US dollar. A potential BRICS currency could reshape global finance. Expansion & Influence – New members (Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia) strengthen its geopolitical weight, particularly in energy markets. Challenges – Internal rivalries (India-China tensions) and economic disparities may hinder deeper integration.

If BRICS succeeds in creating a unified financial system, it could rival the G7, offering developing nations an alternative to Western-led institutions. Yes, Pakistan Can Join—Here's How: Strengthen Economic Stability – Pakistan must stabilize its economy (reduce debt, control inflation) to be an attractive candidate. Diplomatic Alignment – Pakistan enjoys strong ties with China and Russia, key BRICS members. It must also improve relations with India (a current BRICS member).

Strategic Importance – Pakistan's location (CPEC, Gwadar Port) makes it valuable for trade and energy corridors. Formal Application – Pakistan must formally apply, backed by support from China and Russia. Indian Opposition – India may veto Pakistan's entry due to geopolitical tensions.

Economic Instability – High debt, inflation, and IMF dependency weaken Pakistan's case. Western Alignments – Pakistan's historical ties with the US could be a hurdle if BRICS seeks anti-Western unity.

BRICS is evolving into a powerful alternative to Western economic dominance, but its success depends on overcoming internal divisions. Pakistan has a chance to join, but it must stabilize its economy and navigate geopolitical hurdles, particularly India's opposition. Compared to ASEAN and NAFTA, BRICS is less integrated but more geopolitically ambitious. If Pakistan plays its cards right—leveraging Chinese support, improving its economy, and balancing diplomatic relations—it could secure a seat at the BRICS table, opening new avenues for trade, investment, and strategic influence. However, without reforms, it risks being left behind in this shifting world order.

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"Death to the IDF": A Chant Becomes a Global Reckoning

Qamar Bashir



The United Nations, meanwhile, has turned into a factory of eloquent failure. Its general secretaries and humanitarian envoys deliver beautiful speeches, full of metaphors and moral anguish, but they remain utterly toothless. Every ceasefire call ends in more bombs. Every resolution ends in more rubble. The normalization of death is a new political strategy. If this continues, then ethnic cleansing, starvation, and concentration camps will not only be accepted—they will be imitated elsewhere

WHAT began as a defiant chant by a single British artist at Glastonbury has erupted into a global phenomenon—a symbolic battle cry that has echoed across continents. "Death to the IDF," shouted from the stage by Bob Dylan of the punk-rock duo Bob Dylan & The Band, is no longer just a slogan. It is a collective cry of the oppressed, a reflection of unspoken suffering, and a moral indictment of what is increasingly seen around the world as one of the most brutal and morally bankrupt military forces in modern history: the Israeli Defense Forces. The chant, delivered live on BBC's broadcast from Glastonbury 2025, was not a slip or a shock tactic—it was a deliberate, explosive act of protest against the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the West Bank. The reaction was immediate and deeply divided. The Israeli embassy in London called it "grotesque incitement." The BBC apologized. Glastonbury's organizers condemned the act. UK Health Secretary Wes Streeting, while denouncing the chant as appalling, said what Western officials dare to utter publicly: "Get your own house in order." He referred directly to the unchecked settler violence in the West Bank and the increasing brutality of Israel's military operations. In one stroke, the moral lens was inverted—not on the perpetrator but on the perpetrators of the suffering. Within hours, the chant had gone viral. From the streets of London and Berlin to the campuses of UCLA and Columbia, it was repeated, amplified, reinterpreted. In Johannesburg, banners bearing the phrase were raised next to Mandela's warning that freedom is incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians. In Malaysia and Indonesia, it became a mainstay of anti-apartheid rallies. In Istanbul, it was sung from balconies during blackout protests. No PR campaign, no government declaration, no diplomatic silence could now erase it. What was once taboo was now mainstream—a visceral condemnation of what Israel has done and continues to do in Gaza and the West Bank under the silent complicity of the so-called civilized world. And the rage behind the chant is not rhetorical. It is rooted in numbers that defy imagination. Since October 7, 2023, more than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza. Over 14,000 of them were children. Thousands more remain under rubble. UNICEF reports that 9 out of 10 children in Gaza are acutely malnourished. According to WHO, 74% of Gaza's hospitals are either completely destroyed or inoperable. The Red Crescent reports that over 300 paramedics have been killed in targeted strikes. The few surviving doctors speak of makeshift surgeries without anesthesia, of children screaming in agony as their limbs are amputated on cold concrete. One UN physician stationed in Rafah wrote in her dispatch: "This is not war. This is organized, mechanized, bureaucratic death." A young nurse from Médecins Sans Frontières wrote, "I have treated babies with phosphorus burns so deep I can see their bones glowing. I've seen a child still clinging to the leg of their dead mother, surrounded by debris, unaware that the mother is gone. We do not treat patients. We grieve for them while we try to save them." These words are not exaggerations. They are real, raw testaments of horror. "Death to the IDF" is not a celebration of violence. It is a lament, a howl of anguish, a demand for the world to open its eyes. And yet, instead of listening, it is becoming a repression. Donald Trump, now in his second term, ordered the revocation of Bob Dylan's U.S. visa, calling the slogan "terrorist rhetoric." But censorship only gave the chant more fuel. Protests erupted in front of U.S. consulates from Paris to São Paulo. Demonstrators carried signs that read: "You banned the voice. Not the truth." Even progressive Jewish voices began to echo the sentiment—not as anti-Semitism, but as anti-militarism. "We will not let our identity be weaponized to protect genocide," read one statement from a New York synagogue. Israeli officials continue to invoke their mythology—that the IDF is the "most moral army in the world." But the evidence now overwhelms the narrative. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and BBC have all documented war crimes. The use of white phosphorus in civilian zones. The targeting of journalists. The siege of entire hospitals. The starvation of refugee populations. And while Netanyahu claims this is all in the name of security, millions of people now see it for what it is: an apartheid enforced by cluster bombs, domination enforced by siege, religion used to sanctify slaughter. Israeli commentator Yehoshua Pfeffer, writing in defense of Israel, said the current moment is a sacred process. He compared Israel's suffering and response to the flowering of Abraham's staff, a symbol of divine blessing and continuity. But what is blossoming in Gaza is not fruit—it is charred flesh. What is flowering is not hope—it is funerals. To argue that this slaughter is part of a divine process is to devalue every teaching of justice, mercy, and humanity. While Pfeffer invokes scripture, Palestinian families dig through rubble to find the limbs of their children. There is also a stark historical hypocrisy that the global south and Muslim world can no longer ignore. When Serbia constructed ethnic concentration camps in Bosnia and slaughtered thousands of Muslims, it was the United States under Bill Clinton—alongside NATO—that intervened militarily to stop the genocide and dismember Yugoslavia. But now, when Israel is doing the same, with U.S.-supplied weapons, the very same West remains silent. Their eyes are closed. Their ears are stopped. Their hearts have become a tomb. There is no urgent summit, no red line, no NATO intervention. The same global community that once promised "Never Again" now provides the funding, logistics, and diplomatic immunity that enables genocide in real time. Not a single world power—be it the United States, Russia, the European Union, or the OIC—has moved decisively to stop Israel. The Muslim world, shamefully fractured, remains content issuing hollow condemnations. Worse, some of its own governments have joined hands with Israel and the U.S. to target Iran instead of standing

by the children of Gaza. In doing so, they are no different from the tyrants they once condemned. They have failed. Morally. Spiritually. Historically. The United Nations, meanwhile, has turned into a factory of eloquent failure. Its general secretaries and humanitarian envoys deliver beautiful speeches, full of metaphors and moral anguish, but they remain utterly toothless. Every ceasefire call ends in more bombs. Every resolution ends in more rubble. The normalization of death is a new global policy. The normalization of slaughter is a new political strategy. If this continues, then ethnic cleansing, starvation, and concentration camps will not only be accepted—they will be imitated elsewhere. The psychological toll of this horror is now global. People with even a fragment of humanity are losing sleep, losing sanity, feeling helpless, disoriented, consumed by the cruelty they witness. But there is one man who can stop it all—Donald J. Trump. He has the leverage, the influence, and the geopolitical weight. With a single phone call, with a single declaration, he could force Israel into ceasefire. But he has not. And in his inaction, he has become morally complicit. The world will remember that he could have stopped the genocide—and did not. That he could have saved children—and chose silence. If this slaughter continues, history will not brand him as a peace-bringer. It will record him as a facilitator of bloodshed. And the Muslim nations that continue to fund Israel indirectly, that remain passive while their own faith is defiled and their brothers and sisters massacred, will lose their legacy of shame—not only in this world, but in the hereafter. They will not escape the moral consequences of their silence. It is the sound of the world's moral compass spinning wildly in search of true north. It is the voice of the end of our conscience, echoing across Gaza's broken streets. It is the stitching of bullet-riddled bones under candlelight in overcrowded clinics. It is the bleeding of infants in the arms of paramedics who haven't slept for days. And it is also the dark shadow that now hangs over the leadership of the entire world—from the United States to Europe to the United Nations to the Muslim world. Because they have all become complicit in this crime. Israel may be the one pulling the trigger, but all those who fund, supply, and silence it are part of it. The killing machine. If justice cannot be delivered to the people of Palestine today, if those children buried under the rubble of Rafah cannot find justice in this era of humanity, then rest assured—justice will come. It may come not next year, not even in this generation. But justice delayed is not justice denied. Be it in 50 years, or 500, the reckoning will come. Because blood has memory. Suffering writes history. And silence, too, leaves a legacy.

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

America Needs a New Asian Alliance to Counter China

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



In response, several US allies and partners in the region have begun to recalibrate their defense postures. Japan has significantly increased its defense budget and revised its security policies, allowing for a more proactive military role. Australia, similarly, has intensified its military cooperation with the United States and other regional actors, notably through...

THE changing strategic landscape of the Indo-Pacific region, characterized by China's growing assertiveness, has led to renewed calls for the United States to establish a formal collective defense pact in Asia. For decades, the idea of such an alliance was considered neither feasible nor necessary, primarily due to the fragmented political interests of regional actors, the complexity of historical rivalries, and the relatively stable balance of power maintained by the United States' bilateral security arrangements. However, in recent years, China's rapid military modernization, its increasingly aggressive posture in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait and its broader geopolitical ambitions have significantly altered the regional power equation. In this context, the notion of a Pacific defense pact has evolved from a theoretical proposition to a strategic imperative. China's foreign policy under President Xi Jinping has grown more assertive, driven by a vision of national resurgence encapsulated in the slogan "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." This ambition is not merely symbolic; it manifests in tangible geopolitical strategies, including territorial claims over disputed waters, increased military incursions near Taiwan and efforts to expand Chinese influence through mechanisms such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Beijing's long-term goal appears to be the establishment of a regional order in which China is the preeminent power, capable of setting rules and norms to suit its strategic interests. This trajectory, if left unchecked, threatens to destabilize the existing security framework in the Indo-Pacific and could potentially trigger a new world war. In response, several U.S. allies and partners in the region have begun to recalibrate their defense postures. Japan has significantly increased its defense budget and revised its security policies, allowing for a more proactive military role. Australia, similarly, has intensified its military cooperation with the United States and other regional actors, notably through the AUKUS pact. South Korea, while traditionally more focused on the threat from North Korea, is increasingly attentive to the strategic challenges posed by China. Even countries in Southeast Asia, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, are seeking closer security ties with the United States and other like-minded powers to hedge against Chinese encroachment. Despite these efforts, the lack of a formal, institutionalized collective defense framework undermines the cohesion and effectiveness of regional deterrence. The United States, as the principal guarantor of regional stability, must therefore transition from its traditional hub-and-spoke model of bilateral alliances to a multilateral defense pact. A Pacific defense pact, similar in structure and purpose to NATO, would offer a more unified and credible deterrent against Chinese adventurism. Such an alliance would not only enhance interoperability and strategic coordination among member states but also signal a clear, collective commitment to defending the status quo in the Indo-Pacific. The psychological impact of such a pact should not be underestimated; it would serve as a powerful message to Beijing that coercion and expansionism will not be met with mere resistance. One of the main arguments against the formation of a Pacific defense pact has been the diversity of political systems, threat perceptions and historical grievances among potential member states. However, recent developments indicate that these concerns are not insurmountable. The shared threat of Chinese aggression and growing strategic alignment, particularly among its members to deepen strategic alignment. Similarly, the increasing frequency of joint military exercises, intelligence sharing and defense technology transfers in the region underscores the readiness of like-minded nations to enhance their collective security. Another critical aspect supporting the case for a Pacific defense pact is the evolving nature of warfare and security threats. Traditional concepts of territorial defense are being supplemented, and in some cases replaced by hybrid warfare, cyberattacks and grey-zone operations. China's use of non-military tools such as economic coercion, disinformation campaigns and maritime militia demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive security architecture. A collective defense pact would facilitate the sharing of not just military capabilities but also intelligence, cybersecurity infrastructure and early

warning systems, thus enabling member states to mount a coordinated response to a broader spectrum of threats. Critics may argue that a formal alliance could provoke Beijing and accelerate an arms race in the region. While this concern is valid, it overlooks the fact that the status quo is already deteriorating. China has been expanding its military capabilities and influence regardless of U.S. policy choices. In fact, strategic ambiguity and fragmented defense arrangements are more likely to embolden China, as they create uncertainty about the consequences of its actions. A clear, rules-based framework anchored in collective defense would reduce the likelihood of miscalculation and serve as a stabilizing force in the region. It would also offer smaller states the confidence to resist coercion and the reassurance of strengthening the overall resilience of the regional order. It is also important to recognize the normative dimension of such a pact. Beyond military considerations, a Pacific alliance would reinforce the principles of international law, freedom of navigation and the peaceful resolution of disputes. These values are currently under threat from China's efforts to reinterpret or disregard established norms. By aligning around shared principles, member states can collectively promote a vision of regional order based on respect, sovereignty and mutual respect. This normative consensus would also enhance the legitimacy of the alliance and make it more attractive to prospective members. The time is ripe for the United States to spearhead the formation of a collective defense pact in the Indo-Pacific. A Pacific defense alliance would not only bolster deterrence and stability but also reaffirm the United States' commitment to upholding a free, open and rules-based order in the region. It goes beyond mere containment; it is a concerted effort, the Indo-Pacific risks sliding into a period of uncertainty, rivalry and potential conflict an outcome that no responsible power should accept.

Briefs

No-trust move against KP regime...

FROM PAGE 01
The PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting, that discussed the situation in the country as well, was attended by Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan, State and Frontier Regions Engineer Amir Moqim, Minister for Public Affairs Unit Rana Mobashar Iqbal, PM's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Samadullah, Minister of State for Power Abdul Rehman Kanji and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Talla Butki. On the other hand, speaking on Geo News programme Aaj Shabab Khanda Kay Saath, PM's aide on public and political affairs Samadullah denied claims that the ruling party discussed removing the KP government with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) chief Maudoodi Fadzil Rehman. The PM's adviser said this, addressing the media speculations about a meeting between the premier and JUIF chief on June 20. He said he was also present in the said meeting. Samadullah also denied any plan to bring no-trust vote against the PTI's provincial government.

SBP reserves reach...

FROM PAGE 01
providing less than a month's worth of import cover. The government obtained a \$3 billion short-term IMF bailout in response to the prospect of a sovereign debt default. In addition, the government restricted imports and permitted more on the change rate flexibility. The rise in foreign reserves reflects improved external account management, higher remittances, better export, and disciplined policy actions under the IMF's guidance. Mohtashim Sohal, the CEO of Topyline Securities, wrote on X. The SBP indicated its reserves by purchasing dollars from the market. Between June 2024 and March 2025, it bought \$6.8 billion from the interbank market, indicating the availability of foreign exchange in the system.

PTI to file reference...

FROM PAGE 01
Let's see what action they take," said Qaiser. In October last year, the government clinched 225 votes, surpassing the required 224, to import from a handful of independent MNAs, including members of the PTI, in the historic midnight passage of the 26th Constitutional Amendment in the National Assembly. Back then, Qaiser had said the PTI-backed independent candidates, who supported the contentious constitutional amendment, betrayed the party and its founder, Imran Khan. "Those who voted in favour of the bill have committed treachery against the party and its founder," Qaiser said.

Court reserves...

FROM PAGE 01
The court will announce its judgement on PM Shehbaz's plea on July 10. PM Shehbaz had filed a defamation suit against the PTI founder over his allegations on a TV channel, over which the former has claimed that it damaged his reputation and demanded Rs10 billion in damages. In the defamation suit, the prime minister stated that the PTI founder had alleged in a TV programme on April 26, 2017, that he was offered Rs10 billion bribe by PM Shehbaz for keeping silent over Panama Papers case.

Israel using drugs to...

FROM PAGE 01
The official stated that drugs are often used to "ensnare young people, bring them down, and assign them to security and espionage missions" and that agents had been smuggling large quantities of drugs from intelligence officers assigned to the aid teams that have access to the aid distribution points. Israeli intelligence officers used the aid distribution points as a recruiting ground, the Hamas official said.

Asian Junior Squash Championship

Five Pakistani players secure berth in semis

Nauman Khan, top seed in Boys U15 category, defeats India's Harshal Rana

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistani players continued their impressive run at the 32nd Asian Junior Squash Championship, securing multiple victories in the quarterfinals, with five of them qualifying for the semifinals. In the Boys U15 category, Abdullah Nawaz dominated Wong Wing Kuen of Hong Kong with a straight-games victory 11-4, 11-4, 11-6 to advance to the semifinals. The Boys U15 event saw two Pakistani players progress. Nauman Khan, the top seed in this age group category, defeated India's Harshal Rana in a commanding performance with scores of 11-8, 11-5, 11-7, while Ahmed Raza Khalid outclassed Malaysia's Arman Merzha bin Ashraf 11-7, 11-3, 11-3. Pakistan's Sohail Adnan, the top seed in Boys U13, cruised past India's Abhyrady Arora 11-2, 11-8, 11-2 to book his place in the semifinals. In the Girls U13 category, Mahnoor Ali secured a convincing win over India's Anika Kalanki with scores of 11-6, 11-2, 11-3. However, Scherish Ali bowed out in the Girls



U15 quarterfinals after losing to Malaysia's Siti Sparah A Sultan 4-11, 7-11, 2-11.

With five players reaching the semifinals across different age groups, Pakistan remains a strong contender to win multiple medals in the tournament.

Steve Smith back for second West Indies Test after dislocated finger

SYDNEY: Steve Smith has recovered from a nasty dislocated finger and will return for Australia's second Test against the West Indies this week at the expense of Josh Inglis, skipper Pat Cummins said. Smith hurt his finger while fielding in the slips during the World Test Championship final at Lord's three weeks ago and was taken to hospital. It sidelined him for the first Test in Barbados that Australia won by 159 runs, and he was sorely missed with the side's top order failing to fire. "He's ready to go, the finger held up well," Cummins said on Wednesday at St George's in Grenada, with the 36-year-old set to bat with a splint. He will sit back in at number four after Inglis failed to grab his opportunity, making just five and 12. While Inglis misses out, selectors have kept faith with teenager Sam Konstas as Usman Khawaja's opening partner and the under-performing Cameron Green at three, resisting any urge to bring back the axed Marcus Labuschagne, who remains with the squad. The team is otherwise unchanged, with the potent combination of Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood once again spearheading the attack. "He was really happy, particularly batting," Cummins added of Smith, who is unlikely to field in his usual spin position. "Fielding we still potentially need to manage it a little bit. "So he might not be in the slips too often - maybe for spin he'll be okay, but (for the) quicks he might need to wait another week." Australia has never played a Test at St George's, and only once previously visited for a one-day in 2008.

Cummins said it was an unknown and having vice-captain Smith back to help him problem-solve was a bonus. "That's one of his great strengths," he said of the 117-Test veteran. "He's scored runs all over the world and that means that while he's not played a game here, he seems to work out pretty quickly what needs to be done and where your scoring areas are. "Of course, having that knowledge is going to be helpful, particularly for the guys that haven't really played too many Test matches as games on similar wickets." A Memorandum of Understanding has been formally signed between the Commander Regional Directorate Anti-Narcotics Force Punjab Brigadier Sikandar Hadrat and Rana Atif CEO Lahore Qalandars at a festive event held in Lahore.

India welcomes Pakistan hockey team for Asia Cup

The Asia Cup, a key event in the continental hockey calendar, will see top teams competing in India. The inclusion of Pakistan is seen as a positive step towards reviving sporting ties between the two nations.

NEW DELHI: In a significant move towards sports diplomacy, Indian Sports Minister Anurag Thakur announced that India will not object to the Pakistan hockey team's participation in the upcoming Asia Cup, scheduled to begin on July 7 in India. The Asia Cup, a key event in the continental hockey calendar, will see top teams competing in India. The inclusion of Pakistan is seen as a positive step towards reviving sporting ties between the two nations. "Sports should remain beyond political differences," Thakur stated, emphasising India's commitment to fostering a spirit of healthy competition. This development contrasts with recent cricketing relations, where India opted not to send its team to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy, instead playing its matches in Dubai due to security and political concerns. However, the green signal for Pakistan's hockey team signals a potential thaw in bilateral sports exchanges. For Pakistan, participation in the Asia Cup is crucial to improving its international hockey credentials. The team, once a powerhouse in the sport, has struggled in recent years and will benefit from competing against strong opponents like India, South Korea, and Malaysia. Hockey fans on both sides of the border have welcomed the decision, hoping it paves the way for more collaborative sporting events in the future.

Liverpool's Portuguese forward Diogo Jota dies in car crash

The regional fire department of Castille-Leon, where Zamora is located, said on its website a car crashed shortly after midnight on Thursday and burst into flames, with two men, aged 28 and 26, found dead

MADRID: Liverpool's Portuguese forward Diogo Jota, 28, died in a fiery car crash near Zamora in northwestern Spain with his brother, Spanish states-owned TV station said on Thursday, citing local firefighters. Police told Reuters everything pointed to that information being correct, although they could not yet officially confirm the names. The regional fire department of Castille-Leon, where Zamora is located, said on its website a car crashed shortly after midnight on Thursday and burst into flames, with two men, aged 28 and 26, found dead. Jota, who got married on June 28, helped Liverpool win the Premier League last season and also won the FA Cup and League Cup with the Merseyside outfit. Jota arrived at Anfield from Wolverhampton Wanderers in 2020 and scored 65 goals in 182 appearances for the club in all competitions. He also made 49 appearances for Portugal, twice winning the UEFA Nations League. - Agencies

Thailand set for another acting PM after cabinet reshuffle

BANGKOK: Thailand's king is scheduled Thursday to swear in a new cabinet in a reshuffle that will see a third person in a week take on the role as the country's prime minister. The Southeast Asian nation's top office was played into a reshuffle on Tuesday when the Constitutional Court suspended PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra pending an ethics probe which could take months. Power passed to transport minister Suraja Jongsang-nguan who took office for only one day, as the bombshell was dropped in an awkward interim ahead of the reshuffle. When former deputy minister Phumtham Wachaisri is seen into his new position as interior minister he will also take on a deputy prime minister role, outranking Suraja's - thus becoming the acting premier.

Pakistan thrash Japan to storm into netball championship final

Green Shirts crush Japan 64-39 to book their place in Friday's tournament final

JEONJU: Pakistan stormed into the final of the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship 2025 with a commanding 64-39 win over Japan in the semifinal played at the Jeonju Hwasan Gymnasium, Jeonju, South Korea, on Thursday. The Green Shirts asserted control early, racing to a 21-7 lead in the first quarter. They maintained their grip on the game, extending the score to 34-19 by halftime, 42-28 after the third quarter, and closing out the match with a dominant 64-39 finish. Key players including Leya Raza Shah, Alsha Nawrood, Sunayna Kousser, Haleena, South Korea, on Thursday. The Green Shirts delivered a dominant performance, contributing both defensively and offensively to secure the win. Chairman of the Pakistan Netball Federation Mudasar Arif, President Sameen Malik, and Secretary General Muhammad Razi congratulated the team on their remarkable performance and praised the players for securing a spot in the final. The final is scheduled to take place on Friday. Pakistan will now face the winner



of the second semifinal between Maldives and South Korea.

The Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship 2025, organised under the auspices of the Asian Netball Federation, is being held from June 27 to July 4 in South Korea. It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan began their campaign in dominant fashion, outclassing South Korea with a 71-15 victory. In their second match, the Green Shirts continued their impressive run by securing a 56-32 win over China Taipei. In the third groupstage match, Pakistan overhauled South Korea with a commanding 91-6 scoreline. They followed it up with a dominant 75-39 victory over Japan in the fourth match. Pakistan on Tuesday booked their place in the semifinals with a hard-fought 49-39 win over the Maldives in their fifth groupstage match, topping Group B. - DNA

Rana Mashhood reviews plans for first national youth games

Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood emphasized the broader vision behind the Games, highlighting youth empowerment through structured sports participation

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting to review preparations for the First National Youth Games was held on Thursday at the Prime Minister's Office, chaired by Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP). The meeting was attended by senior officials and key stakeholders from federal and provincial departments, including Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mohtashim Wani, Secretary General of the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) Muhammad Khalid Mahmood, and Higher Education Commission (HEC) Director Sports Javed Ali Memon. Their presence underscored the national commitment to making this historic event a success. Scheduled for September 2025, the First National Youth Games are being organized by the PMYP in collaboration with the POA. This event marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's sporting history—the first nationwide youth-focused games of this scale since 1948. The initiative aims to reignite the

spirit of competitive sports among the country's youth while cultivating a sustainable pipeline of athletic talent. The core objective of the Games is to identify, develop, and promote emerging ath-



letes from across Pakistan by providing them with a professional and inclusive platform to showcase their skills. In doing so, the government aims to foster a robust sporting ecosystem, promote



physical fitness, and enhance national integration through youth engagement. The meeting also discussed the meeting included athlete selection criteria, the structure of regional and provincial qualifiers, venue readiness, logistical planning, coordination with local authorities, and the involvement of educational institutions. Participants stressed the importance of transparency, merit, and equal opportunity throughout the selection and organization process.

Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood emphasized the broader vision behind the Games, highlighting youth empowerment through structured sports participation. He also underscored the value of public-private partnerships and interdepartmental collaboration to ensure the highest standards of event management, athlete welfare, and media outreach. Stakeholders across the country expressed strong support for the initiative and praised the leadership of the PMYP and POA in spearheading this much-needed revival of youth sports. The meeting concluded with a unified commitment from all parties to work together toward making the First National Youth Games a landmark success.

Speaker files reference against 26...

FROM PAGE 01
session when opposition members raised slogans and disrupted the proceedings. In an order dated June 27, the speaker, while exercising powers conferred under Rule 210(3) of the Rules of Procedure 1997, suspended the opposition members for a total of 15 assembly sessions. "Lawmakers who fail to uphold the constitution have no right to remain part of the provincial assembly," he said while talking to media outside the ECP office. He further warned that any MPs involved in abusive language, vandalism, and disruptive behaviour would not be granted any leniency. The reference filed against PTI-backed MPs include Malik Farhat Masood, Muhammad Tanweer Aslam, Syed Riffat Mahmood, Yasir Mehmood Qureshi, Kaleem Ullah Khan, Muhammad Anwar Iqbal, Ali Asif, Zulfikar Ali, Ahmad Mujtaba Chaudhary, Shahid Javed, Muhammad Ismail, Khayal Ahmad.

Kundi warns of no-trust...

FROM PAGE 01
against KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. This comes after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in line with the Supreme Court's orders, reinstated reserved seats that were previously awarded to the PML-N, PPP, JUIF, and ANP. The PTI deprived of them and strengthening the opposition in the KP Assembly. The KP Assembly has 93 PTI-backed MPs, who were elected as independents. In contrast, the opposition's numbers have jumped past 50 from 27. However, they are awarded the reserved seats. Twenty-one reserved seats for women were reinstated in the KP Assembly, of which 8 were allocated to JUIF, six to PML-N, and 5 to PPP. One seat each was also allotted to the PTI Parliamentarians and the ANP. Meanwhile, four reserved seats for minorities in the KP Assembly were restored, of which two were handed over to the JUIF, and each to the PML-N and PPP.

Multiple deaths responsible...

FROM PAGE 01
During the hearing, relevant officials appeared before the court to provide updates on the ongoing investigation into the drowning of tourists in the Swat River. The chairman told the bench that departmental negligence had clearly emerged in the inquiry. In response, PHC Chief Justice Mohanad Ibrahim Khan ordered that all individuals responsible be identified without delay. The incident occurred on Friday when 12 members of a family from Sialkot were swept away by a sudden surge in the Swat River while picnicking near the bank. Harrowing videos circulated on social media showed the family stranded on a rapidly shrinking island of land, calling for help. A rescue operation was launched an hour with no immediate rescue in sight. So far, 12 bodies have been recovered. Addressing the Commissioner of Haryana Poonam Chhabra, Justice Khan asked what measures had been implemented to ensure tourist safety in Hazara and what provisions exist for medical emergencies.

Briefs

Rupee gains
9 paise
against US
dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 09 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 283.86 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.95. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 285.50 and Rs 286.40 respectively.

Pakistan travel guide The price of the Euro increased by 69 paise to close at Rs 335.15 against the last day's closing of Rs 334.40, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained constant at Rs197, whereas a decrease of Re1.1 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 288.08 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 289.18. The exchange rates of the United Arab Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went down by 02 paise each to close at Rs 77.28 and Rs 75.49 respectively.—APP

Services' export up by 8.58% in 11 months

ISLAMABAD: The export of various services witnessed 8.58 percent increase during the first eleven months (July-May) of the fiscal year 2024-25 as compared to the corresponding months of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. Pakistan travel guide According to the latest PBS data, Pakistan earned \$ 7,648.29 million from the export of services during July-May 2024-25 as compared to \$ 7,043.66 billion in July-May 2023-24. The services' exports also witnessed growth of 6.82 and were recorded at \$ 10,317.37 billion against \$9,676.87 the previous year. Based on the figures, the services trade deficit witnessed an increase of 1.36 percent during the months under review by growing from the deficit of \$2,533.21 in FY2023-24 to \$2,669.08 during FY2024-25. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports of services in May 2025 increased by 1.57 percent to \$704.39 million from \$715.45 million in May 2024. On the other hand, the imports however decreased by 5.07 percent by going down from \$888.00 million, according to PBS data. On month-on-month basis, the export of services decreased by 0.05 percent in May 2025 when compared to the imports of \$715.84 million in April 2025. The imports of services also declined by 1.62 percent in May 2025 compared to imports of \$802.56 million in April 2025. PBS reported.—APP

Insurance rates for electric vehicle financing scheme reviewed

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting on the Electric Vehicle (EV) Financing Scheme was held on Thursday under the chairmanship of the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan. The meeting focused on key issues such as insurance costs, risks related to battery theft, and anti-theft security measures for electric vehicles. Representatives from insurance and manufacturing companies participated in the meeting, said a press release issued here. EV manufacturers briefed the forum about the latest safety enhancements introduced in electric vehicles, including advanced tracking systems, upgraded locking mechanisms, and secure battery systems. Manufacturers emphasized that lithium-ion batteries are considered the safest for Pakistani weather conditions and are also environmentally friendly. It was highlighted that new technological interventions have significantly reduced the risk of battery theft in electric vehicles. Pakistan travel guide Haroon Akhtar Khan directed insurance companies to submit separate insurance rate quotations for motorcycles, rickshaws.—APP

Pak-China agricultural exporters new era under CPEC: Yunnaniang

Over the past three years, nine new protocols for Pakistan's agricultural exports to China have been signed, supporting bilateral agricultural trade exceeding one billion U.S. dollars annually, with Pakistan consistently maintaining a trade surplus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chief of Mission of the Chinese Embassy, Shi Yunnaniang Thursday said Agricultural cooperation between China and Pakistan is entering a new era in depth and scale under China, Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Thanks to top leadership and the shared vision under the CPEC for this growing partnership, he added. "China and Pakistan attach great importance to agricultural cooperation and regard agriculture as one of the priority areas for their bilateral cooperation," he said in his keynote address here at the China-Pakistan Agriculture Cooperation Forum. He said Pakistan's agricultural cooperation has steadily deepened and achieved fruitful results over the years. Shi said the institutional framework for agricultural cooperation between China and Pakistan has

been strengthened with the establishment of a joint agricultural working group mechanism. In April, the first meeting of the joint working group was successfully held in Beijing, during which both sides formed the China-Pakistan Agricultural Technology Working Group, he added. Consensus was also reached on multiple areas of cooperation, further consolidating the foundation for future collaboration, he said. Shi said, agricultural trade between China and Pakistan has seen significant growth in the recent years. Over the past three years, nine new protocols for Pakistan's agricultural exports to China have been signed, supporting bilateral agricultural trade exceeding one billion U.S. dollars annually, with Pakistan consistently maintaining a trade surplus. Pakistan has exported best-treated beef, fresh cherries, and frozen buffalo embryos to China, he added. In the first five months of

this year, the agricultural trade volume between the two countries reached 300 million U.S. dollars, reflecting a 27% year-on-year increase, he said. Notably, sesame exports surpassed 15 million U.S. dollars, marking a 331% increase, making sesame the largest single agricultural product exported from Pakistan to China, he added. He said the industrial cooperation in agriculture between China and Pakistan has become more robust. In April, 278 sets of agricultural machinery and equipment, provided by China and valued at 13 million RMB, were distributed to various provinces in Pakistan to support local agricultural modernization, he added. "The implementation of these projects will help Pakistan consolidate its agricultural foundation in all aspects," Shi said the exchange of agricultural talents between China and Pakistan has grown in recent years. Each year, the Chinese government supports a

large number of Pakistani youth to study agriculture in China, contributing to the development of professional expertise in the field, he added. Chairman of China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan Wang Huihua, in his welcome remarks said, "We are here to explore new opportunities and discuss further cooperation in the agriculture sector on the framework of the second phase of the CPEC." "This event is not just aimed at strengthening economic and trade ties between our two countries, but also at advancing the agricultural modernization, innovation and sustainable development in Pakistan," he added. He said, China owns several advantages in the cost stability, industrial forms and technology equipment, while Pakistan possesses other advantages like fertilized land and also the working hard labour. Since entering the second phase of CPEC, cooperation between the

two countries has expanded significantly in the agriculture sector, Wang said. This collaboration has covered key areas, including joint agricultural production, export-oriented research, development of agricultural technology, exploration of modernization methods, and research in the field of biotechnology, he added. "Actually there are too many successful stories about our cooperation." Our joint efforts will promote Pakistan's agriculture and digitalization and build a sustainable partnership that contributes to Pakistan's food security and boosts farmers' income and regional prosperity, he said. Mentioning a famous saying, Wang said, if you want to go faster you can walk alone but if you want to go far you have to walk together. "I think the only way we can create a bright future for agriculture through unity and collaboration."

Major garment producer
Bangladesh
eyes US trade deal

Bangladesh, the world's second-biggest garment manufacturer, aims to strike a trade deal with the United States before President Donald Trump's piling tariffs kick in next week, the country's top commerce official told AFP. Dhaka is proposing to buy Boeing planes and boost imports of US wheat, cotton and oil in a bid to reduce the trade deficit, which Trump used as the reason for imposing punitive levies in his "Liberation Day" announcement. "We have finalised a draft reciprocal trade agreement," Mahbubur Rahman said on Wednesday. The government was "hopeful of reaching a win-win agreement". Rahman said a meeting between officials from both countries was slated for July 8, with the US representing 20 per cent of Bangladesh's ready-made garments exports. The textile and garment production accounts for about 8pc of exports in Bangladesh and the industry has been rebuilding after it was hit hard in a student-led revolution that toppled the government last year. Trump hit Bangladesh with 37pc tariffs in his April 2 announcement, which is more than double the 16pc already placed on cotton products.—APP

Chinese delegation explores joint ventures with ICCI

ISLAMABAD: A two-member Chinese business delegation from Shishuihe Universal Mining and SME (Pvt) Company, comprising Shi Jie and Fang Yang, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to explore joint venture opportunities in Pakistan's mines and minerals sector. The delegation was accompanied by ICCI member Muhammad Yassar. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President ICCI, warmly welcomed the delegation and highlighted the region's investment-friendly environment, pointing to the presence of thriving industries such as pharmaceuticals, marble, and steel. He emphasized that improved infrastructure and growing demand in regional and international markets make the mining sector particularly attractive for foreign investors. He urged Chinese entrepreneurs to take advantage of these opportunities, noting that such collaboration would result in a win-win situation for both nations. The ICCI President also briefed the guests on the Chamber's role in advocating pro-business policies and facilitating ease of doing business through continued engagement with the government. He assured the delegation of full support in navigating regulatory and commercial pathways for mutually beneficial cooperation. Commending the positive business climate, the visiting Chinese delegates expressed strong interest in establishing joint ventures in the mineral sector. They noted that such collaborations would not only generate business but also create employment opportunities and contribute to the development of skilled human resources in Pakistan. Former President ICCI Zahid Mehsud shared his expertise on the subject by showcasing the immense investment potential of Pakistan in the field.—DNA

Plan to make
Kazakhstan a
digital country

ASTANA: Kassym-Jomart Tokayev spoke about Kazakhstan's efforts aimed at major infrastructure expansion in energy, transport and digitalization fields, Kazinform News Agency reports. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the CICA headquarters in Astana, President Tokayev said: "Kazakhstan together with international partners is actively modernizing its infrastructure, roads, transit and logistics". Digital transformation and artificial intelligence are key to the country's competitiveness. We seek to make Kazakhstan a digital country, where artificial intelligence serves as a key driver of growth, innovation and digital sovereignty. In order to consolidate efforts in this strategic direction, Kazakhstan set up the Artificial Intelligence Development Council and launches a powerful supercomputer, stated Tokayev. The Kazakh President also noted the agricultural sector's modernization as another strategic direction, that continues contributing to economic diversification and food security.—APP

Uzbekistan,
Azerbaijan
hold second
meeting of Supreme
Inter-state Council

TASHKENT: The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev held a second meeting of the Supreme Inter-state Council. The issues of further strengthening friendly, strategic partnership, and alliance between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, as well as the expansion of cooperation and exchanges in priority areas of collaboration, were considered. The President of Uzbekistan emphasized that the current state visit and the second session of the Supreme Inter-state Council are taking place in the year of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. "Never in history have our relations been at such a high level as they are today", the Leader of Uzbekistan emphasized. The presidents noted the dynamic growth of multifaceted cooperation at all levels. Yesterday, the first Inter-Parliamentary Forum was held in Khiva. The Intergovernmental Commission and the Forum of Regions were held fruitfully in Baku. Tomorrow, the first Rectors Forum was organized in Andijan, where more than 60 agreements were signed. The Azerbaijani president also won the Grand Prix of the Bakhti Festival in Khiva. In the Year of Economic Cooperation.—APP



Islamabad: Minister of State for Finance, Railways and Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, Bilal Azhar Kayani holding a meeting in his office at Finance Division with Counselor Wang Shengjie and Attache Yang Taoferi from the Press Section of the Chinese Embassy.

Scorching summer
heat deepens Gaza's
daily struggles

KHIAN YOUNIS: For Rida Abu Hadady, summer adds a new layer of misery to a daily struggle to survive in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip. With temperatures exceeding 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit), daybreak begins with the cries of Hadady's seven children seeking shade inside the displaced family's cramped nylon tent. Outside, the humidity is unbearable. The only way the 32-year-old mother can offer her children relief is by fanning them with a tray or bits of paper — whatever she can find. If she has water, she pours it over them, but that is an increasingly scarce resource. "There is no electricity. There is nothing," she said, her face beaded with sweat. "They cannot sleep. They keep crying all day until the sun sets." The heat in Gaza has intensified hardships for its 2 million residents. Reduced water availability, crippled sanitation networks, and shrinking living spaces threaten to cause illnesses to cascade through communities, aid groups have long warned. The scorching summer coincides with a lack of clean water for the majority of Gaza's population, most of whom are displaced in tented communities. Many Palestinians in the enclave must walk long distances to fetch water and ration each drop, limiting their ability to wash and keep cool. "We are only at the beginning of summer," Hadady's husband, Yusef, said. "And our situation is dire." Israel had blocked food, fuel, medicine and all other supplies from entering Gaza for nearly three months. It began allowing limited aid in May, but fuel needed to pump water from wells or operate desalination plants is still not getting into the territory. With fuel supplies short, only 40 percent of drinking water production facilities are functioning in the Gaza Strip, according to a recent report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. All day imminent collapse. Up to 95 percent of households face water shortages, the June report said. The Hadadys were displaced after evacuation orders forced them to leave eastern Khan Younis. "Our lives in the tent are miserable. We spend our days pouring water over their heads and their skin," Yusef Hadady said. "Water itself is scarce. It is very difficult to get that water"—DNA

Lebanon PM
steps up
efforts on
weapons
control

BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salameh on Wednesday said that his government is intensifying its efforts to confine weapons solely to state institutions and to extend its authority across all areas of the country as part of a broader push to advance the implementation of a ceasefire. Salameh's comments come as Lebanese officials are drafting a response to Washington's proposal to disarm Hezbollah, which was presented by the US envoy to Syria and Lebanon, Tom Barrack, during a visit to Beirut last month. The proposal centers on achieving full disarmament by the end of the year, strengthening Lebanese-Syrian relations, implementing financial reforms, and establishing a UN-supervised mechanism to secure the release of prisoners held by Israel during the recent war on Hezbollah. Barrack is scheduled to visit Beirut on Monday to discuss the response.—APP

Global shift urged
toward climate-
resilient development

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr Musaddik Malik, has called for a transformative approach to development finance that prioritizes climate resilience, urging global stakeholders to invest in renewable energy and tap into the untapped potential of oceans and rivers. Speaking at the RIDA side event in Seville, Spain, he emphasized that sustainable development must go hand in hand with debt relief and green innovation. Dr Malik was addressing a panel titled "Swapping Out Debt for Development: The DSC Financing Approach" on the sidelines of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (IFD4). He was joined by Pakistan's Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Shehza Mansab Ali Khan. Pakistan travel guide The discussion centered on how developing countries can restructure their external debt obligations in exchange for investments in climate adaptation and resilience. The "Debt-to-Climate Swap" (DSC) model, which the event highlighted, is gaining traction globally as a means to ease fiscal pressures while accelerating the shift toward green infrastructure. "Our focus should be on long-term climate resilience rather than short-term relief," Dr Malik said during the session. "Pakistan is exploring solutions that support solar energy generation and innovative uses of natural resources like rivers and oceans. These are not just environmental assets, but future engines of sustainable economic growth." Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb reinforced the call for global financial reform, noting that countries like Pakistan need access to concessional financing and innovative instruments to meet their development goals without compromising on climate commitments. Minister of State Shehza Mansab Ali Khan also highlighted the need for multilateral cooperation, stressing that "climate finance must be accessible, predictable, and aligned with national development priorities." The IFD4 conference, held in Seville, gathers global leaders, policymakers, economists, and climate experts to rethink financing models that can support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an era of escalating climate risks and economic inequality. With Pakistan consistently ranked among the top climate-vulnerable countries, the government continues to advocate for stronger international support to finance its transition toward a low-carbon, climate-resilient future.—DNA

Gulf diplomacy with Iran helped
limit conflict with Israel, ME

LONDON: Improved relations between Arab Gulf countries and Iran helped contain the recent conflict with Israel, Middle East experts said on Wednesday during a discussion about regional developments. Israel attacked Iran on June 13 with airstrikes targeting its nuclear program and military sites. Iran retaliated during the 12-day conflict by launching salvos of missiles toward Israeli cities. Many feared the war might escalate, dragging in other countries in the region, especially after the US joined the airstrikes on June 22 by dropping bombs on key Iranian nuclear sites. While Iran did retaliate against the US by attacking Al-Udeid airbase in Qatar on June 23, President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire two days later, and Iran has refrained from attacking other US targets in the region. When the war started, Gulf countries condemned Israel's

attacks on Iran and called for de-escalation. There has been a shift in the region in recent years away from an adversarial relationship with Iran to one of more pragmatic relations, commented by a Chinese-embarked agreement between Riyadh and Tehran in March 2023. "That reintegration of Iran into the Gulf security complex has played a really prominent role in preventing Iran from getting out of hand," Simon Mabon, a professor of international politics and director of the SEPAD peace and conflict research center at Lancaster University, said during a discussion about developments in the Middle East. This approach showed Gulf states building a regional security architecture from the inside that is "inclusive," he added. It is viewed as a more "pragmatic and more sustainable way of building a longer-term form of prosperity," and the

approach speaks to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reforms program and its economic integration of the Gulf states, he added during the online event organized by SEPAD and the Foreign Policy Center in London. Riyadh Ahrabi, a lecturer in political science at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah and a SEPAD fellow, said the efforts to forge new relationships between Gulf countries and Iran meant that the nations had been able to "manage their differences diplomatically," and this included economic issues. There had been less Iranian interference in the domestic affairs of GCC countries, and also in the wider Arab region, he added. This included Iran's decision not to get involved in Syria when President Bashar Assad, an Iranian ally, was removed from power by opposition fighters in December last year. The West's position on the Iran-Israel conflict, largely seen

to be one of support of Israel, was symptomatic of the fact that those countries "were not able to offer a real outlook toward the region rather than a strategic one," Ahrabi said. He urged those countries to engage with the Middle East as a socio-economic, sustainable project going forward. If the trace between Iran and Israel continues to hold, many see the end of the brief war as a positive opportunity for more stability in the region. Lisa Khali, an associate fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Program, said there was "a real possibility for an integrated economic and security and political partnership" to emerge. She said a weakened Iran also opens up the chance to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Trump said on Tuesday that Israel had agreed to the terms of a 60-day ceasefire in Gaza, where more than 37,000

Palestinians have been killed during a devastating military campaign launched by Israeli authorities in response to the Hamas-led attacks against Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, during which 1,200 people were killed and dozens taken hostage. Khali said the shift in Israeli policies, with pressure from Trump, could reopen a pathway toward a long-term agreement between Israel and Palestine. This would also lead to further normalization of relations between Israel and Arab countries, she added. "This will in turn encourage the flow of funding to places like Lebanon and Syria for reconstruction, which could only bring good news for these countries economically, but also will help with stability," Khali said. "Having a stable region is very much in the interest of countries in the Gulf as well.—Agencies

Briefs

Hindus begin pilgrimage in held Kashmir

DNA

NEW DELHI: Hindus began a vast month-long pilgrimage in India-occupied Kashmir (Iok) on Thursday, with many of the faithful starting from near the site where a deadly April attack triggered conflict with Pakistan. Last year, half a million devotees took part in the Amarnath pilgrimage to a sacred ice pillar located in a cave in the forested Himalayan hills above the town of Pahalgam. India has ramped up security for the event, deploying 45,000 troops with high-tech surveillance tools overseeing the grueling trek to reach the high-altitude cave, dedicated to the Hindu deity of destruction Shiva. "We have multi-layered and in-depth security arrangements so that we can make the pilgrimage safe and smooth for the devotees," said VK Brift, police chief for the Muslim-majority territory.

India blocks Pakistan actor social media accounts

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: By Thursday morning, the Instagram and X profiles of stars such as Mawra Hocane, Ahsan Raza Mir, and Saba Qamar were once again inaccessible to Indian users, reported India Today. Those attempting to view their pages were met with the message "Account not available in India. This is because we complied with a legal request to restrict this content."

Indian government sources told the outlet that yesterday's account access was unintentional. "If you can see some accounts on X, YouTube and Meta, they will be inaccessible in a few hours. Some technical glitch led to the unblocking. Rectified now," the source said. The incident sparked confusion online, especially after users noticed on July 2 that not just celebrity profiles but YouTube channels like HUM TV, ARY Digital and Har Pal Geo were accessible once again.

Gaza rescuers say Israeli forces kill 25

GAZA CITY: Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli forces killed at least 25 people on Thursday, including 12 in a strike on a school sheltering Palestinians displaced by the war nearing its 22nd month. Israel has recently expanded its military operations in the Gaza Strip, where the war since October 2023 has created dire humanitarian conditions and displaced nearly half of the territory's population of more than two million. Many have sought shelter in school buildings, but these have repeatedly come under Israeli attack, with the military often saying targets are Hamas militants hiding among civilians. — APP

Pak rebuffs Indian claims about rights of minorities

About India's sponsorship of terrorism, the Pakistani delegate said that from the 2014 Army Public School massacre to the recent school bus attack in Khuzdar, the fingerprints of Indian intelligence agencies are evident

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: A Pakistani delegate has rebuffed India's claim that Pakistan was failing to safeguard the rights of its religious minorities, calling the accusation "a textbook case of the perpetrator posturing as a victim." "A state that has weaponised hate, normalised mob violence, and codified discrimination against its own citizens — and against those it occupies — has no moral standing to speak on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)," Babu Isha, a second secretary in the Pakistan Mission to the UN, said about India in the UN General Assembly on Wednesday. The 193-member Assembly held a debate on R2P, a concept aimed at preventing and responding to atrocity crimes, during which Pakistan's Deputy Permanent Representative, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, said that the doctrine had become "meaningless" following the international community's failure to stop the mass killing of civilians in occupied Palestine and Kashmir. Reacting to Ambassador Jadoon's sharp statement, a representative of India accused

Pakistan of violating the rights of its minorities, and of its involvement in the recent attack in Pahalgam, Indian occupied Kashmir, as well as claiming that the Himalayan state was integral part. Reiterating her right of reply, Ms. Isha, the Pakistani delegate, said, "Under the (ruling) BJP-RSS regime, India has descended into a majoritarianocracy where all minorities — Muslims, Christians, and Dalits live under siege. "Lynching is met with silence. Bulldozers become tools of collective punishment. Mosques are razed. Citizenship is denied based on religion. This is not the protection of people — this is their persecution, sanctified by law and celebrated by power." On Jammu and Kashmir, she said India's claim of it being an "integral part" or an "internal matter" was pure political and legal fiction. "Jammu and Kashmir never was nor is an integral part of India," the Pakistani delegate said, noting that the UN recognises it as a disputed territory. Numerous Security Council Resolutions, along with those of the UN Commission for India and Pakistan, reaffirm the right of the Kashmiri people to determine their own future through a free and impartial plebiscite.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif departs on his two day official visit of Azerbaijan, from Islamabad on 3 July 2025. — DNA

Opposition strength rises to 52
Reserved seats reshuffle shakes KP assembly

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) now holds 16 seats after the return of six women and one minority seat, while the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has strengthened its position with five women and one minority seat, bringing its total to 11

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: The political landscape in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly has shifted dramatically following the restoration of reserved seats, strengthening the opposition and altering the number game within the provincial legislature. The Election Commission has officially notified 21 women and 4 minority reserved seats, significantly bolstering the opposition, whose strength has now risen to 52 members. This change is expected to increase pressure on the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.

Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (Fazl) has emerged as the largest opposition party with 19 seats, including eight women and two minority seats restored under the new notification. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) now holds 16 seats after the return of six women and one minority seat, while the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has strengthened its position with five women and one minority seat, bringing its total to 11. Awami National Party (ANP) and PTI Parliamentarians (PTIP) were each allotted one reserved seat. Despite these gains by the opposition, PTI still maintains a numerical lead with 94 seats, although 35 of its

members are independents, including Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. However, legal uncertainties have surfaced as many of these independents did not submit affidavits of political affiliation within the mandatory three-day period following the election. In a strong rebuttal to opposition efforts, Chief Minister Gandapur issued a bold challenge, saying, "I dare the opposition to topple my government. If they succeed, I will quit politics." He claimed that despite the reinstatement of reserved seats, his government remains stable and secure. This development follows a major ruling by the Supreme Court, which overturned its earlier

July 12 verdict and upheld the Peshawar High Court's decision rejecting reserved seats for the Sunni Ithaf Council. As a result, the council has no representation in the Assembly. The court ruling is being viewed as a significant victory for the opposition, fueling speculation over a possible no-confidence motion against the provincial government in the coming days. However, CM Gandapur's confident statements and PTI's numerical edge present a formidable challenge for the opposition. With shifting alliances, legal ambiguity, and growing political tension, the next few weeks may prove decisive for the future of KP government.

Four dead after ferry sinks on way to Bali

"23 rescued, 4 dead," Rama Samtama Putra, Police Chief of Banyuwangi in East Java, where the boat departed

DNA

JAKARTA: At least four people were dead and dozens unaccounted for Thursday after a ferry sank on its way to the resort island of Bali, according to local authorities who said 23 survivors had been plucked from the water so far. Rescuers were still racing to find missing people after the vessel carrying 65 passengers sank before midnight on Wednesday as it sailed to the popular holiday destination from Indonesia's main island Java. "23 rescued, 4 dead," Rama Samtama Putra, Police Chief of Banyuwangi in East Java, where the boat departed, said. The local rescue agency in the Java city Surabaya had earlier said 61 were missing and four rescued, without giving a cause for the boat's sinking. "The ferry's manifest data totalled 53 passengers and 12 passenger crews," it said.

Iran's nuclear programme set back by two years: Pentagon

Pentagon spokesman says official estimate was "probably closer to two years"

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon has said that US airstrikes, launched over a week ago, have set back Iran's nuclear programme by up to two years. The strikes, carried out on June 22, targeted three key nuclear sites in Iran. A Pentagon spokesman on Wednesday told reporters that the damage was likely closer to a full two-year delay, suggesting the US military operation likely achieved its goals despite far more cautious initial assessment that looked to the public. Sean Parnell, a Pentagon spokesman, offered the figure at a briefing to reporters, adding that the official estimate was "probably closer to two years." Parnell did not provide evidence to back up his assessment. "We have degraded their programme by one to two years, at least intel assessments inside the Department of Defense" assess that, Parnell told in a news briefing. US military bombers carried out strikes against three Iranian nuclear facilities on June 22 using more than a dozen 30,000-pound (13,600-kg) bunker-buster bombs and more than two dozen Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles.

The evolving US intelligence about the impact of the strikes is being closely watched, after President Donald Trump said almost immediately after they took place that Iran's programme had been obliterated, language echoed by Parnell at Wednesday's briefing. Such conclusions often take the US intelligence community weeks or more to determine. "All of the intelligence that we've seen (has) led us to believe that Iran's — those facilities especially, have been completely obliterated," Parnell said. Over the weekend, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Rafael Grossi, said that Iran could be producing enriched uranium in a few months, raising doubts about how effective US strikes to destroy Tehran's nuclear programme have been. Several experts have also cautioned that Iran likely moved a stockpile of near weapons-grade highly enriched uranium out of the deeply buried Fordow site before the strikes and could be hiding it. But US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said last week he was unaware of intelligence suggesting Iran had moved its highly enriched uranium to shield it from US strikes. A preliminary assessment last week from the Defense Intelligence Agency suggested that the strikes may have only set back Iran's nuclear programme by months. But Trump administration officials said that assessment was low confidence and had been overtaken by intelligence showing Iran's nuclear programme was severely damaged. — Agencies

South African air chief calls on Gen Sahir

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General Wiseman Simo Mbombo, Chief of the Air Force, South Africa called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC), at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. During the meeting, both sides held discussions on wide range of areas of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation. The dignitaries discussed practical measures to further expand the level and scope of engagements between the two militaries. They also exchanged views on the broader geopolitical landscape. JCSC shared Pakistan's perspective on evolving regional security landscape and highlighted Pakistan's contributions towards regional peace and stability. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary.

House Republicans struggle to unite on Trump's tax-cut bill

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Republicans in the House of Representatives on Wednesday hunkered down closer to advancing United States President Donald Trump's massive tax-cut and spending bill, appearing at one point to overcome concerns over its cost that had been raised by a handful of hardliners. But then the measure stalled again. As lawmakers shuffled in and out of closed-door meetings, a procedural vote was held open for more than seven hours to give Trump and House Speaker Mike Johnson time to convince holdouts to back the president's signature bill. In the end the procedural measure passed 220-212 along party lines, an indication that Trump may have won over skeptics. Voting then began on another preliminary measure needed to advance the bill to the main vote on the House floor, but Republicans then failed to muster enough votes as five Republican defectors — enough to kill it — voted against Trump. Any of those defectors could still change their vote. Trump expressed frustration around midnight Washington time (0400 GMT) as the legislation he has marketed as One Big Beautiful Bill had not yet cleared the procedural hurdle, with voting continuing in the US House of Representatives.

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