



Islamabad POST

Monday, May 18, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani gets Hilal-e-Imtiaz award

Detailed News On Page-08

Nepali Sherpa scales Mount Everest again

Detailed News On Page-08



Naqvi meets the Iranian President

Detailed News On Page-08



'Madness and warmongering'

Indian army chief's remarks absurd: ISPR

Indian leadership remains unable to reconcile with existence of Pakistan peacefully, says military's media wing

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Sunday warned that any attempt to target Pakistan could trigger consequences that would neither remain geographically confined nor be strategically or politically palatable for India. The military's media wing issued the statement in response to recent remarks by the Indian Army Chief Upendra Dwivedi, who said that "Pakistan should decide if it desired to be part of geography and history". Rejecting the statement, the ISPR said that contrary to what it described as the "delusional and hallucinational belief system" prevailing in Hindutva-led India, Pakistan was already a globally significant country, a declared nuclear power and an indelible part of South Asia's geography and history. The statement said the remarks reflected that the Indian leadership had neither reconciled with the very idea of Pakistan nor learnt lessons despite the passage of eight decades. According to the ISPR, such a "hubristic, jingoistic and myopic mindset" had repeatedly pushed South Asia towards wars and crises. The military's media wing said threatening a sovereign nuclear state with elimination from "geography" was not strategic signalling or brinkmanship but reflected "bankruptcy of cognitive capacities, madness and warmongering." It added that India was fully aware that any such geographic obliteration would be mutual and comprehensive. The ISPR stated that responsible nuclear states demonstrated restraint, maturity and strategic sobriety instead of using the language of

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Bilawal slams India army chief remarks

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI/LAHORE/ISLAMABAD: Bilawal House spokesman Surendar Valasai has strongly condemned the provocative remarks attributed to Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi regarding Pakistan, terming them irresponsible, dangerous and reflective of the extremist mindset prevailing under the BJP-RSS regime in India. He said India should first take care of its own internal strife and worsening social divisions instead of issuing hollow threats against Pakistan. The days of altering the geography and history of the region through aggression are over, and any confrontation with Pakistan would invite a firm, united and decisive response from the Pakistani nation and its brave Armed Forces. Surendar Valasai said Pakistan is a sovereign nuclear state fully capable of defending every inch of its territory. He added that any misadventure or aggression against Pakistan would become India's last attempt, as the people of Pakistan stand shoulder to shoulder with their Armed Forces for the defence of the country. He further stated that India remains home to one of the worst forms of

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BAKU: President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev received a delegation led by Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Chief Minister of the Punjab. — DNA

Drone strike at UAE nuclear plant

NEWS DESK

ABU DHABI: A fire broke out following a drone strike on a nuclear power plant in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, authorities said, reporting no injuries or impact on radiation levels. "Authorities in Abu Dhabi responded to a fire incident that broke out in an electrical generator outside the inner perimeter of the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant in the Al Dhafra Region, caused by a drone strike," the Abu Dhabi Media Office wrote in a social media post. "No injuries were reported, and there was no impact on radiological safety levels," it added. "The Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation (FANR) confirmed that the fire did not affect the safety of the power plant or the readiness of its essential systems, and that all units are operating as normal," the Abu Dhabi Media Office said.

Qantas flight diverted after man bites flight attendant

AGENCIES

SYDNEY: Australia's Qantas was forced to divert a flight bound for the United States over a disruptive passenger, with local media reporting the man bit a flight attendant. The flight from Melbourne was headed to Dallas when it was forced to make a stop-off in Papeete, the capital of French Polynesia, due to the disruptive passenger. The man was restrained by fellow passengers, with local media including national broadcaster ABC reporting he bit a member of Qantas staff.

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Maryam meets President Ilham Pakistan, Azerbaijan resolve to further strengthen relations

President Ilham Aliyev also emphasized that Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations are currently developing within a trilateral framework involving Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan

DNA

BAKU: President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev received a delegation led by Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Chief Minister of the Punjab Province of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Maryam Nawaz Sharif conveyed the greetings of her father, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, and Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to the head of state. President Ilham Aliyev expressed his gratitude for the greetings and asked that his own greetings be conveyed to the Prime Minister of Pakistan and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. The head of state recalled the friendly relations between National Leader Heydar Aliyev and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. Expressing satisfaction with participating in the 13th session of the UN World Urban Forum (WUF13), the Chief Minister thanked President Ilham Aliyev for the invitation and praised the excellent organ-

ization of the event. She emphasized that important global issues related to urban planning would be discussed in Baku. Noting that the beauty of Baku had deeply impressed her, Maryam Nawaz Sharif described the Azerbaijani capital as a remarkable example of harmony between culture and modern urban planning. Maryam Nawaz Sharif also stated that during her visit to Baku, she visited the grave of National Leader Heydar Aliyev, the founder of modern Azerbaijan, and honored his memory with deep respect and reverence. During the meeting, the sides commended the development of fraternal relations and strategic partnership between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. They discussed cooperation in political, economic, diplomatic, defense, and other fields, while also highlighting the importance of interregional cooperation and the strong potential for further expanding trade ties.

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Proposal to increase voting age under consideration: Rana

Defence expenditures could be treated separately from existing resource-sharing mechanism, says PML-N senator

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: As speculation regarding the 28th Constitutional Amendment picked up pace, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs, Rana Sanaulah, said that a proposal to increase the voting age is currently under consideration. "A person cannot contest an election until the age of 25 then [...] if that is the case, the age for contesting elections should also be reduced to 18," he said. Under the prevailing

election laws, a Pakistani citizen can be enrolled as a voter if they are at least 18 years of age on January 1 of the year in which electoral rolls are prepared or revised. It is also required that the person is, or is deemed to be, a resident of the relevant electoral area in order to be registered as a voter there. PML-N senator said discussions related to the possible 28th Constitutional Amendment include multiple governance and policy issues, including National Finance Commission

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Briefs

Terrorists killed in Bannu IBO

Senior police official says killed militants were involved in attacks on security forces

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Five terrorists were killed during separate intelligence-based operations (IBOs) across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district, who were involved in attacks on security forces and civilians, a police officer said on Saturday. Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sajjad Khan told the media that IBOs are continuing in different areas following the Fateh Khel police checkpoint attacks. A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (IED) attack carried out by terrorists belonging to Fitna al-Khawarij targeted a police check post in Bannu district, martyring 15 policemen and injuring four others, including a civilian, last week. In the IBOs, law enforcement agencies neutralised five terrorists in Bannu, said the RPO, adding that the killed terrorists were involved in attacks targeting security forces, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), and civilians.

Eid ul Adha on May 27

FIAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: The Zil Hajj moon has been sighted and Eid ul Adha will fall on May 27 in Pakistan, Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Abdul Khaiber Azad announced on Sunday. The announcement was made after a meeting of the committee held at the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) in Karachi, with Maulana Azad in the chair. The meetings of the zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committees were also held at their respective provincial headquarters.

Middle East war

Iran's top diplomat says a lack of trust is impeding talks

Iran FM Araghchi highlights 'rocketing costs' faced by Americans from US war on Iran

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Iran's foreign minister said a lack of trust is the biggest obstacle in negotiations to end the war with the US, saying Friday that Tehran would be open to diplomatic help, particularly from China, to help ease tensions. "We are in doubt about their seriousness," he told reporters in New Delhi, adding that negotiations would move forward if Washington was ready for a "fair and balanced deal." US President Donald Trump earlier this week dismissed Iran's latest formal proposal as "garbage." While Iran was said to include some nuclear concessions, Trump has said he wants to remove highly enriched uranium from the country and prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. In separate negotiations in Washington between Israel and Lebanon, both sides agreed Friday to extend their ceasefire until early June, US officials said. With talks between Iran and the US at a standstill during the shaky ceasefire, tensions remain high and threaten to tip the Middle East back into open warfare and prolong the worldwide

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Centcom chief hails Pakistan for cooperation

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States Central Command (Centcom) has praised Pakistan for its cooperation in counterterrorism operations, describing Islamabad as a "critical counterterrorism partner" in the regional fight against Daesh. In a briefing to a US Senate committee, Centcom chief Admiral Brad Cooper, said that the strong military-to-military relationship between the United States and Pakistan has led to tangible operational results, including actions against high-value targets linked to attacks on American personnel. "Pakistan, especially, is a critical CT partner that is central to the fight against [Daesh] in the region." Pakistan had a major role in the arrest of Daesh operative Muhammad Sharifullah,

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Real reasons behind the removal of DG Sports Board

Sports bodies and hockey organizations across the country are now demanding immediate corrective measures from the new PHF leadership and Federal Secretary Mohyuddin Wani. Their primary demand is the restoration of Nasir Bunda Hockey Stadium fees to the original Rs1,500 level so that clubs can once again resume regular sporting activities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The recent removal of Yasir Pirzada from the position of Director General of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has sparked intense discussion within sports circles across the country. While the official narrative remains limited, insiders within the sports community believe the decision was the result of growing tensions between the DG Sports Board and the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ministry, particularly over the future direction of sports reforms in Pakistan. According to sources, the federal secretary of the IPC Ministry had been pushing for major reforms aimed at improving facilities for athletes, strengthening sports organizations, and reviving grassroots sports. However, these efforts reportedly faced resistance from within the PSB administration under Yasir

Pirzada, whose critics often pointed out that he had no substantial background in sports management. Sports officials and former players argue that several decisions taken during Pirzada's tenure badly damaged national sports, especially hockey, Pakistan's national game which is already struggling for survival. One of the most controversial decisions was the massive increase in fees for the use of the historic Nasir Bunda Hockey Stadium in Islamabad. The fee was reportedly raised from Rs1,500 to Rs6,000 per match or training session, a move that local clubs described as devastating. Grassroots hockey suffered the most from this decision. Small clubs, which operate on limited budgets and rely on community support, simply could not afford the increased charges. As a result, regular practice sessions, youth tournaments, and local competitions gradually disappeared. Coaches and former Olympians repeatedly warned that the policy would

destroy the foundation of hockey development in the country, but their concerns allegedly went unheard. The controversy surrounding Pakistan hockey deepened further during the Pro League tour of Australia. Reports of mismanagement and internal disputes surfaced during the visit, creating embarrassment for the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF). Matters worsened after team captain Ahammad Butt returned from the tour and publicly criticized the hockey management. His statements triggered a major crisis within the PHF, eventually leading to the resignation of PHF President Tariq Bugti, Secretary Rana Mujahid, and other officials. Sources within the sports community claim that Yasir Pirzada played a behind-the-scenes role in encouraging Ahammad Butt to issue those statements against the federation management. The alleged objective, according to insiders, was to weaken the PHF leadership and increase administrative influence over

hockey affairs. However, once these allegations reached senior government circles and Pirzada's alleged role came under scrutiny, the government reportedly decided to send him back to his parent department, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). Sports bodies and hockey organizations across the country are now demanding immediate corrective measures from the new PHF leadership and Federal Secretary Mohyuddin Wani. Their primary demand is the restoration of Nasir Bunda Hockey Stadium fees to the original Rs1,500 level so that clubs can once again resume regular sporting activities. Stakeholders believe that unless grassroots hockey is revived and sports administration is placed in capable hands with genuine sports understanding, Pakistan's decline in international sports will continue. The removal of Yasir Pirzada, many say, is only the first step toward broader reforms that Pakistan sports desperately needs.

Governor, CM discuss overall situation in KP

Governor Kundi said that hosting the conference for the first time in the province's parliamentary history was an honour for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi and Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Sunday discussed the overall situation in the province, including law and order and key administrative matters, during a meeting at the Governor House. The meeting reviewed the closure of CNG stations in the province and the issue of wheat transportation from Punjab. Governor Kundi said that the closure of CNG stations in the province was against the Constitution and was

badly affecting the poor segment of society. He said that both the wheat shortage and closure of CNG stations were creating hardships for low-income people. The Governor said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could procure wheat from Sindh if Punjab provided a transit corridor, adding that the absence of such a route was forcing the province to buy wheat at higher prices. He said that the Sindh government was willing to provide wheat to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The meeting was also attended by Babar Saleem Swati, newly-elected provincial minister Shafi Jan and Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah. Governor

Kundi said that hosting the conference for the first time in the province's parliamentary history was an honour for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Governor Kundi directed the chief secretary to review salaries and incentives being provided to police in other provinces and submit recommendations to the provincial government. Matters relating to the first-ever South Asia Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also came under discussion. Issues related to an increase in salaries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police personnel were also discussed during the meeting.

Section 144 imposed in Quetta

QUETTA: The Balochistan Home Department has imposed Section 144 in Quetta for one month, banning the display or use of weapons, pillion riding, tinted glasses on vehicles and gatherings of more than four people, as security agencies remain on high alert to counter any potential threats. Adviser to Home Department, Babar Yousafzai said on Sunday that the move came in response to concerns over possible actions by extremist elements, including those linked to outlawed organizations. The authorities have warned that any attempt at adventurism by banned outfits would be met with a strong and decisive response. Security forces have completed all necessary preparations and are fully deployed across the city to deal with any untoward situation, he added. Babar Yousafzai emphasized that the measures are aimed at maintaining peace and stability, ensuring the safety of citizens, and preventing any disruption in public order.—DNA

Digital surveillance strengthen to ensure security

Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police highlighted the role of modern telecommunication systems in ensuring public safety, uninterrupted coordination and rapid emergency response on the occasion of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day. An official told APP on Sunday that Islamabad Police was actively utilizing advanced communication technologies to strengthen security monitoring, maintain coordination among units and ensure timely response during emergencies across the federal capital. He said the police helpline system, Safe City surveillance cameras, modern wireless communication network and FM-92.4 radio service were playing a key role in maintaining law and order and facilitating citizens. The official said Safe City Islamabad's "electronic eyes" were continuously monitoring important locations, roads and sensitive areas to help police respond swiftly to suspicious activities and emergencies. He said Islamabad Police was also using modern patrol vehicles, digital communication systems and integrated monitoring mechanisms to improve policing and ensure protection of citizens. According to the official, FM-92.4 was helping spread awareness regarding traffic updates, security advisories and public safety messages among citizens round the clock. He said modern telecommunication systems had significantly improved coordination between police formations, emergency units and field officers, enabling prompt and effective action. The official reiterated that Islamabad Police remained committed to adopting modern technology and innovative policing methods to provide a safer environment to citizens.—APP

\$615m for avoiding 80m tonnes of CO2 emissions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is planning a \$615 million green financing initiative aimed at improving export competitiveness while avoiding up to 80 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) emissions over the programme's lifespan. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the initiative, titled Enhancing Green Export Capacity Through Green Financing, is being led by EXIM Bank in collaboration with local financial institutions and supported through international development financing arrangements. According to the document, the programme targets key export sectors including textiles, leather, rice, and surgical goods to help industries comply with the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) require-

ments and support broader industrial decarbonisation efforts. The financing package follows a blended finance structure comprising \$600 million in concessional lending and \$15 million in grant support. The initiative aims to help exporters adopt clean technologies and energy-efficient production systems at lower borrowing costs while providing technical support for upgrading machinery and introducing renewable energy solutions. The initiative is planned for nationwide implementation across the targeted sectors and will be delivered through participating financial institutions and development finance mechanisms. According to the document, the project is aligned with Pakistan's 2030 emission reduction goals and seeks to strengthen the competitiveness of local exporters amid evolving

international environmental standards. The use of proceeds includes machinery replacement and clean-energy upgrades designed to improve energy efficiency and reduce industrial emissions. The investment structure has been designed as a blended debt model with foreign exchange cover, while the project's financial indicators include a net present value (NPV) of \$9.9 billion and an internal rate of return (IRR) of 3.08 percent. The initiative also aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 9, 12, and 13 and identifies skilled industrial employment among its expected outcomes. The programme represents part of broader efforts to strengthen sustainable industrial practices and support Pakistan's transition toward lower-carbon economic growth.



LAHORE: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani awarding degrees to student at The graduation ceremony of the University of Lahore.

Political consensus vital before 28th constitutional amendment

ISLAMABAD: A prominent leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N), Senator Afnan Ullah Khan on Sunday stated that the proposed 28th constitutional amendment could only advance through broad-based political consensus, emphasizing that any future move in this regard would be undertaken in consultation with the Pakistan Peoples Party and other coalition allies. Speaking to a local media outlet, Afnan Ullah Khan maintained that constitutional reforms require collective understanding among allied parties, stressing that consultation with the Pakistan Peoples Party and other government allies remains essential before any legislative step is taken. Attallah Tarar said consultations with political allies and relevant parties are continuing, as several constitutional and governance matters are still under deliberation. He noted that dialogue among stakeholders remains active to build broader political understanding. He further remarked that certain national matters require timely resolution, emphasizing that any forward movement must emerge through mutual agreement and coordinated parliamentary engagement among coalition partners. Responding to a question, he stated that the federal government is operating under constrained fiscal space due to heavy loan repayments, rising debt servicing obligations, limited tax collection capacity and the constitutionally mandated distribution of resources to provinces.—APP

Punjab ramps up flood prevention drive

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab Irrigation Department has launched pre-flood inspections of irrigation infrastructure, including spurs, embankments, and canal headworks across the province, as part of its efforts to prepare for potential flooding during the upcoming monsoon season. The inspections are being carried out by designated teams, supported by allied departments and law enforcement agencies. "The structures, if found damaged or weak, are being repaired and strengthened immediately in the light of the inspection teams' recommendations," said Dr. Ghulam Zakir Hassan Sial, Director of the Irrigation Research Institute (IRI), Punjab. Talking to Wealth Pakistan, he said that the structural audit of spurs and embankments along the province's rivers is an ongoing process. He added that timely repair

and reinforcement of these structures would help avert a situation similar to the 2025 floods during the upcoming monsoon season, which starts in the middle of June. During August and September last year, severe flooding in the Ravi, Chenab, and Sutlej rivers affected over 3.9 million people in Punjab. The floods were mainly caused by heavy monsoon rains and upstream water releases from India. Thousands of villages across 28 districts were submerged, forcing mass evacuations and resulting in 48 deaths—marking one of the worst flooding events in decades. Dr. Sial noted that during the 2025 floods, the IRI successfully diverted about 12,000 acre-feet of floodwater for Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) through the Old Malisai Canal at Islam Headworks on the Sutlej River, effectively turning a crisis into an opportunity. A total of 144 recharge wells

were constructed within the canal bed, he added. Meanwhile, to prevent inundation of Lahore's housing societies by the River Ravi—similar to last year—the Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) has accelerated work on embankment construction along the river. "The 46-kilometer-long embankments are being constructed on both banks of the Ravi to protect Lahorites from floods," RUDA spokesperson Sher Afzal Butt told Wealth Pakistan. He said the protection structures are being built from Ravi Syphon to Jhok Forests. Under the project, the river-bed will be expanded to at least one kilometer in width to help channelize water flow, even during peak flood conditions. Last year, Lahore witnessed its first major flooding from the Ravi in nearly 40 years, triggered by intense monsoon rains and substantial upstream water releases from India.—APP

Balochistan enters new era of digital governance: CM

QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Sunday announced that Balochistan was stepping into a new era of digital governance, transparency and innovation. The provincial government, he said has introduced its first-ever Digital Media Policy 2026, marking a milestone in modern communication and governance reforms. In a message on the occasion of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, Sarfraz Bugti highlighted that advanced systems were being implemented to strengthen trans-

parency, merit and good governance, including an AI-based recruitment system that ensured fairness and efficiency. "Balochistan is embracing modern communication systems to create a transparent, innovative, and future-ready province," Bugti said. The chief minister noted that rapid progress was underway in establishing IT parks, youth IT programs and e-governance reforms, while projects such as the digitalization of on route 164 buses and climate tech initiatives were reshaping the province's infrastructure.

Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that scholarships and digital skills programs for youth remained top priorities, ensuring equal opportunities for development and access to modern facilities. He added that new projects in health, infrastructure and public welfare were aligning Balochistan with global standards of innovation and sustainability. "The Balochistan government is committed to providing equal opportunities and modern facilities to our youth, enabling them to lead the province into a prosperous future," Bugti concluded.—DNA

Doctors, engineers valuable assets of nation: Nehal

KARACHI: Governor Sindh Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi said that doctors and engineers were valuable assets of any nation. Senior professionals should guide the younger generation through their experience, knowledge and expertise so that future doctors and engineers can play an effective role in the development of the country, he said while addressing the Lifetime Achievement Awards Distribution Ceremony organized by the Medical and Engineering Graduates Welfare Association of Sindh (MEGWAS) as the chief guest here Sunday. The Governor Sindh said that Pakistani doctors and engineers were proving their capabilities across the world and bringing pride to the country at the international level. He emphasized that providing guidance and mentorship to young professionals by experienced and capable teachers was need of the hour so they can successfully face future challenges. Nehal Hashmi stated that the fields of medical sciences and engineering were two fundamental sectors that guaranteed the progress, survival and prosperity of any society. He added that while doctors were tirelessly striving to save human lives and build a healthy society, engineers were laying the foundations of material development, infrastructure and innovation through their knowledge and skills. He said that seeing graduates of both sectors united on a welfare platform in Sindh was encouraging and commendable. He appreciated the efforts of the Association for working not only for the welfare of its members but also for serving people in the remote areas of Sindh. The Governor Sindh assured that the government would continue to support such welfare and educational initiatives. He congratulated all award recipients from the core of his heart and said that their remarkable services are a guiding light for the younger generation. On this occasion, Dr. Shafiq Abbasi and Engineer Momin also addressed the ceremony. At the end, Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented to distinguished doctors and engineers of the country, including Engineer Professor Dr. Faizullah Abbasi, Engineer Professor Dr. Muhammad Tufail, Dr. Captain (R) Rahim Bakhsh Bhatti, Amjad Siraj Memon, Dr. Naushad Sheikh, Dr. Abdul Bari, Dr. Saeed Qureshi, Dr. Nadeem Qamar, Dr. Sanaullah Abbasi, Engineer Professor Shaneela Zardari and others—DNA

Bhandara promotes interfaith harmony, minority welfare

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PML-N MNA Mr. Ispahnyar Bhandara visited the historic Gurdwara Saragarhi Singh Sabha in Hangu, where he distributed food supplies, wheelchairs for elderly community members, and financial assistance among widows facing financial hardship. Mr. Bhandara also presented a donation to the Gurdwara in support of its welfare and community activities. A large number of minority community members from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa gathered in Hangu to welcome Mr. Bhandara and participate in the event. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Bhandara

emphasized the importance of interfaith harmony, minority welfare, and equal citizenship for all Pakistanis irrespective of religion.

He stated that the different colors of Pakistan's minority religions are what make the country beautiful and vibrant, adding that such

coexistence and diversity reflected the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Mr. Bhandara also appreciated the minor-






ity youth who had gathered from Mardan, Kohat, Abbottabad, and other districts, stating that it was heartening to see young members of minority communities actively participating in social and welfare activities at such a young age with maturity and dedication. Following the visit to the Gurdwara, Mr. Bhandara also visited Balmik Mandir and Saint James Church, where he interacted with members of the local communities and reiterated the need for unity, coexistence, and mutual respect among all faiths. Members of the Sikh community thanked Mr. Bhandara for his continued support toward minority welfare and humanitarian causes.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

- May 03/Poland National Day
May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day
May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day
May 07/Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day
May 08/Czech Republic National Day
May 09/European Union National Day
May 17/Norway Constitution Day
May 21/Hungary Armed Forces Day
May 22/Yemen Republic
Re-unification Day(National Day)
May 24/Eritrea National Day
May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
May 25/Argentina National Day
May 25/Jordan Independence Day
May 28/Azerbaijan Republic Day
May 28/Ethiopia National Day
May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day

- Rescue (Police).....15
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Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9221082



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Chairman D Watson Group, Secretary General UBG and former President of ICCI hosted dinner in honour of Abdur Razzaq Sajid (the Chairman of the Al-Mustafa Welfare Trust). Among others, Lt. Gen © Abdul Qayyum President Ex-servicemen Society, Zahid Maqbook, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Sajjad Azhar, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Ch Yasin, Ch. Muhammad Arif, Ansar Mahmood Bhatti Editor Daily Islamabad POST/CENTRELINE/DNA Sadaf Abbasi and others also attended the dinner. DNA

CDA's parking fee policy adds to public misery

Citizens are also questioning CDA's priorities and planning failures. Many argue that every commercial building, plaza, hotel, or hospital should have been required to provide adequate parking space before receiving construction approval. Yet, most of the buildings in the extended Blue Area were allowed to operate without proper parking arrangements

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has once again found itself under criticism after imposing a Rs100 parking fee in Islamabad's extended Blue Area, a decision that is creating serious inconvenience for ordinary citizens, patients, visitors, and businesses alike. What was once promoted as a modern commercial extension with accessible public facilities is now becoming increasingly difficult for people to visit due to the added financial burden. The extended Blue Area was developed with the promise of creating a vibrant commercial hub featuring hotels, hospitals, coffee shops, restaurants, and corporate offices. For years, visitors could enter the area freely, making it attractive for families, patients, tourists, and office workers. However, the sudden decision to charge Rs100 as parking fee per visit has changed the situation dramatically. The most troubling aspect of the policy is its impact on hospitals and medical centers op-

erating in the area. Patients and their attendants, many already burdened by medical expenses, are now forced to pay parking charges every single time they visit a hospital. In cases where patients require regular treatment or repeated consultations, the parking fee becomes an additional and unnecessary hardship. Coffee shops, cafes, and small businesses are also feeling the impact. Owners complain that customers are now avoiding the area because they do not want to pay hefty parking charges simply to sit for a short meeting or enjoy a cup of coffee. The reduced footfall is hurting businesses that were already struggling under rising operational costs and economic uncertainty. Citizens are also questioning CDA's priorities and planning failures. Many argue that every commercial building, plaza, hotel, or hospital should have been required to provide adequate parking space before receiving construction approval. Yet, most of the buildings in the extended Blue Area were reportedly allowed to operate without proper parking arrangements.

Critics ask a valid question: where was CDA when these plazas and commercial buildings were being constructed without sufficient parking facilities? Instead of holding powerful builders and plaza owners accountable, the burden is now being shifted onto ordinary citizens. The developers and owners who earned millions from commercial projects appear untouched, while visitors are forced to bear the cost of CDA's poor urban planning. Islamabad residents believe the policy reflects a deeper governance problem where authorities prefer easy revenue collection over practical public service solutions. Rather than introducing punitive parking fees, CDA should focus on building proper parking plazas, enforcing construction regulations, and ensuring that commercial projects meet basic urban planning standards. If corrective measures are not taken, the extended Blue Area risks losing its attractiveness as a public-friendly commercial center, ultimately harming both businesses and the people it was meant to serve.

506 outlaws in handcuffs in 10 days

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 506 accused, including proclaimed offenders, drug peddlers and illegal weapon holders, during a large-scale crackdown launched across the federal capital in the first 10 days of May 2026. An official told APP on Sunday that Islamabad Police arrested 238 accused involved in illegal weapons, display of arms and narcotics-related activities during different operations. He said indiscriminate action against drug peddlers led to the arrest of 113 narcotics dealers. According to the official, police recovered over 20 kilograms of hashish, 13 kilograms of heroin, 14 kilograms of Ice and 674 bottles of liquor from the arrested accused. He said Islamabad Police also arrested 125 accused involved in illegal weapons during the same period. The official said police recovered 105 pistols, nine rifles/guns, seven Kalashnikovs, 11 daggers and a large quantity of ammunition from the possession of the arrested suspects. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq said ICT Police arrested 268 proclaimed offenders and previously record-holder criminals involved in various crimes during the first 10 days of May. He said Islamabad Police also conducted 107 grand combing and search operations in different areas of the capital against criminal elements during the same period. The DIG Tariq said police organized over 87 open courts (Khuli Kachehri) to ensure prompt resolution of public complaints and improve community policing. Tariq said Islamabad Police was utilizing all available resources to ensure protection of citizens' lives and property.—APP

Pak's milk-yielding breed to enter global markets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's internationally recognized dairy buffalo breeds, particularly the high milk-yielding Nili-Ravi breed, are set to gain greater access to global markets through expanded cooperation with China in livestock genetics, embryo export, and advanced breeding technologies. The development came during a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The meeting brought together senior ministry officials, representatives of the Animal Quarantine Department (AQD), technical experts, and delegates from Chinese companies engaged in livestock breeding and biotechnology. According to an official statement, discussions focused on the export potential of buffalo embryos

from Pakistan to China, development of livestock genetics, enhancement of milk production, and cooperation in modern breeding technologies aimed at promoting Pakistan's premium dairy breeds internationally. The Chinese delegation praised Pakistan's globally recognized buffalo breeds and expressed keen interest in strengthening cooperation in animal genetics and embryo transfer technology. Participants highlighted that Pakistan possesses some of the world's finest dairy buffalo breeds, especially the Nili-Ravi breed, known for its superior genetic traits and high milk production capacity. The meeting noted that increasing global demand for premium dairy genetics is creating significant export and investment opportunities for Pakistan's livestock sector. Experts observed that countries facing climate-related agricultural challenges are increasingly seeking resilient and high-performing livestock breeds, placing Pakistan in

a strong position in the international dairy genetics market. Rana Tanveer Hussain said the livestock sector holds immense potential for boosting exports and earning valuable foreign exchange and added, "Pakistan's high-quality dairy breeds could play a major role in strengthening agricultural trade cooperation with friendly countries, particularly China." "Stronger cooperation with China in livestock and dairy development will positively contribute to Pakistan's agricultural economy and create new opportunities for farmers, breeders, and exporters," the minister said. Senior Director In-Charge of the Animal Sciences Division, Dr. Syed Murtaza Hassan Andrabi, stressed the need for an internationally compliant framework for the export of biological and genetic material. He said Pakistan's elite livestock genetics are a valuable national asset that require both promotion and protection.

Indian Army Chief's remarks reflects Modi's desperation

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Peace and Culture Organisation, Former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights and Women Empowerment and wife of jailed Kashmiri leader Mohammad Yasin Malik, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, has strongly condemned the recent statement by the Indian Army Chief, terming it a reflection of the Modi government's growing desperation, warmongering and political frustration. In her statement on Sunday, Mushaal said that Pakistan's history was rooted in sacrifices, resilience, bravery and victories, warning those attempting to undermine Pakistan's resolve to remember the strength and unity of its people. She said India should focus on its own deepening internal crises, rising unrest, and growing divisions instead of resorting to provocative rhetoric against neighbouring countries. Referring to recent regional tensions, Mushaal stated that Pakistan's armed forces had already demonstrated their professional capability and resolve during Marqa e Haq, exposing India's aggressive posturing and misplaced assumptions of dominance. She said threats of war in a nuclearized region are highly irresponsible, dangerous.—APP

Pak, UN-habitat launch process for first urban strategy

ISLAMABAD: The government of Pakistan, in collaboration with UN-Habitat Pakistan, has launched a consultative process for the country's first-ever National Urban Strategy aimed at developing climate-resilient cities and addressing growing urban vulnerabilities linked to climate change. The process was initiated during a high-level national workshop jointly organized by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and UN-Habitat Pakistan on Sunday. The workshop brought together federal and provincial officials, disaster management authorities, urban planners, development experts and representatives of international organisations to formulate a coordinated framework for sustainable urban development. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Aisha Humera Moriani said that Pakistan's urban growth was accelerating while cities remained increasingly exposed to climate-related risks. She said that rising temperatures, urban flooding, water shortages and unregulated construction had intensified pressure on urban infrastructure and public services. "Our cities are becoming urban heat islands, flood traps and water-stressed zones because climate risks were never integrated into the way we planned and governed them," she remarked. The Secretary noted that over 36 per cent of Pakistan's population currently lived in urban areas and projected that more than half the population would reside in cities within the next two decades. Referring to recurring flooding incidents in areas such as Rawalpindi's Nullah Lai and Nowshera, she highlighted the impact of encroachments, weak waste management systems and outdated drainage infrastructure. She said that the proposed National Urban Strategy would align with the National Climate Change Policy 2021, National Adaptation Plan 2023 and Pakistan's commitments under the Paris climate agreement. Senior Joint Secretary Muhammad Ijaz Ghani said recent climate disasters had exposed weaknesses in urban governance and planning mechanisms. Recalling the Swat River floods, he said that construction on natural floodplains without proper zoning safeguards had aggravated the impacts of flooding. Referring to repeated flooding incidents in Islamabad's Sector E-11 and the DHA underpass drowning incident, he stressed the need for climate-resilient drainage systems and improved hydraulic planning in housing schemes. He also noted that Karachi's drainage infrastructure was struggling to cope with increasing rainfall intensity during monsoon seasons. The officials informed the workshop that the forthcoming strategy would focus on riverine zoning regulations, climate-sensitive spatial planning and stronger building standards. UN-Habitat Pakistan climate expert Khalil Ahmed said that Pakistan's urban areas were facing increasing risks from floods, heatwaves, droughts and infrastructure failures due to rapid urbanization and weak enforcement of environmental regulations. He observed that Pakistan's climate risk profile was shifting towards "compound, cascading and systemic climate crises," placing additional pressure on infrastructure, water resources and healthcare systems. Khalil Ahmed said that the consultation process aimed to identify priority urban risks, integrate climate resilience into planning frameworks, promote Green Building Codes and strengthen environmental assessment mechanisms. Deputy Director Media and Communications at the Climate Ministry Muhammad Saleem Shaikh emphasized the role of public awareness and community engagement in implementing climate-resilient urban policies. Urban Affairs Director Muhammad Azim Khoso stressed the need for implementing Pakistan Green Building Codes 2023 to promote environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient infrastructure.—DNA

Jelly Bangles become girl's latest craving

As Eid shopping picks up across the twin cities, the soft clinking sound of glass bangles once again fills markets with colors, excitement and tiny festive dreams

ISLAMABAD: With flashy reels, influencer promotions and packed Eid-ul-Azha markets, jelly bangles have become this Eid's biggest fashion obsession, as traders and vloggers once again turn a simple accessory into a viral craze chased by young girls across the country. After Kashmiri bangles ruled markets during Eid-ul-Fitr, transparent "jelly bangles" in soft candy-like shades have now taken over markets across Islamabad and Rawalpindi, attracting college students, young girls and women searching for matching colors for their Eid dresses. From Karachi Company Market to Commercial Market and the crowded stalls of Sunday Bazaar Peshawar Mor, rows of pink, purple, blue, green and crystal-clear glass bangles can be seen shining under market lights while customers move from shop to shop with mobile phones in their hands, searching for designs they saved from TikTok, Instagram and fashion vlogs. These bangles look simple but their colors feel alive, said Fatima, a college student looking for matching bangles in Karachi Company. Talking to APP, she said many metal and fancy bangles became popular over the years, but the real beauty and sound of bangles still belonged to glass bangles. The real khamak (sound of bangles) comes from glass bangles, she said smiling. When girls wear colorful bangles on

Eid, it feels like their dreams are shining in their hands. Laughing with her friends, she added, Sacrifice work is for elders and men. Our job on Eid is to laugh, get ready and enjoy colors. Nearby, Areej and Mona at Sunday Bazaar said they came specially after seeing jelly bangles repeatedly appear in online reels and fashion videos. We saw them online first, then suddenly every girl started asking for them, Areej told APP while checking different shades of turquoise and pink. At Commercial Market, crowds of women and students gathered around JD Bangles, where transparent jelly-style glass bangles hung in long colorful rows, reflecting market lights across the shop. Young shopkeeper Abdul Hanan told APP that online orders had increased sharply over the last few weeks. Customers now order from home because they worry their favorite shades may finish early, he said. He added that vloggers and social media pages now played a major role in deciding market trends. One viral reel can change the entire market within days, he said. Earlier we mostly sold traditional glass and metal bangles. Then Kashmiri bangles became popular on Eid-ul-Fitr, and now jelly bangles are the new trend. According to traders, locally made Pakistani glass bangles from Hyderabad are selling between Rs300

to Rs500 per set, while imported Indian-style fancy sets cost between Rs1,200 to Rs1,800 depending on style and decoration. Soft pastel shades, transparent colors and shiny light tones are dominating this year's trend, especially among students and young women. In Moti Bazaar, veteran trader Shaikat, who has been selling bangles for nearly two decades, said shopkeepers now closely watched social media trends before purchasing stock. Girls now come asking for the exact designs they see online, he told APP while arranging fresh bangles inside his colorful shop. We immediately arrange any design that starts going viral. He said shopping excitement for bangles during Eid-ul-Azha had now become almost equal to Eid-ul-Fitr. Earlier, girls mostly bought bangles before Eid-ul-Fitr, but now the excitement is the same on both Eids, he added. Uzma, a university student choosing transparent pink bangles, told APP that girls now preferred styles that looked simple but different. These jelly bangles shine softly and look beautiful in pictures and videos, she said. As Eid shopping picks up across the twin cities, the soft clinking sound of glass bangles once again fills markets with colors, excitement and tiny festive dreams.—DNA

Briefs

Unique-named sacrificial animals become viral

ISLAMABAD: With Eid festivities in full swing, families and children are actively engaged in preparations, while visits to animal markets featuring uniquely named animals have become a source of excitement, further amplified by the popular trend of taking selfies and sharing them on social media. According to media reports, Eid markets are going viral as Gen Z and vloggers turn uniquely named sacrificial animals into a growing selfie-craze trend. The busy mandis have become digital hot-spots where festive shopping is increasingly mixed with social media content creation, as visitors, especially Gen Z and vloggers, are capturing and sharing selfies alongside eye-catching animals, turning the markets into viral online attractions. Among the main attractions are specially named sacrificial animals such as "Sheru," weighing around 120 kg with a strong and well-built frame, and "Badshah," a heavier bull of nearly 180 kg known for its broad width and impressive appearance. These animals are drawing significant crowds and becoming central figures in Eid-related online content, with vloggers also actively selecting animals, recording videos, and taking selfies as part of their digital storytelling. Two youngsters, speaking about the trend, said the animal markets have turned into "fun and memorable places" during Eid, adding that taking selfies with uniquely named animals has become a new way of celebrating the festive season. —APP

President felicitates Norwegian leadership

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Sunday, extended felicitations to King Harald V, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Norway on the occasion of Constitution Day. In a message conveyed on behalf of the Government and the people of Pakistan, the president noted that the relations between Pakistan and Norway continued to flourish with each passing day. "He expressed confidence that the cordial ties between the two nations, further strengthened by the presence of a vibrant Pakistani community in Norway, will continue to grow for the mutual benefit of both friendly countries," the President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release. The president further conveyed his sincere wishes for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the people of the Kingdom of Norway. —APP

Animal-laden vehicles banned on motorways ahead of Eid

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have imposed a ban on the entry of vehicles carrying sacrificial animals on motorways ahead of Eid ul Adha to ensure public safety and maintain smooth traffic flow. According to an NHMP spokesperson, overloaded, unfit and improperly loaded vehicles often become the cause of traffic accidents and congestion on motorways; therefore, such vehicles will be diverted to alternative routes. The spokesperson said that in the past, several serious accidents involving animal-laden vehicles had resulted in significant loss of life and property, prompting the authorities to adopt preventive measures this year. The Motorway Police has also requested the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police departments to establish checkpoints near motorway entry points and cattle markets to prevent unsafe vehicles from entering the motorway network. The spokesperson added that the decision has been taken in the interest of public safety and to facilitate commuters during the Eid travel season. —APP

CAF hosts dialogue on Pak's climate future

The session concluded with a shared commitment towards strengthening collaborative and evidence-informed climate action for a more resilient Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level roundtable discussion on "Shared Responsibility, Shared Resilience: Climate Action in Pakistan" successfully concluded under the convening of the Climate Action Forum (CAF), Secours Islamique France (SIF) Fertiliser import analysis and Institute of Rural Management (IRM). The session was graced by the guest of honour Amir Mohyuddin, Additional Secretary I,

Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MOCC&EC), said a press release issued here. The distinguished roundtable speakers included Dr. Roomi S. Hayat (CEO IRM & Chair CAF), Dr. Altaf Abro (HoM SIF), Amir Khan Goraya (CEO NDRMF), Air Commodore Umar Naeem (NDMA), Ali Tauqeer Sheikh (BoD Fund for Responding to loss & Damage), Fauzia B. Malik (Country Representative IUCN), Mahmood Akhtar Cheema, Shahzadi Kiran (Country Manager KNH), Ahmed Kamal (Former Fed-

eral Flood Commissioner of Pakistan), Javed Iqbal (CEO KnK), Thomas Conan (Deputy Country Representative WFP), Shandana Khan (CEO RSPN), Muzafar Ud Din (Country Representative TAF), Junaid Yamin (CEO Weatherway), representatives from Pak EPA Dr. Zaigham Abbass & Dr. Athar Haroon from PMD, alongside other leading climate experts and practitioners. The roundtable brought together senior policymakers, thought leaders, development practitioners, academia, and civil

society representatives to deliberate on Pakistan's evolving climate trajectory and emerging priorities ahead of the Pre-COP consultations and COP31. Discussions particularly focused on inclusive climate resilience, climate governance, just transition pathways, climate finance, and community-centered adaptation approaches. The session concluded with a shared commitment towards strengthening collaborative and evidence-informed climate action for a more resilient Pakistan.

Pakistan may return to Chinese bond market soon

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first Panda Bond has opened a lower-cost yuan funding channel that may help the country diversify beyond traditional dollar and euro borrowing, an HBL official told China Economic Net. The RMB 1.75 billion, or about \$250 million, issue was priced at 2.5 percent, marking Pakistan's debut in China's domestic bond market. "The pricing guidance was 2.5 percent," Farhan Talib, Head International of HBL, told China Economic Net in an exclusive interview. "That is perhaps the lowest rate at which Pakistan has ever been able to raise money from capital markets." Talib said the transaction gives Pakistan an alternative to traditional dollar- and euro-denominated borrowing and creates a basis for future issuance in yuan. Pakistan may return to the Chinese bond market soon after the debut issue, with discussions already under way on a possible follow-up transaction that could come

within three to six months, he said. "It is not about doing this one time," Talib said. "It is about coming to this market again and again, on a needs basis and on an opportunity basis." HBL, which operates branches in Urumqi and Beijing, served as financial adviser for the transaction alongside CICC after receiving the mandate from Pakistan's Ministry of Finance in 2019. Talib said HBL helped structure the deal, coordinate with partners and support regulatory approvals from the National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors and the People's Bank of China. The bond was backed by a 95 percent guarantee from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank, helping improve its rating and lower funding costs, he said. For Pakistan, the deal brings a new class of Chinese investors into the country's financing base. Those investors will now follow the bond's performance and monitor Pakistan's performance, Talib said. The first issue could also encourage Pakistani

companies with stronger balance sheets to consider raising funds in China, particularly those with stable cash flows, consistent earnings and a sufficient operating track record. "For companies with consistent revenue streams and consistent profitability, certainly," he said, adding that bond investors usually look at an issuer's past performance. The Panda Bond route may also become relevant for future projects under the next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, depending on project structure, cash flows and financing needs, Talib said. It could give Pakistani and Chinese companies another option beyond traditional SINOSURE-backed financing as CPEC expands into industry, agriculture and technology, he said. HBL opened its first China branch in Urumqi in 2017 and its Beijing branch in 2021. Talib said the bank will continue to support Pakistan-China financial links through yuan financing, trade settlement and advisory services.

Govt revises petroleum tax structure

ISLAMABAD: A fresh adjustment in petroleum levy rates has become the key factor behind Pakistan's latest fuel price revision. While consumers see a slight relief in petrol and diesel prices, the real shift lies in how taxes on fuel have been rebalanced. The federal government has modified the petroleum levy structure, making it the main driver behind the latest fuel price change. According to sources from the Ministry of Petroleum, the levy on petrol has been reduced by Rs9.24 per litre, while the levy on diesel has been increased by Rs9.40 per litre. The adjustment signals a redistribution of tax burden between the two major petroleum products. Under the revised structure, the petroleum levy on petrol has been brought down from Rs117.41 to Rs108.17 per litre. In contrast, the levy on diesel has been raised from Rs42.60 to Rs52 per litre, marking a noticeable upward adjustment. Officials say the changes reflect an internal fiscal balancing strategy within petroleum taxation. Despite the levy adjustments, the federal government has also reduced the retail prices of both petrol and diesel by Rs5 per litre each. Following the revision, petrol has been set at Rs409.78 per litre, while diesel stands at Rs409.58 per litre. The Petroleum Division has issued a formal notification confirming the updated rates. The revised levy structure and fuel prices will take effect from midnight and remain valid for the next seven days. —DNA

Unsafe water behind surge in Hepatitis

ISLAMABAD: As cases of stomach diseases continue to increase during the summer, gastroenterologist cautioned the public against consuming unhygienic and improperly preserved food, warning that contaminated food and water remain major sources of Hepatitis A and E infections, particularly threatening the health of children and pregnant women. While speaking to a local media channel on Sunday, gastroenterologist Dr. Abdullah Bin Khalid shed light on the growing concerns of unhygienic food practices during the summer season, particularly the consumption of frozen food stored for prolonged periods. —APP

RCCI organizes leadership workshop

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) in collaboration with the Institute of International Peace Leaders (IIPL) here on Saturday organized a workshop on 'Peace Leadership and Conflict Resolution' and an interactive meeting with a Tanzanian delegation, to strengthen cooperation in peace building and sustainable development. The opening session was chaired by Senior Vice President RCCI Khalid Farooq Qazi, who highlighted the importance of international collaboration in promoting

peace, youth empowerment, human rights and sustainable development. Participants from both sides engaged in detailed discussions on enhancing Pakistan-Tanzania relations, with a focus on joint initiatives in governance, advocacy, diplomacy, climate justice and social development. The visiting Tanzanian delegation, comprising experts from diverse fields, exchanged views with Pakistani counterparts on expanding future cooperation and building long-term partnerships in areas of mutual interest. The speakers emphasized that such engagements play a vital role in promoting people-to-people linkages and strengthening global partnerships for peace and inclusive development.

Libraries gateway to discovery, innovation, progress

ISLAMABAD: In an era driven by information and innovation, libraries continue to play a pivotal role in supporting research, academic growth, and intellectual development, evolving far beyond their traditional image as quiet buildings filled with books. Modern libraries have transformed into dynamic knowledge hubs that empower students, scholars, researchers, and entrepreneurs by providing access to a wide range of educational and digital resources essential for learning and innovation. One of the major contributions of libraries is ensuring access to credible and high-quality information. From books and academic journals to e-books and specialized research databases, libraries provide authentic, peer-reviewed, and updated material that strengthens the quality and reliability of research work. With rapid digital transformation, libraries have further expanded their reach through online databases, digital archives, and virtual collections, allowing users to access global knowledge from anywhere in the world. Experts believe that such facilities are particularly important in today's fast-paced academic environment where timely access to information is crucial. Libraries also offer professional guidance through trained librarians who assist researchers in literature searches, citation management, referencing styles, and research methodologies, helping improve the standard of academic work. In addition to digital services, libraries continue to provide peaceful and well-organized physical spaces that support concentration, productivity, and serious academic engagement. Educationists say libraries are inclusive institutions serving people from all walks of life, including students, early learners, researchers, and

scholars. They also play an important role in promoting critical thinking, lifelong learning, and innovation while preserving knowledge through archives, theses, and dissertations for future generations. Strong library systems are directly linked to academic excellence, research advancement, and societal progress. In a telephonic interview with APP, Zeeshan Ullah Khattak, Director Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) & Training at Islamia College Peshawar and Chairman of the Pakistan Librarians Society (PLS), said libraries are no longer limited to lending books but have become centers for digital learning, innovation, and research facilitation. He said modern libraries are providing democratic access to high-speed internet, digital literacy training, and costly research databases, enabling students, researchers, and aspiring entrepreneurs to benefit from advanced educational resources. Zeeshan Ullah Khattak emphasized that libraries are playing a vital role in bridging the "digital divide" by ensuring that access to information and innovation is not restricted to privileged segments of society alone. He noted that the transformation of libraries into digital hubs is essential for educational growth, research development, and technological advancement in the country. He further stressed the need to strengthen library systems and expand digital infrastructure to equip the younger generation with modern knowledge and skills required in the rapidly evolving world. "Libraries are gateways to discovery, innovation, and progress," he remarked while highlighting their enduring importance in contemporary society. —DNA

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 190

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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British poll results are a political earthquake

YOSSI MEKELBERG

WHEN the results from the May 7 local elections in England, as well as the Scottish and Welsh parliamentary elections, began to emerge, there were few genuine surprises. Yet the overall outcome still felt like a political earthquake in Britain and the tremors are still being felt. What had essentially been a two-party system for nearly a century is increasingly becoming a fragmented multi-party landscape, reflecting growing socio-political malaise, confusion, and disillusionment. For the governing Labour Party, it is impossible to sugarcoat these results. Losing nearly 60 percent of council seats in England, losing control in Wales for the first time in a century, and suffering setbacks in the Scottish parliament amounted to a resounding vote of no confidence across the country. In Wales, the nationalist Plaid Cymru emerged victorious in the Senedd election, albeit without an outright majority, while in Scotland the SNP, despite having appeared politically almost on the ropes not long ago, will continue to govern and advocate for Scottish independence. Altogether, these developments raise serious questions about the long-term cohesion and survival of Britain as a unified political entity. If the results for Labour and its leader, Prime Minister Keir Starmer, were disastrous, they could not conceal what was another poor showing for the Conservatives. The Tories lost hundreds of council seats in England and remain barely a political force in Scotland and Wales. Instead, the biggest winner of these elections was the nationalist-populist Reform Party, the political descendants of the movement that brought on the rest of the country the Brexit debacle. Also making gains were the Greens, who have increasingly moved beyond environmentalism toward a broader left-wing populist agenda. The electorate expressed clear disdain for Britain's two traditional governing parties, Labour and the Conservatives, and neither can afford to ignore this message if they wish not only to win the next general election, but to remain politically relevant. Reform's gains are no longer a fluke but part of a growing trend of an increasingly insular political state of mind, centered primarily around anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalist rhetoric and policies, with little else beyond that defining agenda. In Scotland, and increasingly in Wales as well, the call for independence is becoming louder, more forceful, and, for many, more persuasive. I belong to those who wish to see the Union remain intact. However, when Scotland voted in the 2014 referendum on whether it should become an independent country, just over 55 percent voted to remain in the UK, while nearly 45 percent supported independence. One of the strongest arguments made by opponents of independence at the time was that leaving would also mean leaving the EU and would likely make Scotland poorer. But since then, Brexit has happened, leaving Scotland without either independence or EU membership. Now, with Reform gaining momentum

and potentially capable of winning a future general election, Scotland also faces the prospect of rising English nationalism. This is bound to reignite the debate over Scottish independence with renewed intensity. Another unsurprising consequence of last week's elections has been the growing call within Labour ranks for Starmer to step down. Already, 81 Labour MPs have reportedly expressed support for a future leadership contest, while four junior ministers have resigned. Such developments were perhaps inevitable. For at least a year there has been growing sentiment within the party that the prime minister is, to put it bluntly, failing both the country and Labour itself, and that unless he changes course, the party risks defeat at the next general election. With the Conservatives at their weakest in years, and some of their supporters already jumping ship to Reform, the path for Nigel Farage to become the next prime minister appears increasingly as plausible as it is undesirable. For many across the country, even the prospect of such an outcome is deeply unsettling, given Farage's leading role in Brexit, arguably one of the most self-destructive acts of British foreign and economic policy in modern history, and what he represents ideologically and politically. In a first-past-the-post electoral system, his dream of being the prime minister could yet become the country's nightmare. For the governing Labour Party, it is impossible to sugarcoat these results. To be fair, Starmer has earned much of the criticism directed at him. His cautious and incremental approach seems ill-suited to a period of profound economic and social predicament, when many voters expect bold policies and a greater sense of urgency, particularly on domestic issues. His natural caution often holds him back. Yet while Starmer may not be a charismatic communicator, he has demonstrated statesmanship on foreign policy, especially regarding Ukraine and, to a significant extent, Iran and Greenland. Nevertheless his recent speech after the elections, aimed at saving his leadership, is unlikely to reassure either his critics within Labour or voters more broadly that he can adequately address the pressing issues affecting everyday life: the cost-of-living crisis, job creation, unaffordable housing, overstretched transport systems, and the toxic national debate surrounding immigration. However, replacing an elected prime minister, especially one who close to two years ago won a huge parliamentary majority, is hardly a solution nor is it desirable. Britain has developed a troubling habit of changing prime ministers without addressing the deeper long-term structural causes of its problems. Since 2016, the country has had six prime ministers, averaging less than two years per leader. With the exceptions of Boris Johnson, whose government broke its own pandemic regulations, and Liz Truss, whose economic policies brought the UK economy to its knees, leadership changes should ultimately be decided by voters in the ballot box. Starmer has done nothing remotely comparable to Johnson or Truss, and he was elected with a mandate to govern for five years, even if the law allows for his removal. The real question is whether Starmer has learned enough from his first two years in office to correct the course of what increasingly resembles a drifting ship. I am not convinced that his policy U-turns should always be used against him. While it is preferable for leaders to get things right the first time, it is still better to have a leader willing to correct course in response to justified criticism than one who stubbornly refuses to acknowledge errors at all, provided such reversals do not become habitual.

Trump in Beijing: A Visit of Powerlessness

Qamar Bashir



Trump arrived in Beijing hoping to secure Chinese cooperation on several critical fronts. Washington wanted China to pressure Iran into reopening the Strait of Hormuz completely and stabilizing energy shipments. The United States also sought Chinese compliance with sanctions and shipping restrictions targeting vessels accused of supporting Iran. Another major American objective was to reduce Chinese economic engagement with Venezuela, whose oil exports had increasingly escaped U.S. pressure mechanisms. Simultaneously, Washington expected movement on agricultural purchases, aircraft deals, tariff relief, and broader trade normalization

RESIDENT Donald Trump's May 2026 visit to Beijing was expected to reset global geopolitics, calm financial markets, pressure China on Iran, secure trade breakthroughs, and perhaps establish a new strategic understanding between the world's two largest powers. Instead, the visit exposed something far more consequential: a visible shift in global leverage from Washington to Beijing. What was projected as a high-stakes diplomatic triumph increasingly appeared to many observers as a journey of strategic desperation, where the United States arrived seeking concessions while China calmly projected patience, confidence, and restraint. The visit came at perhaps the worst possible moment for Washington. The United States entered Beijing politically exhausted, militarily stretched, economically pressured, and diplomatically weakened after months of confrontation surrounding Iran, the Strait of Hormuz crisis, sanctions battles, and growing instability in global energy markets. China understood this reality fully. Beijing knew that America's military-industrial supremacy, once considered untouchable, had suffered reputational damage after Iran managed to withstand the combined pressure of the United States and Israel without surrendering its strategic posture. The longer the war dragged on, the more global markets, oil routes, and supply chains trembled. Trump arrived in Beijing hoping to secure Chinese cooperation on several critical fronts. Washington wanted China to pressure Iran into reopening the Strait of Hormuz completely and stabilizing energy shipments. The United States also sought Chinese compliance with sanctions and shipping restrictions targeting vessels accused of supporting Iran. Another major American objective was to reduce Chinese economic engagement with Venezuela, whose oil exports had increasingly escaped U.S. pressure mechanisms. Simultaneously, Washington expected movement on agricultural purchases, aircraft deals, tariff relief, and broader trade normalization. Yet despite all the ceremonial grandeur, lunches, tours, dinners, and carefully choreographed hospitality, China committed to virtually nothing concrete on the core geopolitical disputes. The most sensitive issue of all remained Taiwan. Chinese President Xi Jinping reportedly warned Trump in direct terms that mishandling Taiwan could push both countries toward confrontation or even open conflict. Trump, unusually cautious throughout the visit, avoided public comments about Taiwan while in Beijing. Only after boarding Air Force One did he hint that he may reconsider arms sales to Taipei after hearing Xi's objections. That hesitation alone sent shockwaves through strategic circles. Taiwan represents the center of China's national reunification doctrine under the "One China" policy. Beijing views Taiwan not as a separate sovereign state, but as a breakaway province destined eventually to return to the mainland—much like Hong

Kong returned after decades of British control. China's leadership believes time is now increasingly on its side. Hong Kong's reintegration demonstrated Beijing's long-term strategic patience, and Chinese policymakers appear convinced that Taiwan's eventual absorption into the broader Chinese system is historically inevitable. Trump's reluctance to firmly reaffirm military backing for Taiwan revealed how complicated the balance of power has become. America once projected overwhelming confidence in East Asia. Today, Washington appears increasingly cautious about opening another major confrontation 9,500 miles away while already struggling to manage crises in the Middle East. Equally important was China's silence on the Iran war. Trump publicly claimed that Xi agreed a nuclear-armed Iran would be dangerous and even offered help in ending the conflict. Yet Beijing itself avoided confirming any such alignment. China maintained its carefully balanced diplomatic position, emphasizing only that all parties' concerns should be considered. That distinction mattered enormously. China has no interest in openly endorsing an American-led strategy that weakened one of Beijing's critical energy and geopolitical partners. Iran remains central to China's Belt and Road ambitions, regional connectivity plans, and long-term energy security. Beijing also deeply resented American efforts to interfere with Chinese shipping, oil imports, and maritime operations linked to Iran. The Chinese leadership clearly signaled that while it favors stability, it will not become an enforcement arm of U.S. pressure campaigns. Meanwhile, the economic dimension of the trip produced more headlines than substance. Trump spoke enthusiastically about potential aircraft purchases, suggesting China could buy between 200 and eventually 750 Boeing planes. There were also discussions involving General Electric engines, agricultural products, investment boards, and reciprocal tariff reductions. But the markets were not impressed. Global investors had expected major breakthroughs—perhaps a concrete trade accord, sanctions relief, maritime understandings, or joint statements stabilizing geopolitical tensions. Instead, what emerged was vague language, future possibilities, and broad diplomatic formulations without enforceable commitments. Financial markets reacted negatively because traders recognized the gap between optics and outcomes. The world economy today is deeply fragile. Oil prices remain volatile. Shipping insurance costs are elevated. Supply chains are unstable. Fertilizer markets, aviation industries, and industrial production continue facing enormous uncertainty tied to Middle Eastern instability. Investors were hoping for decisive clarity. What they received instead was strategic ambiguity. The contrast in diplomatic posture between Trump and Xi was also striking. Trump showered Xi with praise throughout the visit, repeatedly describing him as a "great lead-

er," a "friend," and someone with whom America could build a "fantastic future." Xi, by contrast, remained disciplined and restrained. He offered polite gestures, symbolic hospitality, and carefully measured compliments, but avoided emotional reciprocity. This imbalance itself became symbolic. To many analysts, it reflected a reversal of psychological positioning between the two powers. America appeared eager for accommodation; China appeared comfortable waiting. Trump openly admired Xi and praised China's hospitality, while Beijing calmly held its ground on virtually every critical issue—from Taiwan to Iran, sanctions, shipping, and strategic competition. Even more significantly, China now understands America's vulnerabilities far better than before. Beijing witnessed how quickly American stockpiles of precision-guided weapons were consumed during the Iran conflict. It saw how difficult and expensive prolonged modern warfare had become. It also saw that despite enormous military expenditures, Washington failed to decisively bend Iran to its will or secure uncontested dominance over the Strait of Hormuz. This realization changes strategic calculations permanently. For decades, American power rested not only on military capability but on the perception of overwhelming inevitability. That aura has weakened. China now increasingly believes that economic resilience, technological advancement, industrial capacity, and strategic patience can gradually outlast American pressure. The tariff war itself reinforced this conclusion. Washington expected tariffs to severely damage China's economy. Instead, many American farmers suffered as China reduced agricultural imports and diversified suppliers. Soybean producers, meat exporters, and farming communities across the United States felt the consequences sharply. Beijing endured the tariffs while maintaining industrial production and export competitiveness. By the end of the visit, Trump appeared to be requesting renewed Chinese purchases more than dictating terms. The broader geopolitical message of the Beijing summit was therefore unmistakable: the global order is shifting from unipolar dominance toward strategic multipolarity, with China increasingly acting not as a challenger seeking acceptance, but as a confident superpower shaping the rules of engagement. The visit achieved little in concrete terms. There was no major Taiwan understanding, no Iran breakthrough, no Hormuz settlement, no sanctions resolution, and no transformational trade agreement. Yet paradoxically, the trip may still prove historic—not because of what was signed, but because of what it revealed. It revealed an America struggling to preserve leverage it once took for granted, and a China increasingly convinced that history is moving in its direction.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC
Macomb, Michigan

Pakistan: The Heart of Asia's Destiny

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Pakistan and Afghanistan together constitute the natural link between supply and demand in this vast region. Transforming the corridor from a theatre of conflict into an artery of commerce is achievable, yet it requires genuine political will and responsible conduct from Kabul. A landlocked Afghanistan cannot forge a stable and self-reliant...

IN the divine act of creation, the Almighty fashioned the human form with organs so perfectly attuned to one another that health and vigour depend upon their unbroken harmony. No faculty may falter without imperiling the rest. Foremost among them is the heart, which tirelessly propels the life-blood from the seat of intellect in the brain to the remotest vein in the toes. Through carelessness or affliction, however, obstructions arise; vessels constrict, clots form, and the vital current slows. Medicine is first employed to restore flow; when remedies prove inadequate, a stent may reopen the passage; and in the gravest peril, the surgeon must perform a bypass to safeguard existence itself. Such, in many respects, is the condition of Pakistan today. Like the heart within the body of nations, Pakistan occupies a position of singular importance—geographically, politically, commercially, and strategically. It stands at the crossroads of civilisations, bearing responsibilities far beyond its borders. Pakistan has consistently extended every form of cooperation and assistance to address regional challenges, yet it has been afflicted by a persistent malady; terrorism nurtured from Afghan soil and abetted by Indian design. This external interference has disrupted the nation's stability and hindered its natural rhythms. With exemplary patience, Pakistan pursued negotiations to resolve these tensions. When dialogue bore no lasting fruit, military operations were undertaken, not out of choice but necessity, to protect the country's integrity and the welfare of its people. Even now, despite these efforts, acts of terrorism continue, guided from across the border. In these difficult times, brotherly nations have extended valuable support for mediation. Qatar and Türkiye, along with other friendly countries, have offered their good offices to facilitate dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan, demonstrating a shared commitment to regional peace and stability. Such mediations reflected the hope that wisdom and mutual understanding could prevail over hostility, but all efforts went in vain due to Afghanistan's obstinacy in stopping hostile activities from their side. The deeper tragedy lies in opportunities forfeited by continued strife. Central Asia—encompassing Kazakhstan, Uz-

bekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan—holds some of the world's most abundant reserves of natural gas, oil, uranium, and rare earth minerals. These landlocked states remain largely cut off from global markets. To their south lie Pakistan and Afghanistan, positioned by geography as the most direct overland bridge connecting this resource wealth with the energy-hungry economies of South and East Asia, particularly China and India. China, the planet's largest energy consumer, and India, its fastest-growing major economy, both grapple with structural deficits that could be eased through reliable northern corridors. Pipelines for gas and oil, efficient road freight networks, and modern rail links traversing Pakistan and Afghanistan could generate billions of dollars annually in transit revenues. Such corridors would ignite industrial activity, multiply employment, develop infrastructure, and enable both nations to evolve from aid-dependent economies into thriving hubs of regional commerce. Ports such as Gwadar and Karachi could serve as vital gateways, while existing roads and proposed railways would knit together markets stretching from the steppes of Central Asia to the bustling ports of the Arabian Sea and beyond. This vision, however, remains locked behind a single critical barrier; the absence of enduring stability and cooperative governance in Afghanistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan together constitute the natural link between supply and demand in this vast region. Transforming the corridor from a theatre of conflict into an artery of commerce is achievable, yet it requires genuine political will and responsible conduct from Kabul. A landlocked Afghanistan cannot forge a stable and self-reliant future without dependable transit partnerships with its neighbours. It faces a clear choice; become a corridor of commerce that benefits its people or remain trapped as a corridor of conflict that perpetuates isolation and dependence on international charity. The potential rewards are substantial and mutual. Peaceful connectivity would bring transit fees, vibrant border trade, fresh investment, and thousands of jobs for Afghans and Pakistanis alike. Pakistan, in turn, would secure enhanced access to Central Asian resources and fuller utilisation of its strategic ports and highways. Ordinary citizens on both sides of the Durand Line stand to

gain from shared prosperity. Yet no economic endeavour of this magnitude can succeed while terrorism, militant sanctuaries, and cross-border attacks persist. Afghan soil must no longer serve as a base for groups operating against Pakistan. The region's transit promise is therefore inseparable from a firm recalibration of policy in Kabul. The current Afghan dispensation's tolerance—and in some instances apparent facilitation—of anti-Pakistan terrorist activity remains the foremost obstacle to integration. Kabul must review its posture, cease support for elements hostile to Pakistan, and take credible, verifiable action against networks destabilising Balochistan and the border regions. The Afghan people, who ultimately bear the heaviest cost of their leadership's decisions, would do well to ask themselves whether they desire a future marred by proxy conflict and seclusion, or one illuminated by connectivity, commerce, and collective advancement. The strategic implications extend beyond immediate neighbours. Balochistan possesses considerable deposits of minerals and rare earth elements essential to modern technology. This wealth cannot be fully realised while terrorism, sustained through Afghan sanctuaries, continues to unsettle the province. Peace in Balochistan therefore serves not only Pakistani interests but aligns with the broader aims of the United States and other stakeholders who seek secure trade routes and diversified supply chains of critical materials. Washington and the international community have every reason to encourage Kabul to act responsibly, deny safe havens to terrorists, and support regional connectivity rather than permit instability to fester. Central Asia offers the resources, South and East Asia the demand, and Pakistan and Afghanistan the vital corridor between them. Security and mutual trust remain the only missing elements—qualities that depend largely upon a change of approach in Kabul. The Almighty has endowed this region with extraordinary gifts of geography and potential. It falls to its leaders and peoples, guided by foresight and statesmanship, to remove obstructions so that these blessings may flow freely, nourishing prosperity and harmony much as a healthy heart sustains the entire body in balanced and enduring life.

Briefs

Indian army chief's remarks absurd: ISPR

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"civilisational supremacy or national erasure." The statement further said the Indian narrative ignored what it described as India's "historically documented record" of being a source of regional instability, a sponsor of terrorism, a practitioner of transnational assassinations and a centre of global disinformation campaigns. According to the military's media wing, New Delhi's aggressive posture stemmed less from confidence and more from frustration over its inability to harm Pakistan, which it claimed had been exposed during Marka-e-Haq. The ISPR warned Indian leadership against pushing South Asia towards another crisis or war, saying the consequences would be devastating for the entire region and beyond. It added that India needed to reconcile with Pakistan's significance and learn to coexist peacefully with it.

Bilawal slams India army chief remarks

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apartheid in modern human history in the shape of caste oppression, untouchability, religious discrimination and social inequality. He said millions of Dalits, Muslims and other minorities are subjected to discrimination, violence and human rights violations on a daily basis, which is a matter of grave concern for humanity. Bilawal House spokesman said the world is witnessing the rise of intolerance, communal hatred and extremism under the BJP government led by Narendra Modi, whom he described as the "Butcher of Gujarat." He added that instead of threatening neighbouring countries, the Indian leadership should focus on protecting the rights and dignity of its own marginalized communities. Surendar Valasai said Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Pakistan Peoples Party will continue to lead from the front at the national and international level to expose the dangerous designs, extremist ideology and aggressive posturing of the Indian government. He reiterated that Pakistan desires peace, stability and regional cooperation, but any aggression against the country would be responded to with full force and unwavering national unity.

Iran's top diplomat says a lack...

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energy crisis sparked by the conflict. Iran still has a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway where a fifth of the world's oil passed through before the war, and America is blockading Iranian ports. Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, who finished talks on Friday, agreed the strait needs to be reopened. Araghchi said Friday that Iran would welcome diplomatic support from other countries, particularly from China, citing Beijing's previous role in facilitating the restoration of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Beijing has shown little public interest in US requests to get more involved, even though Trump told Fox News' Sean Hannity that Xi had in their conversations offered to help. Pakistan said Thursday it was continuing diplomatic efforts to help ease regional tensions. But it declined to disclose details of the discussions or say whether the US had formally responded. "The clock on diplomacy has not stopped. The peace process is working," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi told reporters in Islamabad. Trump has demanded a major rollback of Iran's nuclear activities while Iran says it has a right to enrich uranium. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who launched the war with Trump on Feb. 28, also wants Iran's highly enriched uranium removed from the country.

FIBA Pledges Full Support for Pakistan Basketball

Khajirian termed the discussions with Pakistan's sports stakeholders "highly productive and encouraging," stating that several important proposals were reviewed to elevate the standard of basketball in the country

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Regional Office-Asia has reaffirmed its commitment to the development of basketball in Pakistan following a high-level visit by its delegation to Lahore and Islamabad, where key meetings were held with top government and sports officials. The delegation, led by Hagop Khajirian, met with Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) and Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Mohyuddin Wani, officials of the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), and representatives of the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) including President Brig (R) Muhammad Iftikhar Mansoor, Secretary General Khalid Bashir, SVP Imtiaz Rafi Butt and Associate Secretary General Ouj E Zahoor.



During the meetings, both sides discussed comprehensive measures aimed at strengthening basketball structures in Pakistan and bringing the country back onto the international basketball map. Speaking on the occasion, Hagop Khajirian

said empowering national federations remains one of FIBA's key strategic pillars, adding that Pakistan holds significant importance as a national federation in the Asian region. He assured full cooperation from FIBA for the promotion and long-term development of basketball in Pakistan. Khajirian termed the discussions with Pakistan's sports stakeholders "highly productive and encouraging," stating that several important proposals were reviewed to elevate the standard of basketball in the country. He also praised the positive response shown by all stakeholders and expressed confidence that the recent meetings would mark a strong beginning for a new era of basketball development in Pakistan. FIBA Regional Office-Asia also reiterated its continued support for the growth and promotion of basketball across Pakistan in collaboration with national sports authorities and the Pakistan Basketball Federation.

USM beat Zamalek on penalties to win CAF Confederation Cup

USM also won the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League in 2023, pipping Young Africans of Tanzania on away goals

JOHANNESBURG: Algerian club USM Alger beat Egyptian hosts Zamalek 8-7 on penalties in Cairo on Saturday to win the CAF Confederation Cup for a second time. For the latest updates, follow us @ ArabNewsSport. Zamalek won the second leg of the final 1-0 through a fifth-minute penalty from

Palestinian Oday Dabbagh to level the aggregate score at 1-1. USM had won the first leg 1-0 last weekend, also through a penalty, converted by Ahmed Khalidi eight minutes into added time. In the penalty shootout, each team successfully converted their first seven kicks, then stand-in Zamalek captain Mohamed Shehata blazed over. Before taking his kick, Shehata struggled to place the ball on the penalty spot, then USM goalkeeper Oussama Benbot came forward from his goaline to further delay the kick. The next USM penalty fell to Congolese substitute Glody Likonza, and he scored with a kick into the left corner that goalkeeper Mohamed Awad got his fingertips to, but could not stop. USM also won the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League in 2023,

pping Young Africans of Tanzania on away goals. It was the first Confederation Cup final failure for Zamalek after two triumphs over Moroccan Renaissance Berkane. The first in 2019 was won on penalties and the second in 2024 on away goals. USM became the first club to win a final in the second-tier African competition after taking a 1-0 lead into the second leg. Dolphins of Nigeria, Club Africain of Tunisia and Berkane were unable to defend the slender advantage in previous title deciders. The return match between Zamalek and USM was often a scrappy affair with many delays for injuries and arguments with the excellent Gabonese referee over his decisions. Less than two minutes had elapsed when Cameroonian Che Malone fouled Pales-

tinian Adam Kaied, but as protests developed it took a further three minutes before the kick could be taken. Dabbagh, who joined Zamalek last year after a loan spell at Aberdeen, remained calm and sent Benbot the wrong way to restore overall equality. Zamalek had the ball in the net again after 15 minutes, but a headed goal from Juan Bezerra was ruled offside. The Brazilian also had a goal disallowed in the first leg. USM pocketed a Confederation Cup record \$4 million while debt-stricken Zamalek collected \$2 million. The Algerian club also qualify for a one-off CAF Super Cup match against the winners of the CAF Champions League, either Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa or FAR Rabat of Morocco. - APP

FIFA to meet Iran officials in Istanbul

ZURICH: FIFA Secretary-General Mattias Grafstrom will meet Iranian FA (FFIRI) officials in Istanbul on Saturday and offer "reassurance" over Iran's participation in the World Cup, a source familiar with the talks has told Reuters. Iran are scheduled to play all three World Cup group matches in the United States but the team's participation in the June 11 to July 19 tournament has been in question since the US and Israel attacked Iran in late February. More questions arose after FFIRI President Mehdi Taj was refused entry to Canada for the FIFA Congress in Vancouver earlier this month because of his links to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Both the US and Canada, who are co-hosting the World Cup with Mexico, classify the IRGC as a "terrorist entity" and have made it clear they will not admit people with links to the elite military force. Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, said in a social media post this week that it was incumbent on FIFA to ensure that all teams and their delegations were able to get into the host countries. "The Iranian national football team has earned its right to participate on the field in accordance with FIFA regulations," he wrote. "Any obstruction to the entry of players, technical staff, federation officials, or essential members of the Iranian delegation would violate the spirit and purpose of the World Cup ... If the organizing body cannot guarantee that all qualified teams, including Iran, can enter the host country without discrimination or restriction and compete on equal terms, the credibility of the World Cup itself will be damaged." The source said FIFA was working closely with the relevant authorities to ensure all teams at the World Cup were able to compete in a safe and secure environment. US President Donald Trump said two weeks ago that he was "okay" with Iran playing at the World Cup despite the conflict between the countries that was triggered by air strikes on the Islamic Republic. - APP

Pakistan, Azerbaijan resolve to further...

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It was additionally noted that centers based on Azerbaijan's "ASAN Khidmet" experience have been established in Pakistan. President Ilham Aliyev also emphasized that Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations are currently developing within a trilateral framework involving Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan.

Qantas flight diverted after man...

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The man was met by local authorities on arrival and has been slapped with a no-fly ban on all Qantas planes. "The safety of our customers and our crew is our number one priority and we have zero tolerance for disruptive or threatening behaviour on our flights," a Qantas spokesperson told on Sunday.

Centcom chief hails Pakistan...

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who was arrested by Pakistan earlier in 2025. Then-Centcom Chief General Michael Kurilla had said in June 2025: "They [Pakistan] have extradited back Jaffar, who was one of the key individuals behind the Abbey Gate bombing." Centcom added that this collaboration has been instrumental in disrupting militant networks operating across the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. "Our strong military-to-military (milito-mil) partnership with Islamabad has produced tangible results against high-value individuals with American blood on their hands." The command also highlighted Pakistan's role in humanitarian response efforts, noting that bilateral coordination was key to delivering US assistance following severe flooding in Pakistan last September. "...It was also key to US [Centcom] humanitarian support following catastrophic flooding in Pakistan last September." Centcom described these combined security and humanitarian efforts as evidence of an "enduring friendship and shared resolve" between the two countries. It may be noted here that the Daesh operative allegedly helped carry out the 2021 suicide bombing outside Kabul airport during the chaotic US military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Proposal to increase voting age under ...

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(NFC) resource distribution, population control measures, and the construction of new water reservoirs. He stressed that the government would not move forward on the 28th Amendment without agreement among all stakeholders. Sanullah further said it is not necessary to change the NFC formula, suggesting that defence expenditures could be treated separately from the existing resource-sharing mechanism. He added that consultations on such matters have been ongoing and would continue as part of broader constitutional and policy discussions. The remarks came amid growing political debate over reports of discussions surrounding a possible constitutional amendment ahead of Eid ul Adha, which is expected to take place on May 27, with concerns also shown that it might undo the 18th Amendment. The 18th Amendment, passed during the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led government in 2010, has triggered many debates in the past, with calls to make changes to it. However, PPP has strongly objected to such proposals and has vowed resistance against any tweaks to the amendment.

Nepali Sherpa scales Mount Everest for a record 32nd time

KATMANDU: A renowned Nepali Sherpa guide scaled Mount Everest for the 32nd time on Sunday, an official said, smashing his own record set last year. Kami Rita Sherpa, 56, reached the 8,849-meter (29,032 foot) peak - the highest in the world - while guiding clients from the 14 Peaks Expedition company. Nepal's Department of Tourism congratulated the Sherpa for achieving the "historic milestone" and for his contributions to promoting mountain tourism. He reached the summit at 10:12 a.m. (0427 GMT) on Sunday, it said in a statement adding that a Sherpa woman, Lakpa, 52, had made her 11th ascent to the peak, the most by a woman. Details of the climbs were not available. Kami Rita was born in the same Thame village in Solukhumbu district as Tenzing Norgay. Norgay and New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary were the first to climb Everest in 1953. Kami Rita climbed the peak for the first time in 1994 and has repeated the feat every year except in 2014, 2015 and 2020 when expeditions to Everest were closed for different reasons. He reached the summit twice in some years. More than 8,000 people have climbed Mount Everest, many of them several times, since it was first scaled by Norgay and Hillary. Among non-Sherpa climbers, the record is held by British guide Kenton Cool who has accomplished the feat 19 times followed by American climbers Dave Hahn and Garrett Madison with 15 climbs each. - APP

Chelsea appoint Xabi Alonso as new manager

"It fills me with immense pride to become manager of this great club," says Alonso

XABI Alonso will take over as Chelsea's new manager, the Premier League club said on Sunday, with the Spaniard signing a four-year deal beginning on July 1. The former Real Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen manager becomes the fifth permanent appointment under Chelsea's BlueCo ownership, following Graham Potter, Mauricio Pochettino, Enzo Maresca and Liam Rosenior. It marks a return to English football for Alonso, who made 210 appearances for Liverpool as a player before leaving for Real Madrid in 2009 and later ending his playing career with Bayern Munich in 2017. "Chelsea is one of the biggest clubs in world football and it fills me with immense pride to become manager of this great club," Alonso said in a statement. "From my conversations with the ownership group and sporting leadership, it is clear we share the same ambition. We want to build a team capable of competing consistently at the highest level and fighting for trophies."



"There is great talent in the squad and huge potential at this football club and it will be my great honour to lead it. Now the focus is on hard work, building the right culture and winning trophies." Chelsea have endured a difficult season, slipping to ninth in the Premier League and facing a long-shot battle to qualify for European competition, after losing the FA Cup final to Manchester City on Saturday. - APP

FPCCI establishes Business Council to promote trade

The first meeting of the Pakistan-USA Business Council of FPCCI was held at the FPCCI President Office in Islamabad. The meeting was convened by Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain, Chairman Pakistan-USA Business Council

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, will lead a high-powered business delegation to the United States in August 2026. Under his leadership, the Pakistan-USA Business Council has been formally established to institutionalize and expand bilateral trade, investment, and private-sector cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. The first meeting of the Pakistan-USA Business Council of FPCCI was held at the FPCCI President Office in Islamabad. The meeting was convened by Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain, Chairman Pakistan-USA Business Council. The meeting was attended by representatives of the U.S. Embassy Islamabad, including Mr. Jay Kim and Mr. Ayan Ali Khan from the Economic and Trade Section. FPCCI Vice President Mr. Tariq Khan Jadoon, Director Pakistan-USA Business Council Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Ms. Samina Fazil, Mr. Jabbar Raheem, Syed Hasnain Kazmi, Mr. Sikandar Khan, along with other members of the Council, were also present. In his welcome address, Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain stated that the establishment of the Council marks an important step towards strengthening structured economic engagement between Pakistan and the United States. He appreciated the leadership of Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh for actively representing Pakistan's business community across key international platforms including ECO, SAARC, CACCI, and SCO. He stated that the United States remains one of Pakistan's most important trading partners and a key source of investment, innovation, and technology transfer, while Pakistan offers significant opportunities in IT, textiles, agriculture, energy, healthcare, manufacturing, minerals, and entrepreneurship.

"The Pakistan-USA Business Council is being developed as a structured institutional platform to deepen trade linkages, facilitate investment flows, and enable sustained private-sector engagement between both countries," Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain said. Mr. Tariq Jadoon Vice President and Mr. Karim Aziz Malik Chairman, Malik Sohail Hussain Chairman PK USA Business Council with Mr. Jay Kim and Ayan Ali Khan distributed membership certificates to Council members and presented crest and flower bouquet to the USA Embassy guests. Mr. Karim Aziz Malik Chairman President Secretariat was also co-opted Board of Directors of the Council.

During the meeting, participants discussed expansion of trade and investment opportunities, exchange of business delegations, and the organization of joint networking initiatives in Pakistan and the United States. The Council underscored the need for structured B2B engagement and policy facilitation to enhance commercial cooperation. FPCCI will also organize a high-powered business delegation to the United States in August 2026. In continuation of these initiatives, the Pakistan-USA Business Council will collaborate with Mr. Farooq Mirza, President 4th Pillar, New York, to commemorate Marka-e-Haq in New York alongside business networking engagements.



Briefs

No tangible concessions' in US response to Iran proposal

TEHRAN: Iranian media on Sunday said the United States failed to make any concrete concessions in its response to Iran's proposal for negotiations to end the war. Fars news agency said Washington gave a five-point list which included a demand for Iran to keep only one nuclear site in operation and transfer its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the United States. Mehr news agency meanwhile said: "The United States, offering no tangible concessions, wants to obtain concessions that it failed to obtain during the war, which will lead to an impasse in the negotiations." Iran's earlier response to a US proposal for peace talks to end the war focused on ending the war on all fronts, especially Lebanon, and on the safety of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian state TV earlier said, without indicating how or when the vital waterway might reopen. It followed a US proposal to end fighting before starting talks on more contentious issues, including Iran's nuclear program. Pakistan, which has been mediating talks over the war, forwarded the Iranian response to the US, a Pakistani official said—APP

Israel strikes Lebanon while Hezbollah calls talks 'dead end'

BEIRUT: Israeli strikes targeted eastern and southern Lebanon on Sunday, state media reported, despite a fragile ceasefire, as a Hezbollah lawmaker called Lebanon's negotiations with Israel a "dead-end." Two Israeli strikes hit the town of Sohmar in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa valley, the state-run National News Agency (NNA) said, adding that others took place across southern Lebanon. Israeli attacks since the start of the war have killed more than 2,900 people in Lebanon, including more than 400 since the truce began on April 17, according to Lebanese authorities. The latest strikes came after envoys from Israel and Lebanon held a third round of negotiations in Washington and agreed to extend the ceasefire. Nevertheless, fighting has continued, with Israeli strikes and Hezbollah attacks on Israeli forces. Iran-backed Hezbollah has repeatedly denounced talks with Israel. "The direct negotiations that the authorities in Lebanon have conducted with the Israeli enemy have... led them down a dead-end path that will result in nothing but one concession after another," Hezbollah lawmaker Hussein Hajj Hassan said on Sunday. "Neither they nor anyone else will be able to carry out what the enemy wants, especially when it comes to the issue of disarming the resistance," he said, adding that the authorities are bringing the country to "very big predicaments...—APP

Saudi PIF keeps US equity portfolio at \$12b'

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund maintained a \$12 billion US equity portfolio in the first quarter of 2026, compared with roughly \$12.9 billion at the end of 2025, as it continued recalibrating investments across global markets. A filing submitted by PIF to the US Securities and Exchange Commission showed the fund retained stakes in four major US-listed companies — Lucid Group Inc., Electronic Arts Inc., Uber Technologies Inc., and Clarite Corp. — at the end of March. Changes in the fund's US equity positions are keenly watched by investors, serving as a clear barometer of its evolving sector focus and broader global investment strategy. The reshuffle comes as Saudi Arabia accelerates its push to reduce oil dependence through Vision 2030, with PIF at the forefront of deploying capital across domestic and international markets.—APP

PMYP, UNESCO to align youth initiatives for uplift

The meeting also explored integrating UNESCO's technical standards into PMYP programmes, particularly the Matric-Tech and PM Youth Skills Development initiatives, while considering the Digital Youth Hub as a national platform for UNESCO youth engagement and outreach

DNA

ISLAMABAD :Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan and UNESCO's Country Director Fuad Pashayev on Sunday held a high level meeting at the Prime Minister's Office to explore collaboration between the PMYP and UNESCO Pakistan under UNESCO's Country Cooperation Strategy 2026-2030, with discussions focusing on education, youth empowerment, digital inclusion, climate resilience and technical skills development. The meeting, attended by senior officials from both sides, aimed at positioning PMYP as UNESCO Pakistan's strategic implementation partner by utilizing its nationwide youth development network to advance opportunities in education, entrepreneurship, innovation and employment for young people across the country.

During the briefing, Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan highlighted PMYP's flagship initiatives, including the Digital Youth Hub, PM Youth Skills Development Programme, Matric Tech Programme, Green Youth Movement, National Volunteer Corps, National Youth Council, and the PM Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme. Mr Khan said the initiatives are designed to connect Pakistani youth with education, technical training, entrepreneurship and climate action opportunities on a national scale. Fuad Pashayev appreciated Pakistan's cultural and historical heritage, observing that the country had significant potential for additional UNESCO recognized heritage sites. Mr Fuad reaffirmed that youth development remained one of UNESCO's central global priorities. The UNESCO director described the Digital Youth Hub as



an innovative platform capable of linking young people with opportunities in education, technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship and civic engagement. He also stressed the importance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), stating that vocational skills could help bridge educational and economic gaps by preparing youth for employment and self reliance. Both sides discussed cooperation in educational inclusion, digital literacy, STEAM education, green skills, climate

resilience, youth participation and reforms in technical and vocational education. The meeting also explored integrating UNESCO's technical standards into PMYP programmes, particularly the Matric-Tech and PM Youth Skills Development initiatives, while considering the Digital Youth Hub as a national platform for UNESCO youth engagement and outreach. Discussions further focused on institutionalizing youth policy dialogue through the National Youth Council and strengthening climate related entrepreneurship through

green TVET pathways and youth financing initiatives. Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan reiterated PMYP's commitment to establishing a long term partnership with UNESCO Pakistan, saying the programme offered a nationwide implementation framework capable of operationalizing youth focused initiatives at scale. The meeting concluded with both sides expressing interest in formalizing cooperation through a structured framework aimed at promoting education, skills, innovation, sustainability and economic opportunities for Pakistani youth.

Jordanian king, Australian defense minister discuss Strait of Hormuz

LONDON: King Abdullah of Jordan met in Amman with Richard Marles, the Australian deputy prime minister and minister for defense, to discuss regional development and security matters. The meeting on Sunday focused on ways to enhance cooperation in various sectors, particularly military and security-related fields, according to the Petra news agency. King Abdullah emphasized that any agreement to end the war between the US and Iran must ensure the security of Arab states. He urged greater international efforts to sustain the ceasefire reached in April, Petra added. Crown Prince Hussein attended the meeting alongside chairman of the joint chiefs of staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti, director of the office of his majesty Alaa Batayneh, and Australia's ambassador to Jordan, Paula Ganly. Australia is part of the Multinational Military Mission, a coalition of nearly 40 nations led by the UK and France. The coalition aim is to coordinate efforts to resume the flow of energy shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, which has been closed since the US and Israel launched military strikes against Iran in late February.—DNA

Drones making Sudan's war even deadlier for civilians

CAIRO: Drone warfare has become the deadliest threat to civilians in Sudan's conflict and both the military and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces are being supplied by a number of countries in the Middle East and beyond, experts say. "Armed drones have now become by far and away the leading cause of civilian deaths," or over 80 percent of conflict-related deaths, United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk said this week, calling for measures to prevent their transfer to Sudan. Drones killed at least 880 civilians between January and April. The war in Sudan began in April 2023 and has killed at least 59,000 people, displaced some 13 million and pushed parts of the country into famine. In recent weeks, the RSF has carried out drone attacks on Khartoum International Airport and other areas near the capital, which the army seized control of last year. Analysts say foreign-supplied advanced drone technology enables the warring parties to expand strikes on densely populated areas, complicating peace efforts and raising fears of a broader proxy conflict. Drones have targeted hospitals, dams, schools and markets "On the battlefield, drones have emerged as a force multiplier, enabling ground offensives and weakening enemy defenses," said Jalale Getachew Birru, East Africa senior analyst at the US-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project. Both the army and RSF use drones to secure contested territory, disrupt mobilization efforts and spread insecurity in areas controlled by rivals, he said. At least 2,670 people, including combatants and civilians, were killed in 2025, marking a 600 percent increase in drone-related deaths and an 81 percent increase in drone attacks compared to the previous year, ACLED found. Drone strikes by the warring parties have targeted civilian infrastructure including hospitals, dams, schools, markets and displacement camps. Most of the civilian deaths in drone attacks have occurred in the Kordofan region in the central Sudan, according to Turk. On May 8, drone strikes in South Kordofan and near the city of el-Obeid in North Kordofan reportedly killed 26 civilians. More than 70 people were killed in drone attacks on densely populated areas in Kordofan earlier this year, according to the Sudan Doctors Network. On Tuesday, a Sudanese rights group, the Emergency Lawyers, said nine drone attacks on civilian vehicles had killed at least 36 people over the past 10 days across seven provinces. The group blamed both the army and RSF and said some drones use visual monitoring technology capable of distinguishing targets, raising concerns that the attacks may not have been indiscriminate. Drones played a role in deadly seizure of el-Fasher. The paramilitary RFS began only last year to use drones widely, said Gabriella Tejada, research associate at The Soufan Center. The army and RSF are competing to obtain new drone models, particularly from China, but the RSF is modifying drones and "increasingly competing to acquire newer, more sophisticated models," Tejada said.—DNA

Uzbekistan economy surges 8.7% in first quarter

ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan posted one of the world's fastest-growing economies in the first quarter of 2026, with gross domestic product expanding by 8.7% amid record investment inflows, rising exports, easing inflation and broad market reforms, government-linked analysts said. The strong performance exceeded forecasts from major international financial institutions, underscoring the accelerating pace of economic transformation in the Central Asian nation. According to data cited by Khurshed Asadov of the Center for Economic Research and Reforms, GDP at current prices reached \$36.9 billion during the January-March period. Earlier forecasts from the Asian Development Bank projected growth at 6.7%, while the World Bank revised its estimate upward from 6% to 6.4% in April. The International Monetary Fund also raised its outlook from 6.2% to 6.8%, though actual growth significantly surpassed those expectations and, said a release issued here. Construction emerged as the fastest-growing sector, expanding 15%, while services, the country's largest economic segment, grew 8.8%. Industrial production rose 8%, and agriculture increased 5.1%. Manufacturing industries recorded particularly sharp gains. Oil refining surged 29.5%, apparel and textile production increased 15.3%, and knitwear output jumped 26.9%. Automotive manufacturing expanded 12.5%, including bus production, which climbed 64.7%, and truck production, up 46.6%, article said. Education and financial services led growth within the services sector, each rising more than 22%. According to data, Uzbekistan's economic reforms gained additional international recognition this year after the country climbed 14 places in the Index of Economic Freedom, entering the category of "moderately free" economies for the first time. Despite global inflationary pressures, authorities also managed to significantly slow price growth. Global oil prices have risen nearly 40% since the start of the year, while geopolitical tensions disrupted logistics corridors and pushed transportation costs for trade routes up by as much as 30%. Imports of cattle reportedly fell by half during the quarter, increasing pressure on domestic food supplies. To stabilize food prices, the government introduced subsidies covering part of the air freight costs for livestock and meat imports. Authorities also approved the import of 100,000 breeding sheep and goats from Mongolia with 50% transport cost compensation. According to article, as a result, inflation eased considerably. Consumer prices rose 1.93% during the first quarter, while annual inflation declined to 7.1% in March, down from 10.34% a year earlier. Monthly inflation in March stood at 0.6%. The government has set a target of keeping annual inflation below 6.5% in 2026. Strong economic activity also boosted public finances. State budget revenues rose 35% year-over-year in the first quarter, with tax revenues increasing 24% and customs revenues up 20%. Local budgets retained significantly more resources as part of the government's decentralization strategy. District-level budgets totaled \$115.3 million, more than four times higher than the same period last year. According to data issued, the investment activity reached record levels during the quarter, with total capital investment and development projects amounting to \$12.85 billion, up 41.5% from a year earlier. Foreign direct investment increased 45.7% to \$8.84 billion. Officials said 1,508 new investment projects worth \$1.185 billion were launched during the quarter, creating approximately 28,000 jobs nationwide. China remained the largest foreign investor with \$6.4 billion invested, followed by Russia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates and Germany, according to article. President officials also announced plans to list 30% of state assets worth \$2.4 billion on international stock exchanges for the first time. The move is tied to the creation of a National Investment Fund and the transfer of management of 13 strategic enterprises to Franklin Templeton. Exports continued to expand strongly, rising 26% year-over-year to \$5.8 billion. Natural uranium exports nearly doubled to \$402.6 million, while exports of non-ferrous metals also doubled to \$248.7 million. According to data issued, Uzbekistan also broadened its export markets, shipping more than 140 previously unexpected product categories to 86 countries, including the United States, Austria, Poland, South Korea, Iran, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan.—DNA

What to know about the Ebola outbreak

ABUJA: The World Health Organization declared Sunday the Ebola disease outbreak in Congo and Uganda a public health emergency of international concern. Africa's top public health body first confirmed a new Ebola outbreak in Congo's Ituri province on Friday. By Saturday, it had reported 336 suspected cases and 88 deaths. All the cases are in Congo, except for two recorded in neighboring Uganda. Health authorities say the current outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, a rare variant of the Ebola disease that has no approved therapeutics or vaccines, making it much harder to fight. Although more than 20 Ebola outbreaks have taken place in Congo and Uganda, including 17 in Congo since the disease first emerged in the country in 1976, this is only the third time the Bundibugyo virus has been reported. Here's what to know about the health crisis: The WHO says the latest Ebola outbreak does not meet the criteria for a pandemic emergency, such as COVID-19, and advises against closing international borders. Its emergency declaration is meant to spur donor agencies and countries into action. However, the global response to previous declarations has been mixed. In 2024, when the WHO declared mpox outbreaks in Congo and elsewhere in Africa a global emergency, experts at the time said it did little to get supplies like diagnostic tests, medicines and vaccines to affected countries quickly.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the first cases were reported in Mongwalu health zone, a high-traffic mining area in eastern Congo's Ituri province. Cases there subsequently migrated to Rwampara and Bunia health zones as patients sought medical care, the Africa CDC said, "enabling spread across three health zones." Those other two zones are Mongwalu and Bunia, the province's capital city. Ituri is in a remote eastern part of Congo, with poor road networks, and is more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the nation's capital, Kinshasa. One major concern, the Africa CDC said, is the proximity of affected areas to Uganda and South Sudan. Bunia, Ituri's main city, is near the border with Uganda. The agency said there's also a risk of further spread due to intense population movement and attacks by armed groups that have killed dozens and displaced thousands in parts of Ituri in the past year. There are also gaps in contact tracing, Africa CDC said, as local authorities race to find those who might have been exposed to the virus. The Bundibugyo virus, which health authorities say is responsible for the outbreak, is rare and different from the Ebola Zaire strain that has been dominant in all of Congo's past 17 outbreaks except one. The virus was first detected in Uganda's Bundibugyo district during a 2007-2008 outbreak that killed 37 people out of 149 cases. The second time

was in 2012 in an outbreak in Isiro, Congo, where 57 cases and 29 deaths were reported. The World Health Organization says the Ebola disease is caused by a group of viruses, and that three of them are known to cause large outbreaks: Ebola virus, Sudan virus and Bundibugyo virus. Dr. Gabriel Nsakala, a professor of public health who has been involved in past Ebola outbreak responses in Congo, said treatments for viral infections like Ebola are often directed at symptoms. He said Congo has extensive experience managing Ebola outbreaks, but response efforts could be complicated by the unusual strain. When the outbreak was confirmed on Friday, the Africa CDC convened an urgent high-level coordination meeting with health authorities from Congo, Uganda and South Sudan, together with key partners including UN agencies and other countries. The meeting, the agency said, focused on immediate response priorities, cross-border coordination, surveillance, safe and dignified burials and resource mobilization, among other areas. On Saturday, Africa CDC Director-General Dr. Jean Kaseya said several key response measures have been put in place to address the outbreak, including mobilization of resources from partners, deployment of multidisciplinary teams at official and nonofficial border crossing points, isolation of high-risk contacts, enhancement of surveillance, and contact listing and follow-up.—DNA

Malik for timely corrective steps to control fuel prices

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has said that rising fuel prices were posing serious challenges to industrial growth and exports, while small businesses were already struggling with high operational costs.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he warned that if timely corrective measures were not taken, the rising economic burden could widen the trade deficit and slow down recovery efforts.

He said the ongoing global fuel price shock, which has triggered economic turbulence across several Asian economies, could affect Pakistan more severely due to its heavy reliance on imported energy resources.

Malik said Pakistan's oil import bill has nearly tripled, adding that there has been a monthly increase of around \$1.45 billion in the overall import bill.

He stressed the need for an urgent national strategy aimed at reducing dependence on imported fuel through promotion of renewable energy projects, including solar and wind power as well as improved energy efficiency in industrial and domestic sectors.

He also called for accelerating exploration of indigenous oil, gas and coal reserves to strengthen the country's energy security.

The former SAARC Chamber president urged policymakers to extend maximum relief to industry, exporters and low-income groups to mitigate the impact of rising energy costs. He said regional economic cooperation among South Asian countries could help stabilize markets and support sustainable economic growth. APP

SMEs can bring an industrial revolution

LAHORE: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can drive an industrial revolution in Pakistan if commercial banks provide hassle-free financing on easy terms and on a priority basis, Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Coordinator Saif-ur-Rehman said on Sunday. Talking to a delegation of small traders, he said SMEs play a vital role in economic growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation and can significantly contribute to boosting exports and strengthening the national economy with adequate financial support. He regretted that despite the government's facilitation policies, a large number of SMEs including women entrepreneurs were still facing difficulties in obtaining business loans from commercial banks. Saif-ur-Rehman said lengthy documentation requirements, complicated procedures and strict lending conditions were discouraging small business owners from accessing formal credit.—APP

Tunisians protest against Saied over arrests and economic strain

TUNIS: Hundreds of Tunisians protested in the capital Tunis on Saturday against President Kais Saied, accusing him of undermining freedoms and presiding over a worsening economic and social crisis. The protest was held under the slogan: "The people are hungry and prisons are full." Demonstrators called for an end to one-man rule and carried banners denouncing arrests of politicians, journalists and civil society figures, amid concerns of a widening crackdown on dissent. Protesters also criticized what they said was Saied's failure to tackle the economic crisis, while using the judiciary and police to silence critics. Tunisia is facing acute economic strain, with sluggish growth, soaring prices, shortages of medicines and some food, financing pressures, and deteriorating public services. Saied, who dissolved parliament and began ruling by decree in 2022, has faced mounting criticism from rights groups over what they say is the dismantling of the post-2011 democratic system.—APP

Briefs

Ukraine launches drones at Russia

DNA

MOSCOW: A huge wave of more than 500 Ukrainian drones attacked Russia overnight, killing three people in the Moscow region, authorities said on Sunday. Air defenses shot down 556 drones in more than a dozen regions, including Moscow, Russia's defense ministry said. "A woman was killed as a result of a UAV hitting a private house. One more person is trapped under rubble," the Moscow region's Governor Andrey Vorobyov posted on Telegram, adding that the early morning attack also claimed the lives of two men. "Since 3 o'clock in the morning, air defense forces have been repelling a large-scale UAV attack on the capital region," he said, adding four people were wounded and infrastructure facilities had been targeted. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had vowed on Friday to launch more retaliatory strikes, a day after a Russian attack on Kyiv killed 24 people. Within Russia's capital, local authorities reported that air defense systems had intercepted at least 74 drones overnight, wounding 12 people. "Minor damage has been recorded at the sites where debris fell," Mayor Sergei Sobyanin posted on Telegram. A total of 120 drones were intercepted in the past 24 hours, he said. While the capital region is often subjected to drone attacks, the city of Moscow is less frequently targeted. Moscow and Kyiv have traded attacks following a prisoner swap and the expiration of a three-day truce on Tuesday. In response to daily bombardments by the Russian military for more than four years, Ukraine has regularly struck within Russia, insisting that it targets both military and energy sites.

Kazakhstan sends 30 wagons of aid to Iran

ALMATY: Kazakhstan has delivered 30 wagons of humanitarian aid to Iran, Al Jazeera reports citing Tasnim news agency, as the country continues to grapple with a severe economic crisis following months of war with the US and Israel. The shipment, sent on the orders of Kazakhstan's president, included canned meat, sugar, flour, medical equipment and medicine. The aid was handed over to the Iranian Red Crescent Society at the Sarakhs railway station. Meanwhile, Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's representative to international organisations in Vienna, has commented on a New York Times report that said the US and Israel are preparing for a possible resumption of strikes against Iran, Al Jazeera notes. - APP

Palestinian president's son elected to top Fatah body

Yasser Abbas, 64, a businessman who spends most of his time in Canada, secured a place on the central committee after being appointed around five years ago as his father's "special representative" — a role that marked his gradual emergence on the political scene

DNA

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: The son of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas won a seat on Fatah's top decision-making body on Sunday, as initial results emerged from the Palestinian movement's first congress in years. Yasser Abbas, 64, a businessman who spends most of his time in Canada, secured a place on the central committee after being appointed around five years ago as his father's "special representative" — a role that marked his gradual emergence on the political scene. Jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti topped the preliminary results, retaining

his seat on the committee with the highest number of votes, according to figures seen by AFP. Jibril Rajoub was reelected as the secretary-general of the committee, retaining the seat he has held since 2017.

Palestinian vice president Hussein Al-Sheikh, Fatah deputy leader Mahmoud Al-Aulou and ex-Palestinian intelligence chief Tawfiq Tirawi also held their seats on the body. Among the newcomers was Zakaria Zubeidi, 50, a former commander of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades — Fatah's armed wing in the Jenin refugee camp — who was freed from Israeli prison last year under a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas. Two women also won seats, including Ramallah governor Laila Ghannam.

The three-day congress, held simultaneously across Ramallah, Gaza, Cairo and Beirut, drew 2,507 voters — a turnout of 94.64 percent, organizers said. Fifty-nine candidates competed for 18 seats on the central committee, while 450 vied for 80 seats on the revolutionary council, the party's parliament. Counting for the council was still under way. The congress opened Thursday, with Abbas being reelected as head of the movement. In his opening address, he vowed to pursue reforms and hold long-delayed presidential and parliamentary elections.

Abbas and the Palestinian Authority are under mounting international pressure to implement reforms and hold elections, amid widespread accusations of corruption and political stagnation, which have eroded its

legitimacy among Palestinians.

Fatah has historically been the dominant force within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which groups most Palestinian factions but excludes Islamist movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

In recent decades, Fatah's popularity and influence have dwindled amid internal divisions and growing public frustration over the stagnation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The sense of disappointment led to a surge in support for rival Hamas, which made huge political gains in the occupied West Bank in 2006 elections that it won handily, before going on to expel Fatah from the Gaza Strip almost entirely after a bout of factional fighting.

Hezbollah claims attacking Israel

BEIRUT: Hezbollah said Saturday it struck a military target in northern Israel, as the fragile ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel has not stopped fighting in the war that began on March 2.

In a statement, the Iran-backed militant group said its fighters targeted "the Ya'ara barracks ... with a swarm of attack drones," after announcing multiple operations against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, where they are occupying territory near the border between the two countries. - APP

Israel Q1 GDP shrinks 3.3pc annualised

DNA

TEL AVIV: Israel's economy contracted at an annualised rate of 3.3 per cent in the first three months of 2026, the Central Bureau of Statistics has said, as the war against Iran weighed on output, Reuters reports.

The decline was not as severe as a 4pc drop forecast in a Reuters poll of economists. The economy grew 2.9pc in 2025 and was expected to bounce back in 2026 to more than 5pc growth after a ceasefire in October ended major fighting in the two-year Gaza war. But growth took a hit after the start of a US-Israeli conflict with Iran began on February 28, resulting in weeks of ballistic missile fire from Iran that closed schools while businesses suffered. The Bank of Israel currently sees the economy growing 3.8pc this year, depending on whether a ceasefire forged last month with Iran holds. In the first quarter, consumer spending fell 4.7pc, exports declined 3.7pc and government spending shed 4.8pc. Investment in fixed assets rose 12.6pc. On a per capita basis, the economy shrank 4.5pc.

War worsens Lebanon economic crisis

DNA

CHIHAY: Ayman Al-Zain watched on a recent afternoon as a bulldozer cleared the rubble of what used to be his sports clothing store, which was one of dozens of buildings destroyed in Israeli strikes against the Hezbollah militant group. With a nominal truce in place that has reduced but not halted the fighting, Al-Zain tried to assess whether to rebuild the shop in Beirut's southern suburbs that he once hoped to pass down to his kids. But it's unlikely he will be able to do so anytime soon, and not only because of the fear of more airstrikes. "Everything is expensive," he told The Associated Press. "If I want to open a new store and get mannequins, hangers and some accessories, the prices are very different than before."

Aziz Boolani conferred with Hilal-e-Imtiaz

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a proud moment for the hospitality sector, the Government of Pakistan has awarded the Hilal-e-Imtiaz one of the country's highest civilian honours to Mr. Aziz Boolani, Global CEO of Serena Hotels. The award recognizes his exceptional contributions to public service, sustainable tourism, community development, and nation-building through excellence in the hospitality industry. Mr. Boolani has earned a distinguished name in the hospitality industry over a career spanning more than four decades. He has worked in leadership roles across some of the most prestigious establishments. The Hilal-e-Imtiaz highlights not only his professional achievements but also his dedication to social impact and nation-building. This follows his earlier recognition with the Sitara-e-Imtiaz in 2016 for similar contributions. Serena Hotels and the broader Aga Khan Development Network family have expressed immense pride in this honour. Colleagues and industry leaders have congratulated Mr. Boolani for setting benchmarks in hospitality while championing community service.



Anmol Pinky complains of 'pressure'

DNA

KARACHI: While police managed to secure a further six-day remand of Anmol Pinky in two cases, the suspected drug baroness contested the police's claim that she was arrested on May 12 in Karachi, saying she had actually been picked up 22 days earlier in Lahore and was being pressured to give "false statements involving Banigala" — an Islamabad area known as the residence of former prime minister and incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan. On Saturday, police produced the suspect, Pinky, before various courts for remand. The screengrab shows a police officer trying to cover Pinky's face with a chador while others hold her in court. In an intense show of resistance and scuffle with policewomen and officials escorting her, Pinky, whose face was covered with a chador, shouted while unmasking her face and alleged that law-enforcement authorities had forced statements from her. She says she was picked up in Lahore 22 days ago; magistrate extends police remand for six days "Hum to doobay hain sanam....in sab ko lai doobay gain [we are drowning my love, and we will drag all of them down with us too]" was her poetic response to a journalist's question about whether she wanted to share anything with the media.

'India-Pak dialogue push gains steam'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Just days after the first anniversary of Marka-i-Haq, calls for dialogue with Pakistan have grown in India, with several leaders in India-held Kashmir among the latest to support efforts to end hostilities between the neighbouring nuclear powers. Former chief ministers of India-held Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, have backed the recent demand by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Secretary General Dattatreya Hosabale for the Indian government to hold peace talks with Pakistan, alongside promoting people-to-people contact between the two countries. According to India's NDTV report, both Abdullah and Mufti have faced criticism in the past for advocating talks with Pakistan amid deepening hostilities between the two countries. However, the situation appears to be different this time. "It is a very significant move that the RSS leader called for talks with Pakistan, and a former army chief [retired Gen Manoj Naravane] has backed his statement. I am glad that somebody is now realising that war is not an option. Dialogue is essential and we must always pursue it to resolve our problems," said Abdullah. Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti among those backing Hosabale's proposal. Mufti said the RSS leader's statement vindicates her party's position. "It vindicates the stand of the PDP [Peoples Democratic Party] that if we are to bring peace to Jammu and Kashmir, the window for dialogue must remain open," she said.

More than 100 houses set ablaze in Jacobabad

DNA

KARACHI: More than 100 houses were set ablaze in the Jacobabad district of Sindh following a violent incident triggered by a dispute over a free-will marriage between two individuals belonging to different communities. According to reports, Sidra from the Channa community married Muhammad Hassan Buriro of the Buriro community by choice, The News reported. The couple, in a video message, appealed to the government for justice, saying they had solemnised their marriage by choice in a Hyderabad court on May 4. They added that after the marriage, they were subjected to a barrage of allegations and threats. Armed men allegedly attacked an entire village belonging to Buriro community, opening fire and torching homes, leaving many families homeless with their life savings reduced to ashes. Residents said panic spread across the area, and no one was able to resist the attackers due to intense gunfire. The affected families are now forced to live under the open sky. Police have registered a case against 32 suspects and arrested five

of them. The FIR was registered at Mirpur Buriro Police Station on the complaint of Ghulam Shabbir Buriro against 32 accused persons, including Mohsin Ali Channa, Saddam Hussain Channa, Abdullah Channa, Muhammad Rafiq Bhatti, Jehangir, Munir Ahmed and Kaleemullah Brohi. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Faizan Ali said that a case has been registered under the Anti-Terrorism Act, adding that raids are underway to apprehend the remaining accused. Speaking to Geo News, the groom's father, Malhar Buriro, questioned why the entire village was punished, saying around 400 armed men, led by Saddam Buriro and tribal leader Ahmed Ali Channa, carried out the attack and burned down homes while villagers remained helpless observers. On the other hand, Channa denied the allegations, claiming that a minor girl had been abducted from their village. He said they would pursue legal action through the courts and rejected any involvement in the arson attack. A video statement of the girl's father has also emerged, who claimed that his 14-year-old daughter was married in violation of the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act. He further alleged that the suspects had abducted both his 14-year-old and 4-year-old daughters.

Italian PM to meet car victims

Italian President Sergio Mattarella will also travel to the northern Italian city, the source said

MODENA: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Sunday will visit people wounded by a driver with a history of mental health problems who ran over pedestrians in a city center in northern Italy. The driver, an Italian of Moroccan heritage, hit several people before crashing into a shop window, colliding head-on with a woman. Eight people were

wounded in the incident in Modena, four of them seriously, including a woman who had to have both legs amputated. Meloni canceled a planned visit to Cyprus to go to Modena, a government source said. Italian President Sergio Mattarella will also travel to the northern Italian city, the source said. Security camera footage broadcast by Italian media showed a car being driven at high speed into a city center street packed with pedestrians and cyclists. The suspect tried to flee the scene but was chased and cornered by four passers-by, then pulled a knife and injured one of them. The driver, an economics graduate born in 1995 who was not known to the police, went through a spell of "psychological disturbance" in 2022, city prefect Fabrizia Triolo said at a news conference on Saturday. "He had been treated at a mental health center for schizoid disorders, but we lost track of him after that initial period of observation in a care facility," she added. According to the prefect, the driver was not under the influence of "psychotropic substances." His home near Modena has been searched. - DNA

Mohsin Naqvi, Iranian president hold talks

Interior minister holds separate meeting with Iran's Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf

DNA

TEHRAN: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian discussed Pakistan's mediation efforts for peace in the Middle East, Iranian state media reported on Sunday, amid Islamabad's efforts to keep US-Iran dialogue going. Naqvi held a 90-minute meeting with the Iranian president, discussing bilateral ties and Islamabad's mediation efforts, according to the reports. During the meeting, President Pezeshkian said that the US-Israeli attacks on Iran were aimed at spreading insecurity inside the country. However, the plans failed due to regional countries' refusal to allow use of their soil for the attacks, he added. The Iranian president thanked Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan for not allowing their territory to be used for military actions against Tehran. The interior minister also held a separate meeting with Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who was part of Tehran's delegation in the Islamabad talks. During the meeting, Naqvi

and Ghalibaf exchanged views on key matters, according to Iranian media reports. The interior minister arrived in Tehran a day earlier "to facilitate" peace talks between the two sides, Iranian media reported. "Mohsin Naqvi arrived in the Islamic Republic of Iran on an official two-day visit as part of Pakistan's ongoing efforts to facilitate talks and promote regional peace," the Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday. Following his arrival, Naqvi met Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, who lauded Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir's efforts to help resolve tensions with the US. Naqvi's meeting with President Pezeshkian comes shortly after Iranian media said that Washington failed to make any concrete concessions in its response to Tehran's proposal for negotiations to end the war. ars news agency said that Washington gave a five-point list, which included a demand for Iran to keep only one nuclear site in operation and transfer its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the United States.

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