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Externally sponsored terrorism cannot block Pakistan's rise

Detailed News On Page-01

ECC approves key plans; restructuring

Detailed News On Page-07



Speaker NA opens AI based system

Detailed News On Page-02



CDF Asim Munir

Externally sponsored terrorism cannot block Pakistan rise

Field Marshal Munir stresses modern warfare preparedness, emerging technologies and multi-domain operational readiness

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has reiterated that hostile forces attempting to undermine Pakistan's progress through proxies and propaganda will ultimately fail in the face of the state's resilience and the unity of its people. Interacting with officers and troops of formations deployed in Balochistan during his visit to Quetta Garrison here Tuesday, the COAS emphasized that Pakistan's destined rise cannot be obstructed through propaganda, fake news or externally sponsored terrorism, said a news release issued Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). Underscoring the importance of sustainable peace and stability in Balochistan, the Field Marshal highlighted that long-term progress depends upon a people-centric approach, inclusive development and improved governance alongside security efforts. He appreciated the ongoing efforts of the Government of Balochistan focused on public welfare, socio-economic uplift and strengthening the bond between the state and the people of the province. Addressing student officers and faculty members at Command and Staff College, Quetta the Field Marshal

Continued on Page 06

Op Ghazab lil-Haq underway with full resolve: Shehbaz

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visited Command & Staff College, Quetta and addressed the faculty and student officers. The Prime Minister lauded the professionalism, operational preparedness, and sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces in safeguarding national sovereignty and ensuring peace and stability. He paid rich tribute to the Shuhada and the unwavering commitment of the Armed Forces in defence of the motherland. Referring to Marka-e-Haq, Prime Minister paid tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces historic victory under the leadership of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. He highlighted Pakistan's responsible conduct and escalation control against India's unprovoked hubristic aggression, stating that Pakistan's mature, prudent and just stance was also acknowledged by the international community. He reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to defend sovereignty and territorial integrity against any misadventure at all costs. The Prime Minister stated that Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq is continuing with full resolve to defend lives and property of innocent citizens against Afghan Taliban based terrorist proxies and to inflict punishment on terrorist hideouts and support infrastructures. He also reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the people of Jammu & Kashmir and Palestine. While acknowledging the presence of students of friendly countries, the Prime Minister underscored the importance of military diplomacy and cooperation and the strides made by Pakistan as

Continued on Page 06

Iran says will open new fronts if attacked again

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's military has warned it could "open new fronts" against the United States if attacks resume, as tensions across the Middle East remain high despite ongoing diplomatic efforts. The warning came after reports that US President Donald Trump temporarily held off a planned strike on Iran to allow negotiations to continue. At the same time, the Israeli military issued fresh evacuation warnings for areas in southern Lebanon, signaling fears of renewed escalation along the Israel-Lebanon border despite ceasefire efforts involving Hezbollah. Global markets reacted cautiously to the developments,

Continued on Page 06

Two killed in attack on mosque

NEWS DESK

SAN DIEGO: Two teenage gunmen opened fire at the Islamic Centre of San Diego, California, killing a security guard and two other men outside the mosque before the suspects were found dead, apparently from self-inflicted gunshot wounds, police said. San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said local law enforcement and the FBI were investigating the attack on the largest mosque in San Diego County as a hate crime. However, no precise motive or precipitating incident for the gun violence has been publicly suggested by authorities. All of the children attending a day school at the mosque complex were accounted for and safe after the shooting,

Continued on Page 06

Airspace curbs for Indian flights extended

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has extended airspace restrictions on all Indian-owned or Indian-operated aircraft until 4:59am on June 24, according to a fresh Notice to Airmen (Notam) issued on Tuesday. A spokesperson of the PAA said the restrictions apply with immediate effect to all Indian-registered aircraft, including commercial and military planes. Aircraft leased by Indian airlines will also remain barred from using Pakistani airspace, it added. The airspace ban on Indian flights was set to expire at 5am on May 24, 2026. The PAA last extended airspace ban for Indian aircraft in

Continued on Page 06

Australia Day in Spring

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Chairman Senate, Timothy Kane, High Commissioner of Australia cutting cake to celebrate the Australia Day in Spring. - DNA

US-Iran standoff

Australia all praise for Pakistan's mediatory role

Timothy Kane says from the cameleers from present-day Pakistan who helped open Australia's outback, to the more than 145,000 Australians of Pakistani heritage and the 21,000 Pakistani students currently studying in Australia, ours is a relationship with deep human roots

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission celebrated Australia Day in Spring 2026 in Islamabad, bringing together senior government representatives, diplomats, business leaders, media, alumni and friends of Australia to mark Australia's national day and celebrate the strong and growing partnership between Australia and Pakistan. The event highlighted the breadth of Australia's engagement with Pakistan across trade, agriculture, education, climate resilience, water security, defence cooperation, sport and people-to-people ties developed over generations. Speaking at the event, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr Timothy Kane, reflected on the deep historical links between

the two countries. He appreciated Pakistan's role as a mediator to defuse tensions between US and Iran. "From the cameleers from present-day Pakistan who helped open Australia's outback, to the more than 145,000 Australians of Pakistani heritage and the 21,000 Pakistani students currently studying in Australia, ours is a relationship with deep human roots," Mr Kane said. Mr Kane noted that Australia and Pakistan are practical partners in areas that matter to both countries' futures. "Australia and Pakistan, as two middle powers in the Indo-Pacific region, are working together to strengthen food security, improve water management, build climate resilience and expand educational opportunities. It is a partnership grounded in trust,

Continued on Page 06

Security forces kill 22 terrorists

ISPR says weapons, ammunition also recovered from India-backed militants

DNA

PESHAWAR: Security forces have neutralised 22 terrorists during a sanitisation operation commenced on May 17 based on credible intelligence leads regarding the presence of India-sponsored militants in North Waziristan's Shewa area, the Inter-Services Public Relations said on Tuesday. The military's media wing said security forces eliminated "22 khawarij, belonging to India-sponsored Fitna-al-Khawarij" during the past 24 hours, following an intense exchange of fire after they effectively engaged the terrorists' location. "Weapons and ammunition have also been recovered" from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area, it said, adding: "Presently the sanitisation operation is in progress and the area has been effectively cordoned off by security forces." The army revealed that evidence further confirmed that the terrorists coerced and intimidated the local population, forcing their compliance to obtain safe passage, using them as human shields.

"Such deplorable acts are highly condemnable and no justification can rationalise the endangerment of public lives," it added. The army vowed that the sanitisation operation will continue to eliminate holed up khawarij from the area, adding that the "relentless counter-terrorism campaign under vision 'Azam e Istehkam' (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by security forces and law enforcement agencies will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country."

Pakistan has seen a sharp increase in cross-border terrorist incidents, particularly in the bordering provinces of KP and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban grabbed power in Afghanistan in 2021. Islamabad has repeatedly urged Kabul to prevent its soil from being used by terrorist organisations to carry out attacks inside its territory. However, the Afghan Taliban regime refused to act against terrorist groups involved in countless attacks on Pakistani security forces and civilians. Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Influentials gang-rape girl in Ghotki

NEWS DESK

HYDERABAD: Adilpur police registered a first information report (FIR) of the alleged gang rape of a teenage girl in Sindh's Ghotki district on Tuesday, more than two weeks after the incident was said to have taken place. The FIR, a copy of which is available with Dawn, was registered against 5 suspects on the complaint of the girl's father under Section 376(2) of the Pakistan Penal Code. The said provision states: "When rape is committed by two or more persons in furtherance of common intention of all, each of such persons shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life." According to the FIR, the incident took place on May 3 when the girl and her parents were working in the fields of a wadera (land owner).

AIIB to provide \$320 million loan

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) on Tuesday signed a \$320 million loan agreement for the reconstruction and improvement of critical sections of the N-5 highway - the country's longest national highway from Karachi to Torkham near the Afghan border. The loan agreement was signed for "Reconstruction of National Highway N-5 under Pakistan's Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework Project," amounting to \$320.16 million. The project will cover critical sections of the N-5, which traverses Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, serving as a backbone of Pakistan's transport network.

TTAP announces nationwide protests against price hike

Opposition alliance demands Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi shifted to hospital immediately

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Tehreek Tahaffuz Aiyee-e-Pakistan (TTAP) has announced nationwide protests on Friday against rising inflation, sharp increases in petroleum prices, not shifting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan to the hospital and the continued detention of political prisoners. In a statement posted on X, TTAP Chairman Mahmood Khan Achakzai said the protests would also demand the immediate transfer of PTI founder Imran Khan to the hospital and the release of political prisoners. The decision was taken during a leadership summit of the opposition alliance, where participants agreed to launch countrywide demonstrations over what they termed worsening economic conditions, lawlessness and political repression.

The jailed PTI founder was diagnosed with central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO), a serious eye condition, according to a report submitted to the Supreme Court by his lawyer and the court's amicus curiae, Salman Salfar. The condition occurs when the main vein draining blood from the retina becomes blocked and is often associated with cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and heart disease.

Continued on Page 06

KP CM, Imran sisters stopped from meeting Khan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Capital police on Tuesday stopped Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi from reaching Adiala jail in Rawalpindi to meet incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan. Imran - imprisoned since Aug 5, 2023, for concealing details of Toshakhana gifts - is serving a 14-year sentence at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail in a £190 million corruption case, also known as the Al-Qadir Trust case. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) allowed the ex-premier to have twice-a-week meetings - on Tuesdays and Thursdays - with his family, lawyers and other associates. Despite the order, the former premier has been restricted from meeting visitors for several months. Afridi set off for the Rawalpindi jail earlier today.

Continued on Page 06

Ambassador Khorev blames West for escalating Ukraine conflict

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Albert P. Khorev on Monday accused the Ukrainian leadership and its Western allies of prolonging the conflict in Ukraine, alleging widespread violations of ceasefire arrangements, forced mobilization, corruption, and disinformation campaigns against Russia. Speaking during a media briefing in Islamabad, Ambassador Khorev said Russia had recently commemorated the 81st anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War and reiterated Moscow's stance against what he termed the "glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism" in certain countries. He thanked Pakistan for supporting Russia-backed resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly aimed at combating Nazism and racial intolerance. The envoy said Russia had declared a ceasefire from May 8 to May 11 as a goodwill gesture during Victory Day commemorations, but alleged that Ukrainian forces violated the truce more than 30,000 times. He claimed a similar pattern was witnessed during the Easter ceasefire in April. According to the ambassador, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was unwilling to end the conflict and continued pursuing large-scale mobilization despite growing public dissatisfaction. He alleged that Ukrainian authorities had issued hundreds of thousands of draft notices and that recruitment methods involved coercion and human rights abuses. Ambassador Khorev also criticized Western countries, including

members of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for continuing military and financial support to Kiev. He claimed foreign mercenaries from several Western countries were participating in combat operations alongside Ukrainian forces and said additional Western military aid worth billions of dollars was under discussion for 2026. The Russian envoy further accused Ukraine of targeting civilian and energy infrastructure, including attacks on the Turkish Stream



ISLAMABAD: Albert P Khorev, Ambassador of the Russian Federation addressing a press conference. - DNA

and Blue Stream gas pipelines, as well as oil facilities linked to Kazakhstan's exports. He warned such actions posed risks to regional energy security. Raising concerns over internal conditions in Ukraine, Khorev alleged increasing cases of corruption, arms smuggling, narcotics trafficking, and human trafficking. He also accused senior Ukrainian officials of involvement in financial scandals and misuse of Western assistance.

The ambassador rejected international initiatives such as the "Register of Damage for Ukraine" and the proposed "Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine," calling them politically motivated and legally invalid. Referring to the 2022 killings in Bucha, Khorev described allegations against Russian forces as a "staged provocation" and part of what he termed a Western-led disinformation campaign against Russia. He also revisited the issue of Ukrainian children transferred during the conflict, arguing that Russia had cooperated through mediation efforts involving Qatar and the Holy See to reunite children with their families. The Russian ambassador further recalled the 2014 Odessa tragedy, in which dozens of anti-government protesters died during clashes following the Euromaidan unrest, saying those responsible had yet to be brought to justice. Concluding his remarks, Khorev reaffirmed Russia's position on Crimea, marking the anniversary of its reunification with the Russian Federation and criticizing the transfer of the "Scythian gold" archaeological collection from Dutch custody to Ukrainian authorities instead of Crimean museums.

27 illegal electricity connections removed in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) intensified its crackdown against electricity theft and illegal connections in Dera Ismail Khan, disconnecting 27 illegal direct connections (hooks) during an operation conducted in various areas of the Bhatta Chowk and CRBC feeder. Following the special directives of Superintending Engineer PESCO Dera Circle Engineer Hizbullah Khan Mehsud, The PESCO Mandhara Sub-Division team led by SDO Engineer Irfanullah Khan launched the successful anti-power theft campaign in different localities. During the operation, the PESCO team removed illegal electricity connections being used through direct hooks. Besides, the letters have also been sent to the relevant police stations for legal action against individuals involved in electricity theft. Speaking to the media, SDO Engineer Irfanullah Khan said electricity theft was causing serious damage to the national economy and that indiscriminate action against the "Kunda mafia" would be continued without discrimination. He said that the power thieves deserve no leniency and strict action was being taken against illegal connections as well as defaulters to ensure uninterrupted and improved electricity supply to consumers. He also appealed to the public to cooperate with PESCO teams and help identify electricity theft as a national responsibility.—APP

Ex-Servicemen Society to observe Love Day for FM Asim Munir

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI : Chief Organizer of the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society, Aziz Ahmed Awan, while addressing the officials of the Ex-Servicemen Society Punjab, has said that May 31st, the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society will observe a "Love Day" for the Commander (Sipah Salar) — Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces — across the country from Peshawar to Karachi and from Quetta to Muzaffarabad, with the So-



ciety's 4 million members participating. This day is dedicated to him for giving the nation victory on May 10th, raising the head of the Pakistani nation with pride, and illuminating Pakistan's name throughout the world. The purpose of this "Love Day" for the Commander is to express solidarity with the Commander (Sipah Salari) on his great services to the country and his success as Commander. He has asked members and officials across Pakistan to start preparations for this.

Pak-China friendship entering new era of strategic, tech coop

He noted expanded cooperation since 1951 across multiple sectors and underscored CPEC as a flagship Belt and Road Initiative project promoting regional connectivity, stability, and shared development. The seminar brought together leading diplomats, scholars, researchers, and practitioners from Pakistan and China to reflect on the evolution of bilateral ties and explore future avenues of cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at an international seminar on Tuesday said Pakistan-China relations have evolved into an iron-clad strategic partnership rooted in mutual trust, sovereign equality and shared development goals. The seminar titled "75 Years of Iron-Clad Friendship: Pakistan-China Cooperation in Diplomacy, Security, and Development" was organized by the China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), said a press release. The Chief Guest, Murtaza Solangi, Spokesperson to the President of Pakistan, highlighted the civilizational depth of Pakistan-China relations rooted in the Silk Road. He emphasized China's consistent policy of non-interference and respect for sovereignty as a cornerstone of the "all-weather" friendship. He paid tribute to leadership on both sides and Pakistan's support for China in international forums. He underscored expanding cooperation across defence, infrastructure, energy, aviation, and emerging technologies, and highlighted CPEC's transformative impact from Gilgit to Gwadar, including its expansion into AI, digital technologies, space cooperation, climate resilience, and green development. He expressed confidence that Phase II of CPEC would further deepen connectivity and shared prosperity. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, described Pakistan-China relations as an "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership" grounded in mutual trust, sovereign equality, and unwavering support for core interests. He highlighted the expansion of cooperation across diplomacy, defence, trade, connectivity, energy, education, and people-to-people exchanges.

Referring to CPEC, he noted that Phase I strengthened energy and infrastructure development, while Phase II focuses on industrial cooperation, agriculture, SEZs, and socio-economic uplift, with Gwadar as a key economic hub.

Shi Yuanqiang, Deputy Head of Mission at the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad, highlighted that China-Pakistan relations have remained resilient and "iron-clad" for 75 years despite global and regional changes. He stressed sustained high-level exchanges and growing strategic trust, reinforced by recent leadership interactions and consensus on building a closer community with a shared future. He underscored CPEC as the central pillar of Belt and Road cooperation, highlighting achievements in energy, infrastructure, investment, and employment, and its evolution toward "CPEC 2.0" focused on industry, agriculture, mining, innovation, and green development. He also emphasized close coordination on regional and global issues, including peace, multilateralism, and cooperation within the Global South. Ambassador Masood Khalid traced the historical depth of relations from early diplomatic recognition to landmark projects such as the Karakoram Highway. He emphasized that the partnership is rooted in mutual respect, trust, and non-interference. He highlighted CPEC's contribution to energy, infrastructure and jobs, and its expansion into agriculture, IT, minerals, and industrial development. Dr. Fazal ur Rehman highlighted early foundations of ties, including the Bandung era, and stressed that friendship requires continuous nurturing. He called for accelerating SEZs, improving the investment climate, and strengthening vocational and educational cooperation through learning from China's development experience. Dr. Hassan Daud Butt emphasized a shift toward a future-oriented partnership focused on technology, innovation, space,

agriculture, and connectivity. He called CPEC the backbone of cooperation, stressing industrialization, improved security, Gwadar optimization, and data-driven policymaking, alongside youth engagement and productivity enhancement. Prof. Dr. Yunsong Huang described the relationship as an "ironclad brotherhood" and a stabilizing force in a changing global order. He highlighted CPEC as the geo-economic backbone of ties, with Phase II focusing on industrial upgrading, SEZ expansion, railway modernization, Gwadar development, and cooperation in green development, space technology, and human capital. Dr. Ma Zheng emphasized the importance of cooperation amid global uncertainty, particularly in defence, security, and counterterrorism. He highlighted coordination on regional stability, including Afghanistan, and called for stronger strategic communication, CPEC development, and people-to-people exchanges. Dr. Gulshan Rafiq underscored the human dimension of ties, stressing that long-term sustainability depends on educational, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. She highlighted academic cooperation and student mobility as key pillars of mutual understanding. Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Director CPSC Dr. Talat Shabbir highlighted the enduring and trusted nature of Pakistan-China relations, rooted in mutual respect, trust, and consistent support for core interests. He noted expanded cooperation since 1951 across multiple sectors and underscored CPEC as a flagship Belt and Road Initiative project promoting regional connectivity, stability, and shared development. The seminar brought together leading diplomats, scholars, researchers, and practitioners from Pakistan and China to reflect on the evolution of bilateral ties and explore future avenues of cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema witnessing the Loan signing ceremony between Pakistan and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Ayaz launches first AI-enabled parliamentary system

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Tuesday said digitalization is a key driver of institutional efficiency, transparency and effective governance as he formally launched the country's first AI-enabled parliamentary system and digital transformation initiative for the Speaker's Office. Addressing the soft launch ceremony titled "First AI-Enabled Parliamentary System in the National Assembly of Pakistan and AI-Powered Digital Transformation of the Speaker's Office for Smart & Efficient Legislation," the Speaker said the initiative marked a major milestone in the modernization of Pakistan's parliamentary ecosystem. The project has been launched under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif in line with the vision of the Speaker National Assembly and the Digital Nation Pakistan Vision. Ayaz Sadiq said the National Assembly was steadily moving towards becoming a fully paperless Parliament, adding that all Members of the National Assembly had already been provided iPads to facilitate digital parliamentary work as thousands of documents are processed daily. He said complete digitalization would enable a fully integrated parliamentary system aimed at improving legislative efficiency, coordination and transparency. The Speaker appreciated the support of the National Information Technology Board and the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, stressing the

need for continued collaboration to further strengthen the transformation process. He also thanked Syeda Amnah Batool for spearheading and coordinating the initiative. Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja termed the initiative a significant and forward-looking step towards the complete digitalization of Pakistan. She reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to supporting the National Assembly in developing a modern, technology-driven parliamentary system. Chairman Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin-ul-Haque described the initiative as a milestone in Pakistan's parliamentary history, saying the National Assembly was transforming into an AI-enabled institution under the leadership of Ayaz Sadiq. He said digitalization of institutional processes was essential in modern knowledge-based economies for enhancing governance, efficiency and transparency. As per the information, the AI-enabled parliamentary system has been developed in liaison with the National Information Technology Board under the coordination of Syeda Amnah Batool. The system is designed to facilitate lawmakers in conducting parliamentary business in a more efficient, structured and technology-enabled manner by improving access to parliamentary information, streamlining workflows and enhancing coordination among parliamentary functions.—DNA

Contingency plan approved amid extreme weather concerns

The meeting was attended by Home Minister Ziaullah Langau, the opposition leader, and secretaries from key departments, along with officials from the PDMA

QUETTA : The Balochistan government has formally approved a comprehensive contingency plan to address the looming threat of extreme weather and the monsoon 2026 season. The decision was taken at a crucial meeting of the Provincial Disaster Management Commission, chaired by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti. During the session, officials and climate experts warned that global climate change could push temperatures in Balochistan as high as 53 degrees Celsius this year. They also highlighted the possibility of unusual and dangerous phenomena such as sudden cloud bursts followed by heat bursts, which could pose grave risks to human lives and vital infrastructure. In response to these warnings, the provincial government sanctioned 7.5 billion rupees to strengthen emergency preparedness. The plan includes keeping PDMA offices fully operational at divisional and district levels, ensuring the availability of rescue machinery, tents, medicines, food supplies, and other essentials. Rescue 1122 centers across all districts will be activated, with future expansion planned at the tehsil level to make relief operations more effective. Hospitals have been instructed to enforce heat stroke emergencies, while medical staff and ambulance services will remain on high alert. The government also announced the launch of a public awareness campaign to educate citizens about heatwave precautions. This campaign will be carried out through schools, mosques, traditional media, and social media platforms. Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, addressing the meeting, stressed that climate change is intensifying the frequency and severity of weather-related threats. He assured the public that the government is committed to protecting lives and property by deploying all available resources. He directed officials to ensure that drainage systems, relief points, and rescue equipment remain fully functional in sensitive districts. "The people of Balochistan will not be left alone in any disaster. A modern disaster management system will guarantee timely action," he declared. The meeting was attended by Home Minister Ziaullah Langau, the opposition leader, and secretaries from key departments, along with officials from the PDMA. Their collective presence underscored the seriousness of the situation and the government's determination to respond effectively to any emergency.—DNA

Kundi says educated youth country's real strength

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said that higher education was the guarantee of a bright future for the province and educated youth were the real strength of Pakistan. He expressed these views while addressing the seventh convocation ceremony of ABASYN University as chief guest. The ceremony was attended by Chancellor Dr Muhammad Imranullah, Vice Chancellor Dr Syed Umar Farooq, teachers, students, parents and people from different walks of life. The Governor said that every graduate was a new architect of the province's future and urged the youth to become ambassadors of innovation, research and development instead of merely seeking jobs. He said that the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possessed immense talent and should acquire modern education and market-oriented skills to meet contemporary challenges. Governor Kundi said that the University had played an

important role in promoting quality education and research, adding that teachers were the real builders of the nation whose services deserved appreciation. He termed the sacrifices of parents as the foundation of a bright national future and advised the youth to adopt honesty, hard work and strong character as their identity. He said nations progressed through individuals who adhered to honesty and principles, and reiterated that Governor House would continue supporting positive youth initiatives and educational activities. Talking to media after the convocation, Governor Kundi said that the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly had invited a meeting on the issues of CNG closure and wheat transportation. He said that Prime Minister had constituted a committee on the CNG closure issue through joint efforts of the opposition and provincial government, adding that representatives of both sides would soon meet the federal committee. The Governor said the court had ordered that CNG stations should not remain closed and urged the provincial government to implement the court's decision. Referring to wheat

transportation issues, he said that wheat supply remained suspended while smuggling had forced people to buy expensive wheat. "We do not seek wheat from the federation, but demand our due share of water," he said, adding that if the province received its rightful share of water, there would be no need to procure wheat from other provinces. He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was providing cheap electricity to the federation without seeking political benefit from it. Governor Kundi said that the province was greatly affected by terrorism and security forces were rendering immense sacrifices for peace. He urged the provincial government to focus on public issues instead of "Adiala politics" and said the opposition was playing an important role in provincial affairs. He said that the opposition stood with the government on provincial issues and added that all provincial rights could be secured from the federation through dialogue and negotiations. The Governor stressed the need for improving governance and eliminating terrorism in the province.

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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 National Day
- 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
- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
- Motorway Police.....9266044
- Motorway Police.9270601-20
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
- Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Enquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange 9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
- CAA.....9281092



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

ICCI, Iranian embassy vow to boost bilateral trade

Crisis Has Brought Pakistan and Iran Closer to each other: ICCI President



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has played a highly commendable and constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the region through diplomacy and dialogue, and its unwavering solidarity with the Iranian nation during recent tensions is deeply appreciated, stated by Mohsin Shahbazi, Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Islamabad. He expressed these views during his visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry along with Dr. Samaneh Kamali Moghaddam, Second Secretary, where they held an interactive session with the ICCI leadership and members of the business community to discuss opportunities for strengthening bilateral trade, economic cooperation and regional connectivity between Pakistan and Iran. Mohsin Shahbazi expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of Pakistan for extending solidarity with the Iranian nation and for playing a posi-

tive mediatory role between Iran and the United States. He said Pakistan's efforts for peace and regional harmony were truly praiseworthy and reflected the deep-rooted brotherly relations between the two neighbouring countries. He observed that crises often create new opportunities for stronger multilateral cooperation and emphasized that Pakistan and Iran possess enormous potential to expand bilateral economic and commercial relations. Highlighting the strategic significance of regional connectivity, he underlined the importance of the ports of both countries in enhancing trade linkages with Central Asian states and other international markets. The Iranian diplomat assured the business community that the Embassy of Iran remains fully committed to facilitating Pakistani businessmen, particularly members of ICCI, in matters relating to visas, trade cooperation and business connectivity. Speaking on the occasion, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that the

recent regional developments had brought the people of Pakistan and Iran even closer and expressed confidence that government-to-government, people-to-people and business-to-business relations would further expand in the coming years for the mutual benefit of both nations. The ICCI President expressed solidarity with the resilient people of Iran and hoped that the Iranian nation would successfully overcome the material losses and hardships caused by the recent conflict. He also highlighted the immense potential for enhancing bilateral cooperation in sectors including energy, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, tourism, mining and information technology, particularly emphasizing the significance of energy cooperation with Iran. Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub highlighted the importance of increasing bilateral trade in agricultural products, especially mangoes and apples, and appreciated the support extended by the Iranian government in facilitating Pakistani exports to Central

Asian states through Iran. Dr. Samaneh Kamali Moghaddam, Second Secretary, also shared valuable insights and proposals for enhancing bilateral trade, business partnerships and private-sector cooperation between Pakistan and Iran. The ICCI leadership appreciated the efforts of the Iranian Embassy in promoting closer economic and business relations and reiterated the Chamber's commitment to organizing trade delegations, business forums, exhibitions and B2B meetings to unlock the true potential of bilateral trade between the two brotherly countries. Among the prominent participants were Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, Executive Member Waseem Chaudhry, Zulqurnain Abbasi, former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry, Chairman ICCI Standing Committee on Sister Cities Initiative Sajid Iqbal and ICCI Secretary General Ghulam Murtaza, along with a large number of members from the business community.

IRSA releases 163,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 163,200 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 160,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1449.41 feet which was 49.41 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 67,600 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1164.70 feet, which was 114.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 38,000 cusecs each. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 115,300, 78,100, 60,200, and 18,000 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 376,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 7,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

FBR offices to remain open on May 23, 24

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Tuesday said that all its field formations across the country will remain open on Saturday and Sunday, May 23 and 24, 2026, for collection of duties and taxes. According to an official statement issued by the FBR, all Large Taxpayers' Offices (LTOs), Medium Taxpayers' Offices (MTOs), Corporate Tax Offices (CTOs) and Regional Tax Offices (RTOs) will observe the two days as normal working days.—APP

Seminar on healthy living

ISLAMABAD: A live seminar titled "Healthy Life - Leave the Grind, Revive Your Mind" will be held on Wednesday, May 20, aiming to promote wellness, healthy living, and career growth among youth and working professionals. Organized by Norvik, the seminar is open to individuals aged 20 years and above, particularly university students and early-career professionals seeking guidance on health management, stress reduction, and future planning. Talking to APP, wellness speaker and event host Dr. Farzana said the seminar aims to raise awareness about preventive healthcare and encourage participants to adopt healthier and more productive lifestyles. She said the program will feature sessions on natural healing methods, organic food and clean eating, fitness and active living, healthy daily habits, and natural approaches to managing lifestyle-related diseases, including diabetes. Participants will also receive guidance on improving physical and mental well-being, while discussions will cover common challenges faced by young adults such as academic pressure, social media anxiety, screen fatigue, irregular sleep patterns, burnout, career confusion, and financial independence.—APP

Bangladesh civil servants delegation visits FCCP

The meeting concluded with an exchange of views and best wishes for continued professional cooperation between institutions working for governance, leadership development, and constitutional rule

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of senior civil servants from Bangladesh visited the Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan on Tuesday and held detailed discussions on constitutional governance, judicial reforms, and institutional cooperation with Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan and other judges of the court. The delegation, accompanied by the Director General of the Civil Services Academy (CSA) and senior faculty members, is currently in Pakistan under an Executive Leadership Development Training Programme aimed at enhancing understanding of governance, constitutional administration, and public service leadership. The meeting was attended by judges including Justice Aamer Farooq, Justice Ali Baqar Najafi, and Justice Arshad Hussain Shah, as well as the Registrar of the court. During the interaction, members of the Bangladeshi delegation appreciated the establishment of the Federal Constitutional Court and termed specialized constitutional forums important for strengthening democratic institutions

and safeguarding citizens' rights. The two sides discussed constitutional evolution, judicial independence, institutional development, and the role of constitutional courts in ensuring rule of law and good governance. The discussions also highlighted the historical relations, shared cultural heritage, and close people-to-people ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Both sides emphasized the importance of continued engagement, mutual respect, and institutional cooperation to promote democratic governance and administrative excellence. A documentary showcasing the achievements and institutional progress of the Federal Constitutional Court during the past six months was also screened on the occasion. The documentary highlighted the court's efforts to establish new judicial traditions and strengthen constitutional governance. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan said the establishment of the Federal Constitutional Court aimed at ensuring swift and effective constitutional justice through expeditious disposal of

cases while protecting constitutional supremacy and fundamental rights. He said the court was working with dedication and institutional expertise to reduce backlog and provide timely constitutional remedies to the people. The Chief Justice also stressed upon the importance of regional cooperation, institutional learning, and exchange of governance experiences between brotherly countries, saying such engagements contribute positively towards strengthening public institutions and promoting mutual understanding. The Director General of the Civil Services Academy thanked the Chief Justice and judges for hosting the delegation and appreciated the court's commitment to constitutionalism, institutional efficiency, and delivery of justice. The meeting concluded with an exchange of views and best wishes for continued professional cooperation between institutions working for governance, leadership development, and constitutional rule.—DNA

Insurance Bill 2026 introduced in NA to make services simpler

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has introduced the Insurance Bill, 2026 in the National Assembly to make insurance services simpler, faster and more accessible for citizens through digital platforms. The legislation, proposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), seeks to replace the 25-year-old Insurance Ordinance, 2000 and facilitate quicker claim settlements and stronger consumer protection mechanisms. According to a press release issued by the SECP on Tuesday, the proposed law is also expected to attract investment, promote competition and support the development of affordable and modern insurance products in Pakistan, where the sector has long struggled with low penetration, outdated regulations and limited innovation. Under the proposed law, insurance services are expected to become simpler, faster and more accessible for the public through digital onboarding, tech-driven insurance products and streamlined regulatory procedures. The key reforms covered in the Insurance Bill, 2026 included market liberalization: Opens Pakistan's market to foreign insurers and reinsurers through branch structures. It includes private sector growth, which allows private sector participation in public property insurance and grants private reinsurers the first right of mandatory reinsurance. It also introduces tech-driven distribution models, flexible intermediary structures and formal recognition for emerging insurtech products and replaces periodic renewals with perpetual licensing and simplifies regulatory filing processes.—APP

Pakistan to send cultural troupe to Jordan for Jerash Festival: Khichi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi on Tuesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening cultural diplomacy and international cultural engagement. The minister expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Pakistan Dr. Maen Khreasat, who called on him at his office in Islamabad to discuss matters of mutual interest, particularly cultural cooperation between Pakistan and Jordan. During the meeting, the ambassador formally extended an invitation on behalf of Jordan's Ministry of Culture to the minister for participation in the 40th Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts, scheduled to be held from July 22 to August 02 in the ancient city of Jerash. Accepting the invitation, the minister said that under existing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between Pakistan and Jordan, Pakistan would send a cultural troupe to Jordan, while a Jordanian cultural troupe would also be invited to visit Pakistan to further enhance people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. The ambassador appreciated Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and lauded traditional performing arts, including Khattak and Balochi dances. He also expressed admiration for Qawwali, sharing that he had personally experienced the art form in Multan. In response, the minister assured that a Qawwali performance would be included in Pakistan's cultural troupe for the festival. Secretary, Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, Asad Rehman Gillani, was also present during the meeting. He briefed the ambassador on the newly established Gandhara Heritage Gallery and the ongoing exhibition highlighting Pakistan's ancient Buddhist civilization. The ambassador expressed keen interest and assured his visit to the exhibition. The minister also informed the ambassador about the newly inaugurated Gandhara Centre at Quaid-i-Azam University, dedicated to the research and preservation of Gandhara Heritage. The meeting concluded with a mutual reaffirmation of commitment to strengthening cultural diplomacy, fostering mutual understanding, and expanding cultural exchanges between Pakistan and Jordan.



Briefs

Punjab, Chinese investors to coop in livestock sectors

ISLAMABAD: The Planning & Development Board, Government of Punjab and representatives of the Chinese Business Forum discussed investment opportunities in livestock, agriculture and value-added food processing during a meeting held in Lahore. The meeting, chaired by Punjab Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani, focused on promoting bilateral cooperation, modern technology transfer, supply chain management and agricultural value addition. Kirmani said the Punjab government is providing a favorable environment for foreign investors and taking practical steps to modernize the agriculture and livestock sectors. He said Punjab's livestock industry has significant potential and can help boost exports through improved standards and processing facilities. He said the Livestock Department is establishing disease control compartments across the province to ensure animal health and meet international, particularly Chinese, export standards for meat and other livestock products.—APP

Pakistani, Chinese law firms launch joint office

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani law firm ZOAO Law LLP and Beijing Huicheng Law Firm have inaugurated a joint office in Beijing to strengthen China-Pakistan legal cooperation and expand cross-border legal services for businesses and investors operating between the two countries. A signing and inauguration ceremony for the joint office was held at Huicheng Law Firm's office in Beijing, attended by senior representatives, partners and legal professionals from both sides. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, the joint office has been established to provide legal support in areas including cross-border investment, trade, regulatory compliance, corporate affairs and dispute resolution. The cooperation aims to improve legal coordination and facilitate more efficient legal services for Chinese and Pakistani clients engaged in bilateral commercial activities. As a Pakistan-based legal firm with experience in local regulatory and business matters, ZOAO Law firm will work closely with the Chinese side to strengthen practical legal cooperation.—APP

Tourism can transform Pak's economic outlook

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan stressed the need for strengthening Pakistan's international image across religious, educational, medical, and culinary tourism



DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Tourism, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, stated that tourism could transform Pakistan's economic outlook with the right policy approach. He was speaking at a seminar titled "Leveraging Pakistan's Strategic Position for Trade and Tourism-Led Transformation," organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS). Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan stressed the need for strengthening Pakistan's international image across religious, educational, medical, and culinary tourism. While acknowledging institutional and infrastructural challenges, he noted that Pakistan was actively engaging investors from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, China, Germany, the United States, and Central Asia, and promoting adventure tourism and recreational festivals.

He called for improved hospitality training to meet international standards, praised recent visa system improvements, and highlighted the government's focus on airport modernization, transport connectivity, and visitor experience to position Pakistan as a competitive global destination. Other speakers at the event also cited Pakistan's vast untapped potential in tourism, trade, and investment as a key driver of economic growth, contingent on effective governance, strategic branding, and policy continuity. Advisor to the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Adnan Pasha, highlighted media, storytelling, and digital content as key tourism drivers, citing Turkey's 8 percent growth following its entertainment industry's global success. He called for reduced regulatory barriers, trust-based governance, and stronger diaspora engagement. Pakistan's 9 million

overseas nationals, contributing \$40 billion in annual remittances, were identified as significant investors through the Roshan Digital Account and potential tourism ambassadors. He flagged untapped Buddhist tourism potential, with communities from Japan to Myanmar eager to visit Pakistan's heritage sites, and stressed that monetizing cultural heritage through royalties and structured tourism reforms was essential for sustainable growth. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Sadaf Khalid, Director Silk Road Enterprises and Member of the FPCCI Standing Committee on Tourism Economy, emphasized the importance of digitalization and public-private collaboration in modernizing Pakistan's tourism sector. Highlighting the country's untapped winter tourism potential, she stated that with improved infrastructure and international partnerships, the sector could generate USD 1-2 billion annually. She also underscored the importance of developing UNESCO Buddhist heritage sites such as Takhti-Bahi and Taxila, noting that Buddhist tourism alone could contribute USD 500 million to 1 billion annually to Pakistan's economy. Referring to Sikh religious tourism, she added that pilgrimage tourism linked to Kartarpur Corridor and Nankana Sahib had the potential to generate over USD 150-250 million annually. In his closing remarks, President IRS Ambassador Jauhar Saleem emphasized that Pakistan's large youth population, strategic relevance, and exceptional natural and cultural assets positioned the country to emerge as a competitive destination for tourism, trade, and investment. He stressed the importance of skills development, global competitiveness, and collective national effort in achieving sustainable economic transformation.

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Experts assess countering violent extremism in Central Asia

DNA

ISLAMABAD:— The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, hosted an insightful session under its Eminent Speaker Series titled "CVE in Central Asia in 2026: Trends, Prospects and Challenges", organized by the Central Asia Program for Regional Cooperation and Connectivity. The session was moderated by Mr. Aarish U. Khan, Head of the Afghanistan Program and Editor of Publications at the IRS. The event featured distinguished speakers—Dr. Eldaniz Gusseinov, Head of Research at Nightingale International, a political foresight institute based in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Dr. Iftikhar Firdous, Founder and Executive Director of The Khorasan Diary in Islamabad who offered in-depth analyses of evolving security dynamics in Central and South Asia. Dr.

Gusseinov highlighted Central Asia's precarious geopolitical positioning between conflicts in Southwest Asia and ongoing tensions involving Afghanistan and Pakistan. He underscored that contemporary threats are less about territorial spillovers and more about ideological diffusions, digital radicalization, and vulnerabilities within strained populations. He noted the increasing use of encrypted platforms for extremist recruitment and emphasized that Central Asian states are pursuing pragmatic engagement with the Taliban through economic cooperation—particularly led by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Russia—while maintaining legal ambiguity on formal recognition. Dr. Firdous presented a sobering assessment of Afghanistan's post-2021 trajectory, noting that initial expectations of a reformed "Taliban 2.0" have not materialized. He pointed to a sharp rise

in terrorism in Pakistan—reportedly increasing by 400%—and warned of intensifying cross-border insecurity, especially along key regions such as Kurram, Bajaur, and Waziristan. He further highlighted emerging trends such as "Gen Z jihadism" and the concept of the "salad bar ideology," where individuals draw from diverse online extremist narratives rather than adhering to a single group for radicalization. Dr. Firdous further emphasized governance challenges within Afghanistan, including institutional weaknesses, international pressure over human rights, and unmet expectations from neighboring states regarding counterterrorism. He also discussed the growing complexity of regional rivalries, including evolving Taliban-India engagement, and the role of non-state actors and digital platforms in shaping modern militancy.

JICA chief visits Taxila museum

Yusuke praised the preservation efforts and described Taxila as a valuable cultural link between Pakistan and Japan through centuries-old Buddhist traditions

ISLAMABAD: On the directives of Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal, the Ministry of National Health Services issued urgent nationwide instructions to strengthen preventive measures against HIV and Hepatitis B and C. The Health Ministry has directed all four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan to ensure immediate implementation of precautionary protocols across public and private healthcare facilities. Official directives have also been issued to federally administered hospitals, District Health Officers, and the Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority. According to the Ministry's spokesperson, all public and private hospitals and health centres have been instructed to strictly implement prescribed screening protocols before every medical.—APP

WAH CANTT: The newly appointed head of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Shinzoaki Yusuke on Tuesday visited the Taxila Museum and reviewed ongoing efforts to preserve the ancient Gandhara civilisation's archaeological heritage. During the visit, Deputy Director, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Asim Dogar, briefed the Japanese official on the historical significance of Taxila, conservation initiatives, museum management and measures being taken to safeguard rare artefacts. Dogar said Taxila, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, remained one of South Asia's most important centres of Buddhist civilisation and Gandharan culture, drawing researchers, historians, archaeologists and tourists from around the world. He also highlighted the Punjab government's large-scale heritage conservation programme covering key archaeological sites in the Taxila Valley, including the Dharmarajika Stupa, Sirkap, Bhir Mound, Mohra Muradu, Jaulian and Mankiala Stupa. Yusuke praised the preservation efforts and described Taxila as a valuable cultural link between Pakistan and Japan through centuries-old Buddhist traditions. He said Japan placed high importance on cultural cooperation with Pakistan and reaffirmed JICA's commitment to expanding collaboration in heritage conservation, education, social development.—APP

ICT admin removes illegal animal sale points on IJP Road

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Tuesday launched an operation against illegal cattle sale points on IJP Road and shifted a large number of goats and other animals to designated cattle markets to maintain traffic flow and cleanliness in the capital. The action was carried out on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon as part of efforts to remove encroachments and regulate animal trading ahead of Eid-related business activity. According to the district administration, officials conducted an operation on both sides of IJP Road against people selling goats illegally along the roadside. Magistrate Industrial Area Raja Shoaib Faiz led the operation along with teams from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Enforcement Wing. During the operation, authorities removed illegal animal sale points that had been set up along the road. Officials also took several goats and other animals into custody and shifted them to approved cattle markets in the city. The district administration said illegal cattle selling would not be allowed in Islamabad as roadside animal markets were creating problems for traffic movement

and public cleanliness. Citizens were advised to buy and sell sacrificial animals only at officially designated cattle markets. Officials said the administration was continuing operations against encroachments and illegal activities across different parts of the federal capital. They added that such actions were aimed at improving traffic management, maintaining cleanliness, and ensuring better public arrangements in Islamabad. The administration further stated that teams would continue monitoring major roads and public areas to prevent the return of illegal sale points. Authorities warned that action would also be taken against anyone found violating official instructions regarding cattle trading in unauthorized locations. Residents have been requested to cooperate with the administration by avoiding roadside purchases and using approved markets for animal trading. Officials said the move was necessary to reduce congestion on busy roads and maintain order in commercial areas of the city. The district administration reiterated that enforcement teams would remain active during the ongoing season to ensure that public spaces and roads remain clear for commuters and residents.—DNA

China-Pak agri investment portal receives positive review

The portal is expected to support faster execution of joint agricultural ventures and strengthen institutional linkages between stakeholders from both countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Agriculture Investment Portal was reviewed satisfactorily during its first progress meeting held at the National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), where officials examined the platform's functionality and ongoing development aimed at strengthening bilateral agricultural investment cooperation between Pakistan and China. According to Gwadar Pro, the meeting was chaired by Digital Transformation and Analytics Consultant Raymond Alexander William and attended by members of the Agri-Investment Cell. Developed in the context of the Pakistan-China B2B Agriculture Investment Conference held on January 19, 2026, the portal is intended to improve investment coordination, project monitoring and digital governance in the agriculture sector. According to official statement, the platform

includes real-time tracking of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed during the conference, digital monitoring of investment progress, AI-assisted feasibility reporting and a proposal creation and evaluation system. The portal also provides investor matchmaking facilities, secure document-sharing modules and communication tools to enhance coordination among stakeholders. Participants discussed the portal's operational capacity and its expected role in streamlining agricultural investments, improving transparency and accelerating implementation of collaborative projects. Officials said the initiative reflects Pakistan's growing focus on digital transformation, smart agriculture and investment-driven development under Pakistan-China agricultural cooperation frameworks. The portal is expected to support faster execution of joint agricultural ventures and strengthen institutional linkages between stakeholders from both countries.

Pakistan showcases food exports in China

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan showcased its strong strength in the global food sector at SIAL China 2026, as the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) leads a delegation of 13 leading companies to the international food exhibition being held in Shanghai from May 18 to 20. The Pakistani exhibitors are presenting a diverse range of products, including rice, processed foods, beverages, Himalayan pink salt, dairy products, sesame seeds, and other agri-food items, aiming to expand Pakistan's footprint in one of the world's largest food import markets. Gwadar Pro quoting an official statement, stated Pakistan's participation is focused on strengthening trade ties with China while promoting the country's premium-quality food and agricultural products to Chinese buyers, importers, distributors, and food companies attending the event. China remains one of Pakistan's largest trading partners and a key destination for Pakistani agri-food exports. During 2025-26, exports of Pakistani agricultural and food products to China witnessed encouraging growth, particularly in the rice sector. TDAP noted that Pakistani rice exports to China recorded remarkable growth amid rising demand and improved market access. In the first quarter of 2026 alone, rice exports to China surpassed \$45 million, highlighting strong potential for further expansion in the Chinese market.—APP

Govt makes HIV, Hepatitis B & C screening mandatory

ISLAMABAD: On the directives of Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal, the Ministry of National Health Services issued urgent nationwide instructions to strengthen preventive measures against HIV and Hepatitis B and C. The Health Ministry has directed all four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan to ensure immediate implementation of precautionary protocols across public and private healthcare facilities. Official directives have also been issued to federally administered hospitals, District Health Officers, and the Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority. According to the Ministry's spokesperson, all public and private hospitals and health centres have been instructed to strictly implement prescribed screening protocols before every medical.—APP

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The Enduring Idea of Single Combat

DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

HUMAN history is filled with wars fought by armies, empires and nations, yet some of its most memorable moments revolve around the actions of a single individual confronting another in direct combat. Long before modern states developed organized military systems, societies often believed that the fate of entire communities could rest upon the courage, skill and honour of two men meeting face to face on the battlefield. This tradition of single combat occupies a powerful place in literature, religion and political culture, revealing how ancient civilizations understood justice, heroism and power. The idea of one-on-one combat for enormous stakes dates back thousands of years. In ancient societies, warfare was not merely about territory or resources; it also carried symbolic and moral significance. Battles were frequently viewed as contests between competing visions of honour, destiny and divine favour. Single combat emerged as a dramatic way to settle disputes while limiting broader bloodshed. Even when it failed to prevent war, it offered a spectacle through which societies expressed their deepest values.

Perhaps the most famous example appears in The Iliad, the ancient Greek epic attributed to Homer. The duel between Achilles and Hector remains one of the defining scenes in world literature. The Trojan War had already consumed countless lives, yet the confrontation between these two warriors came to symbolize the conflict itself. Achilles represented the unmatched martial strength of the Greeks, while Hector stood as the noble defender of Troy. Their duel carried emotional and political consequences far beyond the fate of two individuals. When Hector fell, the psychological balance of the war shifted decisively. The enduring power of this episode lies not simply in violence, but in what the combatants represented. Ancient audiences saw courage, revenge, loyalty and morality reflected in the clash between Achilles and Hector. The duel transformed a vast military struggle into a deeply personal encounter. It allowed people to understand the chaos of war through the actions of recognizable human figures. A similar theme appears in the Biblical story of David and Goliath. The Philistines and Israelites stand prepared for battle, yet the conflict narrows into a contest between a heavily armed giant and a young shepherd armed with little more than a sling and faith. David's victory is significant not only because it defeats a formidable enemy, but because it overturns assumptions about power itself. Strength and size are overcome by conviction, intelligence and divine support. Over centuries, the story of David and Goliath has become a universal metaphor for struggles between the weak and the powerful. Political movements, sporting contests and military conflicts continue to invoke its imagery. The narrative survives because it speaks to a deeply rooted human hope: that courage and belief can triumph against overwhelming odds. In many ancient cultures, single combat was closely tied to ideas of honour.



Warriors were expected to prove themselves publicly, often before armies and rulers. Reputation mattered enormously in societies where personal bravery shaped social standing and political authority. A victorious duel could elevate a warrior's status, while defeat could bring disgrace upon entire communities. Trial by combat also demonstrated the unequal nature of medieval society. Wealthier individuals could often hire skilled champions to fight on their behalf, while ordinary people possessed fewer options. Nevertheless, the practice persisted for centuries because it satisfied social expectations regarding honour, courage and divine justice. Over time, however, legal systems gradually moved away from combat-based judgments. The growth of centralized states, professional courts and written laws reduced reliance on physical confrontation. By the late medieval and early modern periods, many European societies increasingly viewed trial by combat as irrational or barbaric. Yet the fascination with duelling did not disappear.

Instead, it evolved into the aristocratic code duello that flourished in Europe and parts of the Americas between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Duels were no longer meant to determine legal truth through divine intervention. They became rituals of personal honour among elites. Politicians, military officers and gentlemen fought over insults, reputations and perceived slights. Pistols replaced swords, but the underlying concern remained the same: public honour. The decline of duelling in the modern era reflected broader social transformations. States strengthened their monopoly over violence, while legal institutions replaced private revenge and personal combat. Industrial warfare also changed public perceptions of heroism. Modern wars were increasingly fought by massive armies using advanced technology, leaving little room for romanticized notions of individual combat deciding the fate of nations.

Yet despite these changes, the idea of single combat continues to hold cultural power. Films, novels and political rhetoric frequently portray conflicts through the actions of rival individuals. Sporting events often draw upon the language of duels and heroic confrontation. Even contemporary politics sometimes reduces complex international rivalries into personal contests between leaders.

The persistence of this tradition reveals something fundamental about human storytelling. Large conflicts are difficult to grasp in purely abstract terms. People understand events more easily when they are embodied in individual figures whose actions symbolize broader struggles. Single combat offers drama, clarity and emotional intensity in ways that mass warfare often cannot.

At the same time, the romantic image of the duel can obscure the brutal realities surrounding it. Ancient epics celebrate heroism, but the wars behind those stories brought devastation to entire societies. Medieval trial by combat claimed divine legitimacy, yet it often favoured the powerful. Duelling codes praised honour while leaving countless lives shattered by violence.

The history of single combat therefore reflects both humanity's fascination with courage and its long struggle to define justice and power. From Achilles and Hector to David and Goliath, from medieval courts to aristocratic duels, the ritualized clash between individuals has remained deeply embedded in civilization's imagination. Though the world has changed dramatically, the symbolic appeal of one person confronting another for immense stakes continues to resonate across cultures and centuries.

Entering a Multiplex World

Dr. M. Anwar Farooq

The United States, by contrast, remains stronger in military reach, finance and the dense web of alliance networks built over decades. American leadership is loud and visible: bases, exercises, sanctions and institutions that map power into rules. That style creates predictability for friends and discomfort for rivals. It insists that the world follow a vocabulary: of freedom, of open markets, of norms, that implicitly preserves U.S. primacy. That insistence can be persuasive, because it links power to principles, but it can also breed resentment, especially when American coercion arrives with moral rhetoric that many see...

THE world after a US-China meeting is unlikely to reorganize itself under a single flag; it will more likely drift into a messier multiplex order in which power is shared, negotiated and contested across trade, technology, security and climate rather than owned by one capital alone. Meetings between Washington and Beijing rarely end rivalry; they civilize it for a time, creating a brief pause when tariffs may soften, military hotlines may reopen and both sides speak the language of "stability" while continuing the deeper contest for influence. The encounter matters less as a peace treaty than as a weather report: the storm remains, but its shape becomes clearer.

What passes for influence now is far less about the number of aircraft carriers than about chips, supply chains, data, development loans, shipping lanes and the authority to define what "order" means. In those domains China is gaining room to shape outcomes. Its tentative pre-eminence in development finance and trade gives it leverage in capitals that judge offers in project-sized instalments: a road, a port, a power plant. In theory this is an attractive proposition. Who rejects cheap power or faster rail? In practice, though, the calculus is complicated. Deals that build infrastructure also entangle recipient states with Chinese firms and often with opaque financing structures. Where Beijing's method looks pragmatic and transactional, it can also feel coercive, an asymmetry of dependency dressed as partnership.

The United States, by contrast, remains stronger in military reach, finance and the dense web of alliance networks built over decades. American leadership is loud and visible: bases, exercises, sanctions and institutions that map power into rules. That style creates predictability for friends and discomfort for rivals. It insists that the world follow a vocabulary: of freedom, of open markets, of norms, that implicitly preserves U.S. primacy. That insistence can be persuasive, because it links power to principles, but it can also breed

resentment, especially when American coercion arrives with moral rhetoric that many see as selective. These are not tidy alternatives. China's quiet, project-first diplomacy asks countries to choose projects; the U.S. often asks them to choose sides. That difference matters. Many governments, particularly in the Global South, will prefer a choice of projects. Infrastructure and finance speak to immediate needs in a way high-minded claims do not. And yet, China's institutions do not substitute for the global architecture the United States helped build. Beijing's diplomacy is selective; its norms are not yet universal; its model does not translate easily into soft power the way American culture and institutions once did. As a result, China looks more like a major rule-shaper in certain domains than a universal ruler.

The result is a world that resists a single narrative. Expect overlapping zones of influence rather than a single empire. China may dominate trade links with parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The United States will likely retain superiority in security and in the financial plumbing that lubricates global markets. The European Union may set regulatory standards that other states copy to access its markets. Meanwhile, countries in the Global South will be more assertive in bargaining among these centers, extracting concessions without pledging full allegiance to any. Leadership becomes less about occupying a throne and more about collecting enough trust to steer a room, a different art from commanding a stage. A U.S.-China meeting can sharpen these distinctions. It can lower the temperature on one crisis without removing the structural causes of competition; it can open a window for cooperation on shared risks, whether nuclear proliferation or climate disruption, while leaving unresolved the competition over technology, supply chains and influence. Technical agreements on hotlines and deconfliction are useful; they do not eliminate the strategic logic that underlies rivalry. That is why meetings are valuable as

stabilizing gestures whose benefits are tactical and immediate rather than epochal.

The idea of a single country leading the world feels increasingly anachronistic. The nineteenth and twentieth century templates, empires centered on capital cities projecting uniform orders, fit less well in an era shaped by networks, platforms and transnational flows of capital and data. Power today looks like a web: nodes of strength in different domains, sometimes cooperating, sometimes clashing and often competing for the loyalties of the same small states and corporations. In this multiplex, the capacity to shape rules, and to persuade others those rules are in their interest, may matter more than raw dominance. For Beijing, the challenge is to convert leverage into legitimate authority. It can offer scale and speed, but legitimacy is won through predictable institutions and persuasive narratives. For Washington, the challenge is to update the grammar of leadership so it feels less like hierarchy and more like partnership. Both must learn that influence now is often mediated by private actors and multinational institutions as much as by embassies and warships.

The consequence is pragmatic and messy: more negotiation, more hedging, more bargaining. The world will not be neatly Chinese-led nor fully American-dominated; it will be multipart, full of friction and compromise. That is not necessarily worse, diverse leadership can check abuses and offer alternatives, but it is harder to manage. In a crowded bazaar of ambition and suspicion, stability will come from constellations of agreements rather than single hegemonic bargains. The task for leaders is to find the language and institutions that make such constellations durable, remembering that in the age of networks, power without consent is brittle, and consent without credibility is fragile.

The writer is serving as Director of the Institute of Humanities and Arts at Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology, Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan.

Israel's Bases in Iran and Iraq and Threat to Pakistan

Qamar Bashir



This is precisely why Pakistan must now view Afghanistan not merely through the lens of terrorism or border security, but through the broader framework of strategic intelligence warfare. The danger is compounded by the existing instability in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Long-running insurgencies, political polarization, smuggling routes, militant financing channels, ethnic grievances, and cross-border trafficking networks create fertile ground for foreign intelligence agencies...

THE June war between Israel and Iran revealed a frightening new reality of modern warfare: nations are no longer defeated only by armies crossing borders or fighter jets bombing cities. Increasingly, wars are prepared from within. The real battlefield now lies inside societies, intelligence networks, covert safe houses, cyber systems, recruited insiders, and hidden operational bases quietly established years before conflict begins.

What shocked military analysts during the June conflict was not merely the intensity of Israeli airpower, but the astonishing precision with which Iran's top military commanders, nuclear scientists, IRGC leadership, missile batteries, and strategic facilities were targeted. According to multiple international investigations published by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Times of Israel, many of these attacks were enabled through covert Israeli operational networks functioning deep inside Iran itself. Reports suggest that Mossad had spent years cultivating Iranian dissidents, smugglers, contractors, and covert assets near strategic locations such as Tehran, Natanz, Isfahan, and other sensitive military and nuclear sites. Through these embedded networks, Israeli intelligence reportedly obtained precise coordinates, movement patterns, communication details, and even internal meeting schedules of senior Iranian officials. The result was devastating. Nuclear scientists were assassinated with pinpoint precision. Missile launchers were neutralized before activation. Air-defense systems were disabled from within. Underground command centers were reportedly identified and struck with astonishing accuracy. Even senior Iranian military gatherings were allegedly tracked through cyber deception operations and internal informants. Iran later admitted the scale of internal infiltration by launching mass arrests across the country. Thousands were detained on accusations of espionage, treason, and collaboration with foreign intelligence services. Iranian authorities claimed that many individuals had shared coordinates of military sites and strategic locations with Israeli operatives. Tehran's response reflected a painful realization: much of the war had already been prepared inside Iran long before the first missile was fired. But the most alarming development emerged later.

International media reports revealed that Israel had allegedly established covert operational bases inside Iraq as well. According to these reports, hidden facilities in Iraq's western desert were used for reconnaissance, logistics, emergency pilot support, intelligence gathering, and preparation for attacks deep inside Iran. Some reports suggested these installations dated back to 2024 and were operational during both the 2025 and 2026 conflicts. The implications are enormous. If covert Israeli infra-

structure could function inside countries openly hostile to Israel, then no regional state can assume immunity from similar penetration. This is where the danger becomes particularly serious for Pakistan. Pakistan today faces a highly sensitive strategic environment. The growing convergence between India, Israeli strategic interests, and evolving Taliban-controlled dynamics inside Afghanistan creates a deeply concerning security equation for Islamabad. Afghanistan's geography alone makes it an ideal staging ground for intelligence operations targeting both Pakistan and Iran. Its porous borders, fragmented governance structures, smuggling networks, militant corridors, refugee movements, and weak centralized intelligence oversight create an operational environment where covert infrastructure can potentially be established with relative ease.

Israel's operational doctrine, as demonstrated in Iran and Iraq, appears increasingly dependent on first creating hidden operational ecosystems inside or near adversarial states before open conflict begins. Such ecosystems may start as small reconnaissance cells, logistics hubs, communications nodes, safe houses, drone launch sites, cyber relay stations, or intelligence listening posts. Over time, they mature into fully operational covert bases capable of supporting sabotage, surveillance, targeted assassinations, and precision military operations.

This is precisely why Pakistan must now view Afghanistan not merely through the lens of terrorism or border security, but through the broader framework of strategic intelligence warfare. The danger is compounded by the existing instability in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Long-running insurgencies, political polarization, smuggling routes, militant financing channels, ethnic grievances, and cross-border trafficking networks create fertile ground for foreign intelligence agencies seeking recruitment opportunities or covert operational access. Such environments are vulnerable to exploitation by any sophisticated intelligence service capable of leveraging local actors, financial desperation, ideological divisions, or anti-state sentiments. If covert Israeli networks could allegedly penetrate the heavily monitored security structure of Iran, then Pakistan cannot afford complacency.

The warning is clear and urgent: Pakistan and Iran must immediately strengthen their counterintelligence cooperation regarding Afghanistan. Both countries need to activate deep intelligence monitoring systems capable of detecting even rudimentary efforts to establish covert operational infrastructure near their borders. Intelligence operations can no longer remain reactive. They must become aggressively preemptive. This requires several immediate strategic measures. First, Pakistan and Iran must significantly expand intelligence penetration inside Afghanistan itself. Monitoring militant networks alone is

no longer sufficient. Greater focus must now be placed on suspicious logistics activities, foreign funding channels, unexplained infrastructure projects, covert aviation activity, encrypted communications networks, and unusual movements near sensitive border regions.

Second, Pakistan's intelligence agencies must intensify scrutiny over recruitment pipelines operating through financial networks, NGOs, smuggling channels, technology firms, cross-border trade routes, and ideological organizations. Modern intelligence warfare rarely begins with soldiers; it begins with local facilitators.

Third, sensitive military, nuclear, communication, and leadership infrastructure inside Pakistan must undergo a complete security reassessment. The Iranian experience demonstrated that covert targeting becomes possible only after years of surveillance, infiltration, and mapping. Preventing such penetration requires constant internal vetting, cyber monitoring, communication discipline, and aggressive counterespionage measures.

Fourth, strategic coordination between Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and other regional states must expand beyond diplomacy into active intelligence-sharing frameworks focused specifically on covert foreign operational networks.

The reality of modern warfare is brutal. By the time airstrikes begin, the enemy may already have spent years building the battlefield from inside your territory.

This is why the June war should not merely be studied as a military confrontation between Israel and Iran. It should be understood as a case study in how intelligence penetration, covert bases, recruited insiders, cyber deception, and hidden logistics networks can cripple even powerful states from within. For Pakistan, the lesson is existential. The greatest threat may not come from visible armies massing at the border, but from invisible networks silently embedding themselves within vulnerable spaces long before conflict erupts. Afghanistan's instability, combined with emerging India-Israel strategic alignment, creates precisely the type of environment where such covert infrastructure could potentially take root. Time, therefore, is not on the side of complacency. Pakistan, Iran, and other regional powers must act now – before covert operational ecosystems mature into irreversible strategic threats. Once such networks become deeply entrenched, the cost of dismantling them becomes extraordinarily high, and the damage they can inflict may already be beyond repair.

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

Briefs

Externally sponsored terrorism...

FROM PAGE 01 appreciated high standards of training, intellectual rigour and professionalism that remain the hallmark of Command and Staff College. He noted with satisfaction that the graduates of the College have continued to distinguish themselves through their exceptional performance and dedication to the profession. The COAS & CDF highlighted rapidly transforming character of modern warfare and stressed the importance of remaining abreast with emerging technologies, multi-domain operations, tri-services synergy and future battlefield challenges. He advised the officers to continuously train themselves and their troops to effectively respond to the changing character of war while maintaining highest standards of professionalism, preparedness and operational excellence.

TTAP announces nationwide..

FROM PAGE 01 Speaking to the media outside Parliament House on Tuesday, PTI leader Asad Qaiser said several important decisions had been made during meetings of the parliamentary party and the TTAP. He said the parliamentary party had endorsed the four-point agenda of the opposition alliance and assured full implementation of its decisions. Qaiser said the opposition had also decided not to allow the upcoming federal budget to be passed, alleging that parliament had become ineffective and opposition voices were being suppressed. He criticised the treatment of political prisoners, including lawyer Iman Mazari, claiming they were being subjected to injustice.

KP CM, Imran sisters stopped..

FROM PAGE 01 He was accompanied by Imran's sisters and a number of PTI workers and leaders. However, police stopped the delegation at Islamabad's Chungi No. 26 from proceeding towards Adiala Jail, despite heated arguments. Meanwhile, a number of PTI leaders, including Salman Akram Raja, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, and Bushra Bibi's daughters, reached Adiala Jail but were not allowed to meet the PTI founder. It is worth noting that the cut-off time for visiting Imran Khan was 4pm. Meanwhile, according to media reports, a medical team has reached Adiala jail in order to conduct a medical checkup of the PTI founder, whose health during imprisonment has been the subject of concern and alarm.

Australia all praise for...

FROM PAGE 01 tangible cooperation and shared interests." The High Commissioner highlighted Australia's more than 40 years of agricultural collaboration with Pakistan, including joint research on water management, salinity, hybrid wheat, citrus and mango value chains, and climate-resilient farming. He also noted the growing scale of commercial ties between the two countries, with two-way trade now exceeding US\$2.6 billion, including Australian exports of chickpeas, oil seeds and dairy cattle that support Pakistan's food security and dairy sector.

Two killed in attack on mosque

FROM PAGE 01 which erupted at about 11:40am PDT (1840 GMT), officials said. At an evening news conference, Wahl disclosed that the mother of one of the two suspects had called police about two hours before the shooting to report that her son, whom she described as suicidal, had run away from home, taking three guns she owned and her vehicle.

ICC elite panel umpire Ahsan Raza feted

Pakistan's Pride Recognized for Outstanding Contributions to International Cricket Umpiring

DNA

LAHORE: The Burewalins hosted a grand reception in Lahore to honor Mr. Ahsan Raza, Pakistan's only umpire on the International Cricket Council (ICC) Elite Panel, for his exceptional service to the game of cricket. The prestigious ceremony recognized Mr. Raza's distinguished career and presented him with a commemorative medal and shield for elevating Pakistan's standing in international sports officiating. Special awards were also conferred upon other notable personalities for their contributions to society. A Distinguished Gathering The event was organized by Abdul Basit Khan, Founder and Chairman of The Burewalins, alongside prominent businessmen Chaudhry Faryad and Abdul Rauf Chaudhry, former President of the Chamber of Commerce, District Vehari. The reception drew a distinguished gathering from the film and television industry, academia, civil society, business, and the overseas Pakistani community, including: Film & TV Industry: Film producer Syed Noor; senior actors Aurangzeb Leghari, Rashid Mehmood, Ashraf Khan; and singer Khalid Baig. Intellectuals & Writers: Renowned columnist Orya Maqbool Jan; poets Auqir Sharif, Ms. Mehnaz, Ms. Urooj Durani; and literary figures Dr. Shahida, Zaeem Rasheed, and Dr. Muhammad Hanif. Civil Society & Former Officials: Dr. Amjad Sa-



qib, Founder of Akhuwat Foundation; Zafar Abbas Lak, Former IG Motorways; Dr. Malik Khuda Bakhsh, Former IG Police; Khalid Mahmood, Former Vice-Chancellor; and Abdul Rauf Khan, former Grade-21 officer, District Management Group. Business & Overseas Representatives: Mian Muhammad Hanif, President of PML-N France and Patron-in-Chief of The Burewalins; Manzoor Malik of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce; famous Poet Afzal Paris, Seasoned Sports Journalist and Secretary Sjal Muhammad

Yousaf Anjum. The commemorative medal and shield were presented to Mr. Raza by Syed Noor, Abdul Basit Khan, Orya Maqbool Jan, and Abdul Rauf Chaudhry. Recognizing Global Excellence Speakers at the event lauded Mr. Raza for setting a benchmark for honesty, professionalism, and impartiality in international umpiring. They noted that his achievements are a source of pride for Pakistan and the wider region, and serve as an inspiration for the country's youth. Upon receiving the honor, Mr. Raza expressed his

gratitude, stating:

"Umpiring is a challenging job, and I always strive to fulfill my responsibilities to the best of my ability. It is my wish to see more Pakistanis enter this field and bring laurels to the country." A Record-Breaking Career: Mr. Ahsan Raza currently holds the distinction of being the sole Pakistani on the ICC Elite Panel. His career highlights include: 91 T20 Internationals - the highest number officiated by any umpire globally; 43 Test Matches and 78 One-Day Internationals (ODIs) officiating in 25 ICC Events; A record 65 Domestic Finals Special Acknowledgments; Special awards were also presented to Orya Maqbool Jan, Dr. Amjad Saqib, Ashraf Khan, Aurangzeb Leghari, Syed Irshad, Uzma Roomi, and singer Khalid Baig for their respective contributions to society. The evening concluded with a welcome address by Abdul Basit Khan, who outlined the aims and objectives of The Burewalins and thanked the guests on behalf of the community. The ceremony was hosted by renowned poet Imran Javed Ghauri, popularly known as Dr. Danish Aziz. The presence of leading figures from intellectual, social, educational, literary, journalistic, corporate, and cultural circles added significant prestige to the event. About The Burewalins The Burewalins is a community organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting the achievements of Pakistanis in various fields, fostering national pride, and inspiring the youngsters.

Pakistan hockey enters recovery phase under new management

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan hockey is showing strong signs of revival and institutional recovery following sweeping reforms introduced by PHF under the guidance of the Government of Pakistan and Prime Minister of Pakistan, who is also Patron-in-Chief of the federation. In a press release issued by the PHF Media Cell, the federation highlighted several landmark achievements recorded in recent months. Among the most notable milestones was the successful staging of the National Under-18 Hockey Tournament in Islamabad after a prolonged hiatus. The championship drew 15 teams from across the country, providing a competitive platform for emerging talent and signalling a renewed commitment to grassroots development.

On the international front, Pakistan's national team delivered an encouraging performance at the Hockey World Cup qualifying event in Cairo, reaching the final and securing a coveted berth in the upcoming Hockey World Cup, a breakthrough that restored confidence among hockey followers after years of struggle. To strengthen technical expertise, the PHF inducted several former Olympians and distinguished hockey personalities into key coaching, selection, player development and management roles. Prominent figures including Islahuddin Siddiqui, Samiullah Khan, Hasan Sardar, Manzoor Senior, Khawaja Junaid, Ayaz Mehmood, Qamar Ibrahim, Rehan Butt, Nasir Ali and Naeem Akhtar have been assigned responsi-

bilities across the senior, junior and under-18 programmes. The federation has also intensified efforts to mobilise financial resources to ensure smooth participation in major international events, including the Cairo qualifiers, Junior Asia Cup in Japan, Pro League engagements in England and Belgium, and preparations for the Hockey World Cup in the Netherlands later this year. In a significant step for player welfare, daily allowances for players and team management during international tours have been raised to USD 110 per day - described by the PHF as the largest such increase in Pakistan hockey history. The education sector has been formally integrated into the revival programme through coordination with

the Inter-Borders Coordination Commission (IBCC) and educational boards nationwide. Under a school hockey activation initiative, at least 500 schools across Pakistan will receive hockey kits within the next three months. The programme targets students from Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, encouraging organised hockey and utilisation of available AstroTurf facilities. The PHF has expanded its corporate outreach, with PTCL continuing its support, Alaska Batteries joining as a new partner for hockey promotion initiatives, and Sky 47 providing technological and analytical assistance including modern performance monitoring tools. - APP

US Amb. to Romania, Darryl Nirenberg, visits Craiova

BUCHAREST: The United States Ambassador to Romania, Darryl Nirenberg, paid an official visit to Craiova on Monday, his first trip to the country since taking office, according to local authorities and the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest. The visit included meetings with the President of Dolj County Council, Cosmin Vasile, and the Mayor of Craiova, Lia Olguța Vasilescu, as well as trips to the 'Alexandru and Aristia Aman' County Library and the Ford Otosan Craiova company. The President of the Dolj County Council, Cosmin Vasile, stated that the discussions held with the American official focused on both the partnerships developed so far and new opportunities for collaboration. "Together with Mayor Lia Olguța Vasilescu, we had a meeting in which we discussed the successful partnerships we have developed so far, but also new opportunities," Cosmin Vasile said. In turn, Craiova Mayor Lia Olguța Vasilescu said that the American official was presented with the economic and tourist opportunities of the municipality. "Craiova is the first city that Ambassador Nirenberg has visited since he was accredited to Romania, and I presented him with the business opportunities for investors and the events that our city organizes to attract tourists," Vasilescu said. According to the US Embassy in Bucharest, Ambassador Darryl Nirenberg's visit aimed to strengthen cooperation between the United States and Romania. During the meetings with local authorities, topics related to economic growth, investment and job creation in the region were addressed. - APP

Bulgarian foster care initiative highlights urgent need for more families

SOFIA: Representatives of local institutions, social services, clergy, non-governmental organizations and foster parents gathered at the National Press Club of the Bulgarian News Agency in Pernik for a discussion focused on foster care and support for children at risk. The event was part of the national "Foster Me" initiative, organized jointly by BTA and Bulgaria's Social Assistance Agency, aimed at promoting foster care and raising public awareness about the need for foster families. Speaking during the discussion, Pernik Deputy Mayor Adrian Skrimov stressed that foster parents are not left alone in the process of caring for vulnerable children. "Foster parents receive continuous support from social workers, and the entire process is carefully planned," Skrimov said. "It is important for us to ensure care for children from vulnerable groups in the region and to guarantee their fundamental right to grow and develop fully". Anita Sarafka, chief expert for social activities in the municipal administration, said the municipality works closely with the Social Assistance Directorate and local organizations to ensure that foster care teams can respond immediately when a child requires placement. She added that Pernik Municipality has developed a broad network of social services, including state-delegated programs managed by the municipality, allowing professionals to provide tailored support based on each child's specific needs. - APP

BAKU: The 13th Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) taking place in Baku continues to attract broad international media attention. An article published by The Europe Today under the headline "Azerbaijan showcases global urban development vision with record-breaking WUF13 event in Baku" highlights the significance of the forum hosted by the Azerbaijani capital. The publication notes that the large-scale international gathering marks another important milestone for Azerbaijan, which is increasingly becoming a center for global dialogue, international cooperation, and major cultural and sporting events. "To ensure the successful organization of WUF13, the Azerbaijani authorities established a special Organizing Committee responsible for overseeing preparations, infrastructure development, logistics, transportation, security, and coordination with international partners. Officials stated that the decision to hold the forum in Azerbaijan reflects strong international confidence in the country's ability to host major global events and recognition of its modern urban development policies," the article states. It also notes that urban development and sustainable growth have been identified by President Ilham Aliyev as key strategic priorities of Azerbaijan's socio-economic agenda. Authorities emphasized that preserving architectural heritage while developing modern urban ecosystems remains a central pillar of state policy. Azerbaijan's declaration of 2026 as the "Year of Urban Planning and Architecture" further underscores the importance attached to the sector. The publication writes: "One of the forum's most notable venues is the 3.5-hectare Urban Expo Zone, the largest

Global media continues to focus on WUF13 in Baku

exhibition ever organized in WUF history. The exhibition features 217 organizations from around the world, while 66 countries are represented through national pavilions showcasing innovative urban solutions, housing projects, and sustainable development initiatives. "To enhance the visitor experience, organizers have also created a 2.5-hectare open-air 'WUF13 Boulevard,' designed to provide participants with cultural, recreational, and dining experiences reflecting the atmosphere of modern urban life. Volunteers play a central role throughout the event, assisting participants with registration, information services, logistics, exhibition coordination, and cultural activities." The article concludes by emphasizing that the successful hosting of WUF13 demonstrates Azerbaijan's growing contribution to addressing global urban challenges and promoting safe, sustainable, and inclusive cities worldwide. China's influential China Daily published an article titled "Shanghai Award presented at the 13th World Urban Forum in Azerbaijan," noting that the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities, or the Shanghai Award. - DNA

US embassy hosts grand FIFA World Cup launch ceremony

Natalie Baker highlighted that Pakistan is manufacturing world-class footballs for global use, while the FIFA World Cup to be hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico will be the biggest in history, featuring 48 teams for the first time

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: A prestigious launch event related to the upcoming FIFA World Cup was held at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, bringing together prominent figures from sports, government, and various sectors of society. Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, President of Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Mohsen Gilani, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, and Lahore Qalandars Chief Executive Atif Rana were among the distinguished guests in attendance. Addressing the ceremony, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan Natalie A. Baker said it was an honor that the first special FIFA World Cup-related event was being hosted in Pakistan. She expressed happiness over the positive progress being witnessed in the promotion and development of football in the country and noted that Pakistan is playing an important role in the FIFA World Cup. Natalie Baker highlighted that Pakistan is manufacturing world-class footballs for global use, while the FIFA World Cup to be hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico will be the biggest in history, featuring 48 teams for the first time. She said the United States is fully prepared to welcome fans



from around the world and celebrate the historic tournament in a grand manner. She added that sports, particularly football, serve as a powerful bridge to strengthen ties and understanding among nations and people across the globe. Speaking on the occasion, PFF President Mohsen Gilani said football is helping deepen relations between Pakistan and the United States. He described the FIFA World Cup as one of the greatest events in the world, adding that FIFA unites nations on a single platform through the spirit of the game. Mohsen Gilani further stated that Pakistan's women's football team recently participated in a FIFA event for the first time and secured a victory, calling it a historic milestone for the country. He also revealed that Pakistan Football appointed a woman as manager of the men's national football team for the first time, terming it a significant step towards women empowerment in sports. He emphasized that sports play a vital role in bringing people from different countries closer together and said Pakistan is proudly contributing to the FIFA World Cup. Referring to his recent meeting with the President of the U.S. Soccer Federation, Gilani said the United States would prove to be an outstanding host for the mega event. He also mentioned that U.S. President Donald Trump has a special attention for football.

Op Ghazab lil-Haq underway with full...

FROM PAGE 01 Net Regional Stabiliser to contribute towards peace, stability and progression in the region and beyond. The Prime Minister was also accompanied by Federal Defence, Interior and Information Ministers and Chief Minister Balochistan. Earlier upon arrival at Command & Staff College Quetta, the Prime Minister was received by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF.

Security forces kill 22 terrorists

FROM PAGE 01 lil-Haq in February this year, months after the two countries agreed to a ceasefire in October 2025, following clashes triggered by unprovoked gunfire by the Afghan Taliban regime at multiple border points. Despite many rounds of talks, both countries have so far failed to reach an agreement due to the Afghan Taliban regime's reluctance to take action against terrorist outfits operating from its soil.

Iran says will open new fronts...

FROM PAGE 01 with crude prices falling after Trump announced he was delaying a scheduled attack on Iran amid what he described as "serious negotiations." Brent crude and US WTI futures both declined as traders anticipated a possible diplomatic breakthrough that could ease threats to energy supplies and shipping routes in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has reportedly presented a new peace proposal that includes halting hostilities across the region, withdrawal of US forces near Iran's borders, and reparations for war damage. Gulf countries, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are said to have urged Washington to delay military action to give diplomacy a chance.

Airspace curbs for Indian...

FROM PAGE 01 April, a move that has resulted in losses amounting to billions of rupees for Indian airlines. Pakistan closed its airspace for Indian airlines in April last year in a tit-for-tat move after New Delhi suspended the critical Indus Water Treaty amid heightened bilateral tensions following the Pahalgam attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOJK), which New Delhi blames on Islamabad. Pakistan has rejected the allegations and also called for a transparent inquiry. Following Pakistan's decision, India also shut its airspace to Pakistani airlines on April 30, last year. After the Pahalgam attack, India, on May 6-7, 2025, launched unprovoked attacks on multiple Pakistani cities. In response, Pakistan's armed forces launched a large-scale retaliatory military action, "Operation Bunyanum Marsoos".

Briefs

PSX turns
bullish, gains
over 1,091
points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned bullish on Tuesday, gaining 1,091.66 points, a positive change of 0.67 per cent, closing at 162,896.68 points against 161,805.02 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 391.935 million shares with a traded value of Rs 22,975 billion, compared to 499.795 million shares valuing Rs 19,438 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization increased to Rs 18,081 trillion from Rs 17,990 trillion a day earlier. Out of 480 active companies in the ready market, 262 advanced, 171 declined, and 47 remained unchanged. Energycro PK topped the volume chart with 23,945 million shares, followed by Engro Holdings with 22,942 million shares and Bank of Punjab with 19,059 million shares.—APP

Gold price
remains
unchanged in
local market

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold remained unchanged in the local market on Tuesday, with 24 karat gold per tola staying steady at Rs 477,162, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (ASJA). The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold remained unchanged at Rs 409,089, while 10 grams of 22 karat gold stayed stable at Rs 375,011. In the international market, the price of gold remained unchanged at \$4,548 per ounce. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola remained unchanged at Rs 8,099, while the price of 10 grams of silver stood firm at Rs 6,943. The price of silver in the international market also remained unchanged at \$76.15 per ounce.—APP

Rupee gains 03
paise against
US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.57 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.60. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279 and Rs 279.60, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.12 and closed at Rs 323.92 from the previous day's close of Rs 324.04, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a surge of Rs 1.04 and closed at Rs 373.07 compared to the previous day's Rs 372.03. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham decreased by 01 paise and closed at Rs 75.84, while the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged to close at Rs 74.23.—APP

Russian missile
attack on
Ukraine city kills
2, wounds 17

TOKYO/KYIV: A Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian city of Pryluky, some 150 kilometers east of Kyiv, killed two people and wounded over a dozen on Tuesday, local officials said. "At around 10:00 am, the Russians struck the center of Pryluky with a ballistic missile," said Viacheslav Chaus, the head of the Chernigiv region. "It is already known that two people have been killed. At least 17 are wounded, including a 14-year-old child," he added. Russia meanwhile has downed a drone headed for Moscow, city Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on the Telegram messaging app on Tuesday. Emergency services have been deployed to the area where the drone has fallen, the post added. Separately, Ukrainian drones attacked Russia's Yaroslavl region north-east of Moscow on Tuesday, Governor Mikhail Yevrayev said on the Telegram messaging app, warning drivers to steer away from the capital or use alternative routes.—APP

Govt mulls privatization of
FESCO, GEPCO and IESCO

The transaction offers investors the opportunity to acquire between 51% and 100% shareholding together with management control in each of the three distribution companies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan, through the Privatisation Commission, has formally invited Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from local and international investors for the privatisation of three major electricity distribution companies (DISCOs): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO), and Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO). The transaction offers investors the opportunity to acquire between 51% and 100% shareholding together with management control in each of the three distribution companies. The initiative forms part of the Government's broader economic reform agenda aimed at improving efficiency, strengthening service delivery, attracting foreign and domestic investment, and promoting sustainable growth in Pakistan's power sector. FESCO, GEPCO and IESCO collectively serve more than 14 million consumers across major industrial, commercial and urban centers of Punjab and the Islamabad region. These entities operate extensive electricity distribution networks covering key economic corridors and represent strategically important assets within Pakistan's energy landscape. The Privatisation Commission stated that the process is being undertaken in a transparent, competitive and investor-friendly manner in accordance with international best practices. Interested parties may participate individually or as part of a consortium, subject to the qualification criteria outlined in the Request for Statement of Qualification (RSOQ) documents. An online investor briefing will also be



conducted jointly by the Privatisation Commission and the Financial Advisor to highlight investment opportunities, transaction structure and procedural requirements for interested investors. The Privatisation Commission will engage with potential investors and power sector stakeholders to refine the existing DISCO tariff structure, MYT regime, business model, and framework for competitive suppliers. The proposed reforms aim to create a performance and efficiency based return regime while enabling private sector buyers

to leverage DISCO infrastructure and customer base for additional business opportunities. These measures are expected to support faster and more effective private sector participation in Pakistan's power supply business. The Government of Pakistan views the privatisation of power distribution companies as a critical step toward modernising the energy sector, reducing inefficiencies, encouraging private-sector participation and enhancing consumer service standards. The initiative is expected

to contribute positively to fiscal sustainability, energy sector reforms and long-term economic stability. The Privatisation Commission emphasises that Pakistan remains committed to creating a predictable and enabling investment environment supported by policy continuity, regulatory transparency and institutional reforms. Detailed information regarding the transaction, qualification requirements and submission process is available on the official website of the Privatisation Commission.

Indonesia, Malaysia
demand release of
Gaza-bound flotilla
activists

JAKARTA: Indonesia and Malaysia on Tuesday demanded that Israel immediately release their nationals, after Israeli forces intercepted vessels from the Global Sumud Flotilla and detained dozens of foreign activists carrying aid for Gaza. The GSF mission, which comprised more than 50 boats and involved representatives from 45 countries, carried nearly 500 participants, including nine Indonesians and 29 Malaysians. The flotilla coalition left Turkey last week and was on the "final leg" of their planned journey to break Israel's illegal siege of Gaza when they were surrounded by Israeli forces in international waters off the coast of Cyprus. Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed on Tuesday that five citizens were among those detained by Israeli forces, while four other Indonesians are in two of the remaining 10 boats still sailing toward Gaza. "The situation on the ground remains highly dynamic. The four Indonesian citizens still sailing remain vulnerable and could be intercepted or detained by the Israeli military at any time," ministry spokesperson Yvonne Mewengkang said in a video statement. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges the Israeli government to immediately release all detained ships and crew members of international humanitarian missions and to ensure the continued distribution of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in accordance with international humanitarian law." The boats were about 250 nautical miles, or 463 km, from the coast of Gaza when they were intercepted, organizers said. Various footage, circulated widely online, showed the Israeli military approaching in speedboats and boarding the vessels in broad daylight on Monday. At least 41 boats have been intercepted and 337 participants kidnapped, according to GSF's live tracker. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said in a social media statement on Tuesday that he was working with other countries "to ensure that all activists detained by the Zionist regime" are immediately released. He described Israel as a "barbaric Zionist regime" in an initial statement issued on Monday, following the capture of 16 Malaysian activists who took part in the GSF mission. This evil regime's brazen action against this humanitarian aid mission not only violates human rights and international law, but also shows the greed of the Zionist regime in closing access for aid, suppressing the voice of humanity and oppressing anyone who rises up to defend and defend the Palestinian people," Ibrahim said.—DNA

China's irrigation tech viable
lifelines for Pak agri sector

BEIJING: China's smart and affordable irrigation technologies have been viewed as one of the most viable lifelines for Pakistan's agricultural sector. Yet despite long-running trials, partnerships, and verified outcomes in Pakistan, most of these solutions remain confined to small demonstration plots, failing to reach farmers who need them most. "We organized an online-offline training workshop on water-saving irrigation technology in Islamabad last year. Impressively, the final tally shows that online-only participants alone exceeded 960," Xinjiang Tianye (Group) Co., Ltd. told China Economic Net at the recently concluded 2026 World Irrigation Technology Conference. Proven Triumphs China's modern water-saving irrigation technologies have taken root in Pakistan for nearly 20 years. For instance, the aforementioned workshop has run for 16 editions since 2004. That same year, Tianye Group, one of China's first enterprises to introduce these technologies to Pakistan, launched drip irrigation demonstration programs there. It has been conducting trials in Punjab and Sindh, focusing on maize, cotton, and wheat. These trials have delivered tangible gains. Drip irrigation systems save at least 50% of water compared with traditional flood irrigation, while boosting crop yields notably and keeping seedling emergence rates above 90% in dry periods. Constrained by local infrastructure, we relied solely on a few small wells to run our demonstration plots in Pakistan. Even so, maize yields on our plots were double the local average," Lin Ping, Deputy Director of Tianye Water-Saving Engineering Center noted. "During last year's dry spell, fields using our irrigation technology were the only ones within a 150-kilometer radius to secure harvests," she underscored. Scaling Roadblocks Notwithstanding the evident results of demonstration programs, Chinese irrigation technologies have struggled to scale across Pakistan. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Students posing for a picture with PM advisor on youth affairs Rana Mashood and Ambassador of Türkiye Dr. Irfan Neziroglu on the occasion of commemoration of Atatürk Youth and Sports day, held at the Turkish embassy. — DNA

ECC okays key TSGs, PNSC
restructuring, gemstone policy

The ECC considered a summary submitted by the Ministry of Railways regarding allocation of additional grant for payment of outstanding liabilities under the Prime Minister Assistance Package

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet met today at the Finance Division under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb. The ECC approved a summary submitted by the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training for allocation of Rs. 3,915.24 million through Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) for the Prime Minister Youth Skill Development Programme through NAVTTC and establishment of Danish Schools in Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Balochistan. The ECC further approved two summaries submitted by the Ministry of Interior & Narcotics Control, including TSG amounting to Rs. 160 million for repair and maintenance of the Prime Minister's Office during FY 2025-26, and allocation of Rs. 480 million for recurring operational requirements of Frontier Corps KP (North) Hospital at Shakas, District Khyber. The Committee was informed that following winding up of Pakistan Public Works Department (Pak PWD), maintenance responsibilities of the Prime Minister's Office had been transferred to the Capital Development Authority (CDA). The ECC further noted that the approved allocation for FC KP (North) Hospital would support uninterrupted provision of healthcare and operational services for FC personnel, families of Shuhadas, and injured soldiers. The ECC considered and

approved a summary submitted by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination for a TSG of Rs. 1,500 million for the Prime Minister National Health Programme (4th Revised) during PSDP 2025-26. The programme, previously known as Sehat Sahulat Programme, is a fully public-financed social health protection initiative aimed at expanding healthcare coverage and supporting access to medical services. The Committee also approved a summary submitted by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan regarding enhancement of monthly Subsistence/Guzara Allowance for Jammu & Kashmir Refugees of 1989 from Rs. 3,500 to Rs. 6,000 per person with effect from 01 February 2026, along with allocation of Rs. 578.838 million through TSG for the period ending 30 June 2026. The Committee directed the concerned Ministry to take up future budgetary requirements with the Finance Division for the next budget cycle. The ECC considered a summary submitted by the Ministry of Railways regarding allocation of additional grant for payment of outstanding liabilities under the Prime Minister Assistance Package. After detailed deliberation, the Committee approved Rs. 1 billion as Prime Minister Assistance Package, and directed the Railways Division to undertake a broader review of their pension liabilities. The ECC also directed the Establishment Division to review the overall policy framework relating to the Prime Minister Assistance Package. The ECC further approved a summary submitted by the Ministry of National Food Security & Research for allocation of Rs. 1 billion through TSG for operationalization of the

National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority (NAFSA). The Authority was established to strengthen regulatory oversight relating to food safety, plant health, livestock, and agro-chemicals in line with international standards and trade requirements. The Committee also granted in-principle approval for restructuring of Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) through sale of 30% shareholding and transfer of management control to National Logistics Corporation (NLC), submitted by Ministry of Maritime Affairs. The ECC directed the concerned authorities to expedite the process in view of tapping the emerging maritime and transshipment opportunities. The ECC further approved the National Policy to Realize Pakistan's Gemstone Potential 2026-2030 submitted by the Industries and Production Division. The policy aims to formalize the gemstone sector, promote value addition and modern mining practices, and enhance exports and regional economic development, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Investment Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Federal Minister for Petroleum Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Mr. Rana Tanveer Hussain, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Mr. Haroon Akhtar Khan, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the relevant ministries, divisions, and regulatory authorities.

China's zero-tariff offer can help
Africa export better: UN

BEIJING: China's zero-tariff treatment for imports from 53 African countries can help African economies export better, not just export more, if supported by investment in processing, storage, transport and quality standards, said Stephen Jackson, UN Resident Coordinator in China. In a keynote speech at a trade and investment summit in Beijing, Jackson said the greatest development impact of tariff-free access would come when it helps African goods move further up the value chain.

"The opportunity is not only for Africa and the rest of the developing world to export more. It is to export better," Jackson said.

In response to a question from China Economic Net (CEN) during a group media interview on the sidelines of the summit, Jackson said tariff-free access needs to be followed by investment in capacity on the ground. There needs to be investment in the capacity on the ground, to help industrialise, to help improve quality, to help improve standards, to help improve rates of production," he said.—APP

MSF warns aid used for
'military objectives' in
S Sudan

NAIROBI: Medical charity Doctors Without Borders warned Tuesday that aid in South Sudan was being "instrumentalized" for military and political objectives, despite the country's dire humanitarian needs. After gaining independence in 2011, South Sudan descended into civil war and remains mired in extreme poverty, corruption and insecurity. Government troops under President Salva Kiir have again been clashing with militias allied to his long-time rival Riek Machar over the past 18 months, with conflict reported in 73 of 79 counties, according to the ACLED monitoring group. Doctors Without Borders, known by its French initials MSF, warned of a "concerning trend" to block humanitarian and civilian access to contested or opposition-controlled areas and said all sides were using aid for "military and political objectives." In a report, it said the government had prevented MSF from accessing Akobo town, a hotspot of recent fighting in Jonglei state, where the charity supported one of the few hospitals.—APP

US military
watchdog
probes strikes
on alleged
drug boats

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon's independent watchdog is probing the legality of the US military's widely criticized operation targeting alleged drug boats that has killed at least 192 people, US media reported on Monday. President Donald Trump's administration began striking vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean in September last year, insisting it is effectively at war with what it calls "narco-terrorists" operating out of Latin America. But legal experts and rights groups suggest the attacks could amount to extrajudicial killings because they have apparently targeted civilians who do not pose an immediate threat to the United States. Trump's administration has also not provided definitive evidence that the vessels it has attacked as part of Operation Southern Spear are involved in drug trafficking. The backlash from the operation is a blow to US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, who has said that the campaign to hunt down boats allegedly bringing drugs from South America has been so successful that it is now hard to find targets. "The scope of this evaluation includes the joint process for targeted vessels in the US Southern Command area of responsibility as part of Operation Southern Spear," the Pentagon's independent inspector general's office said in a statement quoted by Bloomberg.—APP

Briefs

Thailand cuts visa free stays

DNA

BANGKOK: Thailand is drastically cutting the length of visa-free stays for tourists from more than 90 countries in an effort to curb crime involving foreign nationals, officials said on Tuesday. Tourism is vital to the Southeast Asian nation's economy, but foreign arrivals are yet to return to their pre-Covid highs. A recent series of high-profile arrests of foreigners has included cases linked to drug offences, sex trafficking and foreigners operating businesses such as hotels and schools without proper permits. Under Thailand's current tourism scheme, travellers from more than 90 countries – including Europe's 29-nation Schengen area, the United States, Israel and several South American countries – are eligible to visit for up to 60 days without a visa. Thailand's cabinet approved reducing visa-free stays for travellers from those countries on Tuesday, Tourism Minister Surasak Phanchaoenworakul told reporters in Bangkok. The new visa-free duration would be decided on a country-by-country basis, with most foreign nationals granted stays of up to 30 days, while some could receive only 15 days, Surasak said. Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow said last week that the plan to reduce visa-free stays was part of a crackdown on transnational crime. Thailand was not targeting any specific country, he said, but rather individuals abusing the visa system by committing crimes in the country.

Russian missile attack on Ukraine

DNA

TOKYO/KYIV: A Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian city of Pryluky, some 150 kilometers east of Kyiv, killed two people and wounded over a dozen on Tuesday, local officials said. "At around 10:00 am, the Russians struck the center of Pryluky with a ballistic missile," said Viacheslav Chaus, the head of the Chernigiv region. "It is already known that two people have been killed. At least 17 are wounded, including a 14-year-old child," he added. Russia meanwhile has downed a drone headed for Moscow, city Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on the Telegram messaging app on Tuesday. Emergency services have been deployed to the area where the drone has fallen, the post added. Separately, Ukrainian drones attacked Russia's Yaroslavl region northeast of Moscow on Tuesday, Governor Mikhail Yevrayev said on the Telegram messaging app, warning drivers to steer away from the capital or use alternative routes. Russia has downed a number of Ukraine drones heading toward Moscow, the city's Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on Telegram earlier in the day.

Several 'prominent names' may emerge in Pinky case

Karachi local court sends suspect on three-day physical remand

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Inspector General of Police (IGP) Javed Alam Odho on Tuesday said that several prominent names could emerge during investigations into the alleged high-profile drug dealer Anmol alias Pinky case, urging citizens to cooperate with authorities in efforts against drug trafficking. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, the Sindh IGP said that a task force is being "We are forming a task force. People should provide information to assist authorities," he said, and added the fight against narcotics is the responsibility of every citizen. The statement from the top provincial cop came days after Pinky was arrested from her apartment in Karachi's Garden area.

However, the suspect denied the claim, alleging that she was detained in Lahore 15 days before being transferred to Karachi. Besides narcotics, the suspect is also facing murder charges and is currently in police custody on physical remand. In his presser, the IGP said multiple cases had already been registered against Pinky, including cases by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), adding that many individuals linked to the narcotics business could be identified during the probe. He said the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had been included in the investigation to examine banking transactions connected to the case, while the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) would also look into online drug sales. The Sindh IGP said authorities were distinguishing between drug users

and drug dealers, stressing that those involved in narcotics trafficking would not be spared. He revealed that police had arrested more than 1,000 criminals and seized 40 kilograms of crystal meth (ice) during ongoing operations. He said that Pinky mostly resided in Lahore and urged people not to glamorise the suspect. Addressing the strict security present with Anmol during her court appearances, he emphasised that the police were keeping several "risks" in mind. "The nature of her business is such that there is a risk of many names emerging. One risk is that someone can harm her, so [investigations] do not proceed ahead," he said. Anmol, during her court appearances, has alleged she was facing pressure from the police "to take names" of politicians

and other influential persons. Odho went on to cite police expertise, according to which suspects facing multiple cases remained "under stress". "The objective is not only to protect others from them, but also to protect them from themselves," he said. At the same time, he stressed, "We have not provided security to her as such; only what was appropriate and needed." During his media talk, the Sindh IG also emphasised that the police were "separating" drug users, from whom narcotics were recovered, and suppliers, who were buying drugs in bulk and circulating them ahead. He said that the latter were "more dangerous because they are also acting as suppliers and have a role in ruining society." "We will not let them go under any circumstances," he vowed.



ANKARA: National Defense Minister Yaşar Güler received Pakistan Air Force Commander General Zahaer Ahmed Baber Sidhu in his office. During the reception, Air Force Commander General Ziya Cemal Kadıoğlu was also present. – DNA

Pakistan, IMF broadly agree on macroeconomic framework

Finance Ministry projects 4.1% GDP growth and 8.6% average inflation for the upcoming FY27 budget

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the visiting International Monetary Fund (IMF) team have reached a broad agreement on the macroeconomic framework for the upcoming budget 2026-27, with the Ministry of Finance projecting real GDP growth at 4.1% and average CPI-based inflation at around 8.6%. The IMF has already set a primary balance target of 2% of GDP, equivalent to Rs2.9 trillion, for the next budget. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday held a virtual meeting with the four provincial finance ministers and their economic teams, asking the provinces to focus on additional revenue measures worth Rs400 billion to achieve the desired primary surplus in the 2026-27 budget. The CPI-based inflation, according to the sources, resulted in a heated debate as the Ministry of Finance has projected inflation in the range of 8.6% on average compared to the IMF's projection of 8.4%, keeping in view the persistence of higher fuel prices in the first two quarters of the next financial year. Independent economists have expressed their fears that CPI-based inflation might go up to 11% on average, with increasing apprehension that the State Bank of Pakistan might opt for further tightening of monetary policy in the next fiscal year. The current account deficit is projected to hover around \$4 billion, less than 1% of GDP in the next fiscal year, backed by exports of \$35 billion, imports of \$70 billion and remittances in the range of \$42 billion.

Iran stages mass weddings for couples ready for war 'sacrifice'

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities held mass public weddings in Tehran for couples who signed up to a state-sponsored scheme declaring their readiness to sacrifice their lives in the war against the US and Israel. The ceremonies conducted late on Monday involved hundreds of couples in several major squares in the capital, including more than 100 in the vast Imam Hossein square in central Tehran, according to reports in Iranian media. They were broadcast on state TV in a bid to boost wartime morale, with US President Donald Trump repeatedly threaten-

ing new military action against Iran amid a shaky ceasefire which halted the fighting that began on February 28. Those involved had signed up, according to Iranian media, for the so-called "self-sacrifice" scheme (janfada in Persian) where people pledged to put their lives on the line in the war by, for example, forming human chains outside power stations. Iranian authorities say millions of people, including top figures such as speaker of parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and President Masoud Pezeshkian, have put their names forward. Couples arrived at the Imam Hossein square in military jeeps with

mounted machine guns and were married on a stage in a ceremony presided over by a cleric, AFP images showed. The stage was festooned with balloons and with a giant image of Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who has yet to appear in public since being elevated to the position after the killing of his father and predecessor Ali Khamenei on the first day of the war. "Certainly, the country is at war, but young people also have the right to marry," one young woman in a white Islamic bridal dress, who was not named, said beside her groom in footage published by the Mehr news agency. A man in a dark suit, beside his

bride-to-be, said they were happy the occasion marked the anniversary of the marriage of the prophet Ali, revered by Shia Muslims, to Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. "We received their blessings. Furthermore, we came to offer our best wishes to the people in the streets," he said. Mehr said 110 couples had taken part in the Imam Hossein square ceremony alone. The AFP images showed crowds of well-wishers clapping roses and watching on. Since the start of the war, Iranian authorities have held on a near-daily basis major pro-government gatherings in a bid to highlight popular mobilization amid the conflict.

CNG crisis: Kundi says PM has formed committee

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had constituted a committee on the compressed natural gas (CNG) crisis in the province. The development comes a day after, in a rare show of unity, the KP government and opposition joined hands over wheat and CNG crises in the province and demanded that the federal government resume wheat supply and withdraw its orders for the closure of CNG stations in the province. The province has been affected by a CNG crisis since April, with several filling stations shut and millions of citizens struggling for affordable fuel. The situation has also negatively impacted the economic activity in the province. In a post on the social media platform X on Tuesday, Kundi said, "Thankful to PM Shehbaz for con-

stituting a committee on the critical issue of CNG closure in KP. "KP is producing nearly 508 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) of natural gas against a requirement of around 130 mmcf, yet our people continue to face unnecessary hardship," Kundi said. The governor highlighted that under Article 158 of the Constitution, the province producing natural gas had the "first right and precedence over its usage". He called for the constitutional rights of the people of KP to be upheld. He expressed his gratitude to the KP government and "all political parties" for standing united on the issue. "On matters concerning the rights of KP and the welfare of our people, we must rise above political differences and speak with one voice," Kundi said. In a separate statement, Kundi said that KP Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati had called a meeting on the CNG and wheat crises in the province. "With the joint efforts of the opposition and the provincial government, the prime minister formed a committee on the issue of the CNG shutdown," the governor said. He added that a meeting would be held with the committee "very soon", where the provincial government and opposition representatives would speak to the committee. Kundi said that the opposition in the province was playing an important role in provincial matters. "We stand with the government on provincial issues," he stated. "All rights of the province can be obtained from the federation through negotiations."

Finnish divers recover two Italian bodies

HELSINKI: The Divers' Alert Network Europe, which deployed the three Finnish divers, said on its website that they are technical and cave divers with international experience in search and recovery missions, including operations in "deep overhead environments, confined spaces and high-risk scenarios." The team used advanced technical systems, including closed-circuit rebreathers, a system that recycles exhaled breathing gas and removes carbon dioxide through a chemical scrubber, allowing for "significantly longer dives," the organization said. The body of a fifth Italian – a diving instructor – was found earlier outside the cave on the day they were reported missing. The five were exploring a cave at a depth of about 50 meters in Vaavu Atoll on Thursday, according to Italy's Foreign Ministry. Initial teams had already dived to identify and mark the entrance to the cave system where the Italians disappeared. – APP

Pak, other nine nations condemn Israeli attacks

DNA

PAKISTAN, Türkiye, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Jordan, Libya, Maldives, and Spain denounced Israel's renewed attacks on the Global Sumud Flotilla, describing the humanitarian mission as a peaceful effort to spotlight the worsening plight of Palestinians. In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of these countries recalled with grave concern the Israeli interventions against previous flotillas in international waters and condemned the continuation of hostile acts targeting civilian vessels and humanitarian activists. "Such assaults, including attacks against the vessels and the arbitrary detention of activists, constitute blatant violations of international law and international humanitarian law," the statement added.

Bangladesh Close to win 2nd Test also

SPORTS DESK

DHAKA: Bangladesh are three wickets away from a famous Test series win at home after spinner Tajul Islam took 4-113 to rattle Pakistan despite a rearguard by the opposition batters on Tuesday. Pakistan ended day four on 316-7, needing another 121 runs for victory in what would be a record chase of 437 on the fifth and final day in Sylhet. Mohammad Rizwan, on 75, and Sajid Khan, on eight, were unbeaten at the close of play. Left-arm spinner Tajul struck key blows, including Babar Azam for 47 and Salman Agha on 71, to keep Bangladesh in the hunt for their first-ever Test series win over Pakistan at home. Pakistan slumped to 162-5 and were heading towards a tame defeat before Rizwan and Agha put on 134 runs to raise hopes of Test cricket's highest chase.

Sana Yousaf murder case: Umar Hayat handed death sentence

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad sessions court sentenced Umar Hayat, the main accused in the Sana Yousaf murder case, to death on Monday. Hayat was arrested by the Islamabad Police a day after 17-year-old TikTok influencer Yousaf was shot dead in her house on June 2, 2025. Islamabad Inspector General (IG) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi had said the then-22-year-old culprit was arrested from Faisalabad and termed it a case of "repeated rejections". Judge Afzal Majoka announced the verdict in the case today, handing Hayat a death sentence, in addition to 10 years of imprisonment and Rs2 million fine. Hayat was indicted by the court of Judge Majoka on September 20, where he had



denied the charges made against him. Last year, Hayat – son of a retired government official and a TikTok star himself – had confessed before a magistrate under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) that he shot Sana. However, yesterday, he retracted his earlier confessional statement while testifying before the trial court. In his previous statement, Hayat had admitted to developing a one-sided obsession with Yousaf after online interactions, and said jealousy and suspicion drove him to commit the crime. Yousaf, a TikTok star with more than a million followers on social media platforms, was known for sharing videos of her favourite cafés, skincare routines, and traditional outfits. Her killing drew nationwide condemnation and reignited debate over women's safety in Pakistan.

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