



# Islamabad POST

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## FO condemns mistreatment of flotilla activists

**“Pakistan demands the immediate release of all illegally detained activists. It also calls on the international community to ensure the safety, dignity, and fundamental rights of those detained”**

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Thursday condemned Israel's unlawful interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters as well as the arbitrary detention and reported mistreatment of humanitarian workers. The statement came a day after Israel's far-right national security minister posted a video showing detained activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla kneeling with their hands tied and foreheads on the ground, sparking international condemnation. In the statement released on Thursday, the FO said, “The government of Pakistan condemns in the strongest possible terms the unlawful interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla by Israeli occupying forces in the international waters as well as arbitrary detention and reported mistreatment of humanitarian workers onboard.” The statement said that those detained also reportedly included humanitarian activist Saad Edhi, son of prominent social worker Faisal Edhi and grandson of late philanthropist Abdul Sattar Edhi. “Pakistan demands the immediate release of all illegally detained activists. It also calls on the international community to ensure the safety, dignity, and fundamental rights of those detained,” it said. The FO said it remains in “close contact” with Pakistani diplomatic missions in the region to ensure the safe return of any detained Pakistani nationals. The Global Sumud Flotilla had set sail from Turkey last week in the latest attempt by activists to breach Israel's blockade of the Palestinian territory, after Israeli forces intercepted a previous convoy last month. Earlier this week, Pakistan and nine other countries issued a joint statement condemning Israel's interception of the flotilla. The joint statement was issued by

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## Israel begins deporting flotilla activists

DNA

TEL AVIV: Israel has released hundreds of activists who attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza and is in the process of deporting them, according to a legal organization working with the flotilla. The Israel-based legal advocacy group, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, or Adalah, said Thursday that all of the international activists are in transit to a civilian airport near the southern Israeli city of Eilat for deportation. The group said one participant, Zohar Regev, who holds Israeli citizenship, was in a court hearing in the southern city of Ashkelon on charges of illegal entry into Israel and unlawful stay. Regev has taken part in previous flotillas to Gaza. Netanyahu calls for quick deportation after rebuking security minister Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday he instructed that the activists be deported “as soon as possible,” after sharply rebuking Israel's national security minister for a provocative video showing the minister taunting

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## Wanted terrorist killed

DNA

PESHAWAR: A wanted terrorist ringleader was killed along with four other militants in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Spinwam area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district, security sources said on Thursday. As per security sources, Kharji Umar alias Jan Mir alias Tor Saqib had a bounty of Rs3 million on his head. It said that the Fitna al Khawarij ringleader was the mastermind of several attacks on security forces and civilians. Fitna al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.

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## Pakistan PM Sharif to visit China May 23-26

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit Beijing from Saturday to Tuesday for talks, the Chinese foreign ministry said, without specifying whether the war in Iran would be discussed. Pakistan and China have both sought to mediate in the Middle East conflict, sparked by US and Israeli strikes. A ceasefire agreement since April 8 has halted hostilities, but US President Donald Trump warned on Wednesday that the window for diplomacy was closing. “The leaders of China and Pakistan will have an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and issues of common concern,” Chinese ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister presenting a commemorative stamp to Prince Rahim Agha Khan issued by Pakistan Post to honour His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV for his services to Pakistan. – DNA

## PM hosts breakfast

## Aga Khan expresses desire to continue cooperation with Pak

PM Shehbaz also highlighted the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), and commended the organisation's contributions in rural development, healthcare, education, disaster resilience, climate adaptation, renewable energy, digital skills training, and youth entrepreneurship

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prince Rahim al-Hussaini Aga Khan V on Thursday expressed the desire to continue cooperation with Pakistan in various human development initiatives during a breakfast meeting hosted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. Prince Rahim is undertaking his first visit to Pakistan since being named the spiritual leader of the Ismaili community last year. According to a statement by the PMO, the premier warmly welcomed Prince Rahim and appreciated his commitment to fostering peace, stability, and constructive engagement with governments and international partners. The prime minister also

Continued on Page 06

## ‘Pak-China ties continue to grow’

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that built on mutual trust, sovereign equality, and shared aspirations for peace and development, the relations between Pakistan and China have continued to grow in strength, substance, and strategic significance, amidst

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## Briefs

### Pakistan, Germany sign €40.5m accord

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Germany have signed an agreement worth 40.5 million euros to launch new development projects in climate, energy, and social protection sectors. Secretary Economic Affairs Muhammad Humair Karim Kidwai and German Ambassador Ina Lepel signed the agreement in Islamabad today. Under the agreement, the German Development Bank will provide financial and technical support for launch of nine new development projects across Pakistan.

### ‘2nd phase of CPEC focused on business ties’

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb says the ever-growing Pakistan-China relations will have a huge business impact in the future, along with their strategic significance. In an exclusive interview with Radio Pakistan's correspondent Zafar Iqbal Mayo, he said the government launched its inaugural Panda Bond last week, tapping Chinese capital markets for the first time. Reflecting on the evolution of bilateral economic cooperation, Muhammad Aurangzeb noted that the first phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was focused on infrastructure and its development. He said now fostering business-to-business ties is the hallmark of the second phase of CPEC. Muhammad Aurangzeb further said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit China next week, leading a high-level delegation.

## Supreme Leader

## ‘Enriched uranium must stay in Iran’

Iran's top officials, the sources said, believe that sending the material abroad would leave the country more vulnerable to future attacks

AGENCIES

DUBAI: Iran's Supreme Leader has issued a directive that the country's near-weapons-grade uranium should not be sent abroad, two senior Iranian sources said, hardening Tehran's stance on one of the main US demands at peace talks. Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei's order could further frustrate US President Donald Trump and complicate talks on ending the US-Israeli war on Iran. Israeli officials have told that Trump has assured Israel that Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, needed to make an atomic weapon, will be sent out of Iran and that any peace deal must include a clause on this. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he will not consider the war over until enriched uranium is removed from Iran, Tehran ends its support for proxy militias, and its ballistic missile capabilities are eliminated. “The Supreme Leader's directive, and

Continued on Page 06

## China reaffirms support to Pakistan

DNA

BEIJING: China has reaffirmed support for Pakistan's “fair and balanced” mediating role aimed at ending the ongoing Middle East conflict, as diplomatic efforts intensified amid fresh military escalation in the region. According to reports, Beijing welcomed Islamabad's continued diplomatic engagement and stressed the need for ceasefire and dialogue to restore stability in the Gulf and wider Middle East. China has repeatedly backed Pakistan's role in facilitating communication between Iran and the United States during

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## PTI says agitation is the only option

The TTAP posted on X that over 70 PTI senators and MNAs, as well as Senate Opposition Leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, were among the meeting's participants

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: After PTI leaders were denied a meeting with party founder Imran Khan yet another time on Thursday, MNA Ahad Ali Shah said it seemed his party would “now have to resort to agitation”. “We have reached a conclusion that the government will not arrange meeting with Imran Khan if the party remains peaceful. It seems that now we will have to resort to agitation as the government is not ready to listen to our peaceful requests and demands,” he said while speaking to Dawn. The Islamabad High Court has allowed Imran twice-a-week meetings – on Tuesdays and Thursdays – with his family, lawyers and other associates at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, where he is incarcerated since 2023.

Despite the court order, the former premier has been restricted from meeting visitors for several weeks. On Wednesday, MNA Ahad Ali Shah posted on X that the PTI had submitted a list of six leaders, including him, to Adiala jail authorities for their meeting with Imran. “We were informed by the jail administration that a message has been sent and we should wait for an approval. “We waited there till 4pm but did not get any message from jail authorities. As the meeting time had ended, we decided to leave,” he said. In response to a question, Shah said the PTI had concluded that “the government will never arrange a meeting as long as the party remains peaceful”. “It seems that now we will have to resort to agitation as

Continued on Page 06



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## Efforts afoot to ensure max polio vaccination

RAWALPINDI :All-out efforts were made on the fourth and final day of the ongoing Sub-National Immunization Days (SNIDs) drive to ensure maximum coverage of missed and at-risk children across the district. District Health Officer, Rawalpindi Health Authority, Dr. Jawad Zahid on Thursday said during field monitoring on final day, visits were conducted to Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi where the vaccination status of children was randomly checked, including those visiting as patients and attendants, to ensure administration of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV). Talking to APP, he said remote teams were directed to frequently visit patient rest areas, the Emergency Departments and main entry gates of health facilities to cover any missed children, with special focus on Super High-Risk Mobile Children (SMCs), Persistent Missed Children (PMCs), zero-dose cases and Mobile and Migrant Populations (MMPs). He added that extended evening catch-up activities were underway in public parks and commercial areas to maximise outreach, while a market survey was also conducted in different areas to assess the quality of polio coverage and community response, enabling immediate identification and vaccination of missed children.—APP

## Decision to lift wheat transportation ban lauded

PESHAWAR: Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Thursday welcomed the decision of the committee constituted by the Prime Minister regarding the removal of the ban on wheat transportation from Punjab to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to a statement issued by the Office of the Press Secretary to the speaker, he expressed gratitude to Faisal Karim Kundi, Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, Opposition Leader Dr. Ibadullah, and all parliamentary leaders and political parties for demonstrating unity in the larger interest of the people of the province. The speaker said this was the result of collective stance of political leadership in the province. He congratulated all political and parliamentary leaders for such initiatives and future cooperation on the issue.—APP

## Call for boosting digital trade finance framework

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Single Window (PSW) and Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (Pak EXIM) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance data-driven trade finance and support export growth. Under the agreement, Pak EXIM will leverage PSW's national digital trade infrastructure as a source of verified trade data to support underwriting and risk assessment for its export credit insurance products, export finance schemes administered on behalf of the government and other financial services. The integration of real-time trade information with official credit mechanisms is expected to improve risk evaluation, streamline processing, and facilitate greater access to finance for exporters, said a press release issued here.—APP

# Ahsan concerned over cost escalation in Diamer Dam project

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday chaired a meeting of the Central Development Working Party (CDWP). A revised project related to the Ministry of Water Resources, namely "Diamer Basha Dam Project - Dam Part with Reflection of Helicopter Cost," worth Rs 485,006 billion, came under discussion and was referred to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further consideration, a news release said. While discussing the Diamer Basha Dam project, Ahsan Iqbal expressed serious concern that the revised PC-I of the project had not been submitted during the last six years despite a manifold increase in the project cost from the originally approved cost of Rs 480 billion in 2018, which reflected poor project management capacity. He directed the new chairman of Water and Power Development Authority to ensure that the project was managed in a professional manner. He further observed that concerns regarding the escalating cost of the project had repeatedly been raised during Standing

Committee on Planning meetings since 2020. However, despite the passage of several years, WAPDA had still not submitted the revised PC-I. He emphasized that these reservations should be made part of the official record. The CDWP allowed revision of the PC-I relate to helicopter procurement purely on security grounds and directed that the revised PC-I for the dam component should be submitted without further delay. The deputy chairman further questioned whether a holistic, integrated and professional project design and management system for mega projects existed in WAPDA. "WAPDA should undertake necessary steps to improve its project management capacity," he added. After detailed discussion, the forum also referred another revised project, namely "Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower Project," worth Rs 316,411 billion, to ECNEC for further consideration. While discussing the project, Ahsan Iqbal expressed serious concerns over its management, transparency and oversight mechanisms. He observed that the professional capability of the concerned staff appeared questionable, as the Ministry of Water Resources had also pointed out shortcomings in its inquiry report. The minis-

ter questioned the process through which a local consultant with a dubious record was engaged for the project, stating that an international consultant had initially been hired and was subsequently replaced by a local company in a non-transparent manner. He directed the concerned authorities to share the inquiry report with the ministry for detailed review. Highlighting the financial implications of the project, the minister noted that it was originally estimated at Rs 82 billion, whereas expenditures had already crossed Rs 140 billion. He further directed that all observations regarding mismanagement, weak due diligence, and the performance of contractors and consultants be formally placed before ECNEC by an inquiry committee headed by Member Infrastructure. He directed the committee to thoroughly examine these issues, review the observations raised during the meeting, and submit a comprehensive report to ECNEC. He also directed the authorities concerned to develop a robust institutional framework to prevent such shortcomings in future projects, emphasizing that organizations like WAPDA must uphold the highest standards of professionalism, accountability and project governance.—DNA

# Polish envoy hails Pak's peace efforts amid global tensions

The ambassador said Poland strongly supported negotiations and diplomacy as the preferred means for resolving disputes and reducing tensions. He added that Warsaw hoped ongoing diplomatic efforts in the region would succeed because peace and stability were essential not only for the Middle East but also for the wider international community

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Poland's Ambassador to Pakistan, Maciej Pisarski, on Thursday emphasized the importance of diplomacy, dialogue and regional cooperation while praising Pakistan's role in promoting peace and mediation amid ongoing international tensions. The ambassador was addressing a "Meet the Press" session at the National Press Club Islamabad, where he discussed bilateral relations, regional stability, economic cooperation and global security challenges. The event was attended by journalists, diplomats and members of the press club administration. Upon his arrival at the National Press Club, Ambassador Pisarski received a warm welcome from club office-bearers. NPC Secretary Rao Furqan, in his opening remarks, said diplomacy and media played a critical role in promoting international harmony and strengthening mutual understanding between nations. He noted that the Polish Embassy had maintained close engagement with Pakistani journalists and appreciated its efforts to enhance media interaction. NPC President Razaq Sial also welcomed the ambassador and highlighted the importance of ties between diplomats and the media community. He said such interactions created opportunities for constructive dialogue and helped strengthen people-to-people understanding between countries. Speaking at the forum, Ambassador Pisarski described the "Meet the Press" session as an important platform for the exchange of ideas and noted that it was his second visit to the National Press Club. He said relations between Pakistan and Poland were "warm, friendly and steadily expanding" across multiple sectors. The envoy particularly highlighted Pakistan's role in mediation efforts related to tensions between the United States and Iran, saying Islamabad occupied a unique diplomatic position because of its ability to maintain communication with all sides. "Only a few countries maintain relations with both parties involved in the conflict. This reflects the trust both sides place in Pakistan despite existing concerns," he remarked. The ambassador said Poland strongly supported negotiations and diplomacy as the preferred means for resolving disputes and reducing tensions. He added that Warsaw hoped ongoing diplomatic efforts in the region would succeed because peace and stability were essential not



only for the Middle East but also for the wider international community. Referring to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Ambassador Pisarski said the war should be resolved in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the internationally recognized principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. "These are not only European values, but universal human values," he said, while reiterating Poland's support for peaceful conflict resolution through diplo-

mac and negotiations. Discussing bilateral relations, Ambassador Pisarski said recent high-level exchanges between Pakistan and Poland had opened a "new chapter" in political consultations and cooperation between the two countries. He referred to the recent visit of Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski to Pakistan, during which he held meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari.

## Sindh okays major reforms in health, edu sectors

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh Cabinet on Thursday approved a series of major policy decisions and legislative reforms relating to health, education, transport, fisheries, workers' welfare and governance during a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House. The cabinet approved legislation for the operational management of Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and the National Institute of Child Health (NICH) following transfer of both institutions from the federal government to Sindh under an operations and management agreement. The proposed "JPMC and NICH Operation and Management Act, 2025" standardises recruitment rules for executive directors and introduces a mechanism for removal on grounds of unsatisfactory performance or incapacity. The governing board will also include a representative of the federal Ministry of National Health Services for coordination purposes. The cabinet also approved implementation of the "Sindh Post Graduate Residency Policy 2026" across all public sector medical universities and teaching institutions to introduce a centralised and transparent induc-

tion system for postgraduate medical training. Under the new policy, admissions for FCPS, MCPS, MD and MS programmes will be conducted through a uniform entry test and merit formula. The government has allocated Rs 4,739 billion for 3,794 sanctioned training slots. The policy also introduces a 50:50 seat distribution between FCPS/MCPS and MD/MS streams, a zero vacancy mechanism for vacant seats and mandatory rotations in district and tehsil hospitals with additional merit incentives for peripheral service. The cabinet approved amendments to the Sindh Safe Blood Transfusion Act to broaden eligibility criteria for appointment of the administrative head of the Sindh Blood Transfusion Authority. To strengthen technical and higher education, the cabinet approved the STEVTA Amendment Bill, 2026, introducing mandatory registration of all public and private technical and vocational institutions in Sindh under a unified quality assurance framework. The cabinet also approved amendments to the IBA Karachi and Iqra University laws, allowing establishment of campuses and research centres within and outside Sindh, including Islamabad, besides introducing online, distance and transnational education programmes. In an effort to accelerate

work on the Karachi BRT Red Line Project, the cabinet approved direct contracting with Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) for completion of Lot-2 after termination of the previous contractor due to delays and non-compliance. The chief minister directed completion of mixed traffic lanes, underpasses, elevated structures and drainage works on the 12.85-kilometre corridor from Numaish to Mosamiyat within 90 days. The cabinet also approved emergency off-budget funding for TransKarachi. The cabinet approved transition of the Sindh Business One Stop Shop (SBOS) to the Sindh IT Company along with a six-month service agreement worth Rs150 million to ensure uninterrupted operations of the digital platform. On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the cabinet approved two development schemes for Sukkur, including upgradation of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Wellness and Recreational Park at a cost of Rs228.5 million and establishment of a ladies block at Mir Masoom Shah Library for Rs110.346 million. An additional allocation of over Rs916 million was also approved for prison food charges during the current financial year.

## Soyabean imports decrease 61%

The food group exports from the country during the period under review registered negative growth of 32.2 percent as it was recorded at \$ 6.164 billion during the first 10 months of last financial year

DNA


ISLAMABAD: The import of soyabean oil into the country during the first 10 months of the current financial year decreased by 61.15 percent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April, 2025-26, about 97,521 metric tons of soyabean oil valued at \$108.683 million was imported as compared to the imports of 262,106 metric tons costing \$279.768 million of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. However, the imports of palm oil into the country during the period under review grew by 15.41 per-

cent and over 3.075 million tons of \$3.313 billion were imported as compared to the imports of 2.751 million tons valued at \$2.871 billion of the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, the imported of pulses into the country decreased by 25.01 percent as 1.159 million tons of pulses valued at \$688.357 million were imported during last 10 months of current financial year as against the imports of 1.324 million tons costing \$917.891 million of the same period of the last year. The food group imports into the country during the first 10 months of current financial year grew by 13.81 percent

as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April, 2026, food commodities worth of \$7.848 billion were imported as compared to the imports of \$6.898 billion of the same period of the last year. On the other hand the food commodities worth of \$ 4.190 billion were exported during the first 10 months of current fiscal year as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. The food group exports from the country during the period under review registered negative growth of 32.2 percent as it was recorded at \$ 6.164 billion during the first 10 months of last

## Strategy for better cotton crop amid heat-wave






FAISALABAD: The Punjab Agriculture Department has issued an advisory and comprehensive management strategy for cotton growers to protect the crop from the ongoing intense heat-wave and ensure healthy growth and better yield. A spokesman for Agriculture (Extension) Department said here on Thursday that the farmers have been advised to give preference to heat-tolerant cotton varieties to minimize the adverse effects of extreme temperatures on the crop. He said that in view of the prevailing heat-wave conditions, the growers should carry out deep ploughing before sowing cotton and apply double irrigation prior to cultivation so that moisture storage in the soil could be increased, the land could remain soft and the crop could better withstand heat stress. He said that in case of seasonal or late-sown cotton, the irrigation should be carried out after every three days to reduce the damaging effects of excessive heat. He advised farmers to assess the water requirement of the crop regularly and, in case of moisture deficiency, irrigation should preferably be done during evening or night hours to minimize water loss through evaporation. He said that instead of applying excessive water at one time, the farmers should adopt light irrigation at short intervals so that plant roots could get adequate nutrition and proper aeration for healthy development. He also advised cotton growers to start four weekly sprays of two percent potassium nitrate solution from the flowering stage of the crop to achieve better production results and improve plant resistance against heat stress. He further said that recommended bio-stimulants including amino acid-based growth-promoting compounds should also be sprayed for protection against bollworm attack. The use of bio-stimulants not only helps control pest infestation but also improves the overall growth and vigor of cotton plants, he added.—DNA



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MAY

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

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- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



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- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



## Islamabad Metropolitan

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

## Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters diving in the Rawal Lake spillway stream water to beat the heat in a hot day experiencing in the federal capital.

# Gilani calls for Pak, BD institutional coop in research

Addressing the graduating officers, the Chairman Senate said they were not merely representatives of Bangladesh's civil service but ambassadors of cooperation, understanding, friendship, and regional harmony

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, on Thursday called for institutionalized cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh in the fields of parliamentary affairs, civil service training, legislative research, digital governance, public policy, and leadership development. Addressing the closing ceremony of the Executive Development Programme organized for a Bangladesh Civil Services delegation by the Civil Services Academy and the National School of Public Policy, he emphasized that the future of South Asia depends on constructive engagement, mutual respect, and stronger people-to-people connections. Welcoming the distinguished delegation from Bangladesh, the Chairman of the Senate described the programme as a highly meaningful initiative aimed at reviving institutional linkages and promoting mutual understanding between the two brotherly countries after more than five decades. He said that nations grow stronger when institutions, professionals, and people remain connect-

ed through dialogue, cooperation, and shared learning. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani appreciated the role of the Civil Services Academy and the National School of Public Policy in organizing the programme and providing a valuable platform for intellectual exchange and professional collaboration. He added that such initiatives help build trust, strengthen regional understanding, and create new opportunities for long-term cooperation. Referring to his recent interaction with the Bangladesh Civil Services delegation during their visit to the Senate of Pakistan, the Chairman of the Senate said the engagement reflected warmth, sincerity, and a genuine desire on both sides to open a new and promising chapter in bilateral relations. He also welcomed the positive sentiments conveyed by the Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, particularly the proposal regarding the training of Bangladeshi parliamentary staff in Pakistan. He termed the proposal an encouraging step towards deeper parliamentary and institutional engagement between the two countries. The Chairman Senate stressed that the time had come to institutionalize regular exchanges between

Pakistan and Bangladesh in areas of mutual interest, including parliamentary cooperation, governance reforms, civil service modernization, policy research, and digital transformation. He said enhanced interaction between parliaments, training academies, universities, and policy institutions would contribute significantly to regional stability and sustainable development. Highlighting his responsibilities as President of the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services and Founding Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting stronger institutional partnerships and knowledge-sharing mechanisms with Bangladesh. The Chairman Senate observed that Pakistan and Bangladesh are connected through shared history, cultural affinity, faith, and enduring human bonds. He said there is increasing recognition on both sides that the future of the region must be shaped not by the burdens of the past but by the opportunities of the future. He further remarked that strong nations are built through strong institutions, ethical leadership, and public trust. He un-

derscored the central role of civil servants in ensuring continuity, implementation of policies, and preservation of institutional memory, stating that public servants ultimately translate national vision into public welfare. Addressing the graduating officers, the Chairman Senate said they were not merely representatives of Bangladesh's civil service but ambassadors of cooperation, understanding, friendship, and regional harmony. He said that in an increasingly polarized global environment, programmes such as the Executive Development Programme serve as bridges of trust, wisdom, and enduring friendship among nations. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani expressed confidence that the friendships formed and experiences shared during the programme would further strengthen bilateral ties and pave the way for enhanced cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh in the years ahead. The Chairman Senate concluded his address by conveying his best wishes for the continued progress, peace, and prosperity of both brotherly countries and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting meaningful engagement and lasting friendship with Bangladesh.

## Railways moves towards financial autonomy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has initiated the payment of long-pending dues of its employees as part of ongoing financial reforms aimed at achieving institutional stability and financial autonomy. The department has started disbursing travelling allowance payments to Class-IV employees that had remained pending for the last eight years, said a news release. An amount of Rs 70 million has been released for the purpose, triggering a wave of relief and satisfaction among railway workers, who thanked Federal Minister for Railways, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi. Pakistan Railways has also cleared payments worth Rs 290 million to railway contractors, reflecting improved financial management and administrative efficiency within the department. The salary cheques of railway employees had been sent in advance to the State Bank of Pakistan to ensure timely disbursement of salaries. Federal Minister for Railways, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi said that timely payments and financial stability were indicators of better governance and effective management in Pakistan Railways.—APP

## Muqam, Dr. Karim discuss GB polls

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SA-FRON, Amir Muqam held an important meeting with a delegation led by Senator Dr. Hafiz Abdul Karim, chief of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith Pakistan to discuss the overall political situation in the country, the upcoming elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, and matters of mutual political cooperation. During the meeting, Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith Pakistan announced its full support for Pakistan Muslim League (N) in the forthcoming Gilgit-Baltistan elections. The party also declared the withdrawal of its candidate from GBA-22 Ghanche-1 in favor of the PML-Nawaz candidate, said a news release issued here on Thursday. Both sides agreed to further strengthen political coordination and electoral cooperation in Gilgit-Baltistan. The delegation included Sheikh Ali Muhammad Abu Turab, Malik Suleman Mangla, Gilgit-Baltistan candidate Raza-ul-Haq, and Dr. Muhammad Ali Johar, Director of Jamia Islamia Skardu. After the meeting, Senator Dr. Hafiz Abdul Karim described the discussions as highly positive and significant. He said unity among religious and political forces was essential for political and national stability, adding that Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith Pakistan would fully support PML-N in the upcoming Gilgit-Baltistan elections. Muqam thanked the Senator and his party leadership for their support, saying that Pakistan Muslim League-N highly values the cooperation of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith Pakistan. He reaffirmed the commitment of both parties to work together for the development.—APP

## OGDC secures 8 offshore blocks

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), Pakistan's largest exploration and production company, has secured eight offshore exploration blocks under the Offshore Bid Round 2025, marking a major expansion of its exploration portfolio. The government of Pakistan has reopened its offshore exploration frontier after nearly two decades through the signing of Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) and Exploration Licences (ELs) under the Offshore Bid Round 2025. The signing ceremony was held at the Ministry of Petroleum and was witnessed by Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik. On the occasion, the Minister termed the development a defining milestone in efforts to revitalise offshore exploration, attract investment, and reduce reliance on imported energy.

At the signing ceremony, OGDC was represented by MD/CEO Ahmed Hayat Lak and Head of Exploration Dr. Khalid Amin Khan. Secretary Petroleum Division, MDs of Joint Venture (JV) partners and representatives of Government Holdings Private Limited (GHPL) were also present. Under the Offshore Bid Round 2025, OGDC has been awarded a total of eight exploration blocks, including two blocks as Operator and six blocks as a joint venture partner with other exploration and production companies. The agreements were formally signed by OGDC and its JV partners. The reopening of Pakistan's offshore exploration frontier marks a significant step towards unlocking untapped energy potential and strengthening long-term energy security through enhanced domestic exploration activity.—APP

## Lawmakers urged to participate in legislation

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Thursday urged lawmakers to actively participate in Senate committees and legislative work, saying the Upper House should not be treated merely as a "debating club" for speeches and social media clips. Responding to points of order raised by various senators, the minister said parliamentary participation was not limited to speeches on the House floor, adding that the real legislative work took place in standing committees where bills and policy matters were discussed in detail. Tariq Fazal said the Senate, being the Upper House of Parliament, carried its own sanctity and seriousness, urging lawmakers to contribute meaningfully through legislative engagement instead of limiting their role to televised speeches and online circulation of political statements. Responding to concerns regarding restrictions on the entry of a provincial chief minister into Islamabad.—APP

## No wheat shortage in country

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday rejected claims of a four million-ton wheat shortfall in the country and informed the Senate that sufficient wheat stocks were available to meet domestic needs. Responding to a point of order raised by Senator Aon Abbas, the minister challenged the opposition to present documented evidence supporting the claim of a major wheat shortage. He said he had personally consulted Minister for National Food Security, Rana Tanveer Hussain before addressing the House and confirmed that no such shortfall existed. Azam Tarar said wheat deregulation, introduced last year, had initially disturbed market prices, with wheat selling between Rs 2,500 and Rs 3,000 per maund in different areas. However, he said prices later stabilised and wheat transactions in Punjab were currently taking place between Rs 3,400 and Rs 3,600 per maund. He said the deregulation policy aimed to create a competitive market environment based on supply and demand while also ensuring affordable flour prices for the common man. He acknowledged that a balance was necessary to protect both consumers and farmers, including small-scale growers. The minister said despite concerns over unexpected rains, wheat yield this season remained satisfactory. Responding to concerns over rising petroleum prices, Azam Tarar said the entire world was facing uncertainty due to tensions in the Gulf region. He said the federal government had absorbed financial pressure for two months by bearing over Rs30 billion in differential costs to support fuel prices. He said all four provinces had launched subsidised fuel programmes for motorcyclists, public transport and goods transport sectors through digital wallet systems, while the federal government was separately managing similar support measures for Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The minister said the government had also implemented austerity measures, including grounding 60 percent of official transport vehicles, reducing fuel allocations by 50 percent and restricting foreign visits by cabinet members. He said cabinet members had voluntarily withdrawn their salaries for six months and were undertaking foreign visits at personal expense unless required under international obligations.—DNA

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## Briefs

## Pakistan offers huge potential for Chinese investors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan offers "huge potential" for Chinese investors across agriculture, technology, mining and manufacturing sectors, backed by sweeping incentives, simplified regulations and expanding China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cooperation, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Investment and Chairman of the Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said. In an exclusive interview, Sheikh told Gwadar Pro that Chinese businesses are increasingly viewing Pakistan as a profitable and investment-friendly destination, particularly under the second phase of CPEC. "Many Chinese delegations are interested in Pakistan because the bottom line in Pakistan is very attractive, profitability is very good," Sheikh said, highlighting opportunities in information technology, agriculture, mines and minerals. He said the BOI has prioritized regulatory reforms to improve ease of doing business and facilitate foreign investors through a one-window system in Islamabad involving representatives from all ministries.

"We are mainly placing emphasis on simplifying our regulations," he said, adding that Pakistan recently approved the "Karobar Act" to further streamline business procedures. Sheikh said Pakistan's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are offering extensive incentives to foreign investors, including duty-free machinery imports, exemption from sales tax on machinery and a nine-year income tax holiday. He also revealed that Pakistan is allocating 6,000 acres of land for industrial projects, with plots ranging from 500 to 1,000 acres available free of charge for serious export-oriented ventures. "We are giving those lands just free of cost, so that the initial investment is not made on the land, but on industries, machinery and manufacturing," he said. According to Sheikh, growing Chinese confidence in Pakistan is also reflected in the country's capital markets and bilateral business engagement. He said that Pakistan's stock exchange has ranked among the world's top-performing markets over the past two years. Referring to high-level exchanges between the two countries, Sheikh said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China last year, accompanied by around 300 Pakistani businessmen, resulted in multiple business-to-business agreements, memorandums of understanding and joint ventures.—APP

## Bangladeshi academia team visits universities

The visit reflects the shared commitment of Pakistan and Bangladesh to promoting regional academic collaboration, knowledge exchange, and people-to-people connectivity through higher education partnerships

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In continuation of the ongoing academic engagement programme between Pakistan and Bangladesh, the high-level Bangladeshi academic delegation, led by Chairman University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh Prof. Dr. Mamun Ahmed, visited several prestigious higher education institutions in Lahore. The 13-member delegation commenced its academic engagements with a visit to the Office of Knowledge Stream, DHA Lahore, where the distinguished guests were warmly received by renowned educationist Prof. Dr. Sohail Naqvi. During the meeting, an insightful presentation was delivered on "Micro credential on Quality Assurance in Higher Education" under the Pakistan National Qualification and Accreditation Framework for Higher Education (PNQAHE). The delegation also vis-

ited the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), where Vice Chancellor Dr. Ali Cheema warmly welcomed the distinguished guests. During the visit, comprehensive presentations were delivered on the academic ecosystem, research initiatives, governance structure, and innovation-driven programmes at LUMS. Productive discussions were held regarding academic cooperation, collaborative research opportunities, faculty engagement, student exchange programmes, and future institutional partnerships. Later, the delegation visited the prestigious National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore, where they were warmly received by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Murtaza Jafri. The delegation toured the historic campus and visited the renowned Art Gallery at NCA, where they interacted with distinguished artists, faculty members, and students. The guests showed keen interest in Pakistan's rich artistic

heritage, creative education system, and the role of art institutions in cultural diplomacy and regional cooperation. The delegation met Chairman Admission Committee Prof. Dr. Mehmood Saleem at the University of Punjab, and expressed keen interest in strengthening academic ties and institutional collaboration with Pakistani universities. The delegates described Punjab University as one of the oldest and most prestigious institutions in the region and appreciated its academic legacy and contribution to higher education. Subsequently, the delegation visited Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore, where they were warmly received by Vice Chancellor Dr. Moeed Yusuf, along with Deans, senior faculty members and university management. Dr. Moeed Yusuf shared the university's vision, academic priorities, interdisciplinary learning approach and contributions toward innovation, creativity, and

contemporary higher education. Members of the Bangladeshi delegation expressed admiration for Pakistan's growing higher education landscape and acknowledged the efforts of HEC Pakistan and leading universities in promoting quality education, academic innovation, and international collaboration. They particularly appreciated the openness of Pakistani institutions towards regional partnerships and knowledge exchange. They also expressed strong interest in developing long-term collaborations and signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Pakistani universities to further strengthen academic ties and institutional cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The visit reflects the shared commitment of Pakistan and Bangladesh to promoting regional academic collaboration, knowledge exchange, and people-to-people connectivity through higher education partnerships.

## Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs organizes special ceremony

ISLAMABAD: A special ceremony was organised by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs to celebrate the completion of 75 years of Pakistan-China friendship here on Thursday. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, along with senior officials of the ministry, attended the event. The federal minister hoisted the national flag and planted a sapling as a commemorative gesture, while personnel of the Islamabad Police presented a salute during the flag-hoisting ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry described Pakistan-China friendship as unparalleled, saying China had always stood by Pakistan during difficult times. He said Pakistan remained committed to further expanding trade and economic ties with China, adding that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir were playing a historic role in strengthening bilateral relations. The minister termed China a sincere and reliable friend of Pakistan and said Pakistan-China economic cooperation was playing a vital role in regional development.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A vendor decorates his camel at livestock market in sector 1-14 of the Federal Capital ahead of Eid Al-Adha.

## China's Green Tech, FDI can help Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan struggles with economic uncertainty, rising energy costs, and the global shift away from fossil fuels, Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) and green technology are emerging as key drivers for the country's economic stability and sustainable growth, said Dr. Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF). In an exclusive interview with Gwadar Pro on Tuesday, Dr. Suleri said China has remained Pakistan's most dependable partner, extending support without interfering in internal affairs or attaching political conditions. "China has proven that it is the only global power which does not interfere in a country's domestic matters, cause political disruption, or dictate terms and conditions to its allies," he said. Chinese investment is playing a major role in Pakistan's economy. In the first 10 months of this fiscal year, more than 52 percent of Pakistan's total net FDI came from China, and this trend continues every year. According to Dr. Suleri, the 75-year relationship between Pakistan and China is now entering a transformative phase driven by industrial cooperation, technological innovation, and business-to-business connectivity under CPEC Phase-II. "This is a new beginning for CPEC-II, for business-to-business contacts, and for cooperation in artificial intelligence, space science, and advanced technologies, where China is taking Pakistan along," he said. Calling China the world's manufacturing hub, Dr. Suleri stressed that Pakistan's integration into Chinese supply chains could significantly boost exports, industrialization, and employment opportunities. "China is producing for the rest of the world. If Pakistan becomes part of China's supply chains, that is exactly what Pakistan needs to move forward economically," he added. Dr. Suleri particularly emphasized the importance of Chinese green technology amid global energy crises and growing international efforts to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels. "China's green technology is a game changer," he remarked. "After recent global crises, the world is trying to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels, and Pakistan can make the best use of Chinese green technology for sustainable development and energy security." He said Pakistan-China ties remain a symbol of enduring friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation.

## Home Economics alumni celebrates women's leadership

ISLAMABAD: The Home Economics Alumni Association in collaboration with FG Institute of Home Economics, Art & Design organized a vibrant reunion dinner in Islamabad, bringing together alumni, educationists, social leaders and distinguished personalities to celebrate creativity, heritage and the enduring legacy of home economics education. Held under the theme "Rung Pairahun Ka Khushbu Zulf Lehraney Ka Naam," the event showcased artistic expression, fashion and cultural elegance through personalized appearances and a lively catwalk featuring former students of the College of Home Economics. The reunion was hosted by renowned television personality and alumna Farah Hamid, whose engaging style and spontaneous wit added energy and warmth to the evening. President of the Alumni Association Talat Azim formally welcomed the guests and appreciated Principal Prof. Rozina Faheem for partnering with the association in organizing the event. The gathering highlighted the growing role of the alumni network, which comprises graduates from Home Economics institutions in Islamabad.—APP

## Pak, China reaffirm 'Iron-Clad' partnership at ISSI Seminar

ISLAMABAD, May 21 (I): As Pakistan and China mark 75 years of diplomatic relations, the China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an international seminar titled "75 Years of Iron-Clad Friendship: Pakistan-China Cooperation in Diplomacy, Security, and Development," bringing together diplomats, scholars, and policy experts to reflect on the enduring partnership and its future trajectory. Murtaza Solangi, spokesperson for the President of Pakistan, described Pakistan-China ties as an "all-weather" friendship rooted in the ancient Silk Road and built on China's policy of "non-interference and respect for sovereignty, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. He highlighted cooperation in defence, infrastructure, energy, aviation, and emerging technologies, while calling CPEC "transformative" from Gilgit to Gwadar. Solangi said that the CPEC is now expanding into "AI, digital technologies, space cooperation, climate resilience, and green development," expressing confidence that Phase II would deepen regional connectivity and shared prosperity. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, termed the relationship an "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership" founded on "mutual trust, sovereign equality, and unwavering support for core interests." He said CPEC Phase I strengthened energy and infrastructure development, while Phase II focuses on industrial cooperation, agriculture, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and socio-economic uplift, with Gwadar emerging as a key economic hub. Shi Yuanqiang, Deputy Head of Mission at the Chinese Embassy, in a pre-recorded message said Pakistan-China relations have remained "resilient and iron-clad" despite global changes. He described CPEC as the "central pillar" of Belt and Road cooperation and said "CPEC 2.0" would prioritize industry, agriculture, mining, innovation, and green development.—DNA

## PIDE urges institutional clarity in regulatory governance

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), pursuant to the Prime Minister's directive undertook the study titled "Improving Governance and Accountability: Mechanisms for Separating Regulatory Functions from Ministries." On review of the preliminary findings, the Honorable Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives had advised that a stakeholders' consultation be convened for feedback and collective ownership of the study. Thus, a Stakeholders' Consultative Roundtable on the same was organized at PIDE, Islamabad. The event brought together senior representatives from regulatory authorities, federal ministries, the private sector, and academic institutions. In the opening remarks, Dr. Nasir Iqbal, Professor at PIDE and also co-author of the report, drew attention to Pakistan's persistently declining economic trajectory, noting that the country's GDP growth rate has fallen from approximately five percent to three percent over the past three decades, barely keeping pace with population growth. "It is not about closing these

entities. It is about empowering them while ensuring that they play a facilitative and not restrictive role for business activity," he said, stressing that reforms must reduce the cost of doing business and eliminate regulatory sludge rather than create new layers of regulation. Dr. Mahmood Khalid, Director Economic Analysis, Tax Policy Office at Ministry of Finance and co-author of the report, then presented the study's findings. The research examined five major ministry-regulator pairs - the Power Division and NEPRA, the Petroleum Division and OGRA, the Ministry of Aviation and the Civil Aviation Authority, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and PEMRA, and the Ministry of Education and ICT-PEIRA - to identify overlapping mandates and constraints on regulatory independence. The study found that ministries retain pervasive de facto influence over their regulatory bodies through three primary channels: funding, appointments, and the issuance of policy guidelines. Eligibility criteria for chief executives and board members were found to be vague, inconsistently applied.—DNA

## China's Met Tech is emerging as an effective solution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: This month, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Pakistan has issued repeated alerts for both heatwaves and glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) risks. The country may experience a more intense summer this year, with temperatures in some areas likely to reach 50 during May and June, while in the north, rising heat combined with western disturbances is again raising the risk of sudden flooding from rapidly expanding glacial lakes. Marking 75 years of ties, the China-Pakistan friendship is finding its latest and perhaps most urgent expression in meteorological cooperation, according to China Economic Net's report. It is a real-time demonstration of how two long-standing partners can build shared resilience against a global climate threat. For a country with over 7,000 glaciers and 3,000 glacial lakes,

heat and flooding are not independent events; they are closely linked parts of the same cascading system. Warming accelerates glacier melt and meltwater expands unstable lakes, hence intense rainfall can trigger sudden outbursts that rush downstream into valleys, villages, and infrastructure corridors. "Pakistan is a country that has hyper-diverse climatic variation, which leads to hyper-diverse climatic threats," says Dr. Sayyed Muhammad Tayyab Shah, Executive Director Technical at the National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan. From the northern mountains to the southern delta, Pakistan is simultaneously facing glacial lake outburst floods, landslides, urban flooding, heatwaves, forest fires, storm surges, and sea water intrusion, etc. "Their frequency, quantum, scale are increasing with every passing year," he notes. In Islamabad, Dr. Muhammad Afzaal Karori, Director General of the

Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), focuses on the human cost of a changing climate, specifically the displacement already underway. He points to Pakistan's most vulnerable regions in Gilgit-Baltistan and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where steep valleys and glacier-fed rivers leave little margin for error, and the displacement of entire villages creates a cascading crisis for the nation. During the 2025 flood season, the PMD issued 15 to 16 weather alerts based on a cloud-based early warning system. Dr. Karori says no casualties were reported in the specific valleys where these instruments and forecasting systems were installed. The system behind those warnings is a cloud-based platform with a whole-package solution known as MAZU (Multi-hazard, Alert, Zero-gap, Universal Coverage) - China's solution responding to the United Nations' Early Warning for All initiative.

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## Earth's dynamics may extend to the moon

KHALED ABOU ZAHR

**F**OLLOWING last month's successful Artemis II mission, which carried four astronauts around the moon and back, NASA has now shifted its full focus to Artemis III. This is the final planned test mission before humans return to the moon. The last time a human set foot on the moon was in 1972 with the US' Apollo 17 mission. At that time, the US was facing the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Tensions between China and the Soviets had escalated and Beijing's rapprochement with the US, led by President Richard Nixon, had begun. The Middle East was in turmoil. Against this backdrop, space missions were guided by a race between the US and the Soviet Union. They wanted to show their technological superiority for many reasons, including, obviously, dual-use capabilities. Although the latest phase of achievements in space – since the success of Elon Musk's SpaceX – have been guided primarily by a commercial approach rather than great power competition, the latter has become more prominent recently. We are in a period that rhymes with the 1970s, but this time China has replaced the Soviet Union in the great power competition. There is no doubt that this competition extends to space. Yet, while the past was also about dual-use technologies, it was also an extension of the Cold War and the two rivals proving their technological and, indirectly, moral superiority with each new breakthrough. Ultimately, the proposal known as the "Star Wars" program, announced by President Ronald Reagan, was intended as a shield against any nuclear or ballistic missile attack. It discouraged the Soviet Union in its global fight against the US. That program is now being revived as the "Golden Dome." The space race clearly has a real objective and target in sight: the moon. Both China and the US see the potential for settlements there to gain a clear strategic advantage. Both China and the US see the potential for settlements on the moon to gain a clear strategic advantage. This new moon race is pushing NASA to rapidly prepare the Artemis III mission. It is planned as a crewed Earth-orbit test flight, rather than a direct moon landing. According to recent statements, the mission will focus on testing rendezvous and docking operations between NASA's Orion spacecraft and commercial lunar landers developed by Blue Origin and SpaceX. Astronauts are expected to attempt a lunar surface mission during Artemis IV. Artemis III is seen as a critical step to reduce technical and operational risks before returning humans to the moon's south pole and eventually building a long-term lunar base. As with all similar missions, the agency is still refining the details, including crew assignments, mission duration, science activities and testing. This is undoubtedly a highly complex rehearsal mission that will prepare NASA and its partners for the sustained human exploration of the moon and future missions to Mars.



China is not staying on the sidelines. Expected to launch in about 2029, the current mission in preparation is Chang'e-8, which is due to investigate the presence of ice and other volatile materials at the moon's south pole. An interesting move, led by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and approved by the China National Space Administration, is the development of a robotic support vehicle for this mission. This is part of the country's long-term strategy to build a scientific base in this region of the moon. The 100kg robot is designed to support autonomous surface operations in harsh lunar conditions, including extreme temperatures, dust, uneven terrain and limited communication. China is increasingly focused on infrastructure development rather than mere scientific observation. This is clear as Chang'e-8 will also test technologies for using lunar resources directly on the moon, such as 3D printing, with the goal of reducing dependency on materials transported from Earth. While the US is focusing on crewed missions, China has chosen, for now, a robotic approach. The moon's south pole is a major target of all powers because scientists believe craters there may contain water ice. The moon's south pole is a major target of all powers because scientists believe craters there may contain water ice, which could eventually provide drinking water, oxygen and, just as important, rocket fuel for future missions. This race is also taking place as the main conduit of global space cooperation is reaching the end of its life. The International Space Station, which has been an important focus of collaboration between all nations, will be decommissioned in 2030. This indirectly means that, for now, the mindset behind the moon missions is purely national in essence and with a competitive aspect. China's approach is quite similar to the one it has for the Arctic. There, it is expanding its presence through scientific research stations, satellite infrastructure and frequent icebreaker expeditions under its "Polar Silk Road" strategy. Its key bases include the Yellow River Station in Svalbard, Norway, and the China-Iceland Arctic Science Observatory, while additional influence comes from satellite ground stations, logistics investments and dual-use infrastructure in places like Greenland, combining scientific research with long-term commercial and strategic ambitions. Ultimately, it is marking its territory and establishing a long-term presence that will be difficult, if not impossible, to remove. The US has established a framework for cooperation through the Artemis Accords, which outline the principles for peaceful and sustainable space exploration. Grounded in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, they govern lunar and planetary activities and currently have 67 signatory nations. China has not joined this alliance and is collaborating with Russia to build the International Lunar Research Station, a joint permanent research base located at the moon's south pole. Plans for a joint nuclear plant are even being considered, according to Chinese officials. UN treaties indicate that no single nation can claim territories on the moon. Yet, once a country has a settlement there, even if unmanned, it does not need to claim it. It is de facto its own territory. So, is there a risk of direct confrontation between China and the US for the prime spots? And what happens a decade down the line, when there are successful settlements and ongoing activities, both commercial and military, on the moon?

## The new Geometry of US-China Relations

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Taiwan stands at the centre of these concerns. For decades, Washington maintained a carefully calibrated position designed to discourage unilateral changes to the island's status while preserving regional deterrence. Strategic ambiguity was intended to reduce the likelihood of conflict without explicitly abandoning either side. Today, ambiguity risks becoming confusion. Public suggestions that support for Taiwan could become part of broader bargaining with Beijing inevitably create anxiety not only in Taipei but across Asia

**R**ELATIONS between United States and China have rarely moved in straight lines. Yet the developments of the past year have produced a level of uncertainty that is unsettling even by the standards of great-power politics. Tariffs have been followed by reconciliation, threats by gestures of partnership, and strategic rivalry by language suggesting cooperation. Behind the shifting rhetoric, however, a deeper transformation appears to be taking shape in the balance of influence between Washington and Beijing. What once looked like a conventional trade confrontation has gradually evolved into something more significant: a redefinition of how the two powers negotiate power, security, and influence in the international system. The implications extend far beyond commerce. They touch the future of Taiwan, the credibility of American alliances in Asia, and the broader structure of global order. The 2025 trade confrontation marked a turning point. Washington believed punitive tariffs and restrictions could pressure Beijing into changing long-standing industrial and trade practices. China responded not only with retaliatory duties but with restrictions on rare earth minerals and critical materials essential for advanced manufacturing and technology industries. The result exposed an uncomfortable reality for the United States: economic interdependence had created vulnerabilities on both sides, but some of America's most sensitive industries remained heavily dependent on Chinese supply chains. Beijing concluded from the episode that the United States could be pushed toward compromise if sufficient economic pain was inflicted. The perception of leverage strengthened Chinese confidence and altered the tone of subsequent negotiations. What followed was not a dramatic public surrender by Washington, but a quieter shift in the diplomatic environment surrounding the relationship. In earlier years, American export controls and technology restrictions were treated as sovereign national security tools. They were designed to limit the transfer of sensitive technologies that could strengthen China's military or surveillance capabilities. These measures also reflected broader concerns over cyber security, strategic competition, and human rights issues. The principle was clear: Washington would decide independently how to protect its strategic interests. The new arrangements emerging after the trade conflict appear to have softened that principle. Beijing has increasingly linked economic cooperation to restrictions on American security measures. In practical terms, China now possesses greater influence over the scope and pace of policies once considered entirely within Washing-

ton's sovereign discretion. This may not amount to formal veto power, but it represents a striking evolution in the relationship. The consequences are potentially long-lasting. Rare earth minerals remain essential for semiconductors, batteries, defence systems, and renewable technologies. As long as the United States lacks secure alternative supply chains, future administrations may hesitate before adopting measures that risk renewed economic retaliation from China. Equally important is the changing style of diplomacy between the two countries. Traditionally, American administrations approached China talks with clearly separated agendas. Areas of cooperation, such as trade or climate issues, were discussed independently from areas of disagreement like Taiwan or military tensions in the South China Sea. This compartmentalisation allowed both powers to cooperate where possible while managing strategic competition elsewhere. China, however, has long preferred a different method. Beijing consistently links unrelated issues together, treating cooperation as conditional on the broader political atmosphere. Progress in one area is often made dependent on concessions in another. The approach reflects a larger Chinese view that political trust must underpin all aspects of bilateral engagement. The current American approach increasingly resembles that Chinese model. The distinction between economic negotiation and strategic rivalry appears to be fading. Everything is becoming negotiable simultaneously. This creates opportunities for Beijing to seek concessions on core strategic interests in exchange for limited economic gains or temporary diplomatic stability. Taiwan stands at the centre of these concerns. For decades, Washington maintained a carefully calibrated position designed to discourage unilateral changes to the island's status while preserving regional deterrence. Strategic ambiguity was intended to reduce the likelihood of conflict without explicitly abandoning either side. Today, ambiguity risks becoming confusion. Public suggestions that support for Taiwan could become part of broader bargaining with Beijing inevitably create anxiety not only in Taipei but across Asia. Countries such as Japan and the Philippines closely observe every signal emerging from Washington. Their security calculations depend heavily on whether they believe American commitments remain reliable during periods of crisis. This is where optics become geopolitically consequential. Beijing understands that symbolic gestures, diplomatic language, and summit choreography can shape regional perceptions as effectively as military deployments. Even rhetorical soften-

ing by American leaders may weaken confidence among allies and strengthen China's political influence in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, the United States continues substantial military cooperation with regional partners. Naval patrols in the Taiwan Strait continue. Joint exercises with allies have expanded. Arms sales to Taiwan remain significant. These actions suggest that Washington's operational posture has not fundamentally changed despite the conciliatory language sometimes emerging from high-level diplomacy. Such contradictions create strategic risk. If military deployments signal resolve while political rhetoric suggests accommodation, the possibility of miscalculation increases. Beijing may underestimate the willingness of the United States to defend its partners, while American allies may overestimate the durability of diplomatic understandings between Washington and Beijing. Great powers often stumble into crises not because they seek conflict, but because they misunderstand each other's intentions. In the crowded waters of the South China Sea or around Taiwan, even a limited incident could escalate rapidly if political signalling remains inconsistent. China enters this phase of competition with growing confidence. Its economic weight, technological progress, and expanding military capabilities have strengthened Beijing's belief that the regional balance is shifting in its favour. The perception that Washington prioritises short-term diplomatic stability over long-term strategic consistency only reinforces that belief. For the United States, the challenge is becoming increasingly difficult. Excessive confrontation risks destabilising the global economy and raising the danger of military escalation. Excessive accommodation, however, may gradually erode American influence and weaken allied confidence throughout Asia. Managing this balance requires more than summit diplomacy or temporary trade arrangements. It demands strategic clarity, credible commitments, and a consistent understanding of national interests. Relations between Washington and Beijing will remain competitive for the foreseeable future regardless of the language used at official meetings. The world is therefore witnessing not merely another fluctuation in U.S.-China ties, but the emergence of a new geopolitical landscape in which economics, security, and diplomacy are more deeply intertwined than ever before. The question is no longer whether rivalry exists. It is whether both powers can manage that rivalry without allowing uncertainty, mistrust, and conflicting signals to push the international system toward instability.

## Next UK leader faces a sizable task

Mohamed Chebaro

Andy Burnham, the front runner to be Britain's next prime minister, must contend with many obstacles that could undermine his candidacy, as well as the candidacies of anyone else aspiring to lead. This raises the legitimate question of whether we are in an age where leading has become a case of diminishing returns, as people everywhere are morphing toward greater impatience, intolerance and unruliness. This is maybe made worse by a digital realm that is magnifying dissent and differences, while sidelining harmony

**A**S the UK approaches the 10th anniversary of the June 2016 Brexit referendum, it is fair to say that the ghosts of its divisive and ruinous implications persist, despite many people and politicians' efforts to bury their heads in the sand. This is particularly evident in the context of the looming Labour Party leadership contest, with Keir Starmer likely to be replaced as prime minister less than two years after his party won a huge majority in Parliament. Political wars are not unheard of in Britain but they are now having a greater impact on the social fabric, with the country's multicultural population creaking under the weight of right-wing populists' anti-immigration stance. And the UK is not unique, as similar challenges are tearing apart many EU countries. Andy Burnham, the front runner to be Britain's next prime minister, must contend with many obstacles that could undermine his candidacy, as well as the candidacies of anyone else aspiring to lead. This raises the legitimate question of whether we are in an age where leading has become a case of diminishing returns, as people everywhere are morphing toward greater impatience, intolerance and unruliness. This is maybe made worse by a digital realm that is magnifying dissent and differences, while sidelining harmony. Such adversities unfortunately await Burnham, the center-left Greater Manchester mayor. They are the same adversities that Starmer's leadership has faced, as well as those of the four Conservative prime ministers who ruled in the years following the Brexit referendum. It seems it is no longer easy to be UK prime minister or a leader anywhere else in the liberal democratic world. A YouGov poll on the preferences of Labour Party members this week found that Burnham was ahead of Starmer in a head-to-head contest by 59 percent to 37 percent. And Burnham – if reelected to Parliament in the by-election he is contesting next month – could easily beat the former Health Secretary Wes Streeting. In our changing world, it seems it is no longer easy

to be UK prime minister or a leader anywhere else in the liberal democratic world, regardless of the political tribe one belongs to. The 2016 referendum did not settle the UK consensus regarding the European question, which has sowed divisions in the country – economically and socially and even regarding the country's identity – since the 1950s. Brexit did to the UK economy what the Suez Crisis did to its politics. This has left the UK no longer in Europe, not glued to the hip with the US and off-balance, trying to project the military and security posture of a middle power with a defense budget that is far smaller than its needs. This has been made evident by the Trump 2.0 presidency. Despite all the soft power work of King Charles, the UK and its European partners can no longer wholly rely on the transatlantic alliance to defend it against Russian aggression in Ukraine. This relationship has also been strained by the US' war on Iran and the latter's stranglehold on the flow of energy from the Gulf, which is harming Britain, the EU and their strategic partners in the Middle East. There have even been demands to rewrite history and only teach along nationalistic lines in schools and universities. The dilemma for the next UK PM will be how best to ease the negative ramifications of Brexit. Should negotiations for readmission be on the table again? Or should there be a "light" version of EU membership that only realigns London with the EU rulebook, denying it the weight it once had as a key member of the bloc alongside France and Germany? Also, should Britain become a key player in any European defense structure and how would that impact NATO and the "special relationship" with Washington? Would EU members even want to have this unreliable, indecisive neighbor among them once again? Even if any new leader manages to get the nation behind their approach to these thorny matters, the UK has also been grappling with growing domestic divisions, exemplified by the growing support for the extreme-right Reform UK and the extreme-left,

eco-populist agenda of the Green Party. The narratives of recent rallies have been alarming, eroding the fabric and cohesion of society and leading commentators to warn of the lasting damage to intercommunal relations amid the rise of Reform UK. The normalization of hate speech and the space given in the media to sharp anti-other voices – alleging, for example, that Muslims in Britain can "never coexist," while also not sparing Jews or other religious and ethnic groups – should push everyone to stand up and call for a national dialogue to limit the damage and the splintering of society. Unfortunately, it might already be too late, since the words and deeds of politicians vying for power have ceased to be background noise and have become part of the general political slop that has been fed to the nation since Brexit. Talk of a "foreign invasion" and slogans such as "take back control" and "stop the boats" have become normalized. There have even been demands to rewrite history and only teach along nationalistic lines in schools and universities, while celebrating "raising the flag," even if that marginalizes non-white and ethnic minority citizens. Politicians may be discouraged from wanting to lead having considered all this. For too long, the system has failed to get to grips with the gravity of the adversity that is tearing apart the nation, the system and its future. Discriminatory politics has been mainstreamed by the media and a less-than-innocent digital realm, supposedly as part of a search for understanding and tolerance. Legitimate debates and concerns should not become vehicles to normalize prejudice. The next British leader, whoever it is, should be ready for a long and painful national conversation about the role of politics and the role of the state in a very volatile world.

– **Mohamed Chebaro is a British-Lebanese journalist with more than 25 years of experience covering war, terrorism, defense, current affairs and diplomacy.**

## Briefs

## FO condemns mistreatment...

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the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkiye, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Jordan, Libya, Maldives, and Spain. Israel controls all entry points into Gaza, which has been under an Israeli blockade since 2007. During the Gaza conflict, sparked by Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, the territory has suffered severe shortages of food, medicine and other essential supplies, with Israel at times halting aid deliveries entirely. A previous flotilla attempt was intercepted last month in international waters off Greece, with most activists expelled to Europe.

## Israel begins deporting...

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detained flotilla activists who were handcuffed and kneeling. Netanyahu said that although Israel has every right to stop "provocative flotillas of Hamas terrorist supporters," the way National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir dealt with the activists was "not in line with Israel's values and norms." Ben-Gvir released videos Wednesday showing him walking among some of the approximately 430 detainees. In one, activists with their hands tied behind their backs are kneeling, their heads touching the floor inside what appears to be a makeshift detention area on the deck of a ship.

## 'Enriched uranium must stay...

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the consensus within the establishment, is that the stockpile of enriched uranium should not leave the country," said one of the two Iranian sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. Iran's top officials, the sources said, believe that sending the material abroad would leave the country more vulnerable to future attacks by the United States and Israel. Khameini has the last say on the most important state matters. The White House and Iran's foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

## 'Pak-China ties continue...

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changing regional and global circumstances. The prime minister, in his message on 75th Anniversary of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Pakistan and China being observed today, said that the commemoration would enable the two peoples, particularly the younger generations, to better appreciate the depth, breadth, vitality, and future-oriented character of Pakistan-China relations. "On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, as well as on my own behalf, I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the peoples of Pakistan and China, on the historic occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China," he remarked.

## Pakistan PM Sharif...

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told a press conference on Thursday. Guo added that China would work with Pakistan to "make positive contributions to the early restoration of peace and stability in the Middle East." "China supports Pakistan in playing a fair and balanced mediating role in promoting peace and ending the war," he said. Pakistan has emerged as a central mediator between the US and Iran, hosting talks last month. Its army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir was due in Tehran on Thursday, Iranian media reported. China has played a quieter role, shepherding phone calls and meetings with officials of affected Gulf countries.

## US signals long-term partnership with Pakistan in mining

US Acting Ambassador to Pakistan Natalie Baker said this during her visit to the headquarters of National Vocational and Technical Training Commission in Islamabad

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United States has expressed interest in expanding long-term cooperation with Pakistan in the mining and industrial sectors, with a focus on skilled employment, technology transfer and economic development. US Acting Ambassador to Pakistan Natalie Baker said this during her visit to the headquarters of National Vocational and Technical Training Commission in Islamabad. During the visit, Acting Chairperson Gulmina Bilal Ahmed and senior officials welcomed the US envoy at the NAVTTC headquarters. Natalie Baker also visited the organization's Center of Excellence, where officials briefed her on training programmes linked with industry needs, international certifica-

tion systems and initiatives designed to prepare Pakistani youth for employment opportunities in global markets. Speaking at the event, Natalie Baker said cooperation between Pakistan and the United States in the mining sector was moving forward after the recent visit of experts from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. She said the partnership was not limited to mineral extraction and also covered workforce training, technology sharing, safety standards and institutional development. She said Pakistan had strong potential in copper, gold, rare earth elements, industrial minerals and other critical mineral resources. According to her, the United States wanted to support Pakistan in connecting mining activities with industrial expansion and skilled job creation. The acting ambassador said cooperation

in workforce development and industrial capacity building could further improve economic and technical relations between the two countries. She added that technical training and modern industrial skills were important for sustainable growth and future economic planning. Addressing the gathering, Gulmina Bilal Ahmed said Pakistan's future competitiveness depended on linking education with industry requirements, technology and international markets. She said countries were now building partnerships through workforce cooperation and technical collaboration. She added that Pakistan wanted its skilled workforce to benefit from American expertise and modern industrial practices through stronger bilateral engagement. According to her, cooperation with international partners could

help Pakistani workers gain access to better training systems and improve their participation in global industries. Natalie Baker also appreciated NAVTTC's ongoing reform initiatives and stressed the need for continued collaboration in technical education, vocational training and emerging industrial sectors. Officials discussed ways to strengthen partnerships in workforce development and industrial training programmes. The visit highlighted the growing importance of skills development and workforce advancement in economic cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. Both sides stressed that technical education, industrial training and knowledge sharing could play an important role in supporting economic growth, employment opportunities and industrial progress in the coming years.

## IMF wraps up visit as Pakistan

Discussions on FY27 budget to continue in coming days; next IMF mission expected in second half of 2026

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission on Wednesday wrapped up its discussions with the officials in the finance ministry, focusing on economic developments, fiscal plans for the next fiscal year (FY2027-28), and progress on reforms under the fund-supported programmes, it said in a statement. The IMF said authorities in Islamabad have committed to a primary surplus target of 2% of gross domestic product in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28. The fund's team, led by advisor Iva Petrova, visited Islamabad from May 13-20 for discussions that focused on economic developments, progress on reforms and the impact of disruptions linked to the conflict in the Middle East. The IMF earlier in May cleared the South Asian nation to access about \$1.32 billion in fresh funding. The country is on a \$7 billion IMF programme. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has committed to maintaining an "appropri-

ately tight monetary policy stance" to anchor inflation expectations and will continue to closely monitor potential second-round effects from energy price increases, the IMF said. Furthermore, it added that exchange rate flexibility should continue to serve as a key shock absorber, and efforts should continue to build a deeper foreign exchange interbank market. "Discussions also covered ongoing structural reforms, including in the energy sector and state-owned enterprises, product market liberalisation, and financial sector reforms aimed at supporting durable growth and attracting high-quality private investment," the lender said. The statement added that the progress under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) was also discussed, including efforts to adopt a disaster risk financing framework, integrate climate considerations into budget and investment planning, and advance power subsidy reforms. "The

mission thanks the federal and provincial authorities for their constructive engagement, strong collaboration, and continued commitment to sound policies," the IMF said, concluding the statement. Discussions on the FY2027 budget will continue in the coming days, according to the statement. The next mission, which is envisioned to include the Article IV consultation and Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and RSF reviews, is expected to take place in the second half of 2026.

Last week, the IMF in a report said that Pakistan's steady policy execution has helped preserve economic stability and improve financing conditions, even as the fallout from the Middle East conflict tests the broader outlook, stressing that maintaining disciplined policies and accelerating structural reforms will be critical for the country to build resilience and secure sustainable long-term growth. The Fund's Executive Board released the report after completing the third review of the Extended Arrangement under the EFF and the second review of the arrangement under the RSF. The global lender said that Pakistan had made "significant progress" under its reform programme supported by the EFF and the RSF. "Pakistan's policy efforts under the EFF arrangement have delivered significant progress in stabilising the economy and rebuilding confidence amid a challenging global environment, including the ongoing Middle East war," the Fund said. - APP

## Pakistani climber Salman Ateeque summits Mount Everest

Ateeque becomes 13th Pakistani to reach the world's highest peak

ISLAMABAD: Renowned climber Salman Ateeque on Thursday successfully scaled Mount Everest, becoming the 13th Pakistani to reach the world's highest peak. Ateeque reached the 8,849-metre summit at approximately 11:39am during the ongoing 2026 Himalayan climbing season, which has drawn hundreds of climbers from across the world. Around 464 climbing permits were issued this season to mountaineers from 80 countries, with the largest contingents coming from China and India, said sources privy to the matter. Ateeque was reportedly the only Pakistani climber to obtain an Everest permit this year. The climber, who has a professional background in electrical engineering and over two decades of experience in the telecommunications sector, previously summited Mount Manaslu - the world's eighth-highest mountain - in Nepal last year. Officials familiar with the expedition said Ateeque successfully navigated the hazardous Khumbu Icefall and made his summit push during a favourable weather window. His ascent adds another chapter to Pakistan's growing presence in high-altitude mountaineering. It is pertinent to mention here that Nazir Sabir became the first Pakistani to summit Everest in 2000, while Samina Baig made history in 2013 as the first Pakistani woman to reach the top of the mountain. Other notable Pakistani Everest summiteers include Hassan Sadpara, Mirza Ali Baig, Abdul Jabbar Bhatti, Shehroze Kashif, Sirbaz Khan, Sajid Ali Sadpara, Naila Kiani, Wajidullah Nagri, Abdul Joshi and Saad Bin Munawar. Sirbaz Khan is recognised as the first Pakistani to scale all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres, while Sajid Ali Sadpara became the first Pakistani to summit Everest without supplemental oxygen. - APP

## China reaffirms support to Pakistan

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the ongoing crisis. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran to discuss the latest regional developments and ongoing diplomatic initiatives aimed at de-escalation. The developments came as Iran announced a new "managerial oversight area" for the strategically important Strait of Hormuz, a move seen as part of Tehran's broader effort to regulate maritime transit in the vital energy corridor. At the same time, tensions continued to rise on the Lebanon front, with Israeli forces launching fresh air raids and artillery shelling across southern Lebanon, according to regional media reports. The strikes have further heightened fears of a wider regional conflict despite ongoing diplomatic efforts.

## PTI says agitation is the...

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the government is not ready to listen to our peaceful requests and demands," he added. On Tuesday, a caravan led by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, which was on its way to the Adiala jail to meet Imran, was stopped from entering Islamabad, prompting the participants to stage a sit-in at the intersection of Srinagar Highway and GT Road - locally referred to as Chungi No. 26. A day later, CM Afridi addressed a press conference alongside Imran's sister Aleema Khan, alleging that Islamabad police "fired bullets" at PTI workers, who were staging a sit-in at Chungi No. 26. On Thursday, a meeting of the parliamentary parties from the opposition was also held at Parliament House. It was chaired by Opposition Leader in the National Assembly and head of the Tehreek-i-Tahafuz-i-Ayin-i-Pakistan (TTAP) opposition alliance, Mehmood Khan Achakzai.

## Aga Khan expresses desires...

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assured him of Pakistan's shared commitment to these ideals. PM Shehbaz also highlighted the long-standing partnership between Pakistan and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), and commended the organisation's contributions in rural development, healthcare, education, disaster resilience, climate adaptation, renewable energy, digital skills training, and youth entrepreneurship, it said. He particularly appreciated AKDN's impactful work in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Chitral, especially in remote and vulnerable communities. "The prime minister encouraged AKDN to deepen and expand its partnership with Pakistan, particularly in GB and Chitral, where the network's institutional presence and community outreach are highly valued. He also welcomed enhanced engagement with Aga Khan University, noting its major contributions in healthcare and higher education," the PMO statement added.

## Wanted terrorist...

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The security sources said that he had also laid down a network of underground bunkers, tunnels and explosive traps in the area around Bubali Mosque in Spinwam. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded the security forces for the operation, particularly the elimination of the ringleader, terming it a "major success," as per a statement issued via the interior ministry. Naqvi vowed that "terrorists and their facilitators will not be allowed to thrive under any circumstances". Earlier this week, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said security forces killed 22 India-sponsored terrorists in North Waziristan. It added that an area sanitation operation had been underway since May 17 in North Waziristan's Shewa general area, "based on credible intelligence leads with respect to the presence of khwarij".

## Neuer recalled to aid Germany World Cup bid

"Everyone knows the aura and quality Manu has, what he brings to a team," says coach

## DNA

LONDON: Veteran goalkeeper Manuel Neuer was handed a surprise recall to Germany's 26-man World Cup squad on Thursday, coming out of international retirement to play in the tournament for a fifth time. The 40-year-old retired from international duty in 2024 but coach Julian Nagelsmann confirmed the World Cup winner will be the number one option ahead of Oliver Baumann at this summer's tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico. "Everyone knows the aura and quality Manu has, what he brings to a team," Nagelsmann said at a squad announcement in Frankfurt. "We're planning with him as our number one." Joshua Kimmich will retain the captaincy despite the long-time skipper's return. Former Manchester City and Bayern winger Leroy Sane, now at Galatasaray, has retained his spot. Bayern Munich's Neuer is the only remaining member of the squad that won the World Cup in 2014. Matthias Ginter, another 2014 World Cup winner who was instrumental in Freiburg's run to the Europa League final, failed to make the cut, with Newcastle's Malick Thiaw preferred in central defence. Bayern goalkeeper Jonas Urbig was dropped from the squad after being called up for the March friendlies, but will travel with the side to help in training during the tournament. Munich's Jamal Musiala returns

to the squad after missing Germany's March friendlies as he recovered from a broken ankle. Nagelsmann named a Premier League-heavy attacking contingent, which includes freshly minted English Premier League champion Kai Havertz of Arsenal, Liverpool's Florian Wirtz and Newcastle's Nick Woltemade. Bayern youngster Lennart Karl, 18, was also called up to a major tournament for the first time. As expected, Bayern forward Serge Gnabry misses out with a thigh injury, as does Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen. Recent regulars Niclas Füllkrug and Robert Andrich were not called up. The German FA (DFB) began sharing video snippets announcing the squad player by player on social media early on Thursday, with Kimmich the first confirmed. Neuer was the standout player as Germany won their fourth World Cup in 2014, but since then the team's form has plummeted. Germany crashed out at the World Cup group stage in 2018 for the first time since 1938 and repeated the feat four years later in Qatar. The Germans have not fared much better in other international tournaments. Since making the semi-finals of Euro 2016, Germany have won just one knockout game in the tournament - a 2-0 success against Denmark on home soil at Euro 2024. Neuer has impressed this season for Bayern, winning man-of-the-match honours in the quarter-final victory over Real Madrid, but comes into the tournament under an injury cloud due to a recurring calf complaint.

## Bajwa Ahmad Baig Foundation to Nurture Future Golf Champions

Special emphasis was also placed on recognising outstanding national golfers and honouring their achievements through awards and acknowledgements

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Bajwa Ahmad Baig Foundation has officially been established with the aim of promoting and developing golf in Pakistan, with a special focus on nurturing both professional and amateur golfers. A formal meeting in this regard was held at the prestigious Garrison Greens Golf Club, attended by prominent figures from the golfing community. The session was led by passionate golf enthusiast Brigadier (Retd) Bajwa and renowned professional golfer Ahmad Baig, who is currently competing on the Asian Tour. Among those present were Col Amin Malik, Shahid Shah, Gen (Retd) Arshad, as well as several professional and amateur golfers committed to advancing the sport in the country. During the meeting, participants emphasised the importance of discipline, professionalism, technical skills, and maintaining peak physical fitness as essential qualities for aspiring golfers. Discussions also focused on modern golf management techniques, including the importance of continuous self-improvement and greater accuracy in shot-making. The foundation aims to create opportunities for emerging players, strengthen Pakistan's golfing structure, and encourage young talent



to pursue the sport professionally. Special emphasis was also placed on recognising outstanding national golfers and honouring their achievements through awards and acknowl-

edgements. Professional golfers shared their experiences of competing at the international level, highlighting the challenges and standards required to succeed globally. Speakers

noted that consistent performance, skill, and dedication are the key factors that bring recognition and honour to both the players and the country on the international stage.

## Briefs

**Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar**

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.55 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.56. 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 increased by Rs 0.91 and closed at Rs 323.70 from the previous day's close of Rs 322.79, 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 Rs1.71 and closed at Rs 374.49 compared to the previous day's Rs 372.78. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged and closed at Rs 75.84 and at Rs 74.23, respectively.—APP

**Gold price increases by Rs 5,000 per tola**

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold increased in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola rising by Rs 5,000 to settle at Rs 475,362 compared to Rs 470,362 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 4,287 to Rs 407,546 from Rs 403,259, while the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 3,930 to Rs 373,597 from Rs 369,667.

The rates of silver also witnessed an upward trend, as per tola silver prices increased by Rs 60 to Rs 8,034 from Rs 7,974, whereas the price of 10 grams silver rose by Rs 51 to Rs 6,887 from Rs 6,836. In the international market, gold prices increased by \$50 to settle at \$4,530 against \$4,480, while silver prices gained \$0.60 to \$75.50, according to the Association.—APP

**UAE official slams Iran's Hormuz control plan**

DUBAI: A top UAE official denounced Iran's claim of control over Emirati waters in the blockaded Strait of Hormuz as a "pipe dream" Thursday, following an announcement by an Iranian body overseeing the strait. "The regime is trying to establish a new reality born from a clear military defeat, but attempts to control the Strait of Hormuz or infringe on the UAE's maritime sovereignty are nothing but pipe dreams," said the United Arab Emirates' presidential adviser Anwar Gargash in a post on X. Iran's new body overseeing the Strait of Hormuz said its claimed area of control extends to Emirati waters, drawing a sharp rebuke from the Gulf neighbor.

Traffic through Hormuz, a vital global shipping conduit, has come under Iranian control since the outbreak of war with Israel and the US on February 28. In a post on X on Wednesday accompanied by a map, the newly-established Arabian Gulf Strait Authority said it had outlined "the regulatory jurisdiction for the management" of the strait. It said this covered the area between the line extending from "Kuh-e Mubarak in Iran to the south of Fujairah in the UAE... to the line connecting the tip of Qeshm island in Iran to Umm Al-Quwain in the UAE." It added that "transit through this area for the purpose of passing through the Hormuz Strait requires coordination with, and authorization from, the Arabian Gulf Strait Authority." The UAE's Fujairah port hosts oil infrastructure designed to bypass the strategic waterway.—APP

# Pakistan, Kenya set five years to trade glory

The Joint Trade Committee, a key bilateral platform for strengthening trade relations and addressing outstanding trade matters, reaffirmed the strong importance both countries attach to their economic partnership and future commercial cooperation



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Kenya reaffirmed their commitment to significantly expanding bilateral economic ties, agreeing to double the volume of bilateral trade over the next five years during the Second Session of the Pakistan-Kenya Joint Trade Committee (JTC) held in Islamabad. The session was co-chaired by Mr. Jawad Paul, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and Ms. Regina A. Ombam, Principal Secretary, State Department for Trade, Republic of Kenya, with participation from representatives of various government departments from both countries, said a release issued here

on Thursday. The Joint Trade Committee, a key bilateral platform for strengthening trade relations and addressing outstanding trade matters, reaffirmed the strong importance both countries attach to their economic partnership and future commercial cooperation. The session recorded meaningful progress across a broad range of priority sectors, with both sides agreeing to enhance cooperation in market access, export promotion, customs, investment, animal quarantine, plant protection, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical standards, pharmaceuticals, banking, trade dispute resolution, information and

communication technology, tourism, and industry. It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan's exports to Kenya have recorded a significant increase during the first nine months (July-March) of fiscal year 2025-26. According to official data, exports reached USD 319.9 million, compared to USD 251.6 million during the same period last year, reflecting an impressive 32% growth. These figures have been sourced from the Ministry of Commerce Pakistan through its Trade Analytics Portal Pakistan. This remarkable performance places Kenya among Pakistan's top five export destinations globally and firmly establishes it as

the largest export destination in Africa. On this occasion, Rafique Suleman, President of the Pakistan Kenya Business Council, former Chairman of the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan, Vice Chairman Pakistan Africa Economy Council and Convener of the East Africa Committee stated, Information Secretary BMP. "Pakistan's growing footprint in the Kenyan market is highly encouraging for our export sector. Rice exports have played a pivotal role in driving this growth, while access through Mombasa has enabled Pakistani products to penetrate not only Kenya but the broader East African region."

## Some Ukrainian refugees head home for dental work

KYIV: Four years of brutal Russian attacks have forced millions of Ukrainians to seek safety abroad. But with the war showing no signs of stopping, significant numbers of refugees have started trickling back home, if only temporarily, for one reason: to see their dentist. Those displaced by an onslaught of Russian tanks, drones and missiles have been navigating long journeys home by car, bus or rail for orthodontic work they prefer — or can only get — inside Ukraine. "Here in Ukraine, we really appreciate the quality of the medical services, as well as the personalized approach to our daughter," said Yana Sidko, who left for France in 2022. She now makes the arduous pilgrimage back to the Ukrainian capital with her 13-year-old daughter for treatment. The country was a dental tourism destination before Russia invaded, with Europeans seeking lower-cost procedures and a broader range of treatment. But now the vast majority of those coming from abroad are Ukrainians who fled the war, professionals in the industry told AFP. In a paediatric clinic in Kyiv, dentist Oleg Kovnatskiy told AFP that around 20 percent of his patients — 10 to 20 people a month — come from abroad. Around 90 percent, the 39-year-old said, are Ukrainians. "Whereas previously there were more foreigners... today it's our own citizens that left the country following the full-scale invasion, but are now returning," he said. So common is the trend, there is a running joke that dentists could be one of the main catalysts for many to move back permanently — something that would help alleviate a long-running demographic crisis and a deepening labor shortage. Maryna Kovbasniuk, director of dental care at the private health network, Dobrobut, did not provide overall figures, but told AFP that the numbers of Ukrainians returning for care "continues to grow." Refugees return because dentists are cheaper at home and offer some treatment unavailable everywhere — like the use of sedatives for children — Kovnatskiy said. The lack of a language barrier and the fact that children prefer to see the same dentist on repeat visits are also important factors. "The emotional dimension is essential, as are body language and empathy, and every language has its own nuances," Kovnatskiy said. "This complexity, made up of linguistic and cultural differences, can be an obstacle that is difficult to overcome," he added. Patients often come from abroad for procedures that can take several days like X-rays, MRIs and ultrasounds. Sidko and her 13-year-old daughter, Daryna, travel from France to see Kovnatskiy — their dentist for the past decade.—DNA

## Demand soars for Israel's battle-tested weapons tech

TEL AVIV, Israel: When Israeli defense officials approached Massivit last year about using its unique 3D printers to make military drone parts, CEO Yossi Azarar jumped at the chance. Although the Israeli company had been producing large set pieces and other designs for the likes of Disney, DreamWorks and Netflix, the opportunity to instead quickly churn out large drone parts for the military was too good to ignore. "I stopped thinking about Hollywood sets," Azarar said. "The entertainment industry is a nice customer — defense is a necessity." Business has been booming for the Israeli arms sector, despite widespread criticism of the country's conduct in its wars in Gaza, with Hezbollah and with Iran. Countries that have vowed to shun Israeli weapons makers are nonetheless quietly placing orders, according to industry officials. And manufacturers, including some like Massivit with no previous military know-how, can show that their innovations are being continually combat-tested and improved. According to Israel's Defense Ministry, Israeli weapons sales have more than doubled over the past five years, with a record high of nearly \$15 billion in 2024. While the ministry hasn't released overall 2025 figures, leading Israeli weapons makers, including Elbit and Israel Aerospace Industries, both reported double-digit sales growth last year. More than half of the Israeli arms industry's sales are for missiles, rockets and air-defense systems. For the first time, Israel has surpassed the United Kingdom in its share of global arms exports, making it the world's seventh-biggest supplier, according to a March report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. This tremendous achievement is a direct result of the successes of the (army) and defense industries. ... The world sees Israeli strength and seeks to be a partner in it," said Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz. This year's Defense Tech Expo in Tel Aviv reflected the growing international interest in Israeli weapons, with manufacturers promoting arms and other equipment shaped by the country's recent conflicts. But it also highlighted the tension between showcasing the military technology and the political debate surrounding its use, with event protesters decrying the widespread destruction of Gaza as a testing lab for Israeli weapons. Last year, Spain canceled a deal for anti-tank missile systems sold by an Israeli company's subsidiary. Slovenia, meanwhile, announced it would ban the import, export and transit of all weapons to and from Israel in response to the country's actions in Gaza. After Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and taking roughly 250 others hostage, Israel retaliated, killing more than 72,700 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between fighters and civilians. Some countries and human rights groups have accused Israel of war crimes. Israel's Defense Ministry says it uses its equipment to defend the country and its people, and denies that it uses battlefields as testing grounds. Human rights advocates, though, say Israel has deployed new weapons and technology during the war in Gaza, including AI, big data and targeting. "The regional war has drawn heavily on Israel's deadly playbook and provided a boon to Israeli and other defense and technology companies able to parlay the use of their products in Gaza to attract more business," said Omar Shakir, the executive director of DAWN, a US-based group founded by murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi that pushes for human rights in the Middle East. Despite criticism that Israel's weapons sector is profiting off technologies being used and improved on the battlefield, it's hardly alone, according to experts. "Countries have had to dramatically increase defenses because of the proliferation of global conflicts and they need systems that will work. And most countries don't have the time right now to build their own defense systems locally and quickly," said Seth J. Frantzman, an adjunct fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies who has covered Israel's arms industry for a decade and wrote the book "Drone Wars." A lot of countries are looking to Israel because they're seeing in real time that these are munitions and systems that work, he said. For Massivit, sales have soared since it pivoted to making drone parts for the military, including a 200 percent rise in inquiries from interested buyers since Israel and the US attacked Iran at the end of February, according to Azarar. The company's unique 3D printing technology allows it to make large parts for military drones within days instead of weeks. In addition to selling to the Israeli military, the company's technology has drawn interest from the defense and aeronautical sectors in Europe, the US, Southeast Asia and India, he said. Business has also been good for other defense contractors. Tomer Malchi, co-founder and CEO of ASIO, said Israel's army orders for the company's rugged smartphone unit, the Orion, have surged by 400 percent since the war in Gaza started. The phones use maps, augmentation and artificial intelligence to help soldiers plan missions, navigate and respond to real-time battlefield threats. ASIO recently signed a deal with a major US defense company and is in talks with about 20 other countries, Malchi said.—DNA

## ICCI hopes for business-friendly, export-oriented budget

Sardar Tahir Mehmood also appreciated the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for directing the relevant authorities to formulate a practical strategy to promote investment in the construction and housing sector and ensure its implementation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has expressed the hope that the forthcoming federal budget would be business supportive, export-oriented and investment-friendly to provide relief not only to the salaried class but also to attract foreign direct investment and stimulate sustainable economic growth in the country. He expressed these views while talking to a group of visiting businessmen at the Chamber House on Thursday.

Sardar Tahir Mehmood stated that Pakistan's economy is passing through a critical phase, the upcoming budget should focus on restoring business confidence, promoting industrialisation, enhancing exports and creating a conducive environment for local as well as foreign investors. He stressed that the private sector must be facilitated through pragmatic and growth-oriented policies to enable it to play its due role in economic recovery and national development. The ICCI President emphasized that the taxation system should be rationalized and simplified in order to reduce the burden on the business community and encourage documented economic activity. He observed that excessive taxation and complicated procedures discourage investment and hamper the growth of businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises. He maintained that the business community should be allowed to operate freely and independently so that Pakistan could emerge as a vibrant business and trade hub in the region. Sardar Tahir Mehmood also appreciated the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for directing the relevant authorities to formulate a practical

strategy to promote investment in the construction and housing sector and ensure its implementation. He pointed out that Pakistan is currently facing a deficiency of around 20 million housing units and urged the government to in-



roduce a comprehensive One Window approval mechanism to facilitate investors, builders and developers in the housing and construction sectors. The ICCI President also called for the immediate abolition of super tax, stating that it has placed an additional financial burden on businesses and industries at a time when they are already struggling with rising operational costs and economic uncertainty. He maintained that reducing the tax burden would help businesses expand operations, create jobs and contribute more effectively to the national economy. Highlighting the issue of rising electricity costs, Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that the matter of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) should be resolved once and for all in order to eliminate the heavy burden of capacity charges and ensure the availability of electricity at affordable rates for industries and consumers. He observed that high energy costs have severely affected the competitiveness of Pakistani products in international markets and have become a major hurdle in industrial growth. He further remarked that the real estate sector, which supports nearly 60 to 70 allied industries including steel, cement, tiles, paint, electrical goods and construction materials, deserves special attention in the larger economic interest of the country. He emphasized that incentives for the real estate and construction sectors would have a multiplier effect on the economy by generating economic activity, boosting revenue collection and creating large-scale employment opportunities. Sardar Tahir Mehmood reiterated that the business community expects the government to present a balanced, realistic and progressive budget that promotes investment, supports exporters, reduces the cost of doing business and ensures long-term economic stability for the country.

## Building collapse kills 11 people in Morocco's Fez

RABAT: Eleven people were killed and six others injured when a four-story building collapsed overnight in the Moroccan city of Fez, about 200 kilometers (124 miles) east of Rabat, state-owned broadcaster 2M said on Thursday. Authorities said a search for others who might still be buried was ongoing. Media showed footage of rescuers and residents digging through the rubble. An investigation has been launched into the incident, and residents of adjacent buildings were asked to evacuate as a precaution against potential further collapses, authorities said. Fez, a former capital dating back to the eighth century and the country's third-most-populous city, has seen similar incidents in recent months, including one in December when two buildings collapsed, killing at least 22 people. In 2010, the collapse of a minaret in the historic northern city of Meknes killed 41 people. Adib Ben Ibrahim, housing secretary of state, said last year that approximately 38,800 buildings across the country had been classified as being at risk of collapse.—APP

## Dubai launches second eco incentives package

DUBAI: Dubai will provide economic incentives worth more than \$400 million, authorities said Thursday, as businesses struggle to cope with the aftermath of the Middle East war and Iran's blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. Authorities approved "a second package of economic incentives valued at AED 1.5 billion (\$408 million)," the Dubai government's media office said in a post on X. The incentives include exemptions from municipal fees for hotels and restaurants, reduced fines for customs violations and lower fees for civil aviation permits. "The new package brings the total value of incentives introduced in under two months to AED 2.5 billion (\$680 million)," the office added. In late March, Dubai authorities announced a first package worth over \$270 million to help businesses and families. The United Arab Emirates bore the brunt of Iran's attacks during the war, as Tehran unleashed drones and missiles across the Gulf in response to US and Israeli strikes. The attacks targeted US assets but also vital economic infrastructure including energy facilities, ports, airports and residential areas.—APP

## Iran hangs two men for armed rebellion

TEHRAN: Iran on Thursday hanged two men convicted of armed rebellion and membership in "separatist terrorist groups," the latest in a string of executions during the Middle East war. Since the start of the conflict with Israel and the United States in February, Iran has ramped up executions, with many of the convicts hanged over anti-government protests that took place across Iran early this year. Iran's judiciary said the two men executed Thursday were involved in armed attacks against security forces and assassination plots in western Iran. "Ramin Zaleh and Karim Maroufpoor were hanged for membership in separatist terrorist groups, forming a group with the aim of disrupting the country's security, armed rebellion through the formation of criminal groups, shooting and carrying out assassination attempts," the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported. It was not immediately clear when they were arrested but the judiciary said they had been trained to become "leaders in the unrest." Iran is the world's second-most prolific executioner after China, according to rights groups including Amnesty. Since the war broke out, the country has executed a number of people for alleged espionage or on security-related charges. Earlier this month, Iran hanged a man convicted of selling information to Israeli intelligence. It previously executed an aerospace engineering student on the same charge.—APP

## Briefs

### PSX extends gains on Middle East peace hopes

KSE-100 index surges to intraday high 168,134.65, gaining 3,303.23 points, or 2%

#### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Stocks extended gains on Thursday as renewed hopes of Middle East de-escalation lifted investor sentiment, even as crude prices edged higher after a sharp fall in the previous session. During the session, the Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 index climbed to an intraday high of 168,134.65, gaining 3,303.23 points, or 2%, and retreated to a low of 166,638.56, reflecting a gain of 1,807.14 points, or 1.10%, from the previous close of 164,831.42.

"A flurry of diplomatic moves to end the war created downward pressure in the oil markets, and oil traded about 6% down," said Ahfaz Mustafa, CEO of Ismail Iqbal Securities. "This is signalling an end to hostilities and the re-opening of the strait and eventually normalisation, which buoyed investors' sentiment," he added. Asian markets also advanced on Thursday, supported by hopes of a Middle East peace deal after Iran said it was examining a new US proposal to end the war. Japan's Nikkei jumped more than 3.5%, while South Korea's benchmark Kospi index surged 6.8% in morning trade, with Samsung Electronics trading 5.9% higher. Taipei rose 3.6%, Sydney gained 1.6% and Singapore was up 0.4%.

### Severe heatwave likely

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Thursday warned that moderate to severe heatwave conditions are likely to grip most parts of the country during the Eid holidays from May 25 to May 31 due to the development of a high-pressure system in the upper atmosphere. According to the Met Office, the high pressure is expected to develop on May 25 and strengthen further from May 26, causing temperatures to rise significantly across various regions. The PMD said maximum temperatures are likely to remain 5 to 7 degrees Celsius above normal and may rise to 42C to 45C in districts including Peshawar, Swabi, Nowshera, Mardan, Kohat, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Lahore, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Mandi Bahaudin, Sialkot, Narowal, Okara, Kasur and Faisalabad, as well as Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli and Bhimber. - APP

# Fight against terrorism will continue: CDF Munir

Decorations conferred included 50 Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and 12 Tamgha-i-Basalat. Medals awarded posthumously were received with honour by families of Shuhada



#### DNA

RAWALPINDI: Investiture Ceremony to confer military awards to officers and soldiers of Pakistan Army was held today at General Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF as the chief guest conferred the awards to the families of shuhada, of-

ficers and soldiers in recognition of exceptional gallantry in operations and distinguished services rendered to the nation. Decorations conferred included 50 Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and 12 Tamgha-i-Basalat. Medals awarded posthumously were received with honour by families of Shuhada. Paying tribute to the Shuhada and Ghazis, the Field Marshal stated "Shuhada and

Ghazis remain the enduring pride of the nation. Their honour and sacrifice are a sacred trust for every Pakistani. Peace and security of our motherland are owed to their supreme sacrifices and unwavering devotion to duty." The Field Marshal also expressed profound admiration for the resilience, dignity and steadfastness demonstrated by the families of Shuhada, acknowledging their unparalleled

sacrifices and unwavering commitment to the homeland. Commending the operational preparedness and unwavering resolve of Pakistan Army and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), the Field Marshal lauded their sustained efforts against terrorists and reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism will continue with full national resolve until enduring peace and stability are achieved across the country.

## WB praises progress under NHSP

#### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services and Regulations Syed Mustafa Kamal met representatives of the World Bank on the sidelines of the 79th World Health Assembly in Geneva to discuss Pakistan's health sector and ongoing reforms. According to the Ministry of Health on Thursday, the minister briefed the delegation on various initiatives and reforms aimed at improving healthcare services in the country, including efforts to promote local vaccine production, strengthen primary healthcare infrastructure and other health sector initiatives. The World Bank representatives appreciated the positive progress in Pakistan's health sector, especially the National Health Support Program (NHSP), and expressed support for the government's health policies and future plans. They also praised Pakistan's local vaccine production efforts and showed willingness to support vaccine manufacturing in the country. The meeting also discussed cooperation in strengthening primary healthcare infrastructure promoting telemedicine to improve access to medical services in remote areas. Mustafa Kamal appreciated the World Bank's support and said the government would continue working with international organizations to further improve healthcare facilities in Pakistan.

## Queen Elizabeth wanted to make Andrew trade envoy

#### NEWS DESK

LONDON: Documents show Queen Elizabeth II was "very keen" that the former Prince Andrew be given the job of UK trade envoy. The UK government on Thursday released the confidential papers related to Andrew's appointment, just months after lawmakers accused the king's brother of putting his friendship with Jeffrey Epstein ahead of the nation. "The Queen is very keen that the Duke of York should take on a prominent role in the promotion of national interests," the head of Britain's trade body wrote in a letter. Another document, a government memo sent to UK trade staff around the world, says that "HRH's high public profile" will require "careful and sometimes strict media management," in a reference to Andrew. The involvement of the late queen will confirm previously held beliefs that the monarch held a soft spot for her son - an empathy that might have influenced her lack of decisiveness in dealing with allegations of Andrew's connection to Epstein. Trade Minister Chris Bryant said in a written statement to lawmakers that "we have found no evidence that a formal due diligence or vetting process was undertaken" before Andrew was appointed to the role. "There is also no evidence that this was considered. This is understandable since this new appointment was a continuation of the royal family's involvement in trade and investment promotion work following the Duke of Kent's decision to relinquish his duties as Vice-Chairman of the Overseas Trade Board," he said. He said that the government was cooperating with Thames Valley Police on their investiga-



tion into Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor and possible misconduct in public office. Mountbatten-Windsor was stripped of his royal title last year as King Charles III tried to insulate the monarchy from the growing fallout from the Epstein scandal. The former prince served as a special envoy for international trade from 2001 to 2011, when he was forced to give up the role because of concerns about his links to questionable figures in Libya and Azerbaijan. The move followed the US Justice Department's release of millions of pages of documents related to Epstein. Those files showed how the wealthy financier used an international web of rich, powerful friends to gain influence and sexually exploit young women and girls. Nowhere has the fallout from the document release been felt more strongly than in the UK, where the scandal has raised questions about the way power is wielded by the aristocracy, senior politicians and influential business owners, known collectively as "the Establishment."

## FCCP grants adult convert to Islam right to choose residence

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court has dismissed a petition filed by the parents of a young woman seeking her custody, granting the convert to Islam the right to reside where she chooses. A two-member bench, led by Justice Aamer Farooq, heard the case on Thursday. During the proceedings, the Additional Advocate General of Punjab informed the court that a medical examination had been conducted to determine the young woman's age. The report confirmed that Ayesha - formerly known as Sonia, a resident of Lahore - is between 19 and 19.5 years old. The court had ordered the medical examination during the previous hearing due to discrepancies between provided documentation and Ayesha's own claims regarding her age. Her counsel, Waseem Mumtaz, noted that the medical assessment was conducted in accordance with the court's directive to verify her maturity. Addressing the case, Justice Aamer Farooq remarked that because the woman is an adult, she has the full legal right to live according to her own volition. The court further advised Ayesha to remain open to meeting with her parents if they express a desire to do so. During the hearing, it was stated that the woman, a resident of Lahore, had adopted the name Ayesha after converting to Islam. She testified before the court that her parents had been pressuring her to renounce Islam and revert to Christianity. It is pertinent to note that, during the previous hearing, the Constitutional Court had ordered Ayesha to be placed in a Dar-ul-Aman (women's shelter) until a final decision was reached. - APP

## Pakistan pushes for comprehensive UNSC reform

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan reaffirmed its position that any credible and durable reform of the UN Security Council must be tackled as a comprehensive package rather than through piecemeal changes when the stalled Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) devoted to restructuring the 15-member body resumed Tuesday. Speaking in the session held to advance the process of making the Council more representative and effective, Pakistani Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad argued that reforms must bridge divergences across the "five interlinked clusters" to achieve the broadest possible agreement, i.e. consensus, among member states. The five key reform clusters are: expanding the size of the Council, creating new categories of membership, ensuring equitable regional representation, extending or limiting the veto power, and improving transparency in the Council's working methods. In this regard, he said that Pakistan, as a leading member of the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group, does not support expansion in the Council's permanent members, "with or without veto." Progress towards restructuring the Security Council remains blocked as G-4 countries - India, Brazil, Germany and Japan - continue to campaign for permanent seats in the Council, while the UFC group opposes any expansion in the permanent category, arguing it would create "new centers of privilege." As a compromise, the UFC group has proposed a new category of members - not permanent members - with longer duration in terms and a possibility to get re-elected. The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - and 10 non-permanent members elected to two-year terms. In a sharp rejection of the aspirants' claim of their qualifications for permanent seats, Ambassador Asim Ahmad said, "A reformed Council must derive its authority not from the permanence of a few, but from accountability to, and confidence of the wider membership." Pakistan, he said, believes that there are many more than just these few states - a sizeable number of middle powers and small states, many of which are even today making significant contributions to international peace and security. "We, therefore, support expansion in the elected category of membership," the Pakistani envoy said, pointing out that periodic elections ensure accountability; and accountability ensures legitimacy. - Agencies





## CASH KA DARWAZA BUND

### AB QR CODE SE HOGI PAYMENT

Apna merchant QR Code hasil karne ke liye apne Bank se fori rabta karein

# Payment Barahe Raast

Fori - Free - Asaan - Mehfooz



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