



Islamabad POST

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Ronaldo strikes twice to end long wait for Saudi title

Detailed News On Page-06

US keen to expand coop in Railways

Detailed News On Page-02

Govt committed to fetch more and more investments

Detailed News On Page-03



Briefs

US release classified UFO files

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States' Defence Department on Friday released a second batch of previously classified files on alleged UFO sightings, including references to people reporting unexplained green orbs, discs and fireballs. At the order of US President Donald Trump, the first batch was made public on May 8. He is the latest president to release US government reports on unidentified flying objects, a disclosure process that began in the late 1970s. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the documents, photos and videos of what are officially known as "unidentified anomalous phenomena" had long fueled speculation. "It's time the American people see it for themselves," he said in a statement. One of the 222 files released on Friday contains 116 pages of documentation relating to a series of reported sightings and investigations in a top-secret facility in Sandia, New Mexico, from 1948 to 1950.

EU moves towards sanctioning Iran

DNA

BRUSSELS: The European Union has amended its sanctions framework to target those it says have facilitated Iran in "threatening the freedom of navigation in the Middle East", Al Jazeera reports. The restrictions were originally established to address Tehran's support for Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. "The EU will now be able to introduce further restrictive measures in response to Iran's actions undermining the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz," the European Council said, including travel restrictions and asset freezes on individuals. Meanwhile, Israeli air defences have intercepted two "suspicious aerial targets" launched from Lebanon that triggered warning alarms in northern Israel, Al Jazeera reports. Israel's military wrote on Telegram that the incoming projectiles were identified in the border area with Lebanon. The incident is under investigation, it added.

Petrol, diesel prices reduced

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced a reduction in petroleum prices, providing relief to consumers across Pakistan. According to the latest notification, the price of petrol has been decreased by Rs6 per litre, while high-speed diesel has been reduced by Rs8.80 per litre for the next one week. The revised prices came into effect immediately after the official announcement. Govt officials stated that the decision was taken in view of fluctuations in international oil prices and to ensure maximum relief for the people of Pakistan. The authorities said the government wants to pass on the full benefit of lower global petroleum rates to public.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.
- Editor

PM Shehbaz says

Steps being taken to boost investment

The prime minister said that Qatar was a long-standing friend of Pakistan that had supported Pakistan in every difficult time

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the government was prioritizing measures to boost foreign investment, as the obstacles had already been cleared through the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation led by Founder of Qatar's Taameer Group Mohammad Hussain Al-Ali, which called on him here, said that Qatar was a long-standing friend of Pakistan that had supported Pakistan in every difficult time. Highlighting the Pakistan's vast investment potential in tourism, hoteling, hospitality, real estate and construction sectors," he directed the relevant authorities to provide facilitation and assistance to the Taameer Group regarding investment in Pakistan. The Taameer Group founder briefed the prime minister on the group's investment and ongoing projects in Pakistan. He said that the Group was interested in investing in the hospitality, hotels, real estate and construction sectors in Pakistan, as work on several projects in this regard had already commenced. Expressing deep interest in increasing the group's investment in Pakistan, Mohammad Hussain Al-Ali appreciated the measures taken under the leadership of

Continued on Page 06

'PM China visit to further cement ties'

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will undertake an official visit to China from May 23 to 26 at the invitation of the Chinese government, as the two countries celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Announcing the visit at the weekly media briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said the visit carried special significance as Pakistan and China commemorated 75 years of their enduring friendship and strategic partnership founded on mutual trust, respect and shared aspirations. The spokesperson said the visit would provide an opportunity for both sides to reaffirm the strength of the Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership and advance their shared vision of

Continued on Page 06

Shahrah-e-Bhutto inaugurated

Bilawal for Karachi's role in Pak defence production sector

Demand for Pakistan's defence equipment increased after victory over India in May 2025, says PPP chief



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Friday pushed for Karachi's increased participation in "Made in Pakistan" defence production sector, citing growing international demand

for locally manufactured military equipment. Addressing a ceremony after inaugurating Karachi's Shahrah-e-Bhutto, the former foreign minister said that demand for Pakistan's defence products had witnessed a historic increase after the country's victory over India in the May 2025 war. Several countries have shown interest in purchasing defence equipment from Pakistan, he said, adding that nations around the world preferred battle-tested military hardware. "We want Karachi to contribute to Made in Pakistan defence production as well," the PPP chief said. The four-day war between the two nuclear-armed nations erupted on May 7 last year after India launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistan, following an attack on tourists in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan, Turkiye air force leadership mulls cooperation

The landmark visit of Chief of the Air Staff to Turkiye underscores the depth & vitality of the enduring partnership between the two countries

DNA

ANKARA: Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, during an official visit to the Republic of Turkiye, held high-level meetings with the country's senior Defence, Air Force and Aerospace leadership. During the visit, Chief of the Air Staff called on General Ziya Cemal Kadoglu, Commander Turkish Air Force, H.E. Yasar Guler, Minister of National Defence, and Mr. Selcuk Bayraktar, Chief Technology Officer Baykar Technologies, reaffirming the growing strategic convergence and shared commitment of both nations towards enhanced collaboration in defence, aerospace innovation and emerging technologies.

In the first of a series of high-level engagements, the Air Chief called on General Ziya Cemal Kadoglu, Commander Turkish Air Force, at the Turkish Air Force Headquarters where he was accorded a historic welcome. A smartly turned-out contingent of the Turkish Air Force presented Guard

of Honour to Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu reflecting deep respect, warmth and enduring bonds shared between the two nations. Both Air Chiefs deliberated on matters of mutual interest and avenues to further consolidate the longstanding fraternal ties between the two Air Forces. Emphasizing the importance of greater interoperability and combat synergy, both Commanders reiterated their resolve to pursue bilateral military exercises, professional exchange programmes and advanced training initiatives designed to strengthen operational cohesion between PAF and the Turkish Air Force. The Turkish Air Chief expressed his great appreciation for PAF's continued support in training of Turkish pilots, which he termed as a vital initiative for fostering professional growth and operational understanding between the two Air Forces. Expressing satisfaction over the existing bilateral cooperation, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening

Continued on Page 06

India battles power cuts

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Some parts of India are grappling with power cuts as record-breaking heat has pushed electricity demand to an all-time high in excess of 270 gigawatts, spurring a government call for consumers to limit use. An El Nino weather pattern is bringing above-average summer temperatures across the subcontinent in May, with nighttime outages running from 40 minutes to an hour in the manufacturing and infotech hub of Chennai, residents said. "South Chennai has seen frequent power cuts over the past two days, with outages at short intervals," said R Hari, a resident of the southern city, who complained that they made it difficult to work from home.

Continued on Page 06

Drug queen Pinky send on judicial remand

BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: A local court in Karachi sent alleged drug queen Pinky to jail on judicial remand in all cases after her production in multiple criminal proceedings. Pinky was produced before the court in the judicial complex after the completion of her physical remand in a murder case registered at Baghdad police station. Since her arrest earlier this month, the suspect has faced allegations ranging from running a drug network to murder. Pinky was reportedly arrested on May 12 from her apartment in Karachi's Garden area during a joint raid by police and a civilian intelligence agency.

Continued on Page 06



TEHRAN: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir being welcomed at the airport upon his arrival in Tehran. - DNA

Qatari delegation also in Iran

CDF Asim Munir in Tehran in a bid to facilitate deal

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio commented about CDF Munir's visit to Tehran, saying that the US was in "constant communication with him [and] the highest levels of our government are constantly talking to him

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reached Iran on Friday, security sources said. The CDF will discuss US-Iran talks, peace in the region and other important issues during the visit, the sources said. He will also meet with senior Iranian officials. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio commented about CDF Munir's visit to Tehran, saying that the US was in "constant communication with him [and] the highest levels of our

Continued on Page 06

US - Iran draft agreement signals to ease tensions

DNA

DUBAI: The draft agreement between the United States and Iran will include a series of significant commitments aimed at reducing tensions and stabilizing the region, according to a copy of the document obtained by Al Arabiya.

Continued on Page 06

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Pak, US discuss railways coop

Both sides also agreed to further expand the decades-long cooperation between Pakistan Railways and American company Wabtec. Speaking on the occasion, Hanif Abbasi said that the presence of 254 American-made locomotives in Pakistan Railways' fleet reflected the strong and longstanding partnership between the two countries in the railway sector

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Friday met with United States Ambassador to Pakistan, Natalie A. Baker and discussed Pakistan-US relations and bilateral cooperation in the railway sector, with a special focus on foreign investment and modernization of Pakistan Railways. During the meeting, the two sides agreed to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan Railways' infrastructure and modern technology sectors, said a news release. The United States (US) ambassador assured support for encouraging

American companies and investors to participate in railway development projects in Pakistan.

The discussions focused on potential American investment in locomotives, railway wagons, freight operations and advanced railway technologies.

Both sides also agreed to further expand the decades-long cooperation between Pakistan Railways and American company Wabtec.

Speaking on the occasion, Hanif Abbasi said that the presence of 254 American-made locomotives in Pakistan Railways' fleet reflected the

strong and longstanding partnership between the two countries in the railway sector. The minister said Pakistan Railways was introducing a new Track Access Policy aimed at facilitating international partnerships and attracting foreign investment. He invited American investors to take advantage of the emerging opportunities in the sector. Highlighting regional connectivity initiatives, the minister said Pakistan was actively working on major railway projects linking Central Asian states through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to Nokkundi and Gwadar.—DNA

Kundi, Qadri discuss wheat crisis, CNG closure

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday administered oath to newly-appointed provincial minister Muhammad Adnan Qadri at a ceremony held at Governor House Peshawar. Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, members of the provincial cabinet and senior government officials attended the oath-taking ceremony. Earlier, Chief Minister Sohail Afridi called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi. Former Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Pir Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, newly-appointed provincial minister, Adnan Qadri and Inspector General of Police, Zulfiqar Hameed were also present during the meeting. During the meeting, the participants discussed the wheat supply suspension and issues relating to closure of CNG stations in the province, and agreed on a joint struggle for safeguarding the rights of the province. The Governor and chief minister termed the wheat supply suspension a violation of the constitution and paid tribute to political parties for demonstrating unity on issues concerning provincial rights. They expressed hope that the federal government would fulfill its commitments regarding restoration of wheat supply to the province. The meeting also discussed the role of political parties and provincial leadership in raising the province's case after Eid, besides exchanging views on the overall law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.—APP

UET Peshawar achieves int'l ISO certifications

PESHAWAR: University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Peshawar has achieved a major milestone after its main and allied campuses were accredited with internationally recognized ISO certifications for quality management, environmental management and occupational health and safety systems. According to the university administration, the institution secured ISO 9001:2015 certification for Quality Management Systems (QMS), ISO 14001:2015 for Environmental Management Systems (EMS), and ISO 45001:2018 for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMS). The achievement reflects the university's commitment to promoting international standards in academic governance, operational efficiency, environmental sustainability and workplace safety across all campuses. Vice Chancellor UET Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Sadiq Khattak, congratulated the faculty members, officers, staff and students on the accomplishment and termed it an important step towards transforming UET Peshawar into a globally competitive institution. He said the ISO certifications would help strengthen institutional governance, continuous improvement mechanisms, stakeholder confidence and service delivery within the university system. The vice chancellor added that the achievement demonstrates the university's dedication to maintaining high standards in education, administration and campus management in line with international best practices.—APP

3,850 deployed for Eid cleanliness operation

PESHAWAR: Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) here on Friday finalized a special three-day Eid-ul-Adha cleanliness operation plan. All staff leaves have been cancelled and a total of 3,850 personnel will perform duties in 42 urban union councils for the collection of sacrificial animal waste and remains, routine cleanliness, and water supply and drainage services. This includes 2,880 sanitation workers and 970 water supply staff members. The plan was finalized during a meeting chaired by Chief Executive Officer Yasir Ali Khan, attended by General Manager Operations Muhammad Ejaz, zonal managers, and other officials. According to the plan, 798 small and large vehicles will be used for the collection of animal waste and remains. Waste from streets and neighbor-

hoods will be gathered at 16 designated collection points including Finland, Ring Road, Gulbahar Sabrina, Ramdas Chowk, Sufi Colony, Bahadar Kalay Umar Gul Road, District Council Nothia Qadeem, Kotla Mohsin Khan, Gulabad, Charnari Road, Bahadar Kalay Ring Road, near WAPDA Grid Station Ring Road, Phandu Road, and Usmania Town near Ring Road. From these points, the waste will be transported through larger vehicles to Shamsato dumping site for safe disposal. For disinfection purposes, lime, layers of soil, and insecticides will be used to control foul odor and protect public health. Similarly, lime, marble powder, insecticides, chlorine, and rose water will be used across the city to ensure cleanliness and minimize odor. Arrangements have also been made for spraying, washing, and sprinkling activities. Alongside the operation, a public awareness campaign will also be launched. Banners will be installed throughout the city before Eid, while 15,000 pamphlets will be distributed. The campaign will ensure participation of 300 religious scholars and public representatives. More than 10,000 biodegradable bags will also be distributed for the safe disposal of animal waste and remains. Before Eid-ul-Adha, religious scholars will deliver special cleanliness messages during Friday and Eid prayers, emphasizing hygiene, proper waste disposal, and the use of designated collection points to protect public health and the environment. Special monitoring teams in all five zones will supervise operations during all three days of Eid.—APP

Bangladesh academicians explore HEC, NUST

ISLAMABAD: A 13-member delegation of academia from Bangladesh, led by Chairman University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh Prof. Dr. Mamun Ahmed, visited the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Secretariat as part of an ongoing academic engagement programme between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Chairman HEC, Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar and other senior officers of HEC warmly welcomed the distinguished delegates. In a comprehensive session, the delegation was briefed on the mandate, achievements, and strategic initiatives of HEC Pakistan. On the occasion, senior HEC officers delivered detailed presentations on various aspects of Pakistan's higher education system. The Coordination Division presented an overview of HEC's organisational framework and strategic functions, while the Academics and Accreditation Division briefed the delegation on the higher education landscape, access and expansion of higher education institutions, establishment of campuses, and recent policy reforms. The Quality Assurance Division shared insights into Pakistan's Quality Assurance Framework and accreditation mechanisms, whereas the Information Technology Division highlighted initiatives related to digitisation and automation in higher education. An interactive discussion was also held, during which both sides exchanged views on higher education governance, quality enhancement, research collaboration, digital transformation, and opportunities for future institutional partnerships between universities of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Later, the delegation visited National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, where a guided tour of key academic and innovation facilities, including the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS) and the National Science and Technology Park (NSTP) was arranged. The university officials briefed the delegation on NUST's contributions to research, innovation, entrepreneurship, industry-academia collaboration, and technological advancement.—APP

Chinese diplomat highlights 75 years of Pak-China ties

DNA

LAHORE: China and Pakistan have stood together through thick and thin over the past 75 years and will continue to face future challenges together, making joint efforts to achieve a China-Pakistan community with a shared future. These remarks were made by Chinese Consul General Li Hoeteng during the celebration of the 75th anniversary of Pak-China diplomatic relations, organized by Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. Dr. Abdul Rauf Rafiqi, Director of Iqbal Academy Pakistan, hosted the event, which included a flag-hoisting ceremony and a special exhibition of Chinese books on Iqbal. Mr. Li stated that China and Pakistan will continue to enhance strategic communication, deepen mutual trust, and strengthen cooperation and friendship, delivering benefits to the peoples of

both countries. "On May 21, 1951, Pakistan became one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China and the first Islamic country to establish diplomatic relations with China. Since then, our two countries have always supported each other and shared both joy and hardship on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. We have upheld the core principles of mutual respect and trust, standing side by side through various risks and challenges," he said. He added, "For 75 years, leaders of both countries have visited each other frequently. Our peoples affectionately refer to each other as 'iron brothers,' and have always stood together in times of crisis, whether facing natural disasters or other challenges. History proves that China-Pakistan friendship is not by chance, but a choice made by our two peoples. This relationship has set a model for friendly coexistence and shared development between nations." Mr. Li also noted that

as CPEC progresses into its upgraded phase, cooperation is expanding in key sectors such as industry, agriculture, and mining. "Our partnership in agriculture is increasingly visible, especially in Punjab. The upgraded CPEC will continue to enhance well-being and development for the peoples of both countries," he explained. In his welcome remarks, Dr. Abdul Rauf Rafiqi highlighted the depth and warmth of 75 years of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations. He described Pak-China friendship as "higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the oceans, and sweeter than honey," emphasizing that this bond is not just between states but between civilizations. Dr. Rafiqi added that Allama Iqbal, through his poetry, envisioned the awakening of Asia and the rise of China. Today, the world is witnessing the realization of that vision, and scholarly work on Iqbal in Chinese strengthens cultural and intellectual exchange between the two nations.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani received by Regional Director, International Islamic Relief Organisation, Saad Masoud Al Harthi upon his arrival to visit Dar-e-Ali Ibne Abi Talib school for orphans.

Call for climate justice, resilient housing

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Musadik Malik on Friday urged the international community to prioritise climate justice and resilient housing, warning that climate-vulnerable populations continued to suffer disproportionately despite contributing the least to global emissions. Speaking at the 13th

session of the World Urban Forum 13 in Baku, the minister highlighted the growing challenges posed by climate change, urban inequality, poverty and housing injustice, particularly for marginalised communities. The forum, being held under the theme "Housing the World: Safe and Resilient Cities and Communities", brought together global leaders and policymakers to discuss sustainable urban development and climate resilience. Delivering Pakistan's national ministerial statement, Malik said climate-resilient housing was fundamentally an issue of justice. He noted that while it could take generations for a family to escape poverty, a single natural disaster could push them back into deprivation and vulnerability. Addressing a session on "NDC 3.0: Urban Law and Multi-Level Governance to Enable Climate Commitments." — APP

Revenue Division
Federal Board of Revenue
Government of Pakistan

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

(CONSULTING SERVICES - FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT – FIRMS SELECTION)

Country:	Pakistan
Name of Project:	Pakistan Raises Revenue Program (PRRP)
Assignment Title:	Hiring of Firm(s) for the Provision of Technical Advisory and Implementation Support Services Under a Multi-Provider Open Framework Agreement
Loan No./Credit No./ Grant No.:	7867-PK
Reference No.:	2(14)/2025-Addl-Dir(P&F)/478092
STEP No.:	PK-FBR-478092-CS-QCBS
Selection Method:	Quality and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS)
REOI Issuance Date:	22nd May 2026
Virtual Information Session Date:	15th June 2026 / 1130 HRS PST
Deadline for EOI's Submission:	30th June 2026 / 1130 HRS PST

1. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the Pakistan Raises Revenue Program (PRRP) [P1165982] and intends to apply part of the proceeds for Hiring of Firm(s) for the Provision of Technical Advisory and Implementation Support Services Under a Multi-Provider Open Framework Agreement.
2. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) through the Pakistan Raises Revenue Program (PRRP) financed by the World Bank, intends to engage qualified consulting firms for the Provision of Technical Advisory and Implementation Support Services Under a Multi-Provider Open Framework Agreement. The project supports implementation of various interventions related to tax administration modernization, including ICT modernization, data analytics, customs digital enforcement systems, tax administration improvements, and institutional strengthening. FBR intends to acquire technical advisory and support services on demand, through qualified firms under framework agreement.
3. The assignment requires the provision of specialized technical advisory and implementation support services for the implementation of FBR modernization reforms, supported under PRRP. Under this Framework Agreement, empaneled firms shall deliver assignment-specific outputs and services through Call-off Contracts issued by FBR based on defined scopes of work, deliverables, timelines, and performance requirements.
4. The Federal Board of Revenue now invites eligible Consulting Firms ("Consultants"), to indicate their interest in providing the said Services. Interested Consultants should provide the information demonstrating that they have required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The shortlisting criteria are:
 - a. **Core Business and Years in Business:** The firm must be a registered legal entity with minimum of five (05) years' demonstrated experience in provision of technical advisory, digital transformation, systems integration, institutional strengthening, implementation support, ICT modernization, enterprise solutions, or related services. Demonstrated experience in public sector modernization, taxation, customs, digital government, large ICT programs, or similarly complex environments is preferable and advantageous.
 - b. **Relevant Experience:** Completion of at least two (02) similar/relevant assignments during the last five (05) years. Assignments demonstrating full-service delivery responsibility (rather than staff augmentation) shall be considered advantageous.
 - c. **Technical and Managerial capability of the Firm:**
The Consultant shall provide description and structure that they have the right managerial and technical staff along with experts to perform the Services as outlined in the TORs. The firm must have a multidisciplinary team with qualified and experienced professionals in the envisaged fields. The Consultant shall confirm availability of managerial and technical resources necessary to execute assignment-specific Call-offs. Key Experts CV will not be evaluated at the shortlisting stage.
 - d. **Framework Agreement Readiness and Assignment Delivery Model**
The Consultant shall demonstrate:
 - ability to mobilize assignment teams rapidly
 - ability to deliver outputs against timelines
 - quality assurance and reporting mechanisms
 - experience managing multiple concurrent assignments
 - e. Confirmation of free of Conflict of Interest in accordance with Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations" as referred in Point #5 below.
 - f. Confirmation of eligibility as defined in paragraphs 3.21-3.24 of the World Bank's Procurement Regulations as referred in Point #5 below.
5. The attention of interested Consultant Firms is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, 3.17 and 3.21, 3.22, 3.23, 3.24 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations" for IPF Borrowers' Fifth Edition September 2023 ("Procurement Regulations"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest and Eligibility.
6. Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.
7. A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Framework Agreement arrangements described in the Procurement Regulations.
8. A virtual Information Session shall be held on **15th June 2026 at 1130 Hours PST** to familiarize the potential applicants on Terms of Reference (available at <https://fbr.gov.pk/tenders>) and ensuing procurement process. Interested Consulting Firms may obtain the respective meeting link/ invite via writing an email addressed to the undersigned (Email: procsp.prrp@fbr.gov.pk) between **05th June 2026 and 14th June 2026** (latest by **1500 Hours PST**).
9. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours i.e. **1000 to 1600 hours PST**.
10. The Expression of Interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person or by mail, or by e-mail) not later than 1130 hours (Pakistan Standard Time) on **30th June 2026**. For expressions sent electronically, Program Office will acknowledge receipt of the same via return email. In absence of such confirmation/ receipt, please contact on the address given below.
11. The address(es) referred to above is (are):

Procurement Specialist, PRRP

Room No. 277-B, Second Floor, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) FBR House,
G-5, Constitution Avenue Islamabad, Pakistan
(Off): +92 51 9219641 and +92 51 9215109
Email: PROCSP.PRRP@FBR.GOV.PK

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

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

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Enquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281022



Hospitals

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



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Jordan ambassador attends CIPS-NUST training program

The event marked the successful completion of the training programme aimed at strengthening knowledge and skills related to the protection of civilians in conflict and peacekeeping environments



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan, Dr. Maen Khreasat attended as Chief Guest at the closing ceremony of the

United Nations Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Course held at the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), part of the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). The event marked the successful comple-

tion of the training programme aimed at strengthening knowledge and skills related to the protection of civilians in conflict and peacekeeping environments. Dr. Khreasat congratulated the participants on their achievement and commended

the efforts of the organisers in promoting peace and stability through specialized training initiatives. Participants and dignitaries, including representatives from diplomatic and academic circles, attended the ceremony.

Efforts afoot to strengthen special education services

Currently, nearly 2,000 children and persons with diverse disabilities, ranging from severe to profound levels, are enrolled in the five special education institutions functioning under DGSE in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Directorate General of Special Education (DGSE), an attached department of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training concluded one-week Orientation Training for sixty newly inducted outsourced professionals and allied staff under the theme "Strengthening Service Delivery of Special Education Centres through HR Outsourcing." The National Institute of Special Education (NISE) was entrusted with the responsibility to design, organize, and execute the orientation training program for the newly inducted outsourced professionals before their formal placement at their respective service delivery centres. The orientation aimed at equipping participants with institutional understanding, professional ethics, practical exposure, and specialized skills required for effective service delivery in the field of special education. To address the growing human resource requirements of the Directorate, mandated to provide rehabilitation, education, and vocational training services to children and persons with disabilities in the Federal Capital, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training outsourced the hiring of qualified professionals and allied staff including Special Educators, Clinical Psychologists, Audiologists, Speech Therapy Fellows, Physiotherapy Fellows, Behaviour Therapy Fellows, Medical Officers,

Junior Educators, Assistive Technology Specialists, Mobility Assistants, Orthopaedic Professionals, Optometrists, Nutritionists, Social Services Officers, Sports Teachers, Medical Assistants, Vocational Trainers, Receptionists, Drivers, Attendants, and other support staff for deployment in DGSE service delivery centres. Currently, nearly 2,000 children and persons with diverse disabilities, ranging from severe to profound levels, are enrolled in the five special education institutions functioning under DGSE in Islamabad. These institutions provide educational, therapeutic, rehabilitation, and vocational services aimed at promoting independence, participation, and empowerment of persons with disabilities. The opening session on May 18, began with the National Anthem presented in Pakistan Sign Language (PSL). Children with special needs enrolled in DGSE institutions warmly welcomed the trainees through their captivating instrumental performances, national and folk songs, and also shared reflections expressing gratitude to the Ministry leadership for promoting accessible education and rehabilitation opportunities. The children particularly expressed gratitude in their own unique accessible communication towards the worthy Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Mr. Nadeem Mahbub, as custodian of their rehabilitation, education, and happiness, who has been recently honoured with the prestigious Sitara-e-Imtiaz in recognition of

his dedicated efforts toward making education accessible and a lived and inclusive experience. The students also paid tribute to former Director General DGSE, Captain (Retd.) Asif Iqbal, for his transformative and collaborative leadership during the past one year and four months under the vision of MoFEPT. The session was interpreted in Pakistan Sign Language by one of the pioneers in the development of PSL in Pakistan Sign Language. Prominent guest speakers and experts conducted specialized sessions throughout the orientation program. Sir Khalid Naem, Former Director General DGSE and Former Member National Commission on the Rights of Child, delivered a comprehensive lecture on the History, Scope of DGSE and Importance of Work Ethics in the Field of Special Education. Prof. Dr. Qamar Mahmood, renowned Pediatric and Neuro Physiotherapist conducted a session on Integrating Functional Mobility and Classroom Participation for Children with Physical Disabilities. Dr. Faiza Badar, reputed speech and language pathologist delivered an expert session on Speech and Language Therapy Interventions for Children with Disabilities: A Collaborative School-Based Approach, while Dr. Irfan Ahmed, Consultant Audiologist and Cochlear Implant rehab expert conducted a specialized session on Identification and Management of Hearing Loss in Children with Special Needs, further enriching the orientation through professional insights.

NUML, Rajshahi university sign LoI

ISLAMABAD: A 12-member high-level academic delegation from Bangladesh, headed by Professor Dr. Mamun Ahmed, Chairman University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh and comprising vice-chancellors of leading Bangladeshi universities, visited the National University of Modern Languages. The delegation was also accompanied by representatives of the Higher Education Commission Pakistan. The distinguished delegation was warmly received by the Rector NUML, Major General (R) Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI(M), along with senior university officials. During the visit, the guests were given a comprehensive tour of the university campus and various academic and cultural facilities. The delegation visited the ongoing Job Fair and later toured the NUML TV Studio. At the Faculty of Computing and Engineering, the visiting dignitaries interacted with students and faculty members and took keen interest in innovative projects and technological demonstrations displayed at various stalls. The delegation also visited the NUML Library and the Bangla Corner, where the Chairman UGC Bangladesh recorded his remarks in the visitors' book and appreciated NUML's efforts in promoting linguistic and cultural harmony. The guests later visited the Bangla Department at Ghalib Block and highly appreciated the vibrant cultural stalls organized by Department of Pakistan Studies, representing the rich traditions and heritage of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir. A key highlight of the visit was the signing of a Letter of Interest (LoI) between NUML and Rajshahi University, Bangladesh, aimed at academic and student exchange, faculty, research and administrative exchange, joint educational and research activities, Language and cultural cooperation, postgraduate and postdoctoral collaboration, and institutional linkages between the two universities. The document was signed by Rector NUML and the Vice Chancellor of Rajshahi University, Professor Dr. Faridul Islam. At the conclusion of the visit, shields, gifts, and souvenirs were presented to the members of the delegation as a gesture of goodwill and friendship. The delegation expressed heartfelt gratitude to NUML for the warm hospitality and appreciated the university's significant role in promoting languages, cultural understanding, and regional academic cooperation.

45,000 hajj depart from Islamabad airport

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad International Airport (ISB) buzzed with an air of purpose and devotion in recent weeks as thousands of pilgrims embarked on their spiritual journey to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

With the formal conclusion of Pre-Hajj Operations 2026, airport authorities are calling this year's effort one of the most efficient, seamless, and high-volume operations in the airport's history. Over the course of several weeks, Islamabad International Airport oversaw 284 Hajj flights carrying a record 45,160 pilgrims, more than any previous year, setting a new benchmark in the airport's operational capacity and coordination. For many pilgrims, the journey began long before they stepped onto an aircraft. Months of preparation, orientation sessions, and logistical arrangements converged at ISB airport, where special facilitation mechanisms were put in place to ensure comfort and ease at every stage of departure. Under the Government Hajj Scheme and the increasingly relied-upon Route-to-Makkah initiative, 142 flights carried 37,072 pilgrims. An additional 142 flights under the private hajj scheme transported 8,088 pilgrims, demonstrating a remarkably balanced distribution of traffic across both public and private arrangements. What made this year especially notable was the airport's handling of its seventh consecutive Route-to-Makkah operation, a facility that has significantly transformed the hajj departure experience by enabling Saudi immigration clearance to be completed in Islamabad. This year, airport teams successfully managed up to eight dedicated hajj flights in a single day, including four simultaneous Route-to-Makkah operations, while still maintaining routine flight schedules without disruption. Inside the terminal, the atmosphere reflected a blend of spiritual anticipation and operational precision. Dedicated check-in counters, streamlined immigration and security processes, prayer areas, shaded waiting zones, food and refreshment stations, and enhanced seating capacity created a welcoming environment for departing pilgrims. For elderly travellers and those requiring special assistance, airport teams and volunteers remained on standby throughout the operation, ensuring that every pilgrim, regardless of age or mobility, received the care and attention needed for a dignified departure. Technology, too, played a significant role in strengthening this year's operations. Saudi teams deployed Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tagging systems at check-in counters, enabling enhanced baggage tracking and minimizing the risk of misplaced luggage upon arrival in Saudi Arabia. This digital integration has been hailed by officials as a significant step toward modernizing Hajj facilitation and improving the pilgrims' overall travel experience. Behind the scenes, a network of dedicated personnel worked tirelessly, often around the clock.—APP

ICCI hosts Philippines envoy to promote business linkages

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Pakistan, Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and held an interactive session with the business community to discuss opportunities for enhancing bilateral trade, investment and economic cooperation between Pakistan and the Philippines. The Ambassador described the Philippines as an attractive investment destination and an important gateway to ASEAN markets due to its strategic location in Asia. Through a detailed presentation, he highlighted the Philippines' economic strengths, stating that the country serves as an important entry point to the ASEAN region due to its strategic location in the heart of Asia. He noted that the Philippines offers access to one of the world's largest consumer markets and provides extensive opportunities for foreign investors. He highlighted investment opportunities in manufacturing, renewable energy, agribusiness, IT, healthcare, tourism, real estate and construction sectors. He informed participants that the Philippines offers incentives including income tax holidays of up to seven years, duty-free imports and VAT exemptions. The Ambassador particularly emphasized the potential for joint ventures in Halal food products for ASEAN markets and stressed the importance of stronger business-to-business contacts, exchange of trade delegations and cooperation in multiple sectors. He assured the business community of the Embassy's full support and facilitation, especially for ICCI members for the purpose. Earlier, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mahmood, welcomed the Ambassador and said that Pakistan and the Philippines have vast untapped potential to enhance bilateral trade and economic relations.—DNA

MAY 2026

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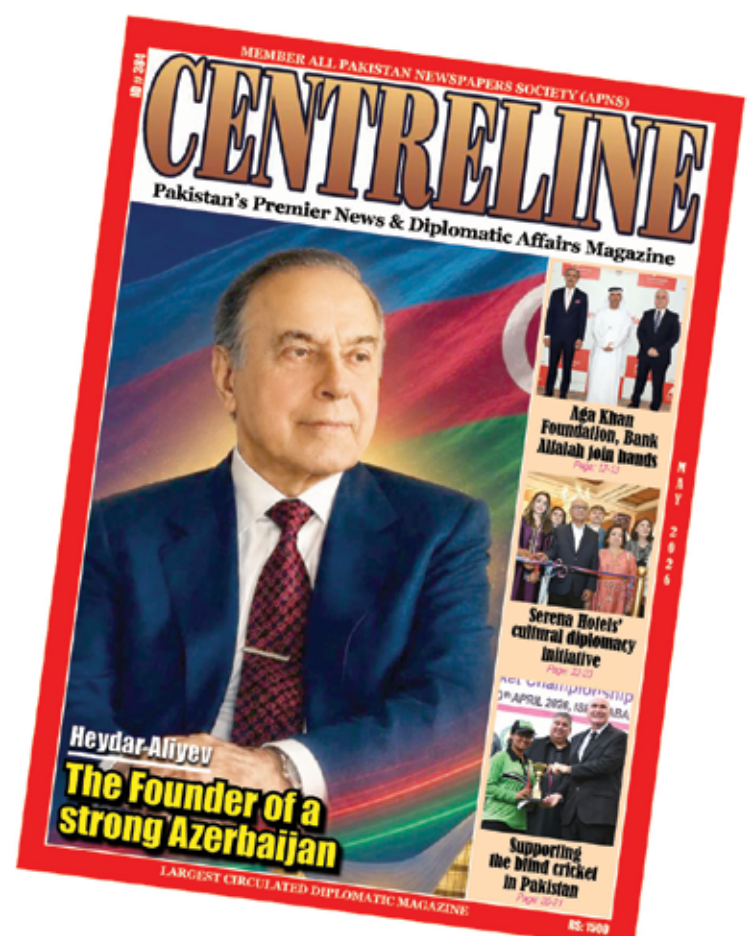
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Briefs

Murree
activates
smart
monitoring
system

ISLAMABAD :Ahead of the Eid al-Adha rush, Murree authorities have unveiled extraordinary security and crowd-management measures, including the launch of the "Safe Tourism Murree" mobile app and the deployment of hundreds of officials across the hill station. District Police Officer (DPO) Murree, Dr Muhammad Raza Tanveer while speaking to a local media channel said that comprehensive security and traffic management arrangements have been finalized to facilitate tourists during Eid al-Adha as we anticipated a heavy influx of tourists during the Eid holidays, expecting a significant surge in visitor numbers across Murree. He added that more than 700 police and security personnel will be deployed across key locations, while entry to busy areas like Mall Road will be restricted to families only to prevent overcrowding and ensure public safety. He further stated that the newly launched "Safe Tourism Murree" mobile application will provide real-time traffic updates, emergency assistance, and help maintain smooth tourist flow throughout the holiday period. DPO Murree further said that special checkpoints and diversion plans have been put in place at all major entry and exit points of the hill station to manage heavy tourist influx during Eid. He emphasized that law enforcement teams will remain on high alert to ensure smooth traffic flow, prevent congestion, and respond quickly to any emergency situation.—APP

Cattle markets
witness strong
economic
activity

ISLAMABAD: As the festive season of Eid-ul-Adha gathers momentum, cattle markets across cities have evolved into bustling commercial centers, where labourers for loading animals, feed vendors, ornament shopkeepers, knife-sharpening services and transporters remain engaged around the clock, sustaining a nonstop cycle of trade and activity. Officials and market representatives speaking to media outlets said that thousands of workers, traders, transport operators, and feed shopkeepers are actively involved in the seasonal livestock trade, as demand for sacrificial animals continues to rise sharply across urban and rural markets. A labourer working at the cattle market said that the Eid season offers him the most significant earning opportunity of the year, explaining that although the work is physically demanding and involves long hours, the income earned during this period helps him cover household expenses for several months. He added that increased market activity has created vital employment opportunities for daily wage workers like him.—APP

Hajj arrange-
ments running
smoothly

ISLAMABAD: Director General Hajj Abdul Wahab Soomro Friday confirmed that Hajj services are in full operation, with pilgrims benefiting from air-conditioned accommodations, wheelchair accessibility and round-the-clock digital coordination through WhatsApp to assist and guide pilgrims at every stage of their journey, ensuring better communication, comfort and support throughout the Hajj process. In an exclusive conversation with local media outlet regarding Hajj 2026 arrangements, DG Hajj Abdul Wahab Soomro confirmed that more than 117,000 pilgrims under the government scheme have already reached Saudi Arabia, while the remaining groups are still in transit as the ongoing flight operations continue smoothly. He said that comprehensive facilities have been put in place for pilgrims, including air-conditioned arrangements in Mina, improved accommodation standards and round-the-clock support to ensure maximum comfort and convenience during the pilgrimage.—APP

Govt committed to support
investment climate: Minister

He also shared suggestions and proposals from the business community aimed at further improving the investment environment and addressing key issues faced by industries



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with President Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Mr. Faheem ur Rehman to discuss matters related to the business environment, investment facilitation, and the energy

supply situation in the country. During the meeting, the Federal Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to supporting the investment climate and ensuring maximum facilitation for the business community. He stated that the Government is taking practical steps to promote economic stability, encourage investment, and strengthen coordination with relevant stakeholders. President

LCCI Faheem ur Rehman appreciated the Federal Government's diplomatic efforts and stated that Pakistan has demonstrated responsible and effective diplomacy in the prevailing regional situation. He also commended the Ministry of Petroleum for ensuring continuity of supply and efficient handling of the situation despite disruptions caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Faheem ur Rehman

particularly praised Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik for his proactive leadership and effective management in addressing energy-related challenges and ensuring stability for the industrial and commercial sectors. He also shared suggestions and proposals from the business community aimed at further improving the investment environment and addressing key issues faced by industries.

Experts call
for reforms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Policymakers, diplomats, economists, and development experts gathered at a high-level forum hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute to celebrate 75 years of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations and discuss the future trajectory of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The event, titled "Celebrating Long-Term Pak-China Cooperation," also marked the launch of SDPI's report, Charting the Evolution from CPEC's First Phase to Its Transformative Second Phase, Gwadar Pro reported. The report says, speakers described the Pakistan-China partnership as a rare example of sustained strategic cooperation. The emphasized the need for institutional reforms, regulatory consistency, and stronger economic coordination to unlock the full potential of bilateral ties. Federal Minister for Investment and Chairman of the Board of Investment (BOI) Kaiser Ahmed Sheikh said the longstanding relationship between Pakistan and China reflected one of the most consistent and trusted partnerships in modern diplomacy. But stressed that administrative inefficiencies and slow institutional processes were limiting the pace of economic cooperation between the two countries.—APP

Gwadar
begins
key road
blacktopping

ISLAMABAD: The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) on May 20 launched blacktopping work on the road linking Jannat Bazaar with Old Eidgah Road under the Old Town Rehabilitation Project, marking another step in the city's ongoing infrastructure upgrade efforts. Gwadar Pro quoin the GDA, stated that the road connecting Jannat Bazaar to the Old Eidgah area is considered an important route for residents of Gwadar's old residential neighborhoods. Authorities said blacktopping work on the road from Kitab Chowk to Marine Drive is also a major component of the rehabilitation project. Construction, expansion, blacktopping, tuff tiling and paving work on roads and streets across different parts of the city are continuing at a rapid pace. Officials said the projects are aimed not only at improving infrastructure in old residential areas, but also at enhancing the city's appearance and public facilities. The Old Town Rehabilitation Project seeks to modernize Gwadar's historic neighborhoods by introducing improved urban infrastructure.—APP

EU-funded 'Deliver Justice
Project' completes five years

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: European Union (EU)-funded 'Deliver Justice Project' concluded in Islamabad, marking five years of strengthening access to justice, improving people-centred justice services, and advancing rule of law reforms across Pakistan. Jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the project worked across Islamabad, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to support justice and security institutions, civil society, and local communities. The closing event brought together representatives from the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, provincial justice and security institutions, civil society, media, and communities to reflect on the project's impact and the partnerships that made it possible. Champions of justice from KP and Balochistan were also recognized for their contributions to promoting more accessible and inclusive justice services, said a press release. On the occasion, Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, said, "The EU is committed to helping Pakistan provide an improved, more efficient, safer, and more accessible justice system to its citizens. Through this project, we've been able to support the justice sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

and Balochistan." The event highlighted the project's impact through testimonials and conversations with women lawyers, women police officers, and community members who benefited from legal awareness, legal aid, and justice services under the initiative. An interactive Impact Hub showcased achievements, research, and personal stories from across the project areas. Honourable Justice Shahid Waheed, Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan, attended the event as the Chief Guest. In his remarks, he noted, "The justice sector across the world is undergoing profound transformation. Courts and justice institutions are increasingly expected not only to decide disputes, but also to deliver justice that is accessible, inclusive, efficient, transparent, and responsive to the needs of society. In developing democracies, particularly, justice institutions carry an even greater responsibility: to reinforce public trust, protect constitutional rights, and ensure that no individual or community is left behind." A panel discussion on the future of the rule of law in Pakistan explored how sustained collaboration can help make justice systems more responsive, inclusive, and accessible for all. Moderated by Shahzada Ahmad, Programme Manager, UNDP Pakistan, the discussion featured insights from Judge Muhammad Amir Munir, Director, Federal Judicial Academy; Munizae Jehangir, Senior Journalist; Muhammad Mudassar Javed, CEO, SHARP; and Huma Akhtar Chughtai, Member of the National Assembly. "We have much to be proud of," said Van Nguyen, Officer-in-Charge, UNDP Pakistan.

China and
Pakistan's open
new chapter

ISLAMABAD: From Gwadar's China-Pakistan Friendship Hospital which has treated over 350,000 patients since opening, to the screening of Pakistan's highest-grossing film in Chinese cinemas; from Pakistan's first driverless rapid transit train shuttling in Lahore that carries over 300,000 passengers daily in April, to the training of Pakistan's first astronaut for China's space station mission... As Beijing is to welcome the visit by Pakistan's Prime Minister later this week, one of the most enduring bilateral relationships in modern times and arguable the most important foreign relations for Pakistan is set to renew with refreshed vigor after 75 years of close part-

nership, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Friday. The year 2026 is one of expanded investment outreach and commemoration designated by both countries. What began with highways, ports and power plants is leaving growing imprint on Pakistan's industrial transformation and economic modernisation, and more importantly, seeping into ordinary Pakistani people's life: energy spending saved, difficult illnesses cured, high-paid jobs landed, better products acquired, to name a few. For 12 consecutive years, China is Pakistan's largest trade partner. Over 7.4% of Pakistan's goods find its consumers in Chinese market in FY 24-25; in the first quarter this year, Pakistan's exports to China rose 44.79% from a year earlier. Pakistan's exports to China reached USD 2.38 billion in fiscal year 2024-25. The first phase of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement, launched in 2007, helped expand bilateral trade by 242 percent over the following decade. Under Phase II, which came into force in 2020, China removed tariffs on 313 priority Pakistani product lines, while both sides agreed to liberalise 75 percent of tariff lines.—DNA

Pak mediation to save
region from war

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States and the United Nations, Masood Khan, has said that Pakistan is playing a leading diplomatic role to prevent a devastating regional conflict between the United States and Iran, warning that failure of ongoing mediation efforts could plunge the Middle East into prolonged instability and economic turmoil. Speaking during a television interview on the rapidly evolving Iran-US crisis, Ambassador Masood Khan described the current environment as "extremely fluid," noting that contradictory statements from various capitals have complicated diplomatic efforts despite reports suggesting that a memorandum aimed at ending the conflict may already be under discussion. Ambassador Masood Khan stated that countries including Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan are actively engaged in mediation efforts, adding that Pakistan has assumed a central role in facilitating communication between Tehran and Washington. He noted that Islamabad's diplomatic outreach and shuttle diplomacy continue at an intense pace, with senior Pakistani leadership remaining deeply involved in efforts to secure de-escalation and dialogue. Highlighting the complexity of the negotiations, Ambassador Masood Khan said that one of the most difficult hurdles remains the future status of the Strait of Hormuz. He observed that Iran has adopted a firm position regarding control and security arrangements in the strategically vital waterway, further complicating efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement. He further stated that inflammatory rhetoric from both sides, particularly aggressive statements emerging from Washington and Tehran, continues to undermine trust and intensify tensions.—APP

Power Division warns consumers
against fake subsidy links

ISLAMABAD: The Power Division on Friday warned electricity consumers against fraudulent activities being carried out by hackers and criminal elements under the guise of a government subsidy scheme. In an advisory issued for consumers, the Power Division spokesperson said certain elements were attempting to steal users' personal information through fake QR codes and suspicious online links related to electricity bill subsidies. The spokesperson said consumers were being asked to click on a specific link and share personal information through a four-step process. After entering the details, users were further asked to provide a six-digit verification code on the same link. The spokesperson cautioned that such methods were illegal and fraudulent, adding that some elements were using QR codes to achieve malicious objectives. He clarified that the relevant information cannot be entered on any platform other than the electricity bill. The Power Division urged consumers not to enter their personal information either digitally or on paper for obtaining electricity subsidies. The spokesperson further said law enforcement agencies had been informed about the activities of the criminal elements involved in the scam.—APP

Uranium is the core of the crisis

TANVEER HUSSAIN



THE Strait of Hormuz, in itself, is not as big an issue as it is being portrayed. The real conflict is about the balance of power and political dominance between the United States and Iran. If Iran succeeds in imposing any form of tax or control over ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, it would be seen as a serious blow to the concept of American supremacy. In the eyes of many American citizens, it would be viewed as a diplomatic, political, and military failure of President Trump. The real issue is not the Strait of Hormuz, but Iran's enriched uranium and its nuclear program.

Iran has endured decades of sanctions, economic pressure, and diplomatic isolation solely to achieve nuclear capability. As a result of attacks by the United States and Israel, several of Iran's nuclear reactors have reportedly been destroyed or rendered inoperable. Rebuilding such facilities is neither simple nor quick. It would require years of work, billions of dollars in investment, advanced technology, skilled manpower, and highly sensitive equipment. Much of this equipment is not openly available due to international sanctions, forcing Iran to rely on covert networks, smuggling routes, and unofficial channels.

Under current circumstances, with Iran's nuclear program under intense global scrutiny, operating such clandestine networks has become far more difficult than before. International intelligence agencies, financial monitoring systems, and regulatory bodies are now more active and coordinated than ever. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to say that reviving Iran's nuclear program today is significantly more difficult than it was in the past. Some analysts believe Iran unnecessarily delayed the development of nuclear weapons. Had Iran achieved its objectives earlier, the situation today might have been very different. Pakistan and Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan faced immense international pressure and difficulties over allegations of assisting Iran and Libya. Even during that period, Iran could not fully achieve its objectives, while today the process has become far more complex and dangerous. On the other hand, the demand by the

United States and Western powers that Iran hand over its enriched uranium to international authorities or to the United States is an extremely sensitive issue for Iran. For the Iranian leadership, this is not merely a technical or diplomatic matter; it is a question of national dignity, sovereignty, and ideological survival. Even if an Iranian government were to accept such an agreement, it would likely face severe resistance from the public, religious groups, and revolutionary institutions within the country. Iran has endured decades of sanctions, economic crises, political isolation, and internal hardships in pursuit of this technology. Under such circumstances, a sudden abandonment of the nuclear program would be seen by many Iranians as a national humiliation. This is why emotions surrounding the issue remain extremely intense inside Iran. If the government were to make a major compromise against public expectations, it could trigger internal unrest, political instability, and even conditions resembling civil war. According to some observers, this may also align with the broader American strategy: to achieve through internal pressure, economic hardship, and political instability what could not be achieved through direct military confrontation. Throughout history, major powers have often weakened rival states from within to secure their objectives. In Iran's case, many believe that the continuing sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and economic strain are aimed not only at stopping the nuclear program, but also at weakening

the Iranian system internally. In all of this, Pakistan's role also becomes significant. Pakistan has consistently supported efforts to reduce tensions, encourage dialogue, and promote ceasefires in the region. Amid rising tensions between Iran and the Western world, Pakistan has attempted to maintain a responsible and balanced policy. Pakistan understands that any large-scale war in the Middle East would not only affect Iran or the Gulf states, but would also have economic, political, and security consequences for the entire region, especially Pakistan. For this reason, Pakistan has played a positive diplomatic role in supporting peace, negotiations, and ceasefire efforts. Pakistan has consistently tried to prevent the conflict from escalating further and has encouraged all sides to choose dialogue over war. As a nuclear power and an important country in the Muslim world, Pakistan's approach is considered important for regional peace and stability. Pakistan believes that war cannot provide a lasting solution, whereas diplomacy and negotiations are the only realistic paths that can save the region from destruction. In conclusion, the conflict surrounding Iran is not limited to nuclear technology or the Strait of Hormuz. It has become a matter of national dignity, regional power, global politics, and the future balance of power in the world. That is why a lasting solution to this crisis lies not in military action or economic sanctions, but in realistic diplomacy, negotiations, regional cooperation, and sustainable ceasefire efforts.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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

Pivotal EU-GCC summit set for Riyadh

DR. CHRISTIAN KOCH

THE second EU-Gulf Cooperation Council summit, scheduled to be held in Riyadh in the autumn of 2026, comes at a critical moment in international affairs. What began as a historically underdeveloped relationship between two neighboring economic and geopolitical blocs is rapidly evolving into one of the most strategically consequential partnerships of the emerging multipolar era. If the inaugural EU-GCC summit in Brussels in October 2024 symbolized the opening of a new chapter, the second summit in Riyadh comes at a moment where both sides need to transform political ambition into sustained strategic cooperation. The regional and global environment that confronts Europe and the GCC states has become dramatically more unstable, fragmented and competitive in recent years. The ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict is fundamentally reshaping the security calculations of governments across the Middle East and Europe alike. A multidimensional crisis is evolving that has direct implications for global energy markets, maritime security, supply chains, inflation, defense spending, political stability, and the future structure of international alliances. In addition, the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, instability in the Red Sea, uncertainty surrounding long-term American strategic commitments and the growing weaponization of trade, energy and technology are all fundamentally altering the calculations of policymakers in both Brussels and GCC capitals. The good news is that, in this context, the EU and GCC have begun to recognize that their interests are now interconnected and not merely complementary. In this context, the importance of hosting the summit in Riyadh should not be underestimated. The ongoing US-Israel-Iran war has exposed vulnerabilities for both Europe and the Gulf states in ways that are impossible to ignore. The EU and GCC have begun to recognize that their interests are now interconnected and not merely complementary. For the GCC countries, the threat is immediate and existential. The Gulf sits at the center of the regional confrontation. Any escalation involving Iranian retaliation, attacks on energy infrastructure, disruption of maritime traffic, cyberwarfare or proxy conflicts threatens the economic and national security foundations of the Gulf monarchies. Even in the absence of direct military confrontation on Gulf territory, instability alone creates enormous risks for investor confidence, economic diversification plans, tourism sectors, logistics networks and long-term development agendas such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. For Europe, the implications are equally severe, albeit in different ways. Europe remains heavily dependent on stable global energy flows and secure maritime trade routes. Due to the war in Ukraine, European economies have already experienced the consequences of geopolitical disruptions to energy markets. A prolonged Middle Eastern conflict involving Iran threatens to generate another wave of energy volatility, inflationary pressure and supply chain instability at a time when many European economies remain fragile. The restrictions imposed



on the strategic Strait of Hormuz and the continued vulnerability of the Bab Al-Mandab Strait and the Red Sea have more than underlined the direct consequences for European trade and industrial production. Moreover, the conflict has highlighted the limits of existing international security arrangements. The US remains the dominant military actor in the Gulf, yet many regional partners increasingly question the predictability and long-term sustainability of American commitments. Simultaneously, Europe has discovered that it cannot indefinitely outsource its strategic interests in the Middle East to Washington while remaining insulated from the consequences of regional instability. This realization is driving a new convergence of interests between the EU and GCC. The Riyadh summit will therefore represent far more than a diplomatic gathering. It will offer an opportunity to establish a more structured and operational political-security partnership capable of addressing the realities of an increasingly dangerous regional environment.

Several issue areas come to mind in this regard. The first is maritime security cooperation. Enhanced EU-GCC cooperation on naval coordination, maritime surveillance, intelligence sharing and the protection of critical sea lanes will be a vital component to strengthen regional resilience. The EU has already accumulated considerable operational experience through naval missions such as Operation Atalanta in the Horn of Africa and Operation Aspides in the Red Sea. A second area is overall defense preparedness in the GCC states. The EU's comparative advantage lies in integrated security cooperation that includes resilience-building, technology partnerships, cyber defense, intelligence coordination, industrial cooperation and crisis management. In terms of defense-industrial cooperation, Europe's defense sector can contribute to developing local defense manufacturing ecosystems, joint research and development programs, technology transfer agreements, and military-industrial partnerships focused on long-term sustainability. Air and missile defense cooperation will be a critical domain in this regard. Beyond hard security, the political and diplomatic dimension of the summit will be equally important. Here, the GCC states have emerged as active diplomatic actors capable of mediating conflicts and facilitating dialogue between rival powers. Europe, despite its internal divisions, remains one of the world's largest diplomatic and economic blocs with considerable influence in international institutions. Closer EU-GCC political coordination could therefore create new avenues for de-escalation diplomacy, humanitarian coordination, reconstruction planning and regional stabilization efforts.

The geopolitical environment confronting both regions has entered a new and more dangerous phase. Finally, the current conflict has reinforced the importance of economic diversification, supply chain security and strategic investment partnerships. The instability generated has revealed the dangers of over-dependence on fragile trade routes and concentrated supply chains. Europe and the Gulf share an interest in developing resilient transport corridors linking Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Strategic projects involving ports, railways, digital infrastructure and logistics integration will be essential to help both regions reduce vulnerability to geopolitical shocks. This includes the importance of long-term energy coordination. Although Europe seeks to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, Gulf energy producers will remain indispensable to global energy stability for decades. At the same time, the Gulf is positioning itself as a future leader in clean energy exports, particularly hydrogen.

A Steadfast Friend: Pakistan's Enduring Stand for Palestine

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Yet Pakistan's contribution has never been limited to words. When the tragedy in Gaza deepened after late 2023, the Pakistani people responded with open hearts. More than 1,600 tons of aid—food parcels, life-saving medicines, blankets to ward off the winter cold, tents for the homeless, and essential medical equipment—were carefully gathered and dispatched. These were not mere shipments; each container carried the empathy of a nation that knows the pain of hardship. Pakistani hospitals have offered treatment to injured Palestinians...

FOR more than seventy long years, the people of Palestine have carried a burden that no nation should ever bear. From the narrow streets of Gaza, where families huddle amid rubble, to the hills of the West Bank, where ancient olive groves are uprooted by the day, an entire population has known the daily ache of dispossession, the sting of humiliation, and the quiet grief of watching children grow up without a true home. Mothers bury their sons under skies lit by flares; fathers search through debris for any trace of yesterday's life. The world has witnessed these scenes—broadcast into living rooms across continents—yet its response has too often been confined to solemn statements and passing protests. Condemnations echo in grand halls, only to fade into silence when decisive action is required. Those with the power to halt the suffering appear either shackled by distant interests or lulled into indifference by the comforts of expediency. Even the stoutest champions of human rights seem, on this one matter, to have misplaced their zeal for justice. In the midst of this moral drift, Pakistan has stood as a steadfast companion to the Palestinian cause. Since the very dawn of its own independence, the nation's heart has beaten in rhythm with the aspirations of a people denied their freedom. This was no passing sympathy born of politics alone, but a profound human solidarity rooted in shared faith, shared history, and an instinctive rejection of oppression. Pakistani leaders, even before the formal birth of the state in 1947, raised their voices against the proposed partition of Palestine. Later, in moments of open conflict, Pakistani pilots took to the skies in 1967 and 1973, risking their lives alongside Arab brothers. The spirit of that era found its finest expression in 1974, when Pakistan hosted the Islamic summit in Lahore and helped secure international recognition for the Palestine Liberation Organization as the authentic voice of its people. This consistency has weathered every storm. Civilian governments and military administrations alike have upheld the same principled line: unwavering support for the establishment of an independent, sovereign, and contiguous Palestinian state along the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif—the sacred city that stirs the soul of every Muslim—as its eternal capital. Pakistan does not recognise Israel, and it maintains full diplomatic ties with Palestine, whose embassy in Islamabad stands as a quiet symbol of enduring friendship. In the chambers of the United Nations and within the councils of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Pakistani diplomats have spoken repeatedly and without apology. They have condemned the relentless march of illegal settlements that devour Palestinian land, the annexation policies that shrink horizons of hope, and the repeated violations of international law that mock the very idea of justice. Yet Pakistan's contribution has never been limited to words. When the tragedy in Gaza deepened after late 2023, the Pakistani people responded with open hearts. More than 1,600 tons of aid—food parcels, life-saving medicines, blankets to ward off the winter cold, tents for the homeless, and essential medical equipment—were carefully gathered and dispatched. These were not mere shipments; each container carried the empathy of a nation that knows the pain of hardship. Pakistani hospitals have offered treatment to injured Palestinians, while universities have welcomed young students robbed of their classrooms by conflict, granting them scholarships to build skills that may one day help reconstruct their shattered homeland. In these acts, one senses the simple human impulse: when your brother bleeds, you do not turn away. The Palestinian question has long outgrown the boundaries of territory or politics. It has become a mirror held up to the conscience of the world, revealing uncomfortable truths about selective justice and the fragility of international law. Every fresh cycle of violence revives the same haunting images—children with haunted eyes, families torn apart, a people's dignity trampled underfoot. Pakistan has consistently maintained that no lasting peace can flower in the Middle

East while the core wounds of the Palestinians remain unhealed. In recent months, as tensions between the United States, Israel, and Iran have pushed the region toward the abyss, Pakistan has chosen the harder path of restraint. It has called for de-escalation, for open dialogue, for ceasefires that allow life to return, and for humanitarian corridors that let aid reach those in desperate need. This measured quiet, free of inflammatory rhetoric, has earned quiet respect across the Muslim world, where responses to the crisis are often fractured by competing interests and internal divisions.

In an age when many nations recalibrate their principles according to economic winds or security pacts, Pakistan's moral clarity shines with rare steadiness. Its position flows not from military might or vast wealth, but from a deep-seated belief that justice is not negotiable. The Palestinian struggle is, at its core, the story of human resilience—the refusal to let oppression define one's identity. It is the elderly farmer who tends his remaining olive trees with trembling hands; the young student studying by candlelight in a refugee camp; the mother who sings lullabies over the sound of distant explosions. Pakistan's support honours that resilience. It affirms that no people should be asked to normalise their own subjugation in exchange for a false promise of stability. Pakistan does not claim to hold all the answers. It knows, as every thoughtful observer does, that diplomacy alone cannot undo decades of accumulated pain. Yet by refusing to abandon its convictions, Pakistan keeps alive the possibility of a better path—one where dialogue replaces violence, where rights are respected, and where the children of Palestine may one day walk freely in a land they can truly call their own. In standing with them across seventy difficult years, Pakistan has not merely followed a foreign policy; it has honoured the universal longing for freedom that stirs in every human heart. And in doing so, it reminds us all that moral consistency, however quiet, retains its power even in an age that too often prizes convenience above conscience.

Biodiversity: Nature's Lifeline

Prof Dr Shujaul Mulk Khan



Biodiversity simply means the variety of life on our planet. It includes all living organisms—plants, animals, microorganisms and the ecosystems in which they interact. Scientists generally describe biodiversity through three interconnected dimensions. The first is genetic diversity, which refers to variations within species. These genetic differences allow plants and animals to adapt to environmental changes, resist diseases, and survive natural disasters. For example, diverse crop varieties enable farmers to cope with droughts, pests, and changing climatic conditions, ensuring food security for growing populations. The second dimension is species diversity, meaning the wide range of species living in a particular habitat or across the planet. Every species, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, plays a unique role in maintaining ecological balance. Pollinating insects support agriculture, predators regulate populations, and microorganisms recycle nutrients. When species disappear, ecological systems lose stability, often triggering chain reactions that affect entire ecosystems and human livelihoods. The third dimension is ecosystem diversity, which refers to the variety of natural environments such as forests, wetlands,

grasslands, mountains, rivers, and oceans. Each ecosystem performs essential ecological functions. Forests regulate climate and store carbon, wetlands purify water, and oceans produce much of the oxygen we breathe. These ecosystems are not isolated units but interconnected systems that sustain life through continuous interaction. Biodiversity provides humanity with invaluable benefits known as ecosystem services—nature's silent contributions to human wellbeing. These services include the food we eat, the water we drink, and the medicines that heal us. Agricultural productivity relies on fertile soils, pollinators, and healthy ecosystems. Forests and oceans help regulate the climate by absorbing carbon dioxide, reducing the severity of global warming. Natural landscapes also offer cultural, spiritual, and recreational values that enrich human life and strengthen community identities. Beyond these visible benefits lies biodiversity's most powerful contribution: resilience. A biodiverse ecosystem has the capacity to recover from disturbances such as floods, droughts, disease outbreaks, or extreme weather events. Diversity acts like a safety net; when one species declines, others step in to maintain ecological functions. In contrast, ecosystems lacking diversity become fragile and vulnerable to collapse. This resilience is essential in an age when environmental uncertainties are increasing due to climate change and unsustainable human activities. Sustainability is closely linked with biodiversity. Sustainable development seeks to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. However, sustainability cannot be achieved without protecting nature's diversity. Overexploitation of resources, deforestation, pollution, and habitat destruction weaken ecosystems and

reduce their capacity to support human societies. Declining biodiversity threatens food systems, water security, public health, and economic stability. Simply put, when nature suffers, humanity suffers as well. The message of World Biodiversity Day is therefore a collective cry for awareness and action. Scientists warn that the world is experiencing an unprecedented rate of species loss, often described as a human-driven biodiversity crisis. Addressing this challenge requires cooperation at every level—governments implementing conservation policies, communities protecting local ecosystems, and individuals adopting environmentally responsible lifestyles. Simple everyday choices can contribute to biodiversity conservation. Planting trees, conserving water, reducing waste, supporting sustainable agriculture, and respecting wildlife habitats are practical steps that strengthen environmental protection. Education also plays a vital role in nurturing ecological consciousness among younger generations, helping societies move toward a more harmonious relationship with nature. Ultimately, biodiversity is not just about saving rare animals or preserving scenic landscapes; it is about safeguarding life's foundation. Humanity is deeply embedded within nature's web, dependent on its balance and generosity. World Biodiversity Day reminds us that protecting biodiversity is an investment in resilience, sustainability, and shared survival. The future of our planet depends on whether we choose to live as responsible stewards of Earth rather than mere consumers of its resources. By valuing and protecting biodiversity today, we secure hope, stability, and wellbeing for generations yet to come.

— Department Plant Science,
Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad —
qau.edu.pk/profile.php?id=804024-
smkhan@qau.edu.pk

Briefs

Pakistan, Turkiye air force...

FROM PAGE 01 institutional collaboration through sustained engagements in emerging domains aimed at reinforcing operational preparedness in the face of evolving security challenges. Subsequently, Chief of the Air Staff called on H.E. Yasar Guler, Minister of National Defence of Turkiye. The meeting featured substantive discussions on bilateral defence collaboration, Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation and collaborative endeavours across diverse domains. The Air Chief highlighted the deep-rooted historical, cultural and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Turkiye, underpinned by the bonds of Islamic brotherhood, mutual trust and shared strategic interests. The Turkish Minister of National Defence appreciated the professionalism and modernization drive of Pakistan Air Force under its current leadership and expressed keen interest in deepening bilateral engagement in the areas of training, capacity building and aerospace cooperation. In yet another significant engagement, Chief of the Air Staff met with Mr. Selcuk Bayraktar, Chief Technology Officer of Baykar Technologies. The interaction focused on advancements in aerospace innovation, unmanned aerial systems and emerging technologies, reflecting the shared vision of both sides to pursue greater collaboration in next-generation defence technologies.

‘PM China visit to further...

FROM PAGE 01 building an even closer community with a shared future. During the visit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will hold meetings with Chinese President, Xi Jinping and Premier, Li Qiang. The leadership-level engagements will review bilateral cooperation in political, economic and strategic fields, with particular focus on trade, investment, industrial cooperation, agricultural modernisation, information technology, science and technology, and people-to-people exchanges. The prime minister will begin his visit from Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, where he will chair the Pakistan-China Business-to-Business Investment Conference focusing on information technology, telecom, energy, energy storage and agriculture sectors. In Beijing, Prime Minister Shehbaz will attend a reception hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries in connection with the 75th anniversary celebrations. The spokesperson said the visit was expected to further deepen political trust, enhance strategic coordination and expand practical cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Bilawal for Karachi's role in...

FROM PAGE 01 Pakistan – in its response to the illegal aggression – downed eight Indian fighter jets, including French-made Rafale, and dozens of drones. Following Islamabad's military success over India, several countries, including Iran, Bangladesh and Libya, reportedly expressed interest in purchasing Pakistan's military equipment. The victory in the May 2025 war also solidified Pakistan's position on the global stage, with Islamabad emerging as a key mediator between the United States and Iran to resolve their disputes. Meanwhile, the PPP chairman said that the burden of the Middle East conflict was being borne by poor citizens, who were already struggling with rising electricity and gas bills. Bilawal said that peace in the region would help reduce economic difficulties, warning that continued conflict could further aggravate economic conditions. "If the war does not end, the economic situation will become more serious," he said.

Women's Symposium Sparks New Era in Pakistan Football

Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto appreciated the efforts of Syed Mohsen Gilani and his team for reviving football activities across Pakistan over the past year

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The "Reviving Women's Football in Pakistan – Building the Future Together" symposium was successfully held, bringing together government officials, FIFA representatives and key football stakeholders to discuss the future development of women's football in Pakistan. The Women's Football Symposium 2026 was organized by the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF). The event was attended by Member of the National Assembly Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto, Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) and Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, former Multan Sultans CEO Ali Tareen, PFF President Syed Mohsen Gilani, PFF CEO Shahid Khokhar, Head of PFF Women's Wing Mejzgaan Orakzai, along with other dignitaries. Speaking at the symposium, Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto appreciated the efforts of Syed Mohsen Gilani and his team for reviving football activities across Pakistan over the past year. She said the renewed energy and momentum in football are encouraging signs for the future of the game, adding that Pakistan has witnessed inspiring examples of women breaking barriers and redefining what is possible in sports. Federal Secretary IPC Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani said football is a game of the masses and that the government is committed to



providing maximum facilities for the promotion of football at the grassroots level. He emphasized the importance of developing sports infrastructure in schools and colleges and said the Pakistan Football Federation is moving in the right direction for the development of the game. "Football has the power to go beyond sport. It promotes confidence, leadership, teamwork and discipline among the youth," he stated. PFF President Syed Mohsen Gilani said

the federation is making every possible effort for the promotion and development of football in Pakistan. He added that FIFA has provided football arenas and that the project will expand to different cities in the future. Meanwhile, FIFA Head of Women's Football Development Arijana Demirovic expressed excitement about working with Pakistan and praised the country's football talent. She said FIFA is committed to creating pathways and opportunities for girls

to grow in football and stressed the importance of greater participation in sports. "This is a great opportunity to collaborate and work together for the future of women's football in Pakistan," she said. She further added that FIFA will continue supporting football development in Pakistan and plans to visit the country again in the near future, while also appreciating the efforts of Mohsen Gilani for the promotion and development of football in Pakistan.

Ronaldo strikes twice to end long wait for Saudi title

41-year-old was without major club trophy since winning Serie A with Juventus in 2020

DNA

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Al Nassr clinched the Saudi Pro League title with a 4-1 win over Damac on Thursday, ending his long wait for domestic silverware. A trademark free-kick and a close-range finish, both in the final half-hour, sealed the win Al Nassr needed on the last night of the season, with Al Hilal finishing just two points behind. Ronaldo, 41, who was without a major club trophy since winning Serie A with Juventus in 2020,

arrived in the kingdom to great acclaim in 2023, wept as he watched the final minutes from the bench. He adds the Saudi championship to his English, Spanish and Italian titles and five Champions League medals. Al Nassr took a 2-0 lead but were back to 2-1 before Ronaldo's free-kick on 63 minutes evaded the goalkeeper and a forest of legs to find the far corner. He struck again nine minutes from time, receiving a cut-back on the edge of the six-yard box and smashing high into the net. Next up for the all-

time leading men's international goalscorer, with 143 goals, is a sixth crack at the World Cup after he was named in Portugal's squad this week. Ronaldo opened the door to a series of big-money Saudi signings when he joined Al Nassr in January 2023 following an unhappy second spell at Manchester United. Neymar and Karim Benzema were among those to follow after Ronaldo inked a two-and-a-half-year deal estimated at 200 million euros, extended for two years in June 2025. The stated aim was to turn the Pro League into one of the world's top

five football competitions measured by the quality of players, stadium attendances, and commercial success. International interest has been muted, however. In December 2024, Saudi Arabia was confirmed as host of the 2034 World Cup, a coup as it pushes to decouple its economy from oil and attract business and tourists, partly via the buzz of sports. With a record 664 million Instagram followers, Ronaldo has been a highly visible ambassador as Saudi Arabia tries to turn the page on the ultra-conservative image that has defined it for decades.

Babar returns as Pakistan name squad for Australia ODIs

Shaheen Afridi stays at skipper, Mohammad Rizwan left out from 16-member squad

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has named a 16-member squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series against Australia, scheduled from 30 May to 4 June in Rawalpindi and Lahore. The national selection committee confirmed that the squad will be led by captain Shaheen Shah Afridi, with Salman Ali Agha serving as vice-captain. Star batter Babar Azam and pacers Harris Rauf and Naseem Shah have been recalled after missing the previous away series against Bangladesh. Mohammad Rizwan has been left out, with wicketkeeping options now including Muhammad Ghazi Ghamri and uncapped Rohail Nazir. Besides Nazir, the squad includes two more uncapped players, Ahmed Daniyal and Arafat Minhas. Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub remain unavailable due to injuries and are undergoing rehabilitation under the PCB medical panel, according to the PCB. The 16-member squad will assemble in Islamabad later tonight and will train under the coaching staff from Saturday, 23 May.

Steps being taken...

FROM PAGE 01 Prime Minister Shehbaz for national development and the promotion of business and foreign investment. He stated that under the prime minister's leadership, the Government of Pakistan was taking positive steps to facilitate investors under the SIFC. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, federal ministers Ahad Khan Cheema and Attaullah Tarar, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, and relevant senior officials.

India battles power cuts

FROM PAGE 01 India's peak power deficit late on Thursday evening was about 2.57 gigawatts, said national regulator Grid-India. "Although we are prepared to supply electricity as required, due to the intense summer, let us all try to use electricity wisely and judiciously," the power ministry said in a statement on Friday. Shortages are chronic during the evening hours as supply then relies heavily on thermal and hydropower sources, while daytime demand is met partly by solar generation. The record heat and surging electricity demand are testing India's power system, said Disha Aggarwal, senior programme lead at energy and environment think-tank CEEW, as hotter nights become the norm.

CDF Asim Munir in Tehran...

FROM PAGE 01 government are constantly talking to him". He also praised Pakistan for doing an "admirable job" trying to mediate a peace deal between Washington and Tehran. "The primary interlocutor on this has been Pakistan and continues to be and they've done a, you know, I think an admirable job. And that's what we continue to work through," Fox News quoted Rubio as saying. "Obviously, other countries ... may have their own situation going on. We talk to all of them. But I would just say that the primary country we've been working with on all of this is Pakistan, and that remains the case," he told reporters in Sweden.

US – Iran draft agreement signals...

FROM PAGE 01 Al Arabiya did not say where they obtained the document from. The proposed deal outlines a mutual pledge by both parties to comply with international law and the United Nations Charter, signaling a renewed emphasis on diplomatic engagement and adherence to global norms. A key component of the draft is the gradual lifting of US sanctions on Iran with Tehran committing to fully adhere to the terms outlined in the agreement in return. These include guarantees of freedom of navigation in the Arabian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Sea of Oman as well as mutual commitments to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, alongside a pledge of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Drug queen Pinky send on judicial...

FROM PAGE 01 At the time, authorities said that weapons, cocaine, and other drugs worth around Rs1.5 million were recovered from her possession, adding that she was allegedly running a drug supply network in the port city. However, the suspect denied the claim, alleging that she was detained in Lahore 15 days before being transferred to Karachi. Meanwhile, Pinky was produced before the court for remand proceedings in 18 separate cases. However, the court ordered that she be sent back to jail under judicial custody, instructing investigation officers handling the cases to submit challans.

4 factors that helped Al-Nassr to SPL glory

LONDON: Al-Nassr beat Damac 3-1 on Thursday to become Saudi Pro League champions for the first time since 2019. Here are four factors that contributed to that long-awaited success. The 41-year-old may not be the same player he was, but his near-unparalleled experience at the game's top levels still make a difference. Over the season he scored 28 league goals – not quite enough for a third successive golden boot, but impressive nevertheless. There has been controversy and heartache along the way but that was all forgotten on the final night. After the events of last week, when a last-second goalkicking howler prevented Al-Nassr from being crowned champions against Al-Hilal, and last weekend, when Gamba Osaka came to Riyadh and won 1-0 in the final of the AFC Champions League Two, there was a real fear the yellows could end a season that had promised so much with nothing. In the second half on Thursday night, when Damac pulled a goal back to make it 2-1 and then almost equalized immediately, those fears returned. The tension was palpable. But then the Portuguese megastar scored directly from a free kick and showed his striking instincts to fire home from close range. The fear ended and the celebrations began. After 10 wins from the first 10 games, Al-Nassr approached the end of the year in control. Then the final game of 2025 saw a 2-2 draw at Al-Ettifaq followed by three straight losses in the first 12 days of the new year – against title rivals Al-Ahli, Al-Qadsiah and Al-Hilal. This suggested it was the same old Al-Nassr – great when things are going their way, but without the stomach for a title fight. – APP

Experts discuss climate innovation at COMSATS University

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) has held a productive meeting with the Department of Meteorology at COMSATS University to discuss emerging global debates, scientific research, and potential collaborative initiatives in the field of Climate Intervention and Solar Geoengineering. The meeting was attended by Prof. Dr. Athar Hussain, Prof. Dr. Toqeer Ahmed, Dr. Shahbaz Tariq of Freedom Gate Prosperity, and fellow researchers and academics working on climate and atmospheric sciences. Discussions focused on innovative climate intervention approaches currently being explored internationally, including Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI), Marine Cloud Brightening (MCB), Cirrus Cloud Thinning (CCT), and space-based solar radiation management concepts. Participants exchanged views on the scientific, environmental, ethical, and policy dimensions of these emerging technologies, particularly their potential implications for temperature regulation, precipitation patterns, biodiversity, food security, climate displacement, and public health. The discussion emphasized the importance of evidence-based research, responsible scientific dialogue, and regional understanding of climate intervention technologies in the context of increasing climate vulnerabilities faced by countries such as Pakistan. Both sides generally agreed to explore future collaboration on research, academic engagement, policy dialogue,

and climate awareness initiatives. The participants also highlighted the need to create informed public discourse around climate change and future climate technologies through collaboration between universities, researchers, civil society organizations, and policy experts. A particularly encouraging aspect of the meeting was the shared understanding that senior school students should also be actively engaged in climate awareness and climate dialogue initiatives. It was discussed that young students should be provided opportunities to understand environmental challenges and share their perspectives, concerns, and ideas regarding climate change, sustainability, and future climate interventions. Participants observed that youth engagement can contribute significantly towards building informed and responsible future leadership on environmental issues. Representatives of FGP expressed confidence that this academic and research-oriented engagement could lead to impactful interdisciplinary initiatives, policy-oriented discussions, and greater public awareness on climate resilience and responsible climate innovation. At the conclusion, the FGP delegation also visited the International Office and the Central Library of COMSATS University Islamabad. The delegation appreciated the university's strong international academic linkages, research-driven environment, digital learning resources, and modern library facilities supporting students, researchers, and international collaboration. – DNA

Pakistan, Bangladesh civil service engagement to promote mutual trust

The minister briefed the visiting delegation on the government's reform initiatives and policy measures being implemented in different sectors in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday said Pakistan attached special importance to institutional cooperation and exchange of administrative experiences with friendly countries, stressing that enhanced engagement between the civil services of Pakistan and Bangladesh would further promote mutual trust and constructive collaboration. He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of senior Bangladeshi civil service officers currently visiting Pakistan. The meeting discussed matters of mutual interest, governance systems, administrative reforms, institutional capacity building and

professional cooperation between the two countries. Prime Minister's Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi and Federal Secretary for Information Ashfaq Ahmed Khalil were also present during the meeting. The minister briefed the visiting delegation on the government's reform initiatives and policy measures being implemented in different sectors in Pakistan. Attaullah Tarar described the Executive Development Programme between the civil services of Pakistan and Bangladesh as an important development in recent decades, saying both countries shared historical ties as well as a common administrative and governance heritage. He welcomed the positive progress in bilateral relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh and expressed confidence that such exchanges would further strengthen understanding and cooper-

ation between the two countries. The minister emphasized the need to further enhance collaboration between training and capacity-building institutions of both countries through faculty exchanges, joint research initiatives and development of training modules. He also appreciated the successful conduct of the programme under the Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor initiative organized by the Civil Services Academy. The Bangladeshi delegation expressed keen interest in Pakistan's administrative structure and reform initiatives undertaken in various sectors. The meeting was termed positive and constructive with regard to bilateral relations and exchange of professional experiences. Speaking on the occasion, Tariq Fatemi underscored the

importance of strengthening professional linkages and institutional cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh. He said bilateral engagement was essential for promoting regional harmony and mutual understanding. Meanwhile, Director CTP of the Civil Services Academy Syed Shabbir Akbar Zaidi gave a comprehensive briefing to the delegation on the academy's objectives, modern training system, course modules, academic programmes and various capacity-building initiatives. The delegation included Salma Siddiqua Mehtab, Muhammad Mustafa Jamal Haider, Abu Raihan Miha, Feroz Ahmed, Muhammad Munir-ul-Islam, Toufiq Imam, Raihan Akhtar, Ehtesham-ul-Haq, Muhammad Shams-ul-Haq, Muhammad Abdus Salam, Zi-ar-Rehman and Zia Ahmed Saman.

Briefs

Over 1.5m pilgrims gather in Makkah

ISLAMABAD :More than 1.5 million pilgrims from different countries gathered in Makkah on Friday to offer the last Juma prayers before the start of Hajj rituals amid extraordinary operational, security and crowd-management arrangements at Masjid al-Haram and surrounding areas Saudi Press Agency (SPA) told APP that huge numbers of pilgrims and worshippers were expected to perform Juma prayers at the Grand Mosque and other mosques across Makkah as pilgrim arrivals continued ahead of Hajj 1447 AH. Due to heavy crowds and the early filling of the Grand Mosque, authorities temporarily suspended Haram transport and taxi services in surrounding areas to regulate movement and ensure the safety of worshippers. The report said elderly pilgrims and women were advised to offer Juma prayers at nearby mosques to avoid overcrowding inside the Grand Mosque and reduce pressure on central areas around Haram. Authorities also urged pilgrims to follow precautionary measures due to hot weather conditions, including avoiding direct sunlight, using umbrellas and drinking sufficient water.—APP

PSX turns bearish, loses over 670 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bearish trend on Friday, losing 670.20 points, a negative change of 0.40 percent, closing at 167,844.25 points against 168,514.45 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 480.818 million shares with a traded value of Rs 22.721 billion, compared to 729.400 million shares valuing Rs 34.992 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization decreased to Rs 18.616 trillion from Rs 18.661 trillion a day earlier. Out of 486 active companies in the ready market, 160 advanced, 280 declined, and 46 remained unchanged. Sitara Petroleum topped the volume chart with 80.101 million shares, followed by Pervez Ahmed Co with 34.778 million shares and P.T.C.L. with 26.697 million shares. The top gainers included Rafan Maize Products Company Limited, which increased by Rs 122.17 to close at Rs 9,647.50, and Ismail Industries Limited, which gained Rs 48.79 to settle at Rs 1,968.08. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 173.62 to close at Rs 26,000.00, while PIA Holding Company Limited fell by Rs 153.00 to close at Rs 18,147.00. In the futures market, turnover stood at 226.439 million shares with a traded value of Rs 10.160 billion, compared to 309.502 million shares worth Rs 14.410 billion in the previous session. Out of 318 futures-market companies, 60 recorded gains while 253 declined and 5 remained unchanged, according to PSX data.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.52 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.55. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279 and Rs 279.60, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.42 and closed at Rs 323.28 from the previous day's close of Rs 323.70, 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 decrease of Rs0.51 and closed at Rs 373.98 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.49. The exchange rate of the Emirati Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 and 02 paise and closed at Rs 75.83 and at Rs 74.21, respectively.—APP

D. Watson Lions Club calls for to community service

Director Lion Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari briefed the participants about the club's activities and future plans

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A General Body meeting of the Islamabad D. Watson Lions Club was held in which outgoing office-bearers were bid farewell while newly elected office-bearers were warmly welcomed. The meeting, held recently, was attended by PDG Lion Dr. Hassan Surosh Akram, Chartered President Lion Ahsan Bakhtawari, President Islamabad D. Watson Lions Club Lion Malik Mohsin Khalid, Secretary Lion Faizan Shahzad, MC Lion Muhammad Owais Malik and other members. During the meeting, the newly elected office-bearers were also announced, including President Lion Sadaf Asim Abbasi, Secretary Lion Shahbaz Masih, Treasurer and Director Lion Ahsan Bakhtawari, First Vice President Arham Ahsan Bakhtawari, Second Vice President Muhammad Owais Malik, LCIF Coordinator Haris Bakhtawari, Marketing Chairperson Nasir Mahmood Club, Club Service Chairperson Joharia Azhar, Club Membership Chairperson Malik Nadeem Akhtar, and Club Administrator Zafar Bakhtawari. New members Maqsood Tabish, Hammad Kazmi, Majid Shabbir, Iqbal Aanchan and Imran Rashid also attended the event. Addressing the gathering, PDG Lion Dr. Hassan Surosh Akram said that Islamabad D. Watson Lions Club has always been a shining example of service, brotherhood and humanity. He said the new lead-



ership should further strengthen the spirit of service and continue playing a positive role in society. Director Lion Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari briefed the participants about the club's activities and future plans. In his address, he stated that efforts would be made to organize more effective and positive activities for the welfare of youth and the community so that the scope of service

could be further expanded. He appreciated the services of the outgoing office-bearers and expressed hope that the new team would lead the club towards greater progress and success. Outgoing President Lion Malik Mohsin Khalid welcomed the new office-bearers and members and said that Lions Club is a great platform for the service of humanity. He expressed confi-

dence that the new team would further promote welfare activities with the same spirit of dedication. He added that unity, sincerity and teamwork are the real strengths of the club. At the conclusion of the meeting, Secretary Lion Faizan Shahzad presented the club dues report, while participants reaffirmed their commitment to launching more social welfare initiatives in the future.

New ship recycling law to enforce Hong Kong convention

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Friday said that new legislation has been approved to regulate hazardous materials in the ship recycling sector, promote environmentally sustainable ship breaking practices, and advance the implementation of the Hong Kong Convention In a statement after the Senate passed the Environmentally Sound Management of Inventory of Hazardous Material on Ships Bill, 2026, the minister said the legislation would facilitate the implementation of the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009, by addressing environmental, occupational health and safety risks associated with ship recycling. He said the bill, moved by himself, had already been approved by the National Assembly and was passed by the Senate on Thursday, paving the way for its enforcement across the country. Junaid Chaudhry said the legislation aimed to ensure that hazardous waste generated through ship recycling was managed in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner. He added that the law would prohibit hazardous materials identified under the convention, mandate inspection and certification of ships, and impose strict penalties for violations. Every ship arriving in Pakistani waters for recycling would be subject to mandatory surveys, inspections and certification of its Inventory of Hazardous Materials, he said noting, "ships found violating the law could face seizure, detention, removal from Pakistani waters and other prescribed penalties." He said the Ministry of Maritime Affairs would serve as the national focal point for coordination, implementation and reporting to the International Maritime Organization to ensure compliance with the convention. The minister noted that Pakistan ranked among the world's top three ship recycling nations and handled nearly one-third of global ship recycling activity, giving the country a significant responsibility in ensuring safe, transparent and environmentally sound recycling practices. He said the ship recycling industry, established in Gadani in the 1980s, remained an important sector for the national economy and employment, making it necessary to align local practices with international environmental, labour and safety standards. Junaid Chaudhry said Pakistan had become the 23rd country to accede to the Hong Kong Convention, reaffirming its commitment to green and safe ship recycling while enhancing Gadani's standing in the global ship recycling industry.—DNA

Saudi POS transactions remain above \$3.5b

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's point-of-sale transaction value remained above \$3.5 billion in the week ending May 16, with several sectors recording gains even as overall spending edged down from the previous week. According to the latest data from the Saudi Central Bank, total transaction value reached SR13.7 billion (\$3.65 billion), while the number of transactions stood at 249.8 million. Freight transport and courier services led the sectoral gainers, rising 5.6 percent in value to SR67.6 million. Apparel and clothing edged up 1.9 percent to SR1.22 billion, while trade of vehicles and spare parts increased 2.3 percent to SR533.2 million. Food and beverages remained the largest spending category despite a 5.4 percent decline to SR2.14 billion. Restaurants and cafes followed with a 2.2 percent decrease to SR1.73 billion. Education spending recorded the steepest sectoral decline, falling 22 percent in value to SR164.1 million. Hotel spending slipped 4.8 percent to SR177 million, while furniture and home supplies fell 10 percent to SR528.2 million.—APP

UK becomes first G7 nation to secure GCC trade deal

RIYADH: The UK has become the first G7 nation to secure a trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, in a deal projected to add £3.7 billion (\$5 billion) annually to the British economy— According to a UK government statement, the agreement with the six-member GCC bloc is also expected to generate £1.9 billion in real wage gains. At the core of the deal is a broad reduction in tariffs. Around £580 million in duties on UK goods exported to the Gulf will eventually be eliminated, including £360 million that will be removed immediately once the agreement comes into force. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer hailed the agreement as "a huge win for British business," noting it marks the government's fifth major trade deal since taking office, following agreements with India, the US, the EU and South Korea. The Gulf states are valued economic partners and this agreement deepens that relationship, building trust and unlocking new possibilities for trade and investment," he added. Commenting on the deal, GCC Secretary-General Jasim Al-Budaiwi said it "will contribute to cementing the economic pathways of both regions for generations to come." The GCC official said that the agreement contains a framework designed to achieve tangible, sustainable, and measurable economic benefits for businesses, investors, and citizens across all seven signatory economies. Business and Trade Secretary Peter Kyle echoed that confidence, stating the deal "sends a clear signal of confidence — giving UK exporters the certainty they need to plan ahead and reinforcing the strength and stability of the UK's trading relationship with the Gulf at a critical moment." Combined with the recently announced India deal, the two agreements are expected to add more than £8 billion annually to UK gross domestic product compared to 2040 projections "The deal will create opportunities for companies producing iconic UK products — from butter and cheddar cheese to biscuits and chocolate — as the GCC imports over 80 percent of its food," the statement said. The automotive industry, along with retailers including Holland & Barrett, is also expected to benefit from lower tariffs, stronger intellectual property protections and streamlined customs procedures. UK services — which account for around 80 percent of the British economy and roughly half of all UK exports to the GCC — will gain guaranteed market access under the terms of the agreement.—DNA

Pak EXIM, PSW partner to boost digital trade finance

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (Pak EXIM) and Pakistan Single Window (PSW) 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. The collaboration aims to address long-standing constraints in trade finance, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often face challenges in meeting traditional collateral and documentation requirements. By utilising transaction-level trade data available through PSW, Pak EXIM will be able to adopt more evidence-based credit assessment methodologies. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Aftab Haider, CEO of PSW, said "the partnership reflects the next phase of digital trade reform, where trade facilitation and trade finance ecosystems are increasingly integrated. Leveraging authenticated trade data will help reduce information asymmetry,

improve transparency, and support timely access to financial products for exporters". Shahbaz Hussain Syed, President & CEO of Pak EXIM, stated that "as Pakistan's official export credit agency, Pak EXIM is expanding its institutional partnerships to strengthen support mechanisms for exporters. Access to PSW's digital trade data platform would enhance analytical capabilities and contribute to informed and efficient decision-making". The MoU marks a step toward aligning trade regulation and trade finance within a coherent digital framework. By reducing reliance on manual processes and enhancing data interoperability, the initiative is expected to contribute to improved transparency, operational efficiency, and resilience across the export value chain.



ISLAMABAD: Syed Aftab Haider, CEO – PSW (3rd from left), and Shahbaz Hussain Syed, President & CEO – Pak EXIM (3rd from right), exchange MoUs at Pak EXIM's head office.

Erdogan shuts liberal Istanbul university

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday ordered the closure of a top independent university with liberal leanings in the middle of the school year, according to an official decree. The decree, published in the official journal, revokes the operating license for Istanbul's Bilgi University, which has more than 20,000 students from Türkiye and abroad, with some of its researchers renowned in their fields. The closure was effective immediately. As grounds for the move, the edict cites a law allowing for the closure of a private institution if "the expected level of education and training... is insufficient." Türkiye's Council of Higher Education (YOK) promised to take "the necessary measures" to ensure the students at the social sciences university, who were due to sit end-of-year exams in June, "suffer no harm." YOK did not say whether the students would be taken in by other institutions in the coming weeks, nor how they would be able to complete their academic year. "An institution built with 30 years of effort was effectively shut down overnight," Yaman Akdeniz, a Bilgi professor of law, wrote on X. "The constitution is clear — universities are established by law and their closure can only occur by law as well. "But who cares?" he said. "In an era without justice or fair trials, it seems the next item on the agenda was to shut down an entire university... We will never remain silent in the face of this lawlessness.—APP

Australian women linked to Daesh leave Syrian camp

SYDNEY: A second group of Australian women and children linked to the Daesh extremist group have departed a refugee camp in northeast Syria and may be returning to Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported on Friday. The broadcaster said a bus carrying the group left the Al-Roj camp on Thursday afternoon under escort by a convoy of Syrian government officials. The group is expected to reach Damascus, though it remains unclear when they might travel to Australia, the report said. Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said Australia's security and intelligence agencies had been preparing for the return of women linked to Daesh for more than a decade. "This is not a coherent group, there is a spectrum in terms of the actions of the individuals while they have been away from Australia," Burke said by email. He did not provide details about the group's travel to Australia. The Australian government has previously ruled out providing direct assistance for the return of Australian families linked to Daesh but has acknowledged "very serious limits" to preventing citizens from re-entering the country. Earlier this month, four women and nine children linked to Daesh returned to Australia after spending seven years in detention camps. Upon arrival, Kawasir Ahmad, 54, and her daughter Zeinab Ahmad, 31, were charged with slavery offenses.—APP

Lebanese accuse Israel of wiping their towns off the map

BEIRUT: Lebanese mother-of-two Hala Farah is collecting photos and videos to preserve the memory of her hometown which, like many others along the southern border, has been completely destroyed by Israeli forces. Testimony from residents and officials, as well as satellite images and photographs taken by AFP journalists on both sides of the border, show widespread destruction in dozens of Lebanese towns and villages since the start of the Israel-Hezbollah war on March 2. Responding to Hezbollah's attacks, Israel carried out massive airstrikes and launched a ground invasion in the south, which borders Israel and where the Iran-backed movement holds sway. While a ceasefire began on April 17, the destruction, demolitions and bulldozing in southern areas have only intensified, affecting homes, infrastructure, schools, places of worship and farmland. Israel's army, which sometimes issued evacuation warnings ahead of strikes, has repeatedly said its attacks target Hezbollah sites and operations — not civilians.—APP

Briefs

Severe heatwave likely in Sindh

DNA

KARACHI: A severe heatwave is likely to grip several districts of Sindh from May 25 to 31 as temperatures could rise between four and six degrees Celsius above normal levels, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on Friday.

The advisory comes as Muslims across Pakistan prepare to celebrate Eid ul Adha from May 27-29.

According to the Met Office, a high-pressure system is expected to develop in the upper atmosphere from May 25. The PMD said that temperatures in Sukkur, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Larkana and Dadu could remain between 47°C and 50°C during the period.

It added that Shaheed Benazirabad, Khairpur, Ghotki and Naushahro Feroze were also expected to experience severe heatwave conditions. In Hyderabad, Badin, Tharparkar, Umerkot and Mirpurkhas, temperatures are likely to range between 44°C and 47°C, while Matiari, Tando Muhammad Khan, Jamshoro and Sanghar could also record temperatures touching 47°C.

The Met Office advised children, women and elderly people to take precautionary measures in view of the heatwave. It also urged farmers and growers to ensure proper care of crops and livestock. Meanwhile, Karachi is expected to experience hot and humid weather over the next three days.

Private college principal dies after being shot

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A private college principal, who was critically injured after being shot at outside his campus, succumbed to his injuries during treatment in the Gojra area of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Friday.

According to police, principal Hamza Ahmed Dar was shot outside the college a day earlier and had been undergoing treatment in hospital in critical condition. Officials said he sustained three bullet wounds to the head. Police said the incident occurred when the principal came out of his office, after which the attacker opened fire outside the college premises. A college watchman also confirmed the sequence of events in his statement to investigators. The suspect was arrested while attempting to flee from the scene and was taken into custody along with the weapon used in the attack, police added. Investigators said the detained attacker was a resident of Wah Cantt and had been staying at a hotel near the college since Sunday.

Crackdown on human smuggling networks intensified, says Talal

Accountability action has also been taken within the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), where some officials were found to be involved in assisting such networks. In several cases, entire shifts were removed after investigations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior & Narcotics Control Talal Chaudhry told the National Assembly on Friday that, under the Prime Minister's zero-tolerance policy on illegal immigration, strict action is being taken against human smuggling networks operating in and outside the country. Responding to a calling attention notice about Pakistani citizens detained in Cambodia in connection with alleged cybercrime and scam-related cases after being trapped in fraudulent job schemes, he said that since June 2023, around 3,158 agents involved in illegal immigration facilitation have been arrested.

He said assets worth millions of rupees belonging to these agents have been seized, while bank accounts holding large amounts of money have been frozen. He added that accountability action has also been taken within the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), where some officials were found to be involved in assisting such networks. In several cases, entire shifts were removed after investigations. According to him, more than 100 FIA officials have faced disciplinary action, including criminal cases and convictions, over their alleged role in human smuggling. The minister said the ongoing crackdown aims to dismantle organised networks that exploit citizens through illegal migration routes and fake travel arrangements. He said passengers travelling abroad, even with valid passports and visas, are sometimes subjected to additional profiling and screening to stop misuse of legal travel channels.



He explained that this system helps identify high-risk travel patterns linked to smuggling networks, though it has also led to complaints from passengers who were offloaded despite having complete documents. He said strengthened monitoring has reduced illegal migration attempts by an estimated 47 percent, calling it a significant improvement. He stressed that the purpose of the system is not to stop

genuine travellers but to block human smuggling networks. He added that special focus has been placed on routes leading to Cambodia, where many Pakistanis were reportedly trapped in fake job schemes and later faced detention or legal action. He said such cases increased during 2024 and 2025, prompting stronger enforcement measures.

Providing further details, he said the FIA conducted 286 inquiries related to Cambodia, leading to 111 criminal cases. He added that profiling systems were developed to identify passengers using suspicious travel routes linked to illegal migration. He said 222 passengers have so far been offloaded at airports as a preventive step.

He also stated that around 15,000 Pakistanis are currently in Cambodia, many of whom were misled by online job scams. He added that Cambodian authorities have also tightened regulations in response to the situation. Around \$1 million in fines imposed on 1,272 affected Pakistanis were waived through coordination efforts, while emergency travel documents and passports were provided to facilitate their return. This includes 631 emergency travel documents, 112 new passports, and 75 renewed passports. He confirmed that four Pakistani nationals had died in Cambodia and their bodies were repatriated. He said the route involves complex trafficking networks passing through countries including Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar before reaching Cambodia. He added that awareness campaigns by FIA and advisories from the Foreign Ministry continue, but many citizens still fall victim to agents and online fraud. He said a large number of affected Pakistanis have already been safely brought back through coordinated rescue efforts.

UN chief condemns Israeli takeover of Unrwa

DNA

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned Israel's establishment of a military base in occupied East Jerusalem at the site where an Unrwa office once operated for besieged Palestinians, Al Jazeera reported.

Stéphane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN secretary-general, said the move is a breach of international law. "The UN Relief and Works Agency is an integral part of the United Nations, and Unrwa Sheikh Jarrah compound remains United Nations premises. These unprecedented and escalatory measures against Unrwa are a breach of the inviolability of United Nations premises," Dujarric told reporters.

"The state of Israel is not entitled to exercise sovereign powers in any part of the occupied Palestinian territory, and is under obligation to bring an end to its unlawful presence ... as soon as possible."

Sudan's war has left thousands missing

KHARTOUM: It was a classic husband's phone call. He was done for the day and would stop at the market before coming home. But he was returning from war, not work.

Fahmy Al-Fateh never made it home. His wife, Azaher Abdallah, started calling friends and family, then turned to his colleagues in Sudan's army. Her husband was last seen leaving a military base in the capital, Khartoum, on a motorcycle. That was over a year ago.

Now the couple's 3-year-old son shouts at every passing motorcycle, thinking it's his father, Abdallah said. "He was the most precious thing in my life," she said, sobbing and burying her face in her hands. "I would feel more at peace if I knew something. It's better than not knowing what happened to him, whether he's alive or dead." Her husband is one of more than 8,000 people who have gone missing during Sudan's three years of war, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. - APP

US Navy official says Taiwan arms sales on 'pause'

WASHINGTON: The acting US Navy Secretary said Thursday that arms sales to Taiwan had been put on "pause" to ensure that the American military had sufficient munitions for its Iran operations. Asked at a congressional hearing about the stalled \$14 billion weapons purchase by Taiwan, acting Secretary Hung Cao said that "right now we're doing a pause in order to make sure we have the munitions we need for Epic Fury - which we have plenty." "But, we're just making sure we have everything, then the foreign military sales will continue when the administration deems necessary."

The US State Department and the Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Cao's remarks. Taiwan's Presidential Office spokeswoman Karen Kuo said Friday there was "no information indicating that the US intends to make any adjustments to this arms sale." A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman told a news conference Friday that Beijing's "position of resolute opposition to US arms sales to China's Taiwan region is consistent, clear and firm." US President Donald Trump has not committed to following through with the sale, raising concerns over his commitment to support for Taiwan. The United States recognizes only Beijing, but under US law is required to provide weapons to the self-ruled democracy for its defense. China has sworn to take the island and has not ruled out using force, ramping up military pressure in recent years. Ahead of his visit last week to China, Trump said he would speak with Chinese President Xi Jinping about the arms sales, a departure from Washington's previous insistence that it will not consult Beijing on the matter. After the visit, Trump said he made no commitments to Xi about Taiwan and would be making a determination on the arms sales "over the next fairly short period of time." - DNA

Rubio tells NATO ministers Trump 'very disappointed'

HELSINGBORG, Sweden: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met NATO allies on Friday for the first time since President Donald Trump called the alliance into question due to divisions over the Iran war and Washington announced plans to pull 5,000 troops from Europe. Before leaving for a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Sweden, Rubio said Trump was "very disappointed" in alliance members who had not allowed the US to use bases on their territory for the war, singling out Spain in particular. "You have countries like Spain denying us the use of these bases - well then why are you in NATO? That's a very fair question," Rubio told reporters in Miami. "In fairness, other countries in NATO have been very helpful. But we need to discuss that." Trump has fiercely criticized NATO members for not doing more to help the US-

Israeli military campaign. He has said he is considering withdrawing from the alliance and questioned whether Washington was bound to honor its mutual defense pact. NATO officials have stressed the US did not ask the 32-member alliance to take part in the Iran war, but many members have honored commitments to allow US forces to use their airspace and bases on their territory. European concerns about Trump's attitude toward NATO were also exacerbated this year by Trump's push to acquire Greenland, a territory of fellow NATO member Denmark. At the gathering in the Swedish town of Helsingborg, European ministers are expected to try to placate the US by stressing they are ready to help with freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz when conditions permit and to take more responsibility for European security. - APP

Residents burn an Ebola treatment center in Congo

BUNIA: People set fire to an Ebola treatment center in a town at the heart of the outbreak in eastern Congo on Thursday after being stopped from retrieving the body of a local man, a witness and a senior police officer said, as fear and anger grow over a health crisis that doctors are struggling to contain. The arson attack in Kwampara reflects the challenges of health workers trying to curb a rare Ebola virus by using stringent measures that might clash with local customs, such as burial rites. The disease has been spreading for weeks in a region lacking in adequate health facilities and where many people are on the move to escape armed conflicts.

The bodies of those who die from Ebola can be highly contagious and lead to further spread when people prepare bodies for burial and gather for funerals. The dangerous work of burying suspected victims is being managed wherever possible by authorities, which can be met by protests from victims' families and friends. The center in Kwampara was burned by local youths who became angry while trying to retrieve the

body of a friend who had apparently died of Ebola, according to a witness who spoke to The Associated Press by telephone. "The police intervened to try to calm the situation, but unfortunately they were unsuccessful," said Alexis Burata, a local student who said he was in the area. "The young people ended up setting fire to the center. That's the situation." An AP journalist saw people break into the center and set fire to objects inside and also to what appeared to be the body of at least one suspected Ebola victim that was being stored there. Aid workers fled the treatment center in vehicles. Deputy Senior Commissioner Jean Claude Mukendi, head of the public security department in Ituri Province, said the youths had not understood the protocols for burying a suspected Ebola victim. "His family, friends, and other young people wanted to take his body home for a funeral even though the instructions from the authorities during this Ebola virus outbreak are clear," Mukendi said. "All bodies must be buried according to the regulations." - APP

Oil falls, stocks climb as investors hope for progress in US-Iran talks


Treasury yields ease as investors anticipate progress in Middle East peace negotiations

DNA

LONDON: Oil prices fell and stocks rose on Thursday as investors were optimistic about possible progress in peace talks over the Middle East war, although the US and Iran stuck to opposing stances over Tehran's uranium stockpile and controls on the Strait of Hormuz. A senior Iranian source told Reuters no deal has been reached with the US, but the gaps have been narrowed, while US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said there had been "some good signs" in talks, but any toll system in the strait would be unacceptable. US President Donald Trump said the US will eventually recover Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium. Oil prices had been higher earlier in the day, while major US stock indexes were all lower after Reuters reported Iran's supreme leader has issued a directive that the country's near-weapons-grade uranium should not be sent abroad. US Treasury yields were lower in the afternoon amid hopes of peace deal progress. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note US10YT=RR was last down 0.8 basis points on the day at 4.575%. It reached its highest level since January 2025 on Tuesday. The war, which began on February 28, has sent energy prices soaring and sparked concerns about higher inflation and consumer spending. US crude CL1 fell \$1.91 to settle at \$96.35. Brent LCO1 declined \$2.44 to settle at \$102.58. "Oil is down


and below \$100, and that's a good thing," said Adam Sarhan, chief executive of 50 Park Investments in New York. But also, Sarhan said, investors have remained upbeat about the outlook for stocks, especially in technology. Shares of Nvidia, the world's biggest company by market capitalisation, ended down 1.8% as investors took profits after recent sharp gains. Nvidia late on Wednesday reported earnings that beat Wall Street expectations and announced an \$80 billion share repurchase program. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 276.31 points, or 0.55%, to 50,285.66, the S&P 500 rose 12.75 points, or 0.17%, to 7,445.72 and the Nasdaq Composite rose 22.74 points, or 0.09%, to 26,293.10. MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe rose 5.24 points, or 0.48%, to 1,106.89. The pan-European STOXX 600 index finished up 0.04%. Shares of IBM rose 12.4% after news that the Trump administration will fund a handful of quantum computing companies, including a new IBM venture, in exchange for stakes in some of the firms. Shares of D-Wave Quantum and other quantum computing stocks also jumped.

"When you look at the normal economic environment surrounding this market, you would expect (stocks) to be lower, but if you believe the war will come to an end soon - that we're at a temporary high on energy prices, it does push you to look more not just at the underlying earnings that have been good but also the earnings potential that comes from AI," said Rick Meckler, partner at Cherry Lane Investments. SpaceX unveiled its IPO filing late on Wednesday, giving the market its first glimpse into how much billionaire Elon Musk is spending on AI as he bets on transforming the rocket maker into a broader AI-led business. Investors were also watching developments in Türkiye.



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