



Islamabad POST

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Pope calls for regulating the AI effectively

Detailed News On Page-08

President greets Jordan leadership on Independence

Detailed News On Page-08



Aurangzeb, UK envoy hold talks

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US-Iran standoff

President Xi praises Pak leaders role

Says Beijing was willing to work with Islamabad to build a more close-knit China-Pakistan community with a shared future and achieve more in their "all-weather" cooperation

CENTRELINE REPORT

BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping hailed Beijing's "unbreakable" friendship with Pakistan on Monday as he met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Beijing, seeking to deepen the "all-weather" partnership between the two countries. PM Shehbaz landed in China on Saturday on a four-day official visit, reaching Beijing yesterday after making a stop in Hangzhou. Greeting PM Shehbaz at the Great Hall of the People, Xi called the Pakistani leader an "old friend" and said the two countries had "understood, trusted and supported each other" over decades, forging an "unbreakable tradition of friendship". "Despite international changes, China has always prioritised Pakistan relations in our neighbourhood diplomacy," Xi said. He added that Beijing was willing to work with Islamabad to build a more close-knit China-Pakistan community with a shared future and achieve more in their "all-weather" cooperation. PM Shehbaz, in turn, called China and Pakistan two "iron brother" countries with a relationship that is "next to none". Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, who concluded his visit to Iran on Saturday, was also present on the occasion. Following a rickety ceasefire achieved in the US-Israeli war on Iran in April, Pakistan hosted mediation talks in Islamabad between

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China firmly supports Pakistan in combating terrorism

DNA

BEIJING: China on Monday strongly condemned the recent terrorist attack in Pakistan and reaffirmed its firm support for Islamabad's efforts to combat terrorism and maintain national stability. Responding to a question at a regular press briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said that China had taken note of the incident and expressed deep condolences to the victims. "We strongly condemn this terrorist attack and extend deep condolences to the victims and sincere sympathies to the injured and the families of the victims," she said. Mao Ning emphasized that China firmly opposes all forms of terrorism and reiterated Beijing's continued support for Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir also in the picture. - DNA

KP Governor, CM meet Prince Rahim

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Monday met visiting Prince Rahim al-Hussaini Aga Khan V at the Lower Chitral Airport, where the latter assured him of investment in the province. Prince Rahim arrived in Pakistan on Wednesday for a week-long visit - his first to the country since being named the spiritual leader of the Ismaili community last year. Speaking to reporters during a visit to Chitral, CM Afridi said he had made the visit to welcome Prince Rahim on his arrival. "During the meeting with Prince Rahim Aga Khan, discussions were held on the province's potential as well as the government's initiatives and goals," the chief minister said, while lauding the services of the Aga Khan Foundation. "We also discussed the establishment

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Deal: so close yet so far

Iran says 14-point MoU framework reached with US

Iran navy says it coordinated passage of 32 ships through Hormuz in past 24 hours

CENTRELINE REPORT

TEHRAN: Tehran says it has agreed on a 14-point memorandum of understanding (MoU) framework with Washington aimed at ending the war and easing regional tensions, while stressing that a final deal is not imminent and key issues remain under negotiation. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said talks have produced a framework MoU focused on halting hostilities on all fronts, including Lebanon, and addressing U.S. maritime actions and the release of frozen Iranian assets. He emphasized that while many topics have seen progress, the sides still need 30-60 days after any MoU is signed to hammer out details into a final agreement.

Continued on Page 06

Iranian negotiators arrive in Doha

DNA

TEHRAN / DOHA / JERUSALEM: High-stakes diplomatic efforts to formalize a framework peace deal between Iran and the United States reached a critical juncture today. Even as top Iranian negotiators landed in Qatar to hammer out the details of a fragile ceasefire, rhetoric on the ground remains highly combustible. President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized that Tehran will not bow to "excessive" American demands, while inside Israel, hardline cabinet ministers

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Briefs

Newly-married couple shot dead in Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A newly married couple was shot dead in Karachi's Malir area soon after appearing before a local court on Monday, according to a senior police official. According to Korangi Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Fida Hussain Janwari, the couple was returning from the court when assailants, who were chasing their car, opened fire on them in the Saudabad locality. SSP Janwari said that the woman's family had lodged a complaint at Sachal Police Station over her disappearance. However, the woman had recorded a statement before the Malir court that she had married of her own free will. "The couple suffered critical injuries and died on the spot," he said.

Gen Z account under attack in India

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: A viral social media account focusing on the concerns of India's Gen Z has come under attack, with its founder alleging hacking and threats to his family after it won millions of followers disenchanted with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. The satirical "Cockroach Janta Party" (CJP) account garnered more than 22 million followers on Instagram within days, reflecting mounting unease among young users on issues it highlighted, from unemployment to the leaks of exam questions. "The government has taken down our iconic website," founder Abhijeet Dipke wrote on X, adding that its X account had been withheld in India while the group's Instagram account had been compromised and his family had received threats.

Twist to the story

Trump demands widespread sign-up to Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords are a set of agreements brokered under Trump in 2020 and govern the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Israel and countries that have historically been hostile to it



NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Monday seemingly predicated an emerging Iran peace deal on Muslim-majority nations across the Middle East and beyond normalising relations with Israel. This brand new demand came on the heels of a potential memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the US and Iran to end the war on all fronts and potentially lift oil waivers. It is worth noting that the nations named by Trump, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have traditionally advocated for a two-state solution between Palestine and Israel as a precursor to any discussions on the normalisation of relations with Israel.

In a lengthy social media post, Trump listed countries whose leaders he spoke with on Saturday about efforts to end the war with Iran. "After all the work done by the United States to try and pull this very complex puzzle together, it should be mandatory that all of these countries, at a minimum, simultaneously sign onto the Abraham Accords," he wrote. "Those countries discussed are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (already a Member!), Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain (already a Member!)" The Abraham Accords are a set of agreements brokered under Trump in 2020 and govern the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Israel and countries that have historically been hostile to it. They, however, remain unpopular among the public in many parts of the region, not least because

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Oil slips to two-week low as US and Iran deal likely

Brent crude futures LCOc1 were down \$4.44, or 4.3%, to \$99.10 a barrel

DNA

LONDON: Oil prices fell more than 4% to two-week lows on Monday as optimism grew that the United States and Iran were moving closer to a peace deal, even though they remain at odds over key issues such as blockades on the Strait of Hormuz. Brent crude futures LCOc1 were down \$4.44, or 4.3%, to \$99.10 a barrel at 0822 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate CLc1 futures were at \$92.24 a barrel, down \$4.36, or 4.5%. Both contracts touched their lowest since May 7 earlier in the session. On Saturday, US President Donald Trump said Washington and Iran had "largely negotiated" an understanding on a peace deal that would reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which carried a fifth of global shipments of oil and liquefied natural gas before the conflict. However, the two sides remain at odds over several difficult issues, with Trump saying on Sunday he had told his representatives not to rush into any deal.

"We've been at this stage before, only for talks to break down. Therefore, the market will likely be more cautious about overreacting," said Warren Patterson, head of commodities strategy at ING. Both sides played down hopes for an imminent breakthrough on Monday, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying there will either be a good agreement or Washington would deal with Iran in "another way." Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on Monday that Iran was negotiating an end to the war and was not currently discussing nuclear issues. Analysts expect a return to normal oil flows through the strait will take months, while damaged oil and gas facilities are repaired. "We continue to believe that the key factors for the oil market to watch should be the physical oil flows and so far, flows through the Strait remain restricted," UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo said. According to media, two liquefied natural gas tankers were exiting

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Sindh launches province-wide anti-rabies campaign

DNA

KARACHI :Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah launched a province-wide Rabies Prevention Campaign, declaring that the Sindh government would adopt a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to eliminate preventable rabies deaths through mass awareness, improved treatment facilities, vaccination coverage and stray dog population management. Presiding over a meeting at the CM House, the chief minister said rabies remained a serious but preventable public health challenge and directed all concerned departments to work in close coordination to ensure timely treatment, public awareness and effective preventive measures across the province. The meeting was attended by Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Secretary Local Government Waseem Shamshad, Principal Secretary to CM Asif Jameel, Secretary Information Nadeem Memon, Secretary Health Tahir Sangi, Dr Abdul Bari of Indus Hospital, DG Health Dr Waqar Memon, CEO PPHI Javed Jagirani and other senior officials. During the briefing, the chief minister was informed that over 285,000 dog-bite cases had been reported in Sindh during 2025, while more than 22 rabies-related deaths were recorded in major hospitals. The CM was informed that 85,891 dog-bite cases had already been documented from January to April 2026. Launching the campaign, Murad Ali Shah said the Sindh government was determined to strengthen both preventive and treatment mechanisms to save precious human lives. "Rabies is a completely

preventable disease, and no citizen should lose their life due to lack of awareness, vaccines or timely treatment," the chief minister said. He said the government would ensure the uninterrupted availability of anti-rabies vaccines and immunoglobulin at healthcare facilities across Sindh. "We are adopting a multi-dimensional strategy involving healthcare, local government institutions, rescue services, media and community organisations to tackle rabies effectively," he added. The chief minister paid tribute to late infectious diseases expert Dr Naseem Salahuddin, describing her as a pioneer of rabies prevention in Pakistan whose lifelong struggle for a "Rabies-Free Pakistan" would continue to inspire future public health initiatives. The meeting was informed that under the Sindh Rabies Control Programme launched in 2022, neutering, spaying and vaccination campaigns for stray dogs were being carried out in 20 districts. So far, over 25,500 dogs have been neutered or spayed, while more than 36,900 dogs have been vaccinated through operational Rabies Control Programme Centres in Karachi, Matiari, Dadu and Tando Allahyar and others. Minister Health Dr Azra Fazal said 11 additional centres would soon become operational in Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Jamshoro, Khairpur, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and other districts. The chief minister directed local government authorities to accelerate dog population management programmes in urban and rural areas. "We need humane, scientific and sustainable measures for stray dog control instead of temporary responses," Murad Shah said. The meeting was informed that 278 WHO-standard Rabies Prevention Units had been established across Sindh as primary treatment centres for dog-bite victims, while 112 WHO-standard referral cen-

tres had been activated to manage severe exposure cases, ensuring round-the-clock availability of anti-rabies vaccines and Rabies Immunoglobulin (RIG). Minister Health told the chief minister that anti-rabies vaccine doses for over 63,000 patients and eRIG treatment for more than 8,700 patients had already been provided during the ongoing programme. Murad Shah directed the Health Department to ensure all referral centres remained fully functional and properly staffed. "No patient should be denied treatment due to a shortage of medicines, staff or facilities," he said. The meeting was also informed that extensive training programmes for doctors, paramedics and Rescue 1122 staff were being conducted in collaboration with the Indus Hospital Health Network under WHO-certified guidelines. A seven-day province-wide awareness campaign through television, print, social media, schools and community outreach programmes was also launched to educate the public about prevention, first aid and timely treatment following dog bites. The chief minister appreciated the development of a digital ARV Patient Tracking System, designed to monitor dog-bite cases, vaccine administration and follow-up doses across Sindh in real time. Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah directed the health department to operationalise the digital monitoring system immediately after final approval. "Technology-driven monitoring will help improve response time, ensure accountability and save lives," he said. The chief minister also instructed the Information Department to intensify awareness campaigns in Urdu, Sindhi and regional languages to maximise outreach at the community level. "Public awareness is the strongest defence against rabies," he added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chinese and Pakistani artist performing during the celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relation between the Republic of China and the Pakistan at PNCA. — DNA

Progress on Sukkur barrage rehabilitation reviewed

SUKKUR: A World Bank implementation support mission visited the Sukkur Barrage to review rehabilitation works under the SBIP S1 contract, here on Monday. The mission, led by Task Team Leader Francois Onimus, included Environmental Specialist Alfano and Social Safeguard Specialist Imran ul Haque. Officials from the Project Management Office SBIP, including Project Director Noor ul Arfeen Balouch, Deputy Director Technical Abdul Fatah Memon, Contract Specialist Abdul Razaque Memon, and Mechanical Engineer Mumtaz Ghumro, accompanied the delegation. Representatives from the Project Implementation Consultant team, Irrigation Department, and the Chinese contractor also attended. Officials briefed the mission that targeted civil and mechanical works have been completed, with only finishing works currently underway. Phase 2 and 3 works are scheduled for completion by June 15, 2026, after which the cofferdam will be dismantled. The mission held a meeting with the contractor at Camp A, where a presentation was given on engineering progress and environmental and social safeguard arrangements. The World Bank team expressed satisfaction with the completed and ongoing works. The Sukkur Barrage rehabilitation project, funded by the World Bank, is slated for completion by June 2027.—APP

Balochistan projects receives over Rs11b

ISLAMABAD: The Finance Division has released Rs11.4 billion for development projects in Balochistan under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2025-26, with funds directed towards road infrastructure, urban rehabilitation and water supply schemes. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, against the revised allocation of Rs19.197 billion for Balochistan projects, actual releases stood at Rs11.405 billion as of May 6, 2026, said a press release. Among the highest-funded schemes, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the 124-kilometre road from Khani Cross to Ziarat and onward to Sinjavi received Rs1.5 billion against a revised allocation of Rs2.5 billion. The document further shows that Rs902.65 million was released for the construction of a border terminal at the Pak-Afghan border in the Badini area and the construction of the road

from the Obashtai area to Kahan Daggar (main Badini Road) in the Qilla Saifullah district. The revised allocation for the project was set at Rs1.34 billion. An amount of Rs2 billion was allocated for the construction of a road from Sui to Kashmir from the same revised allocations. Gwadar-related projects also accounted for a significant portion of the released funds. The rehabilitation of the Old Town Gwadar project received Rs359.949 million to help improve urban infrastructure in the coastal city from the revised allocation of Rs400 million for FY2025-26. The Gwadar Development Authority Business Plan project received Rs75 million from the revised allocation of Rs250 million. The Gwadar Safe City Project received the full revised allocation of Rs1.5 billion. The PSDP data further shows that the construction of Sibi-Talli and Kohlu-Rakhni roads received the full revised allocation of Rs500 million Construction/upgradation of

Durgai Shabozai to Taunsa Road received the full revised allocation of Rs750 million. The construction of Panigur-Gichak-Awaran Road received the 1.5 billion out of revised allocation of Rs1.9 billion. In addition, the construction of the Naag-Gichak Road in Panjgur received Rs200 million during the period. The development of the Ziarat Town project received Rs300 million against the same revised allocations. The improvement/widening of Spera Ragha Road from Khanozai to Loralai Kila Saifullah received the full Rs200 million revised allocation. A project to provide necessary facilities, including freshwater treatment, water supply, and distribution in Gwadar, received Rs142 million from the revised allocation of Rs470 million. The construction of blacktopped roads from Killi Sardar Abdul Rahim Killji, Taftan, to Chaghi also received Rs75 million, realising the full revised amount.—APP

Mohtasib intensifies efforts for redressing public grievances

ISLAMABAD: The Wafaqi Mohtasib, Naveed Kamran Baloch has instructed the Officers and Staff members to intensify efforts for redressing public grievances relating to maladministration of the federal government agencies and departments adding that the general public should not suffer on account of their inefficiency. He was addressing the Officers and Staff members on the eve of his visit to the Wafaqi Mohtasib Regional Offices located at Karachi, Hyderabad and Mirpur Khas, said a press release. He called upon them to ensure implementation of Wafaqi Mohtasib's decisions in their true letter and spirit. He also urged them to pursue the Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR) programme in a more organized, efficient and co-ordinated manner. Earlier, he received a detailed briefing on the working of these Regional Offices. While at the Mirpur Khas office, he also inaugurated a new Conference Room established recently. The inaugural function was also attended by Hariram Kishori Lal, MPA from the minority community of Sindh. Speaking on the occasion, the Wafaqi Mohtasib said that his office is in fact a poor man's court devoted to resolution and redressal of public grievances particularly.—APP

China-Pak art festival celebrates 75 years of diplomatic ties

ISLAMABAD: A vibrant China-Pakistan Art Festival was held in Islamabad to celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, highlighting the enduring friendship and cultural harmony between the two nations. The colorful event, organized at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), brought together artists, diplomats, students and people from different walks of life. The venue came alive as performers from both Pakistan and China presented musical performances, cultural acts and artistic showcases, reflecting youthful passion and the warmth of cultural

exchange. Speaking on the occasion, Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage and Culture, Farah Naz Akbar said the relationship between Pakistan and China extends far beyond governments and diplomacy. "This is not merely a cultural event; it is a reflection of the deep-rooted friendship between the people of Pakistan and China. Over time, this bond has grown even stronger, and art and music continue to bring hearts closer," she said. Farah Naz Akbar emphasized that such cultural activities introduce the younger generation to each other's traditions and civilizations, further strengthen-

ing mutual understanding. She described China not only as Pakistan's strategic and economic partner but also as a brotherly nation, adding that "China is our second home." Speaking at the event, Chen Peng, Cultural Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, said 2026 marks an important year for deepening the China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Co-operative Partnership. He stressed that the friendship between the two countries transcends political and economic cooperation and is deeply rooted in mutual understanding and cultural affinity between the people of both nations.—DNA

Plan to export disease-free compartments for livestock

ISLAMABAD :Pakistan plans to accelerate livestock exports by establishing dedicated meat processing export zones and disease-free compartments for major animal diseases, as part of broader efforts to modernise one of the country's fastest-growing economic sectors. Plans are also underway to establish modern slaughterhouses aligned with international standards and introduce time-limited financial support schemes to attract investment and encourage value-added livestock exports, according to the Year Book 2024-25 released by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research and available with Wealth Pakistan, said a press release. Breed improvement has emerged as another major focus area, with plans to establish nucleus herds, import high-yield dairy, beef and mutton breeds, and introduce advanced genetic materials including sexed semen, embryos and ova. The report noted that these initiatives are expected to improve productivity, generate employment opportunities and strengthen national food security. Animal husbandry continues to play a vital role in Pakistan's rural economy, involving more than eight million rural families in livestock production and contributing approximately 35% to 40% of household income in farming communities. The livestock sector has also consolidated its position as a major contributor to Pakistan's agricultural economy, accounting for 61.2% of agriculture's value addition and contributing 14.7% to the country's GDP during FY2024-25. According to the report, the sector maintained steady growth, with gross value addition increasing from Rs5,587 billion in 2022-23 to Rs5,837 billion in 2023-24, reflecting a growth rate of 4.4%. The sector also contributes to foreign exchange earnings, accounting for approximately 2.9% of Pakistan's total exports during FY2024-25, highlighting its growing importance in the national economy. To further strengthen the sector, the government is pursuing a private sector-led development strategy supported by public-sector policy interventions. The strategy focuses on improving veterinary healthcare services, modernising breeding and animal husbandry practices, expanding artificial insemination services, promoting balanced livestock nutrition and advancing reproductive technologies such as Embryo Transfer Technique (ETT) and In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF). The strategy also includes efforts to control economically significant diseases, including Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) and Avian Influenza, which affect productivity, trade and the broader livestock economy.—DNA

PR launches Awam Express train service from Peshawar to Karachi

They thanked Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and Federal Secretary for Railways Syed Mazhar Ali Shah for the start of Awam Express train service from Peshawar.

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Railways here Monday launched a new Awam Express train service from Peshawar to Karachi. The impressive inauguration ceremony was held at Peshawar Cantt Railway Station, where Secretary Ministry of Railways, Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, officially inaugurated the service.

Former Pakistani legend cricketer Shahid Khan Afridi also attended the event. The upgraded Awam Express train is equipped with modern facilities, including eight air-conditioned coaches, comfortable seating, and other passenger amenities for facilitation of passengers. The train

has the capacity to accommodate 1,234 passengers. The first upgraded Awam Express departed from Peshawar for Karachi at 8:30 a.m. The train will travel via Rawalpindi, Lahore, Khanewal, Multan, Bahawalpur, Khanpur, Liaquatpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Sadiqabad, Dharki, Pano Aqil, Rohri, Nawabshah, Tando Adam, and Hyderabad before reaching Karachi. Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Secretary Ministry of Railways Syed Mazhar Ali Shah said that passengers would be provided with modern travel facilities and welcomed travelers to experience the upgraded service of Pakistan Rail-

ways. The Awam Express train service was a gift of Federal Govt for people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other provinces of Pakistan. He added that the recent Quetta incident could not weaken the nation's resolve, emphasizing that Pakistan Railways remains a symbol of national unity. He said efforts would continue to further improve railway services and strengthen railway business operations. Speaking at the ceremony, former Captain Shahid Afridi expressed sorrow over the loss of precious lives in yesterday Quetta terrorists incident and prayed for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks. He also



congratulated Pakistan Railways on the launch of the new train service and mentioned that the Shahid Afridi Foundation had installed a water filtration plant at Cantt Station. The passengers expressed jubilation over the new train service and improved facilities therein. They thanked Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and Federal Secretary for Railways Syed Mazhar Ali Shah for the start of Awam Express train service from Peshawar. The passengers said it was a great gift of PMLN Govt for people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.—APP

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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 Forced Day
May 22/Yemen Republic Re-unification Day(National Day)
May 24/Eritrea National Day
May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
May 25/Argentina National Day
May 25/Jordan Independence Day
May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day
May 28/Ethiopia National Day
May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day

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Bomb Disposal.....15
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Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
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Cantonment Board 9270151-3



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Rs 3,000 for small sacrificial animals, Rs 4,000 for large

The Chairman CDA directed the officials to ensure prompt resolution of complaints received from visitors and traders and instructed the departments concerned to further strengthen security and operational arrangements at the market

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has fixed charges at Rs 3,000 for small animals and Rs 4,000 for large animals at the sacrificial cattle markets established across the city, ahead of Eid-ul-Azha. The charges were disclosed during a visit by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Sohail Ashraf to the sacrificial cattle market here Monday to review arrangements. He was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz, Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) Chief Officer Dr Anam Fatima and other officials. During the briefing, the officials informed the chairman that several measures had been taken to facilitate citizens, buyers and traders visiting the market in connection with Eid preparations. According to the officials, uninterrupted provision of clean drinking water is being ensured at the market, while lighting arrangements, restroom facilities and free parking have also been made available. The administration said that special arrangements had been put in place to maintain cleanliness, security and order at the site during the cattle trading period. The officials also informed the chairman that a help desk and helpline had been established by the CDA and MCI administration to address public concerns. The citizens would be able to lodge complaints regarding sanitation,



drinking water, restroom facilities and other civic issues through the helpline service, they told. The Chairman CDA directed the officials to ensure prompt resolution of complaints received from visitors and traders and instructed the departments con-

cerned to further strengthen security and operational arrangements at the market. Expressing satisfaction over the preparations, the CDA Chairman said that steps had been taken to facilitate residents and traders at sacrificial cattle markets.

Later, Sohail Ashraf visited the Diplomatic Enclave and reviewed security and civic arrangements, directing officials to complete cleanliness, lighting, parking and ongoing development works on priority.

Gold price surges by Rs 4,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a sharp increase in the local market on Monday, with 24 karat gold per tola rising by Rs 4,600 to settle at Rs 477,762 compared to Rs 473,162 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 3,943 to Rs 409,603 from Rs 405,660, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 3,615 to Rs 375,483 against Rs 371,868. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$46 to \$4,554 per ounce from \$4,508. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs 236 to Rs 8,270, while the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs 203 to Rs 7,090. The price of silver in the international market also increased by \$2.36 to settle at \$77.86.—APP

Two suspected car lifters injured

WAH CANTT: Two suspected car lifters here on Monday were injured and arrested after a shootout with police while three accomplices escaped, the police said. They said a police patrolling team signaled a suspicious vehicle carrying five men to stop in the Saddar Wah area, but the suspects opened fire on the police and attempted to flee. During the exchange of fire, two suspects were wounded and taken into custody, while the remaining three escaped under the cover of darkness, the police added. The police recovered a stolen car, reportedly snatched from the Saddar Wah area last month, along with weapons from the suspects. The police said the detained men had prior criminal records in Islamabad and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa involving vehicle theft, attempted murder, fraud and illegal weapons charges. Two bullets struck the bulletproof vest of Head Constable, Muhammad Ijaz during the incident, but he was not injured, they added. The police had launched search operation to arrest the fleeing outlaws, they said adding the injured men were shifted to a hospital, while a forensic team collected evidence from the site.—APP

Historic facilities provided to pilgrims thru welfare steps

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, and Prime Minister's Coordinator Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, on Monday said the leadership of the Saudi Arabia under the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has set unprecedented examples in serving pilgrims by introducing state-of-the-art facilities and modern technological systems for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims from across the world. In an exclusive talk with international media here, Ashrafi said Saudi Arabia was utilizing modern technology, artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, advanced healthcare systems and comprehensive crowd-management mechanisms to ensure a safe, peaceful and spiritually enriching Hajj experience for millions of pilgrims. He said the Kingdom's remarkable arrangements reflected its unwavering commitment to serving the guests of Allah and facilitating pilgrims in accordance with the requirements of the modern age. Ashrafi said Saudi authorities had transformed Hajj operations into one of the world's most organized and technologically advanced management systems, where pilgrims were being facilitated from arrival to

departure through integrated digital services. He highlighted the introduction of the mandatory "Nusuk Card," describing it as a revolutionary initiative that carried pilgrims' personal, medical, accommodation and transportation information in both physical and digital formats. He said the system greatly helped in identity verification, access to holy sites, locating missing pilgrims and streamlining transportation and accommodation arrangements. Ashrafi said Saudi Arabia had also introduced smart sensors and AI-powered systems in Mina and other holy sites for real-time crowd monitoring and management. According to international media reports, advanced digital systems linked with the Nusuk platform were helping authorities regulate pilgrim movement, reduce congestion and ensure safer mobility between Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifah and the Grand Mosque. He said the use of artificial intelligence and smart surveillance systems at the Grand Mosque represented a major leap in Hajj management. Saudi authorities were utilizing real-time crowd density indicators, computer vision technologies and AI-based monitoring systems to guide pilgrims and improve safety measures around Tawaf and Sa'i areas. Praising the healthcare arrangements, Ashrafi said the Kingdom had deployed tens of thousands of healthcare workers, emergency response teams and specialized medical units across Makkah, Mina,

Arafat and Madinah for Hajj 2026. He said modern hospitals, emergency centers, AI-assisted medical services and rapid response systems were ensuring immediate medical assistance for pilgrims. He further said Saudi Arabia had expanded special services for elderly and differently-abled pilgrims through mobility support systems, digital guidance tools, transport assistance and dedicated facilitation centers at the holy sites and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. Ashrafi said full 5G connectivity, free internet facilities and multilingual digital services in more than 60 languages were helping pilgrims remain connected and receive guidance in their native languages. He added that digital transformation initiatives launched under Saudi Vision 2030 had significantly enhanced the spiritual journey of pilgrims. He also appreciated Saudi Arabia's efforts to simplify visa issuance, digital registration and online pilgrimage management through the Nusuk platform. He said the fully digital registration and permit systems had improved transparency, efficiency and convenience for pilgrims worldwide. The Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council said the Saudi leadership deserved appreciation from the Muslim Ummah for continuously expanding the capacity of the holy sites, improving transportation infrastructure, enhancing cleanliness and adopting smart-city solutions to facilitate pilgrims.

Police rolls out massive Eid security plan

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police has finalized a comprehensive security plan for Eid-ul-Adha under which more than 7,000 police officers and personnel will perform security duties across the federal capital during the Eid holidays. An official told APP on Monday that Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired a high-level meeting to review security arrangements for Eid days, cattle markets, mosques, Eidgahs and public places. The official said over 450 traffic police officers would also remain deployed across the city to ensure smooth flow of traffic during Eid-ul-Adha. During the meeting, all zonal officers were directed to remain present in their respective areas and personally monitor security and policing arrangements. IGP Rizvi directed officers to further strengthen security at Faisal Mosque and all mosques and Eidgahs across the capital. He said special traffic squads would be deployed to maintain uninterrupted traffic flow, while vigilant Capital Patrol personnel would continue patrolling in different areas of the city. The official said Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) quick response teams would remain on high alert to effectively respond to any emergency situation during Eid days. The IGP Rizvi also directed deployment of special police contingents at recreational spots and ordered continuous monitoring of city security through Safe City surveillance cameras. According to the official, Police Khidmat Markaz F-6 and Diplomatic Enclave would remain open during Eid holidays to facilitate citizens. Rizvi urged citizens to immediately report any suspicious activity through emergency helpline "Pucar-15" and cooperate with police personnel during checking.—APP

MAXHUB partners with QAU

ISLAMABAD: MAXHUB, a Chinese brand specializing in smart collaboration solutions, has partnered with Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) in Islamabad to accelerate the university's digital transformation, creating a more efficient teaching and research environment for faculty and students, Gwadar Pro reported. MAXHUB has unveiled a state-of-the-art smart seminar hall at the university, powered by the company's comprehensive smart education solutions. The facility is designed to demonstrate the full potential of interactive flat panels tailored for educational settings. Concept credit for the seminar hall was attributed to Hanan Ali Abbasi, an author and public speaker. The smart seminar hall serves as an experiential hub for MAXHUB's education-focused solutions that span the entire teaching cycle. Key functionalities include pre-class lesson preparation with automated courseware generation, in-class interactive teaching with diverse engagement tools, and post-class teaching evaluation to measure learning outcomes. The solution aims to create a more dynamic and collaborative classroom experience, moving beyond traditional teaching methods. AXHUB partners with Quaid-i-Azam University to drive digital campus transformation, photo provided to GP in a gesture recognizing the company's contribution to the university's digital advancement. Dr. Abdul Haq, Chairperson of the Department of Statistics at Quaid-i-Azam University, presented a token of appreciation to Leo Deng, Country Head of MAXHUB in Pakistan, for his role in digitally advancing the main auditorium at the Department of Statistics. Looking ahead, Deng announced that MAXHUB plans to extend its support to a wider range of educational institutions across Pakistan. The company will donate its smart education solutions to relevant education ministries, as well as selected higher education institutions, vocational training colleges and primary and secondary schools.—DNA

IRSA releases 175,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 175,200 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 183,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1454.95 feet which was 54.95 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00

feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 71,200 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1167.10 feet, which was 117.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 42,000 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 124,500, 89,300, 58,300, and 16,600 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 45,100 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 7,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Fire erupts at 3 points in Margalla Hills

The administration stated that the fire was being controlled at three separate points and expressed hope that the situation would be brought under control soon. Teams continued working on the affected sites to prevent further damage.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A fire that broke out in the Margalla Hills behind the F-5 sector prompted a large response from the district administration, with more than 65 personnel taking part in efforts to control the blaze. Authorities said the fire spread to three different locations on the hills, while strong winds created difficulties for firefighting teams. According to the district administration, rescue workers, firefighting staff and other officials remained engaged in the operation to stop the fire from spreading further across the hills. Officials said the windy conditions slowed down the response and made access to some areas difficult. The administration stated that the fire was being controlled at three separate points and expressed hope that the situation would be brought under

control soon. Teams continued working on the affected sites to prevent further damage. Following the incident, authorities temporarily closed all hiking trails in the Margalla Hills area as a safety measure. Citizens were requested to avoid visiting the trails until the firefighting operation is completed. The district administration urged the public to cooperate with officials and stay away from the hills to allow emergency teams to carry out their work without interruption. Officials also warned that changing wind patterns could increase the risk of the fire spreading to nearby areas if movement on the trails continues. The Margalla Hills remain a popular destination for hikers and visitors in Islamabad, especially during the evening hours and weekends. However, authorities said public safety remains the top priority during the ongoing emergency response. Officials added that monitoring of the affected areas is continuing and further updates will be shared after the fire is fully extinguished.



Briefs

Eid preparations gain momentum in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: With the arrival of Eid-ul-Azha approaching, the buying and selling of sacrificial animals has gained momentum across Rawalpindi, with a large number of citizens visiting livestock markets. To facilitate the public, the district administration has set up eight temporary cattle markets and sale points where arrangements for cleanliness, security, and other basic facilities are being ensured. According to the district administration, cattle markets have been established in various areas including Bhatta Chowk and Ranyal in Rawalpindi Cantt, near Fatima Jinnah Women University on Chakri Road, and at a designated plot near Police Station Rawat on GT Road. Similarly, a cattle market has been set up in Gujjar Khan near the slaughterhouse on Galian Road, while in Wah Cantt, a designated sale point has been established near Sharif Hospital Stop on GT Road. In Taxila, a sale point has been set up near the Sunday Bazaar at Tumbair Market, while in Kallar Syedan and Kahuta, cattle markets and sale points have been made operational at Bypass Chowk and Tangi Road near Sakhi Sabzwari, respectively. All these facilities are being managed by relevant municipal bodies, cantonment boards, and the district administration, while assistant commissioners are continuously monitoring the arrangements. As Eid draws closer, crowds have significantly increased at these livestock markets. Citizens, along with their families, are visiting to purchase sacrificial animals, while children are also showing keen interest in selecting animals of their choice. Livestock traders said that the price of an average goat ranges between Rs50,000 and Rs80,000, while medium-sized cows are being sold between Rs200,000 and Rs300,000. Some buyers noted that prices have increased compared to last year, however, they remain hopeful of further adjustments. Many middle-class families are opting for collective sacrifice to fulfill the Sunnah of Prophet Ibrahim (AS). In line with directives of the Punjab government, special focus is being given to cleanliness, hygiene, and provision of civic facilities in livestock markets to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for both buyers and traders. Meanwhile, the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company has cancelled holidays of sanitary workers and officials to ensure effective cleanliness arrangements during Eid-ul-Azha. Following directives from Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a comprehensive sanitation plan has also been prepared for the timely disposal of offal and maintenance of city cleanliness.—APP

ISSI marks Youm-e-Takbeer to highlight strategic stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: To commemorate Youm-e-Takbeer, the Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), hosted an event on the theme Strategic Stability, Emerging Threats and Role of Diplomacy. The meeting was attended by Professor Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Vice Chancellor of Quaide-Azam University; Dr. Rizwana Abbasi, Professor at the Department of International Relations, NUML; Air Commodore (Retd) Khalid Banuri, Senior Advisor JCCL, Air Headquarters, Islamabad; and Maj. Gen. Ausaf Ali (Retd.), former Director General Policy, Doctrine and Strategy, SPD. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors, ISSI, in his welcome remarks, stated that Pakistan's nuclear capability was shaped by its security imperatives and the need to restore strategic balance in South Asia. He emphasized that Pakistan adopted the nuclear course reluctantly, only after India's nuclear tests created an existential challenge and pushed the region toward overt nuclearization. Pakistan's response, he noted, was guided by legitimate security concerns in the face of an increasingly belligerent and aggressive India. He further observed that the inter-

national community now has a better understanding of Pakistan's security compulsions. Despite repeated attempts by India to test Pakistan's deterrence, it has continued to hold. He concluded that Youm-e-Takbeer should therefore be commemorated as an important national occasion. Earlier, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC, stated that May 28 marks a significant day in Pakistan's history, when the country conducted its nuclear tests. He highlighted that deterrence today is facing challenges due to the emergence of EDTs and other regional and global conflicts. He emphasized the need to modernize the nuclear posture to ensure that deterrence remains credible, effective, and responsive to emerging security challenges. Dr. Rizwana highlighted that strategic stability in South Asia is becoming increasingly fragile due to India's evolving military posture and the introduction of new technologies. She stated that since the Cold Start Doctrine of 2004, India has focused on developing offensive war-fighting capabilities against Pakistan, including the option of limited conflict and so-called surgical strikes. This has been supported by major military modernization efforts, not only to strengthen India's position against Pakistan but also to expand its role in the wider Asia-Pacific region. She

further observed that India's unilateral actions in Jammu and Kashmir and illegal holding of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance have added to regional instability, while precision weapons, drones, advanced surveillance, AI, and automated decision-making are making the battlefield more complex and increasing the risk of escalation. While discussing the role of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs), Air Commodore (Retd.) Khalid Banuri stated that the character of war is changing rapidly, with serious implications for strategic stability in South Asia. He noted that Artificial Intelligence, hypersonic missiles, and space-based systems are transforming the military domain by reducing decision-making time during crises. Describing the convergence of AI, hypersonic weapons, and space capabilities as a dangerous "triangle of escalation," he stressed the need to keep humans in the decision-making loop, extend arms control frameworks to emerging domains, and invest in reliable crisis communication networks. Adding to the discussion, Maj. Gen. Ausaf Ali (Retd.) stated that nuclear capability is only one element of national power, and other dimensions of the state's power must also be strengthened. He explained that escalation today can take multiple forms, including cyber oper-

ations, Artificial Intelligence, space-based capabilities, the electromagnetic spectrum, quantum technologies, and hypersonic missiles. While discussing the role of diplomacy, Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal highlighted that diplomatic engagement remains essential for maintaining strategic stability in South Asia. He noted that Pakistan has played a significant diplomatic role in managing regional crises, including efforts linked to the Iran-U.S. ceasefire, but stressed that sustained dialogue between India and Pakistan is even more important for regional peace. He observed that the deadlock in bilateral engagement has prevented confidence-building measures from maturing and has created a serious gap in arms control and strategic stability. Referring to emerging alignments such as I2U2 and QUAD, he cautioned that these developments cannot be underestimated in Pakistan's security calculations. He further noted that we are witnessing a transformation in India's military doctrine, with a growing focus on escalation dominance. Dr. Jaspal emphasized that diplomacy can create space for restraint and crisis management, but in its absence, Pakistan has to rely on a strong security posture due to the adversarial environment. The discussion was followed by an interactive question-and-answer session and a group photo.

Bhatta Chowk cattle market comes alive

RAWALPINDI: Twin cities' largest cattle market at Bhatta Chowk has started gaining momentum as Eid-ul-Azha draws closer, with increasing activity of traders and buyers across Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Traders from farflung areas have brought a variety of healthy and well-groomed sacrificial animals, adding to the vibrancy of the market. The market presents colourful scenes, with large and strong bulls on display at some spots, while goats and sheep of different breeds are attracting buyers at others. Citizens are visiting the market along with their families, where selection of animals, bargaining and purchasing activities are continuing throughout the day. Talking to APP, a buyer Yasir said he had come with his family to find a suitable animal and was satisfied with the variety available, though prices were slightly higher this year. Another citizen, Amir, said that he was visiting different markets to compare prices and quality before making a final purchase, adding that arrangements at Bhatta Chowk were better than previous years. A cattle trader, Habib, informed that traders had brought animals from different areas of the country and were hopeful of good business in the coming days as the rush increases closer to Eid. The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB), being administrative body of the market has made arrangements on around an area of 25 acres, to facilitate both traders and visitors by providing water, electricity and medical services at the market. "We are regularly monitoring the market activities here, our staff is deployed in the mandi to maintain its standard", said an RCB official. Officials said cleanliness, security and animal care measures had also been ensured to provide a safe and comfortable environment for buyers. Eid-ul-Azha, besides being a religious obligation, reflects the spirit of sacrifice and devotion, and the festive atmosphere at cattle markets across Rawalpindi is a manifestation of these sentiments.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A information banner displayed at vehicle about three days Eid Dastarkhwan by a volunteers group in Sector F-8 in the Federal Capital.

AC urges scholars to promote unity

ATTOCK: Assistant Commissioner (AC) Attock, Muhammad Arif Qureshi on Monday urged religious scholars and spiritual leaders to use mosques and pulpits during Eid-ul-Adha to promote the message of brotherhood, unity, love and religious harmony, while calling on citizens to ensure cleanliness and proper disposal of sacrificial waste. He was addressing a meeting to review arrangements for Eid-ul-Adha. Qureshi said citizens should avoid throwing animal remains and garbage on roads and public places after performing sacrifices and instead demonstrate civic responsibility by helping keep the city clean under the Punjab government's "Clean Punjab" initiative. He said maintaining a clean and organized environment during Eid was a shared responsibility of both the administration and the public, adding that district administration teams and relevant departments were working round the clock to carry out timely cleanliness operations across the district. The meeting was attended by SHO Sadar Circle, Taimoor Khan, religious scholars and leaders from different schools of thought, including Allama Mufti Ameer Zaman, Maulana Sher Zaman, President Imam Bargah Panjani Syed Raza Naqvi, Secretary General Athar Hasnain Zaidi, President Anjuman Hussainia Khoori Sardar Muhammad Iqbal, Lala Farooq, Riaz Hussain Shah and Daniyal Daud, as well as representatives of sensitive agencies. Addressing participants, Qureshi said the country currently needed unity, solidarity and interfaith harmony, adding that the nation stood firmly against terrorism and anti-state elements. He praised the Pakistan Army and police for their efforts in safeguarding national security and urged the religious leaders to cooperate fully with district authorities and law enforcement agencies regarding security arrangements during Eid.—APP

Chairman senate special message on Hajj

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani extended heartfelt felicitations to Muslims across Pakistan and around the world, as well as to pilgrims performing Hajj, on the blessed occasions of Hajj and Youm-e-Arafah. He said that Hajj is a profound manifestation of faith, sacrifice, patience, equality, and brotherhood, reminding Muslims of their collective responsibility towards unity, service to humanity, and obedience to Allah Almighty. The Chairman Senate stated that Youm-e-Arafah is a day of immense mercy, forgiveness, and acceptance of prayers. He noted that the gathering of millions of Muslims in the plains of Arafat reflects the spirit of unity and equality in Islam, where all distinctions of race, language, nationality, and status disappear before the Almighty. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani urged pilgrims and the entire Muslim Ummah to pray for peace, stability, and prosperity in Pakistan and for an end to conflicts, hatred, and suffering across the world. He emphasized that these blessed days offer a unique opportunity for spiritual reflection and supplication, particularly as the prayers of Hajj pilgrims hold special significance.—DNA

Pak, China sign MoU on agri machinery cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to explore cooperation in agricultural machinery manufacturing, technical collaboration and phased localization initiatives during a high-level Pakistani delegation's visit to Jiangsu, China. According to an official statement from National Food Security and Research, the MoU was signed between a Pakistani private sector company, Kingsbridge Ventures and China's Changfa Group, a leading manufacturer of tractors, harvesters, diesel engines and other agricultural machinery, as both countries moved to deepen cooperation in agricultural mechanization and modern farming technologies. Pakistan's Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan held talks with Chinese companies on joint ventures, technology transfer and local assembly of agricultural machinery in Pakistan, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. As per the statement of the ministry, discussions focused on providing Pakistani farmers with affordable and modern farming equipment while promoting mechanized agriculture and boosting productivity. The Pakistani delegation also visited Star Charge Group to discuss the use of smart energy technologies for agri-

cultural infrastructure and rural development projects. During a separate meeting with Changzhou Mayor Zhou Wei and senior officials, both sides discussed agricultural innovation, technology-driven development and investment opportunities. Rana Tanveer Hussain said "modern agricultural machinery was essential for increasing productivity, reducing costs and ensuring sustainable food security in Pakistan". Haroon Akhtar Khan said "cooperation with Chinese companies would help strengthen local manufacturing capacity and support long-term economic growth through modern technologies". Travis Head and his wife Jessica have been subjected to a barrage of online abuse after the Australian cricketer was embroiled in a spat with India great Virat Kohli during an IPL match. The players clashed during the T20 match between Head's Sunrisers Hyderabad and Kohli's Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Friday. Heated words were exchanged between the two before Kohli was dismissed for 15 and his team slumped to a 55-run defeat. As the two sets of players lined up for the post-game handshakes, Kohli ignored Head's outstretched arm but shook hands with the other players. The Instagram accounts for Head and Jessica have since been flooded with abusive comments, apparently from fans of the former India captain.—DNA

Pak-China relations at their strongest point

DNA


ISLAMABAD: Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States and China, and former Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Sardar Masood Khan said Monday that Pakistan and China have built an extraordinary relationship over the past seventy-five years that has emerged as one of the strongest and most resilient bilateral partnerships in the world. Commenting on the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, Ambassador Masood Khan stated that the relationship between the two countries had evolved from strategic cooperation during the Cold War into a comprehensive partnership encompassing diplomacy, trade, defence, technology, connectivity, and regional stability.


He remarked that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China carries immense significance because it focuses on three key dimensions including strengthening strategic and economic cooperation, commemorating the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, and consulting on rapidly evolving regional developments, particularly the tensions involving Iran, Israel, and the United States. Khan noted that meetings with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang would further elevate bilateral cooperation and inject greater momentum into economic and technological collaboration under CPEC 2.0. He explained that while the initial phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor concentrated on infrastructure, energy, roads, and telecommunications, the new phase emphasizes digital transformation, artificial intelligence, industrial partnerships, agriculture, advanced technologies, and

space cooperation. Highlighting the transformation in bilateral engagement, he observed that cooperation between Pakistan and China is no longer limited to governments and state-owned enterprises, but increasingly includes business-to-business collaboration, technology partnerships, startups, and private sector investment. He stated that Pakistan remains the flagship partner of China's Belt and Road Initiative and continues to play a pivotal role in enhancing connectivity between East Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia, adding, this interconnected regional framework would not only support economic growth but also strengthen regional peace and stability. He also underscored the growing collaboration between the two countries in defence production, aerospace, satellite technology, digital trade, e-commerce, and innovation.


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Pakistan Saves Middle East and Iran and Shatters Israel Invincibility

QAMAR BASHIR

At a moment when the world stood dangerously close to a catastrophic regional war capable of dragging humanity toward economic collapse and even nuclear confrontation, Pakistan accomplished something that few nations in modern history have ever achieved. Through persistence, strategic wisdom, diplomatic resilience, and calculated engagement with opposing powers simultaneously, Pakistan helped prevent the Middle East from falling into total destruction and the world economy from sliding into chaos. What military alliances, aircraft carriers, sanctions, missile strikes, assassinations, cyber warfare, and diplomatic threats failed to accomplish was ultimately challenged through dialogue, persuasion, trust-building, and geopolitical balance. Pakistan emerged not as a military conqueror, but as a stabilizing force capable of influencing some of the world's most dangerous rivalries at a critical historical moment. The war began with overwhelming momentum in favor of the United States and Israel. Under what Washington called "Operation Epic Fury," Iran faced unprecedented military, financial, and geopolitical pressure. Israel's strategic planners believed they were approaching the realization of a long-term objective: permanently weakening Iran, dismantling its missile and drone capability, reducing its regional influence, and reshaping the Middle East in Israel's favor. At the beginning of the conflict, nearly every major analyst believed Israel would emerge as the biggest strategic winner. Iran was isolated, Gulf states were anxious, energy markets were panicking, and the Strait of Hormuz – through which nearly one-fifth of the world's energy supplies transit – became the focal point of global fear. Oil prices surged, shipping insurance costs exploded, inflation intensified worldwide, and stock markets across continents became unstable. Governments feared a global recession deeper than the financial crisis of 2008. My own analysis during the early phase of the conflict was that everybody was losing, but only Israel was winning. Yet history often changes because of one unexpected factor – strategic wisdom exercised at the right moment. Pakistan emerged as that factor. Pakistan understood something many world powers failed to fully appreciate. This conflict was not merely about Iran's nuclear ambitions or Israel's security concerns. It was about the future geopolitical architecture of the Middle East, control of global energy routes, strategic domination, and the possibility of dragging the world toward a wider confrontation involving nuclear-capable states. The danger was real. The United States possesses enormous nuclear arsenals. Israel is widely believed to possess nuclear capability. Iran was being accused of moving closer to nuclear threshold status. If the war

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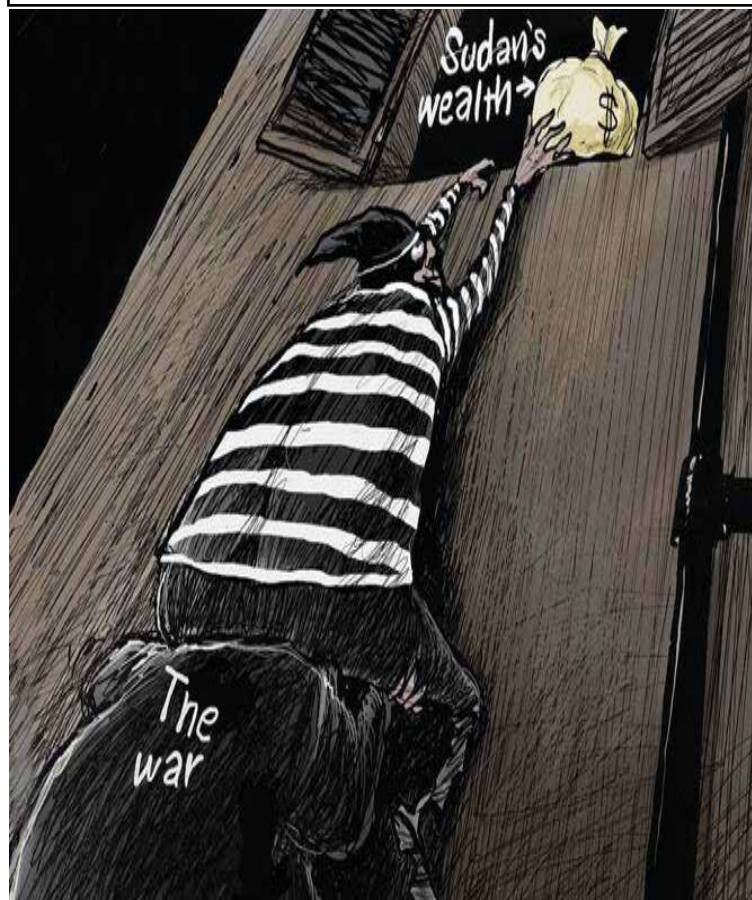
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had continued to escalate uncontrollably, the possibility of mutually assured destruction could no longer have been dismissed as theoretical. Pakistan recognized that danger earlier than many others. In that atmosphere, Pakistan chose diplomacy over silence. Field Marshal Asim Munir's statement became symbolic of Pakistan's commitment when he reportedly declared with conviction that Pakistan would not allow Iran to fall. At the time, many dismissed the statement as political rhetoric. Yet Pakistan gradually transformed those words into strategic action. Quietly, carefully, and persistently, Islamabad built trust simultaneously with Tehran, Washington, Beijing, Moscow, Ankara, Riyadh, Doha, and other key capitals, effectively bypassing Israel, reducing it to inconsequential in the mediation process and frustrating all its objectives of starting the war. Despite repeated attempts by influential Israeli circles and hardline lobbies in Washington to sideline Pakistan from the mediation process, Islamabad remained central because all parties eventually recognized one reality: Pakistan possessed credibility with opposing camps simultaneously. Iran trusted Pakistan's intentions. Gulf countries trusted Pakistan's balance. China and Russia trusted Pakistan's strategic judgment. Even Washington eventually realized Pakistan had become indispensable in preventing total escalation. The emerging 60-day framework agreement reflects that diplomatic achievement. Instead of discussions centered exclusively on dismantling Iran, the negotiations shifted toward reopening the Strait of Hormuz, reducing naval confrontation, ending hostilities across multiple fronts including Lebanon, and establishing timelines for broader future understandings. This represented a dramatic reversal of battlefield realities. At the beginning of the war, Iran reportedly faced enormous pressure to surrender key elements of its uranium enrichment capability, missile program, drone infrastructure, and regional strategic influence. Israeli strategic thinking envisioned a transformed Middle East where Iran's long-term deterrence capability would be permanently dismantled. Discussions even emerged regarding alternative regional energy corridors bypassing the Strait of Hormuz through routes linked to Israeli-controlled infrastructure and the Red Sea. The dream of "Greater Israel" appeared increasingly visible through expanding buffer zones in Gaza, southern Lebanon, Syria, and potentially beyond. Today, much of that strategic vision lies shattered. Instead of negotiating surrender, Iran is negotiating from resilience. The focus has shifted away from total dismantlement toward maritime management, phased arrangements, timelines, and future diplomatic understandings. Iran emerged bloodied but strategically unbroken. Lebanon was spared the scale of destruction inflicted upon Gaza. A wider regional war was paused. Most importantly, the world economy was protected from what could have become the largest energy and financial collapse in modern history. The economic implications of this diplomatic intervention are staggering. Had the Strait of Hormuz remained blocked for a prolonged period, global oil prices could have reached catastrophic levels. Energy-importing countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America would have suffered devastating inflationary shocks. Food prices, electricity costs, transportation expenses, fertilizer production, and industrial manufacturing costs would all have surged simultaneously. Hundreds of millions of vulnerable people – potentially more than a billion globally – could have been pushed below the poverty line.

China's Patience over Taiwan

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



China, however, has long preferred a different method. Beijing consistently links unrelated issues together, treating cooperation as conditional on the broader political atmosphere. Progress in one area is often made dependent on concessions in another. The approach reflects a larger Chinese view that political trust must underpin all aspects of bilateral engagement. The current American approach increasingly resembles that Chinese model. The distinction between economic negotiation and strategic rivalry appears to be fading. Everything is becoming negotiable simultaneously

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

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

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

Protecting Our Skies This Eid-ul-Azha

Izmi Herlani

Globally, aviation authorities and Air Forces treat bird hazards with utmost seriousness. Extensive measures are implemented around airbases and airports to control bird activity, maintain environmental cleanliness and minimize attractants that encourage bird congregation. However, during Eid-ul-Azha, the challenge becomes exceptionally complex due to the widespread disposal of sacrificial remains in open spaces, empty plots, roadsides, drains, canals and garbage dumps. In many localities, improper disposal practices unintentionally...

EID-ul-Azha is one of the most sacred and spiritually significant occasions celebrated across Pakistan and the Muslim world. The festival embodies the values of sacrifice, devotion, compassion and unity, bringing families and communities together in an atmosphere of faith and gratitude. As Pakistani citizens fulfil the religious obligation of Qurbani with great enthusiasm and reverence, it is equally important to remember that the spirit of Eid also emphasizes responsibility towards society, public welfare and the environment. Among the major public safety concerns associated with Eid-ul-Azha is the improper disposal of sacrificial animal waste, including offal, blood, hides and carcasses. While often overlooked, this issue creates serious environmental and health hazards and, importantly, poses a significant threat to aviation safety. The accumulation of exposed animal remains in open areas attracts large concentrations of birds such as kites, crows, vultures and stray scavengers. Increased bird activity near populated areas, airfields and flying corridors can create dangerous conditions for aircraft operations, particularly during takeoff and landing phases. For the Pakistan Air Force, which remains continuously engaged in safeguarding the aerial frontiers of the country, flight safety remains an uncompromising priority. PAF aircraft conduct operational missions, training sorties and readiness patrols around the clock to ensure the defence and security of Pakistan's airspace. During Eid-ul-Azha, however, the sudden rise in bird populations around urban centres and flying zones substantially increases the risk of Bird Aircraft Strike Hazards, commonly referred to as bird strikes. A bird strike may appear insignificant to the general public, but in aviation operations it is considered one of the most serious flight safety hazards worldwide. Even a small bird colliding with an aircraft travelling at high speed can cause severe structural damage. In many cases, birds are ingested into aircraft engines, potentially resulting in engine malfunction, compressor damage or complete engine failure. Bird strikes can also damage windscreens, radomes, sensors and other critical systems essential

for safe flight operations. The danger becomes even greater when birds move in flocks, especially around low-altitude flight paths used during takeoff and landing. Modern fighter aircraft operate at extremely high speeds and demand precise operational environments. A single bird strike at a critical phase of flight can endanger not only highly valuable national assets but also the lives of trained aircrew who remain committed to defending the nation under all circumstances. Globally, aviation authorities and Air Forces treat bird hazards with utmost seriousness. Extensive measures are implemented around airbases and airports to control bird activity, maintain environmental cleanliness and minimize attractants that encourage bird congregation. However, during Eid-ul-Azha, the challenge becomes exceptionally complex due to the widespread disposal of sacrificial remains in open spaces, empty plots, roadsides, drains, canals and garbage dumps. In many localities, improper disposal practices unintentionally create feeding grounds for scavenging birds. The situation becomes particularly dangerous when such dumping occurs near airbases, aviation facilities or known flying routes. Birds drawn towards these sites can remain airborne in large numbers for extended periods, increasing the likelihood of hazardous encounters with aircraft. This is why public cooperation during Eid-ul-Azha is not merely a matter of civic cleanliness; it is directly linked with national safety and operational preparedness. Every citizen has an important role to play in reducing bird hazards and ensuring safer skies for aviation operations across the country. Citizens are strongly encouraged to follow proper and hygienic disposal methods for sacrificial waste and animal remains. Local administrations and municipal authorities usually establish designated collection points and waste disposal mechanisms during Eid days. These arrangements should be utilized responsibly to prevent the accumulation of exposed waste in residential and open areas. The following precautionary measures can significantly help reduce bird hazards: Dispose sacrificial remains only at officially designat-

ed collection points. Avoid throwing animal waste in streets, rooftops, parks, canals, drains, empty plots or open garbage areas. Place offal and waste material in sealed bags before disposal to minimize exposure. Ensure timely cleaning and washing of slaughter areas after Qurbani. Where municipal collection services are unavailable, bury animal remains at suitable designated locations. Prevent the dumping of carcasses near airfields, highways and open grounds where birds are likely to gather. Encourage neighbourhoods and local communities to adopt collective cleanliness measures during Eid festivities. Religious teachings also emphasize cleanliness, moderation and consideration for the well-being of others. Maintaining hygiene and preventing public hazards are fully aligned with the spirit of Eid-ul-Azha and reflect responsible citizenship. By ensuring proper disposal of animal waste, citizens not only help preserve the environment and public health but also contribute towards protecting critical national defence capabilities. Pakistan Air Force has consistently maintained the highest standards of operational safety and professionalism in fulfilling its mission. From peacetime vigilance to operational readiness during national contingencies, PAF personnel remain committed to defending the country's skies with unwavering dedication. Supporting flight safety efforts during Eid-ul-Azha is therefore a shared national obligation that requires cooperation between institutions, communities and individual citizens alike. As the nation celebrates Eid-ul-Azha in a spirit of sacrifice and unity, let us also demonstrate our collective commitment towards civic responsibility and national service. By disposing of sacrificial remains properly and encouraging others to do the same, every Pakistani can contribute towards safeguarding valuable national assets and ensuring the safety of those who tirelessly protect our skies. This Eid, let us honour not only the spirit of sacrifice but also the responsibility that comes with it. Clean surroundings, responsible conduct and public awareness can go a long way in ensuring safer skies for Pakistan and uninterrupted operational readiness for the defenders of the nation's aerial frontiers.

Briefs

President Xi praises Pak leaders role

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Washington and Tehran, relaying proposals and missives between the warring countries even when tensions escalated. Weeks into Islamabad's diplomatic efforts, Washington has reported progress in negotiations with Tehran. "I know that you have just returned from Iran and made positive efforts to mediate for peace. We appreciate the constructive role of Pakistan," Xi said. Earlier in the day, PM Shehbaz called for Islamabad and Beijing to "really be together" in ongoing efforts to restore peace in the Middle East amid the war. He made the remarks during bilateral talks with his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang at the Great Hall of the People. Addressing the delegation-level talks with Li, PM Shehbaz mentioned the Middle East conflict, saying that the "world is passing through a very critical moment". "I think we have to really be together, so that the world at large is at peace and business as usual starts again, because this crisis has hit not only the economy in the region [...] but the global community," he said. "There is a crisis in the Gulf and Pakistan has played a very sincere role to mediate between the United States and Iran," PM Shehbaz said, noting that CDF Munir had just returned from Tehran. "And he didn't want to miss this great visit, and he assured me that he will be joining me in this meeting, and he has been travelling throughout the night," Shehbaz added.

China firmly supports Pakistan...

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She said China would continue to support Pakistan in combating terrorism, safeguarding social unity and stability, and ensuring the safety and security of its people. The spokesperson further said that China stands ready to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan and work jointly to uphold regional peace, security and stability. China and Pakistan maintain close cooperation in security and counter-terrorism under their longstanding strategic partnership.

Trump demands...

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they do not tackle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "It may be possible that one or two have a reason for not doing so, and that will be accepted, but most should be ready, willing, and able to make this settlement with Iran a far more historic event than it would otherwise be," Trump wrote in his Truth Social post. "It should start with the immediate signing by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and everybody else should follow suit. If they don't, they should not be part of this deal in that it shows bad intention." A day prior, US Senator Lindsey Graham — a close ally of Trump and a staunch supporter of Israel — wrote on X that if Arab and Muslim nations would join the Abraham Accords as part of the Iran deal, it would herald "one of the most consequential [agreements] in the history of the Middle East", but warned that refusal to join would render an agreement "unacceptable".

Oil slips to two-week...

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the Strait on Monday, heading to Pakistan and China, while a supertanker with Iraqi crude left the Gulf for China on Saturday after being stranded for nearly three months, shipping data showed. US energy firms responded to higher local energy prices by adding oil and natural gas rigs for the fifth week in a row, for the first time since February 2025. The rig count, an early indicator of future output, rose by seven to 558 in the week to May 22, its highest since June 2025. Even so, Baker Hughes said the total count was still down eight rigs, or 1%, from this time last year.

PAF lifts national Volleyball championship



The triumph reflected PAF's unwavering commitment to excellence, teamwork and competitive spirit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force added another glorious chapter to its sporting legacy by clinching the coveted title of the 55th Men's National Volleyball Championship 2026 after defeating Pakistan Navy in a thrilling final held at POF Sports Complex, Wah Cantt. Featuring 16 top teams from various departments and regions across the country, the championship witnessed high-intensity competition from 18 to 23 May, 2026, bringing together Pakistan's finest volleyball talent in the nation's most prestigious volleyball tournament. The grand finale between Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy unfolded as a highly competitive encounter, distinguished by exceptional athleticism, unwavering resilience and exemplary fighting spirit. After conceding the opening set 16-25, PAF staged a remarkable comeback, displaying unmatched composure and dominance to secure the next three sets with scores of 25-21, 25-21 and 25-18, ultimately sealing the match 3-1 and reclaiming

the national crown after a gap of 12 years. The triumph reflected PAF's unwavering commitment to excellence, teamwork and competitive spirit. Throughout the tournament, the PAF team remained in commanding form, demonstrating superior match fitness, tactical discipline and professional prowess. Prior to the final, PAF had stormed into the title clash without dropping a single set, including a straight-sets victory over defending champions WAPDA in the semifinals. PAF Team's Captain Chief Technician Fahad Raza emerged as the star performer of the tournament and was declared both the Best Player of the Match and Best Player of the Tournament for his outstanding all-round performance. Adding further distinction to PAF's triumph, Chief Technician Afaq Khan was awarded the Best Outside Hitter title for his exceptional display throughout the championship. The landmark victory stands as a testament to Pakistan Air Force's enduring emphasis on physical excellence, sportsmanship and the promotion of healthy competitive culture alongside professional competence.

Saudi leadership providing historic facilities to pilgrims: Ashrafi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council, and Prime Minister's Coordinator Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, on Monday said the leadership of the Saudi Arabia under the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has set unprecedented examples in serving pilgrims by introducing state-of-the-art facilities and modern technological systems for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims from across the world. In an exclusive talk with international media here, Ashrafi said Saudi Arabia was utilizing modern technology, artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, advanced healthcare systems and comprehensive crowd-management mechanisms to ensure a safe, peaceful and spiritually enriching Hajj experience for millions of pilgrims. He said the Kingdom's remarkable arrangements reflected its unwavering commitment to serving the guests of Allah and facilitating pilgrims in accordance with the requirements of the modern age.



helped in identity verification, access to holy sites, locating missing pilgrims and streamlining transportation and accommodation arrangements.

Ashrafi said Saudi Arabia had also introduced smart sensors and AI-powered systems in Mina and other holy sites for real-time crowd monitoring and management. According to international media reports, advanced digital systems linked with the Nusuk platform were helping authorities regulate pilgrim movement, reduce congestion and ensure safer mobility between Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifah and the Grand Mosque. He said the use of artificial intelligence and smart surveillance systems at the Grand Mosque represented a major leap in Hajj management. Saudi authorities were utilizing real-time crowd density indicators, computer vision technologies and AI-based monitoring systems to guide pilgrims and improve safety measures around Tawaf and Sa'i areas. Praising the healthcare arrangements, Ashrafi said the Kingdom had deployed tens of thousands of healthcare workers, emergency response teams and specialized medical units across Makkah, Mina, Arafat and Madinah for Hajj 2026.

Haider Ali Dedicates Sitara-e-Imtiaz to Parents

OUR CORRESPONDENT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's celebrated Paralympic athlete Haider Ali has dedicated his Sitara-e-Imtiaz award to his parents, saying their sacrifices, encouragement, and prayers played a decisive role in his journey to becoming one of the country's most successful para-athletes. Haider Ali, who recently received one of Pakistan's highest civilian honours from the government, told journalists that it had always been his dream to represent Pakistan and win international accolades for the country. "Receiving the Sitara-e-Imtiaz is a proud moment for me, and I thank Almighty Allah, my parents, and everyone who supported me throughout this journey," he said. He also expressed gratitude to the National Paralympic Committee of Pakistan for continuously supporting him throughout his sporting career. He further acknowledged the role of Pakistan WAPDA in his achievements, saying the institution provided him with strong backing and opportunities that contributed significantly to his international success. The decorated athlete also credited Rizwan Aftab Ahmed for playing a vital role in his training and preparations for international competitions. "The support ensured that I received proper medical care, nutritional guidance, and financial assistance, allowing me to focus entirely on my performances and winning medals for Pakistan," he remarked. Haider Ali added that his biggest target is the 2028 Summer Paralympics, and that he is working hard to continue winning medals for Pakistan and raising the national flag at the highest level of international sport.

Iranian negotiators arrive in Doha

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are calling for a return to all-out war in Lebanon. 1. Pezeshkian Vows No Surrender to "Economic Warfare" Speaking to the Iran Chamber of Commerce on Monday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian insisted that while Tehran remains engaged in diplomatic channels, it will not give in to overreaching pressure from Washington. "The Islamic Republic of Iran will not surrender to excessive pressures and demands under any circumstances," Pezeshkian stated. He added that after failing on the military front, foreign adversaries have shifted their focus to "economic warfare," which he claimed Iran would overcome through state and private-sector solidarity. The comments follow weeks of intense, Pakistan-mediated negotiations aimed at stabilizing a temporary ceasefire that took effect on April 8, following direct military exchanges between the U.S., Israel, and Iran back in February.

Iran says 14-point MoU...

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US President Donald Trump said an agreement to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz is "largely negotiated," though he acknowledged final details are still being discussed. Regional mediators, led by Pakistan, say the path forward includes declaring an end to the war, reopening the strait, and time-bound talks on broader issues. Reporting indicates the MoU envisions staged steps: stabilizing the ceasefire, resolving navigation and toll-free passage through the Strait of Hormuz, and opening a short negotiation window for a broader peace arrangement. Iranian outlets and analysts note the framework signals willingness to de-escalate without major immediate concessions from either side. Points of contention persist. U.S. officials have floated expectations around Iran's highly enriched uranium and long-term enrichment limits, while Iranian officials say nuclear issues are not part of the current stage and insist sanctions relief and halting U.S. attacks are core demands. Several accounts describe a 30- to 60-day period post-MoU to negotiate sanctions relief, Strait procedures, and potentially nuclear matters.

KP Governor, CM meet...

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of an Aga Khan University and hospital in Peshawar," CM Afridi added. "Prince Rahim Aga Khan assured investment in the province." At the Lower Chitral Airport, the chief minister was received by local leaders and government officials. He added that he would attend a reception ceremony held in honour of Prince Rahim. The Ismaili spiritual leader reached Gilgit-Baltistan on Friday, where he urged followers to strengthen unity, pursue education and remain steadfast in faith. Addressing a large gathering of community members in the Passu area of Hunza on Friday, Prince Rahim emphasised the importance of harmony within families and society, stating that strong and united families form the foundation of a prosperous and happy community. "When families and communities remain united, they become stronger and happier — and the Imam will also be happy," he told the gathering. Upon his arrival at Nur Khan Air Base on Wednesday, Prince Rahim was received by President Asif Ali Zardari. He was presented with a guard of honour at Aiwan-i-Sadr, where he stood alongside the president as the national anthem was played. He reaffirmed the Aga Khan Development Network's (AKDN) commitment to supporting humanitarian and development efforts in Pakistan during a meeting with the president.

PMAA holds Marka-e-Haq Women's Martial Arts Workshop

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Martial Arts Association (PMAA) organized the "Marka-e-Haq Women's Self-Defence Workshop" to mark the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, where hundreds of young women received martial arts and personal safety training. The workshop was organized in collaboration with IFM-SA-Pakistan, The Trust Schools and Shinkyokushinkai Pakistan. Renowned karate experts Shihan M. Arshad Jan and Shihan Shakil Ahmed inaugurated the workshop and highlighted the importance of martial arts training for women. PMAA Chief Trainer Sensei Anwar Mohiuddin said self-defence has become an essential skill for girls and women, adding that martial arts help build confidence, mental strength and discipline. Participants received practical training in situational awareness, escape techniques, defensive strikes and ways to counter harassment and physical threats. A team of instructors, including Sumaiyya, Abdullah Munir, Aliza, Hanzla Chaudhry and Meerab, conducted the hands-on training sessions. The event concluded with medal and certificate distribution ceremonies. The Trust Schools secured four gold medals to emerge as the top-performing institution, while Fatima Jimnah Medical University finished second. Lahore Medical and Dental College also received a special participation award.

Travis Head and wife Jessica suffer online abuse after Kohli spat

Australian cricketer's wife says her friends and family had also received hateful private messages

LIONEL Messi was at the centre of an injury scare just weeks before the start of the World Cup on Sunday after abruptly exiting Inter Miami's Major League Soccer clash against the Philadelphia Union. Argentina superstar Messi was substituted in the 73rd minute at a rain-soaked Nu Stadium in Miami after clutching the back of his left leg and requesting to come off. The 38-year-old icon appeared to be walking normally as he headed straight down the tunnel after exiting the game, which Miami went on to win 6-4. Inter Miami coach Guillermo Hoyos said after the game it was too early to determine if Messi was injured, and suggested the Argentine's substitution was precautionary due to the pitch conditions. "As far as I know, we don't have a (medical) report on that yet, but we will have one shortly," Hoyos said after the game when asked for details of Messi's condition. "He was genuinely suffering from fatigue in that regard — it is indeed fatigue. "He was tired; the pitch was heavy, and when in doubt, the standard approach is always to ensure you don't take

any risks." Messi's Inter Miami team-mate Mateo Silveti was unable to shed any light on his compatriot's condition. "I'm just as in the dark as everyone else," Silveti said. "At that moment, we were all focused on the match. I didn't know if it was an injury or if he was simply tired. "We're hoping it turns out to be nothing serious. Given his mindset and everything else, we're going to wish him the very best." Messi has carefully managed his workload since joining Inter Miami in 2023, with team staff regularly excusing him from games during particularly congested fixture periods. He has spent multiple stints on the sidelines in the past few years due to problems with his hamstring, which caused him to miss parts of Miami's pre-season campaign earlier this year. Any significant injury to the eight-time Ballon D'Or winner, though, would deal a huge blow to Argentina's hopes of defending their World Cup crown in the United States, Canada and Mexico. The tournament kicks off in Mexico City on June 11, with Argentina due to play their opening game against Algeria in Kansas City five days later. Inter Miami's game on Sunday was the last before MLS takes a break ahead of the World Cup. Messi has not formally confirmed he plans to play in the World Cup, but is widely expected to return for what will be a record-equalling sixth appearance at the finals.

Thrilling 3 Day Gerry's Diplomatic Cricket Tournament concludes

Total 10 different teams participating such as Spanish Lá roja, UNICEF Lions, UNCHR, Diplo team, ICCI, Gerry's strikers, MoFa XI, Mofa lions, Media Shaheen and Excise Islamabad worries

ISLAMABAD: Sanjrani Oxens is proud to announce the successful conclusion of Gerry's Diplomatic Cricket Tournament Season 2. After three action-packed days of competitive sportsmanship, the tournament came to a spectacular close today, leaving cricket enthusiasts, Diplomats, International Organisations, corporate and local authorities teams with unforgettable memories. Total 10 different teams participating such as Spanish Lá roja, UNICEF Lions, UNCHR, Diplo team, ICCI, Gerry's strikers, MoFa XI, Mofa lions, Media Shaheen and Excise Islamabad worries. Over the course of the entire three days, teams battled it out on the pitch in a series of high energy matches that showcased incredible talent and teamwork. The tournament culminated in a gripping grand finale today, where ICCI Team emerged victorious, claiming the championship title after a fiercely contested match against MOFA Lions Team. The closing ceremony celebrated not only the champions but the spirit of international collaboration and community that defined the entire weekend. This massive sporting event was organized by Mubasher Sanjrani, CEO Sanjrani Oxens Enterprises. The event was proudly spearheaded by Title Sponsor Gerry's, whose commitment was vital to the tournament's scale and success. HabibMetro played a crucial role as the Silver Sponsor, ensuring a premium experience for all attendees and players, among other distinguished partners. President ICCI Mr Sardar Tariq Mehmood was the chief guest on the occasion. The ceremony was attended by Different Foreign Mission Ambassadors, Diplomats, sports journalist, ICCI members among other honourable guest. — APP



Briefs

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.51 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.52. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.80 and Rs 279.55, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.78 and closed at Rs 324.06 from the previous day's close of Rs 323.28, 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 an increase of Rs1.49 and closed at Rs 375.47 compared to the previous day's Rs 373.98. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs75.82, and the Saudi Riyal went up by 01 paisa to close at 74.22.—APP

Jordan, Venezuela sign coop agreements

AMMAN: Jordan and Venezuela signed a series of agreements aimed at expanding cooperation during a visit by Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil to the kingdom on Sunday. Gil met King Abdullah II in Amman, where discussions focused on ties between the two countries, opportunities for cooperation across several sectors and key regional and international developments, the Jordan News Agency reported.

Separately, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi held talks with Gil during what officials described as the first visit by a Venezuelan foreign minister to Jordan in more than 70 years of diplomatic relations.

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi held talks with Gil during what officials described as the first visit by a Venezuelan foreign minister to Jordan in more than 70 years of diplomatic relations. (Petra) The two ministers agreed to coordinate with relevant institutions in both countries to strengthen cooperation in agriculture, energy, investment, pharmaceuticals, tourism, information technology and culture. Safadi and Gil also signed four agreements and memoranda of understanding covering agricultural cooperation, political consultations between the two foreign ministries, academic cooperation between diplomatic institutes and the establishment of a joint committee. The two sides said they were also working to finalize agreements related to investment protection, double taxation and visa exemptions.—APP

Bangladesh opens first refugee camp center

DHAKA: Inside the crowded camps of a coastal Bangladeshi district, where makeshift shelters are home to over 1 million refugees, a new center aims to preserve the heritage of the Rohingya people, an entire generation of whom has been growing up disconnected from their historical roots and cultural identity. Funded by Bangladeshi authorities in late February, the Rohang Heritage Center is housed in one of the small bamboo huts in Camp 6. The modest space is filled with documents, photographs, historical maps, and recordings preserving the Rohingya language. "In total, more than 200 items are currently on display at the heritage center," Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner in Cox's Bazar, told Arab News. "The items have been collected from old newspaper clippings, books published on Rohingya history, and various historical documents. These materials were brought by Rohingyas who managed to carry them while fleeing to Bangladesh." A predominantly Muslim ethnic minority, the Rohingyas have lived for centuries in Myanmar's western Rakhine State.—APP

Aurangzeb, Jane discuss eco coop, reform agenda

The meeting ended with a shared commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-United Kingdom bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation across economic, development, and institutional sectors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting today with Ms. Jane Marriott CMG OBE, British High Commissioner to Pakistan, who called on the Minister at the Finance Division. The meeting focused on Pakistan-United Kingdom bilateral cooperation, economic reforms, regional developments, and continued engagement on matters of mutual interest.

During the meeting, the Finance Minister shared the Government's perspective on the evolving global economic environment and its implications for Pakistan's economy, particularly in the context of regional geopolitical developments and energy market volatility. He outlined the Government's ongoing efforts to maintain macro-economic stability, manage external sector pressures, and sustain the momentum of economic reforms aimed at ensuring long-term growth and resilience.

Senator Aurangzeb highlighted improvements in key economic indicators, including stability in the external account, continued strength in remittance inflows, and growing investor confidence. He also briefed the British High Commissioner on measures being undertaken to broaden the tax base, strengthen revenue mobilization, improve compliance, and enhance transparency through technology-driven reforms and digitalization initiatives.

The Finance Minister further emphasized the Government's commitment to policy



continuity, fiscal discipline, and structural reforms, including efforts to improve public sector efficiency, strengthen institutional coordination, and create an enabling environment for private sector-led growth and investment. Discussions also covered the importance of effective communication and public engagement in sustaining support for the reform agenda. Regional and global developments, including their economic

and humanitarian implications, also came under discussion. Both sides acknowledged the importance of dialogue, international cooperation, and coordinated efforts to address emerging challenges affecting economic stability and global supply chains. The British High Commissioner appreciated Pakistan's continued engagement on regional issues and reaffirmed the United Kingdom's support for Pakistan's economic

reform efforts and development priorities. Matters relating to climate resilience, population planning, social sector coordination, and cooperation with international financial institutions were also discussed during the meeting. The meeting ended with a shared commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-United Kingdom bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation across economic, development, and institutional sectors.

Pak's heritage showcased at exhibition in Romania

BUCHAREST: The Embassy of Pakistan in Bucharest inaugurated a photographic exhibition titled "Pakistan: Pages of a Story" at the Buzau County Museum of Romania, depicting the splendid architecture, beautiful landscapes, exciting festivals, and eye-catching individuals of Pakistan. The exhibition, opened on the occasion of the "European Night of Museums", will run for the next four weeks. As the exhibition coincides with the 500th anniversary of the establishment of the Mughal Empire in South Asia, a significant number of pictures focus on Mughal-era buildings including Badshahi Mosque, Shalimar Garden, Wazir Khan Mosque, Mausoleum of Emperor Jahangir, Hiran Minar and Chauburji. A photographer from Lahore, Yasir Nisar, contributed half of the displayed pictures at the exhibition which also includes the work of 18 students of photography from the Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, and School of Creative Arts, University of Lahore. The students include Mahnoor Ashraf Watoo, Malaika Rauf, Afan Asad, Muhammad Hassan, Noreen Asim, Agha Fahad Ali, Arman Nadeem, Tehreem Fatima, Shaneela, Toqeer Nasir, Asad Ali, Zoha Ishtiaq, Muhammad Ahmad, Ume Habiba, Momin Ali, Mehreen Fareed, Laiba Umer, and Ahmad Jamil. The exhibition was inaugurated by Ambassador of Pakistan to Romania Ilyas Mehood Nizami, and General Manager of Buzau County Museum Daniel Bolocan. Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Ambassador Ilyas Nizami highlighted the key features of the displayed pictures and paid rich tribute to the Mughal Kings and Emperors who left indelible marks on administration, culture, architecture, art and cuisine of South Asia. He thanked all the contributing photographers as well as the management of the Buzau County Museum for their cooperation. He said that cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts constituted an important facet of Pakistan-Romania relations. He further said that the exhibition was yet another step towards advancement of friendship between Pakistan and Romania through culture, heritage and human experience. The exhibition was visited by hundreds of people on its first day and is expected to attract a large number of visitors during the coming weeks.—APP

Syria pushes for academic reforms to meet needs of employment sector

DAMASCUS: Syria's Education Minister has called for an urgent overhaul of the country's academic curricula and practical training methods to better prepare people for the workforce. Mohammed Abdul Rahman Turko was speaking at a meeting in Damascus between his ministry and the German Agency for International Cooperation, GIZ, to discuss mechanisms for modernizing the Syrian Arab Republic's vocational and technical education sectors. The talks focused on restructuring training programs to align them with the needs of the labor market and national reconstruction efforts. The meeting was attended by experts from the vocational education field and representatives from various chambers of industry, highlighting the collaborative effort to bridge the gap between education and employment. Sawwan Harastani, director of vocational and technical education, said the ministry was working with chambers of industry and the private sector to identify in-demand specializations and tackle gaps in the current system. She said the talks looked at ways to expand the dual education model, which combines classroom learning with company-based practical training.—APP

Lebanon marks Resistance, Liberation Day

DUBAI: Lebanon marked its Resistance and Liberation Day on Monday against the backdrop of continued Israeli strikes and fresh displacement in the country's south, with officials saying the anniversary could not be fully celebrated while parts of Lebanese territory remain under attack. The national holiday commemorates May 25, 2000, when Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon after a 22-year occupation. In a post on X, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam called for this year's anniversary to be observed as a day of solidarity with those affected by the ongoing conflict rather than celebration. "Let us make this year's occasion of Resistance and Liberation Day a day of solidarity with the families of the martyrs, the wounded, the prisoners, the displaced, and our steadfast people in the South and the frontline villages," Salam said. "As for the holiday, we will not celebrate it until the day of Israel's complete withdrawal from our land and the safe, dignified return of our people." President Joseph Aoun said the liberation of southern Lebanon in 2000 was achieved through the sacrifices and steadfastness of the people of the south, calling May 25 "a day of comprehensive national dignity." But he said this year's anniversary came as Lebanese villages in the south continued to face Israeli attacks and what he described as a renewed occupation in violation of international resolutions, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Aoun said Lebanon remained committed to securing a full Israeli withdrawal through negotiations while reaffirming the role of the Lebanese state and army in protecting the country's sovereignty.—APP

Envoys, diplomats laud ICCI for promoting sports diplomacy

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in collaboration with Sanjranii Group had organized cricket tournament at the F-9 Cricket Ground. The tournament brought together ten teams from different organizations and institutions, creating an atmosphere of sportsmanship, unity, and healthy competition. The ICCI Gladiators emerged as the champions of the tournament after delivering an exceptional unbeaten performance throughout the event. The team won six consecutive matches and remained undefeated, showcasing remarkable teamwork, discipline, and cricketing excellence. The grand final was played between ICCI Gladiators and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs team. After winning the toss, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs elected to field first. ICCI Gladiators responded with an explosive batting performance, posting a massive total of 134 runs in just 6 overs. Chasing the challenging target, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs team managed to score 77 runs, while ICCI Gladiators comfortably secured the championship trophy with an outstanding all-round performance. ICCI Sardar Tahir Mehmood, attended the event as the chief guest. The tournament also witnessed the participation of distinguished members of the diplomatic community, including Abdul Aziz, Ambassador of Lebanon, Titus Abu Basutu, Ambassador of Zimbabwe, and Eduard Prada, Deputy Head of Mission at the Romanian Embassy. Diplomats from Spain, Türkiye, the Czech Republic, France, Zimbabwe, and several other friendly countries also attended the event, adding an international flavor to the tournament. Speaking on the occasion, Sardar Tahir Mehmood congratulated the winning team and appreciated the efforts of all participating teams. He stated that sports play a vital role in promoting discipline, teamwork, tolerance, and positive thinking among youth. He emphasized that such healthy and constructive activities help strengthen social harmony, mutual understanding, and friendship among different communities and institutions. The visiting ambassadors and diplomats highly appreciated the organization of the tournament and lauded ICCI and the Sanjranii Group for promoting sports diplomacy and people-to-people connections through healthy activities. They noted that sports serve as a powerful medium for strengthening friendship, cultural understanding, and cooperation among nations. The diplomats also praised the enthusiasm and talent displayed by the participating teams and expressed their desire to see more such international and community engagement activities in the future. Chairman Sports Committee ICCI Waqas Ilyas Abbasi remarked that sports are the foundation of a healthy society and serve as an effective platform for encouraging youth towards positive and productive activities. He said ICCI would continue to organize such sporting events to promote healthy engagement, unity, and camaraderie within the business community and beyond. At the conclusion of the tournament, Chief Guest Sardar Tahir Mehmood distributed trophies, shields, and prizes among the winning team and outstanding performers, while the participants and guests highly appreciated the successful organization of the event.—DNA

When global conflict reaches the classroom

ALIZAY KHAN & MARZIA HASSAN ZAIDI

In Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the effects of the global conflict have had an impact on everyday life, affecting everyone but especially university students because one prevalent outcome of the instability is that their routines, finances and academic schedules are increasingly shaped by global instability. While Pakistan played the role of mediator in the ongoing US-Iran negotiations Islamabad fell victim to strict security lockdowns and road closures that causes massive disruptions to public life. All major routes including that connect the city remained sealed due to diplomatic activity and consequently, public transport, also faced suspension. For students traveling daily between Rawalpindi and Islamabad, these restrictions transformed their everyday commute into an exhausting experience. Traffic diversions, sudden closures as well as rising transport fares made commuting to universities difficult. As a result of this, educational institutions in the twin cities have even shifted to distant mode of classes, hosting them online where they can by most examinations faced being postponed during high security lockdowns. The uncertainty has been particularly difficult for hostel students living away from their hometowns. Many students who travel back home on weekends or semester breaks now fear getting stranded either in Islamabad or in their hometowns due to sudden road closures or unexpected university announcements due to ongoing situations which eventually results in low attendance and falling behind others academically. Some hostilities describe constantly checking university notices and traffic updates before planning even short trips because they worry about being unable to return to

campus on time. For twenty-two-year-old Areeba Hassan, a student at the National University of Sciences and Technology, daily commuting has become a financial burden rather than a routine task. She says, "Earlier I could manage my weekly transport within a fixed amount. Now I never know how much I will spend in a week. Some days I even think about missing classes because I know the return drive fare will be too expensive". Areeba, like many students needs her family's financial support to continue her education. However, as inflation is already increasing the prices basic necessities, transport expenses have become an additional pressure which families have to navigate. But financial burden is just the tip of the iceberg as students also have to work their schedules around blocked roads, security checkpoints and blockades instead of academic priorities. Bilal Ahmed, a twenty-four-year-old student who is currently a full time students and working balancing his studies with a call center job, describes impact it has on his mental health. He says: "I spend almost half of what I earn on commuting now. Sometimes I go directly from university to work because going home and coming back again costs too much. It feels like calculating travel expenses instead of focusing on my studies is unconsciously becoming normal". A van driver, Waseem, operating between Rawalpindi and Islamabad explains: "When petrol increases, everything becomes expensive for us. If we don't increase fares, we can't even cover maintenance or daily fuel costs". As a result, university transport fees have also seen multiple increased revisions in a single year. These rising costs create another barrier to education, particularly for lower and middle-income families who are already struggling to keep their children in school on top of the rising inflation. The impact of these challenges is not just short term, the long-term effects of this political instability may shape an entire generation of young

Pakistanis. Students who should be focusing on research, internships and career development are instead engrossed with navigating uncertainty, inflation and restricted mobility. The frustration can also be seen across social media platforms, where students continue to discuss how rising fuel and transport costs affect their education and any future professional opportunities. Twenty-year-old Raazia Zainab summarizes the situation clearly: "When fuel prices increase, everything becomes expensive. Food, transport, groceries...everything changes. Students are already under pressure from studies, and now even sticking to our usual daily routine feels difficult, as we keep on looking for ways to cut costs or save up for the entire month". In such times of uncertainty and instability, the government and university institutions can facilitate students by taking practical steps that help students such as a student carpooling app. Additionally, they could also create a network where students travelling to the same city can connect and share rides. Steps like these would lower travel costs for everyone and ease financial burden. The government can introduce student discounts on transport fares or indirectly help manage cost of travel by introducing reduced rates on internet packages and study materials to ease other academic expenses. The role Pakistan is playing of the mediator in international diplomacy may strengthen its image on a global stage, but the on-ground reality of the young generation living in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the consequences are much more personal. The conflict has shown how international politics can have a direct impact on the educational economic futures of students. What may begin as a diplomatic negotiation between nations rarely stays confined and eventually reaches the daily lives of young people trying to build a future in uncertain times.

Muslim candidates divide right in Italian city vote

VIGEVANO, Italy: A local election in an industrial city in northern Italy is exposing differences over immigration between governing coalition parties and showing how the country's rapidly changing social fabric is shaping politics. Surrounded by factories and rice paddies, Vigevano is a city of 62,000 people where 15 percent of the population is foreign, including many people from Egypt and Romania. Many more are naturalized Italians and second-generation immigrants. Once a Communist Party bastion, the city is held by the League, a far-right junior partner in Italy's ruling coalition whose leader Matteo Salvini has said citizenship should be revoked for second-generation immigrants who commit crimes. But the League's mayoral candidate, Riccardo Ghia, a jeweller, made headlines last month when he put two Muslim candidates on his list of prospective councillors — with an eye to attracting votes from immigrant communities. One of the two, Italian-Egyptian Hagar Haggag, 20, said she had received a slew of insults and threats since her candidacy was announced. She attributed the virulent reaction mainly to the fact that she wears an Islamic headscarf. She told AFP she had "never felt racism" in the local section of the party, pointing out that the former League mayor had allowed a Muslim prayer hall to open in a disused hangar in 2022. He said he thinks he could "pick up quite a few League voters."

Candidates with foreign origins still remain relatively rare in Italian elections, where immigration has been more recent than in France or Germany, said sociologist Maurizio Ambrosini from Milan's Statale university.—APP

SDPI receives WHO WNTD award 2026

ISLAMABAD: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) has been awarded the World Health Organization's (WHO) World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) Award 2026. The award, one of the highest global honours in tobacco control, was conferred in recognition to the organization's exceptional services in advancing evidence-based policies that protect current and future generations from the harms of tobacco and nicotine products, said a press release. The award, announced on May 19, places SDPI among a select group of global honourees from each of WHO's six regions. Notably, this year also saw the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and Pakistan's Tobacco Control Cell recognized by WHO, underscoring the country's growing prominence in the global fight against the tobacco epidemic. SDPI Consultant Dr Waseem Iftikhar Janjua is part of the team SDPI producing landmark research on the economic costs of tobacco use, the impact of taxation on consumption, and the illicit tobacco trade. The recognition reflects SDPI's unwavering commitment to supporting the government, particularly the ministry in three critical areas, i.e. strengthening tobacco taxation, protecting public health policies from industry interference, and countering the rapid spread of emerging nicotine products. With strategic support and technical guidance from its partners, SDPI has built an influential coalition linking national stakeholders with partners across the Eastern Mediterranean Region and the wider global tobacco control community. Pakistan faces a severe tobacco epidemic with an estimated 31 million tobacco users and over 160,000 tobacco-related deaths each year. The WHO award highlights the critical need for sustained, evidence-based interventions from raising tobacco taxes and enforcing graphic health warnings to banning flavored nicotine products. SDPI's work has consistently pushed for these measures, earning praise from national and international partners. The 2026 award adds to SDPI's growing international recognition as a globally respected think tank, reinforcing its reputation for producing policy-relevant research that saves lives. As World No Tobacco Day 2026 is observed globally on May 31, SDPI stands as a beacon of what dedicated research.—APP

Briefs

IHC restrains eviction of apartment owners

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday issued a significant order restraining authorities from evicting the sub-lease holder apartment owners of One Constitution Avenue until further notice.

A division bench comprising Justice Muhammad Azam Khan and Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas heard intra-court appeals filed by former Air Chief Mujahid Anwar Khan, former ICC President Ahsan Mani, former Senate Chairman Wasim Sajjad, and others. The appellants have challenged paragraph 30 of the single bench decision concerning the protection of third-party rights.

Advocates Taimur Aslam and Ali Raza appeared on behalf of the appellants, while Kashif Ali Malik represented the Capital Development Authority (CDA). During the proceedings, the CDA counsel argued that the appeals were not maintainable. Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas remarked, "We will hear the full case later; today we are only considering their request for a stay."

The court inquired whether the apartment owners' case had been considered when the matter was before the Supreme Court. The bench also questioned how residents began living in the building without a completion certificate. Justice Muhammad Azam Khan remarked, "Was the CDA sleeping when there was no completion certificate but residents had already started living there?"

The CDA counsel informed the court that the building had still not received its completion certificate. The court subsequently ruled that no eviction of apartment owners shall take place until further orders. — APP

At least 16 killed in road accident

DNA

MARDAN: At least 16 people were killed and seven others were injured after a Swat-bound passenger coach collided with a bus parked by the roadside of the Swat Motorway in Khoro Kotay Saeed Abad area on Monday, Rescue 1122 said. Rescue 1122 Public Relations Officer Syeed Abbas Shah confirmed the number of casualties.

The Motorway police, Rescue 1122 officials and locals of nearby areas rushed to the spot after the incident was reported and shifted the dead and injured to Mardan Medical Complex Hospital. According to the Motorway Police, the passenger coach crashed into a bus that was parked by the roadside after developing a mechanical fault. Hospital and Rescue 1122 officials said that the identities of the dead and injured persons had yet to be ascertained.



BEIJING: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China Li Qiang witnessed signing and exchange of several agreements, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), protocols, and cooperation documents between the two countries. — DNA

Finance Minister assures PTC team of enhanced enforcement

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with a delegation of Pakistan Tobacco Company (PTC) at the Finance Division. The delegation was led by Mr. Usman Zahur, Area Director (APMEAC) & General Manager Pakistan, and included senior representatives from marketing, corporate affairs, and fiscal affairs.

During the meeting, the Finance Minister outlined the Government's broader fiscal reform agenda focused on strengthening revenue mobilization, broadening the tax base, improving enforcement, and enhancing transparency through technology-driven systems. He noted that ongoing reforms in tax administration centered on people, processes, and technology are aimed at improving compliance, reducing leakages, and ensuring fair revenue collection across the economy.

The Minister highlighted that enhanced enforcement measures, supported by digitization, technology-based monitoring systems, and coordinated operations by relevant agencies, are contributing to

improved compliance and revenue collection in several sectors. He noted that enforcement actions in industries including sugar, cement, beverages, textiles, and tobacco are helping address illicit and undocumented economic activity.

The PTC delegation appreciated the Government's reform and enforcement initiatives and shared views on the tobacco sector, including excise taxation, illicit trade, market dynamics, and export competitiveness. The delegation acknowledged recent actions against illegal and non-compliant operators and emphasized the importance of a stable and predictable taxation framework to support formal sector growth and sustainable revenue generation.

Discussions also covered regulatory and taxation issues, sectoral competitiveness, market trends, and the importance of strengthening enforcement to reduce the share of illicit products operating outside the documented economy. Both sides exchanged views on coordinated enforcement mechanisms involving federal and provincial authorities.

The Finance Minister reiterated that revenue mobilization and effective enforcement remain central to the Government's fiscal

reform agenda. He emphasized that while the Government is committed to ensuring policy consistency and strengthening compliance, all sector-specific proposals would be evaluated in line with broader fiscal objectives and economic priorities.

The meeting also discussed export potential and investment opportunities within the tobacco sector and related value-added products. The delegation highlighted Pakistan's role as a regional manufacturing and export base for certain product categories and shared perspectives on international market opportunities. Discussions further included regional experiences relating to enforcement, taxation models, and regulatory practices in comparable markets.

The Finance Minister appreciated the delegation's input and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to continued engagement with the formal business sector to support investment, exports, industrial activity, and sustainable economic growth. He stated that the Government would continue pursuing reforms aimed at improving the ease of doing business, strengthening compliance systems, and creating a more transparent and competitive economic environment.

Pope calls for regulating AI

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo XIV called for robust regulation of artificial intelligence and for its developers to work for the common good rather than profit, issuing a sweeping manifesto on safeguarding humankind as the technology impacts everything from work to war. "Magnifica Humanitas" (Magnificent Humanity), Leo's first encyclical, has been eagerly awaited ever since history's first US-born pope announced days after his election that he considered AI to be the biggest challenge facing humanity today.

In the text, Leo denounced the "culture of power" driving the AI race, especially in developing ever more sophisticated methods of remote warfare. He declared that it was "not permissible" to entrust irreversible, lethal decisions to AI systems, setting up another flash point between the American pope and the Trump administration, which has worked aggressively to deregulate AI development. Experts in the tech industry, academia and Catholic morality said the document will likely become a benchmark in the debate over AI, a point of reference for policymakers, researchers and ordinary folk alike. It comes as the near-daily developments in the technology trigger concerns rise over AI replacing human jobs and even human intelligence.

"It lends itself to people who are at the forefront of these tools and able to see the incredible things that they're able to do, to have questions about their own 'What does it mean to be human?'" said Taylor Black, a Microsoft AI executive and director of Catholic University of America's AI institute. — APP

WB mission reviews progress on Sukkur Barrage

SUKKUR: A World Bank implementation support mission visited the Sukkur Barrage to review rehabilitation works under the SBIP S1 contract, here on Monday. The mission, led by Task Team Leader Francois Onimus, included Environmental Specialist Alfano and Social Safeguard Specialist Imran ul Haque. Officials from the Project Management Office SBIP, including Project Director Noor ul Arfeen Balouch, Deputy Director Technical Abdul Fatah Memon, Contract Specialist Abdul Razaque Memon, and Mechanical Engineer Murtaz Ghumro, accompanied the delegation. Representatives from the Project Implementation Consultant team, Irrigation Department, and the Chinese contractor also attended.

Officials briefed the mission that targeted civil and mechanical works have been completed, with only finishing works currently underway. Phase 2 and 3 works are scheduled for completion by June 15, 2026, after which the cofferdam will be dismantled. The mission held a meeting with the contractor at Camp A, where a presentation was given on engineering progress and environmental and social safeguard arrangements. The World Bank team expressed satisfaction with the completed and ongoing works. — APP

Two killed in Russia during drone strike

MOSCOW: Two people were killed Monday in Ukrainian strikes on the Russian border regions of Belgorod and Bryansk, local authorities said.

"A drone attacked a vehicle in the town of Graivoron," the authorities of the Belgorod region said in a statement, reporting that "a civilian was killed."

In Bryansk, a man was killed in a Ukrainian strike in the settlement of Belaya Beryozka, the acting regional governor Yegor Kovalchuk wrote on Telegram.

Ukraine regularly targets Russia in retaliation for the daily bombardments it has been subjected to since the start of the large-scale Russian offensive in February 2022. — APP

President Zardari felicitates Jordanian leadership

The president expressed confidence that the fraternal ties would continue to grow even stronger in the years ahead

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday extended felicitations to King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the people of Jordan on their Independence Day, annually observed on May 25.

In a message, conveyed on behalf of the Government and the people of Pakistan, the president noted that Pakistan and Jordan

enjoyed cordial and long-standing relations, founded on mutual respect, trust and shared values.

He said that both countries maintained a close understanding and convergence of views on a wide range of regional and international issues. The president expressed confidence that the fraternal ties would continue to grow even stronger in the years ahead.

President Zardari recalled the Jordanian king's visit to Pakistan in November 2025, emphasizing that it provided a valuable impetus to bilateral cooperation and further reinforced the bonds of friendship between the two nations.

He further conveyed his sincere wishes for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the people of Jordan.

Train blast in Quetta

Tajikistan president extends condolences to Pakistani leadership


President Rahmon stated that the tragic news of the bombing, which resulted in dozens of deaths and critical injuries, caused "immense grief and sorrow" in Tajikistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD / DUSHANBE — Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has strongly condemned the devastating suicide terrorist attack that targeted a passenger train in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, expressing profound grief over the loss of lives. In separate, identical official communiqués dispatched to Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Tajik head of state conveyed the solidarity of the government and people of Tajikistan with Pakistan during this time of national mourning. President Rahmon stated that the tragic news of the bombing, which resulted in dozens of deaths and critical injuries, caused "immense grief and sorrow" in Tajikistan. "We strongly condemn this horrific terrorist act and, as always, all forms of terrorism, and we further empha-

size the need for relentless struggle against it," Rahmon wrote in his messages to the Pakistani leadership. The Tajik leader extended his heartfelt condolences to the families and relatives of the victims—whom he termed martyrs—and prayed for the full and swift recovery of the dozens wounded in the blast.




Observers note that Tajikistan's swift and high-level response underscores the deepening bilateral and security ties between Dushanbe and Islamabad. Both nations share acute security concerns regarding regional stability, cross-border militancy, and the protection of critical transport infrastructure. President Rahmon's call for a "relentless struggle" against terrorism aligns with ongoing discussions within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and bilateral frameworks aimed at enhancing intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism coordination across Central and South Asia.



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