



# Islamabad POST

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**WHO chief Tedros hails five Ebola virus recoveries**

Detailed News On Page-07

**PTI 'seriously considering' exiting system**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Tobacco kills thus should be avoided**

Detailed News On Page-01



## Agreement still in limbo

# IRGC tells US to choose between peace and war

Meanwhile, Iran's chief negotiator said Sunday that Tehran would not agree to any deal with the United States unless it fully secures Iranian rights; Netanyahu orders deeper Israeli incursion into Lebanon

DNA

TEHRAN/BEIRUT: A senior commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has said the United States must choose between accepting what he described as the "rights of the Iranian people" or continuing the ongoing conflict, as tensions in the region remain high. The remarks come amid continued military and political confrontation involving Iran, the United States and Israel. The IRGC said Washington's room for maneuver had narrowed significantly and warned that further military pressure on Iran would not achieve its objectives. Iranian officials have repeatedly argued that any resolution requires recognition of Tehran's rights and security interests. Meanwhile, the IRGC Navy announced that 28 commercial vessels, including oil tankers and container ships, safely transited the strategic Strait of Hormuz during the past 24 hours under coordination with Iranian naval authorities. Tehran said the passage of vessels demonstrated its continued oversight of one of the world's most important energy shipping routes. The Strait of Hormuz has remained a focal point of regional tensions amid concerns over maritime security and the impact of conflict on global energy supplies. Iranian authorities have repeatedly warned against unauthorized navigation through routes not coordinated with the IRGC Navy. In Lebanon, violence also continued as Israeli strikes targeted areas in the south of the country. Lebanese media and health officials reported that several people were killed and others wounded in attacks on towns in southern Lebanon.

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## Trump claims Iran agreed to no nuclear weapons

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump said he had secured guarantees from Iran that it would not develop nuclear weapons, as reports emerged he had sent a tougher peace proposal back to Tehran. Any tweaks to the proposal could prolong even further an agreement to formally end the Middle East war and open the Strait of Hormuz maritime route after weeks of efforts to secure a deal despite fractious rhetoric and the occasional flare-up of armed conflict. The New York Times and Axios media outlets reported on Saturday that Trump had sent back a new framework to be considered by Iran with "tougher" terms, though it was not immediately clear what that entailed. Trump has said his priorities for any deal include stopping Iran from any nuclear weapon development and re-opening the blockaded Strait of Hormuz. "The one guarantee that I have to have is that there will be no nuclear weapons. They've agreed to that, and it was very interesting," he told his daughter-in-law Lara Trump in an interview broadcast on her

Continued on Page 06

## Gilani son denies he was deported from UAE

DNA

MULTAN: MNA Ali Musa Gilani on Sunday denied reports of his deportation from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), terming them "fake news". "I was not deported at all, it's fake news! I travelled as per schedule and returned as per schedule," Musa, son of Senate Chairperson Yousaf Raza Gilani posted on X in response to a claim of his deportation. It was made in a post shared by former Pakistan Institute of Development Economics vice chancellor Nadeem Haque, who commented: "Seriously. We are so devalued."

Continued on Page 06

## Jordan condemns storming of Al Aqsa mosque

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Jordan condemned the "provocative and reckless" storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem by a group of Israeli settlers. On Sunday, settlers raised Israeli flags on the steps leading to the Dome of the Rock, chanting and singing the Israeli national anthem under the protection of the police. They entered the compound from Al-Maghrabah Gate, which is fully controlled by Israeli authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Jordan's absolute rejection and strong condemnation of the continued incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli settlers, according to the Petra news agency.

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## Zardari urges people to say no to tobacco

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasized the importance of stronger awareness, regulation and prevention efforts to curb the use of tobacco. In a message on the World No Tobacco Day, the President said this day reminds us of our shared responsibility to protect current and future generations from the harms of tobacco products. The President said the World Health Organization estimates that tobacco causes more than 7 million deaths every year worldwide.

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LAHORE: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Lahore on 31 May 2026. - DNA

## Protected consumers

# Leghari rejects reports of ending electricity subsidy

No proposal under consideration to increase taxes on electricity bills, says Power Minister Awais Leghari

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari on Sunday rejected reports that the government was planning to withdraw electricity subsidies for protected consumers, saying eligible users would continue to receive financial support through a new QR code-based system. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Leghari said: "[The] government is not ending electricity subsidies for protected consumers," adding that reports suggesting otherwise were "contrary to the facts". He said consumers using less than 200 units of electricity continued to receive subsidies and that the number of such consumers had now exceeded 20 million. "Eligible consumers will continue to receive subsidies without interruption through the QR code system," he said. The minister also ruled out any increase in taxes on electricity bills, stating that no such proposal was under consideration.

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## Mayor says construction work near Hill Park halted

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Mayor Murtaza Wahab on Sunday said construction work around Karachi's Hill Park had been halted, while the opposition Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) demanded that the PPP-led Sindh government investigate the matter. Spread over 62 acres and located in PECHS, Hill Park was built in the early 1960s and is one of the largest parks in the city. In a statement issued on Saturday night, a Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) spokesperson said that the construction work was halted a week ago following a public complaint. Confirming this during his media talk on Sunday,

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## Briefs

### CM Maryam calls tobacco silent killer

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, in her message on World No Tobacco Day, said that smoking could prove more dangerous than many fatal diseases and described use of tobacco as a silent epidemic affecting public health, society and the economy. She added that every puff of tobacco is a step towards a new disease, adding that smoking is not merely a habit but a self-destructive act against one's own health, finances and social well-being. She highlighted that Punjab government is taking measures to ensure a complete ban on smoking in schools, colleges and other educational institutions; and underscored that smoking in government offices, public transport and other public places is a punishable offence.

### Talks with US continue: Araqchi

ALKS and message exchanges with the United States are ongoing, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told state media. We should not give importance to speculation and we can not judge the talks until we get to a clear result, Araqchi added. Meanwhile, The UN Security Council will hold an emergency meeting Monday over Israel's expansion of its offensive in Lebanon, following the capture of the medieval castle of Beaufort, diplomatic sources told media. The meeting was requested by France and will take place immediately after an emergency meeting over the crash of a Russian drone into a Romanian apartment building, which is scheduled for 3:00 pm (1900 GMT), the sources said.

## Regional tensions

# Afghanistan reportedly acquiring Russian Air Defense System

The move is being closely watched by neighboring countries, particularly amid ongoing concerns over border security and cross-border militancy

DNA

KABUL/MOSCOW: Afghanistan's acting Defense Minister, Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, has signed a military cooperation agreement with Russian officials during a recent visit to Russia, according to media reports. The development comes amid reports that Afghanistan is set to acquire a Russian-made air defense system, a move that could significantly enhance the country's airspace protection capabilities and mark a major step in military cooperation between Kabul and Moscow. While details of the reported acquisition have not been officially disclosed, Russian air defense systems are widely regarded among the most advanced in the world and have been deployed by several countries to counter aerial threats, including drones, missiles and aircraft.

Security analysts say the reported procurement could alter the regional security landscape by improving Afghanistan's ability to monitor and defend its airspace. The move is being closely watched by neighboring countries, particularly amid ongoing concerns over border security and cross-border militancy. In the past, Pakistan has carried out limited cross-border strikes against militant targets inside Afghanistan, citing security threats emanating from Afghan territory. However, observers suggest that the deployment of a modern air defense network could complicate any future military operations in Afghan airspace and strengthen Kabul's deterrence capabilities. The reported agreement also signals growing defense ties between Russia and Afghanistan's interim authorities at a time when Kabul is seeking to expand diplomatic and

Continued on Page 06

# Kaja Kallas visit puts Pak-EU trade ties in focus

The GSP+ facility has been instrumental in boosting Pakistan's exports to Europe, making the EU one of the country's largest trading partners. Islamabad is keen to secure continued access to the scheme, which has significantly benefited Pakistan's textile and manufacturing sectors

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Kaja Kallas, will arrive in Pakistan on June 1 for an official visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and reviewing key aspects of the Pakistan-EU partnership. The visit comes at the invitation of Ishaq Dar, with both sides set to co-chair the 8th session of the Pakistan-EU Strategic Dialogue, the highest-level forum for structured engagement between Pakistan and the European Union. During her stay, Kallas is also expected to meet Pakistan's senior leadership, including the president and prime minister, underscoring the importance both sides attach to their longstanding relationship. Pakistan and the European

Union enjoy broad-based cooperation encompassing trade, development, climate action, education and regional security. However, analysts believe one of the most important issues likely to dominate discussions will be Pakistan's future under the EU's GSP+ trade scheme, which grants preferential access to European markets and is due for renewal under the bloc's revised framework.



The GSP+ facility has been instrumental in boosting Pakistan's exports to Europe, making the EU one of the country's largest trading partners. Islamabad is keen to secure continued access to the scheme, which has significantly benefited Pakistan's textile and manufacturing sectors. Despite strong economic ties, the European Union continues to express concerns regarding human rights, political freedoms, judicial independence and governance issues in Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06

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## Govt plans Rs 980m mineral resource centre

ISLAMABAD: The government has planned a Rs979.621 million project for the establishment of a mineral resource centre, analytical laboratory, and mineral detection facility at the PCSIR Labs, Peshawar to promote mineral exploration, value addition and exports. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the project will be executed by the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) under the Ministry of Science and Technology during 2026-2028, said a press release. The proposed facility aims to strengthen mineral processing and analytical capabilities through modern scientific technologies and advanced laboratory infrastructure. The project scope includes ore beneficiation, analytical services, mineral identification and detection, geological surveys of local ores, and minerals extraction and processing technologies. According to the document, the key technologies to be installed include Optical Emission Spectrometer, Atomic Absorption Spectrometer, XRF, and X-Ray Diffraction systems to ensure accurate mineral analysis and testing.—APP

## Steps to ensure smoke-free institutions in Punjab

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has urged citizens to quit smoking and adopt a healthy lifestyle, describing tobacco use as a serious threat to public health and a major cause of preventable diseases and deaths. In her message on the occasion of World No-Tobacco Day, she said tobacco consumption could prove more dangerous than many deadly diseases and termed it a menace worse than an epidemic. She said every puff of tobacco was a step towards a new illness. The CM said smoking was not merely a habit but amounted to a self-destructive attack on one's health, economic well-being and social life. She added that more than 250,000 deaths linked to tobacco use in the country were alarming and deeply painful. CM Maryam Nawaz said the Punjab government was taking measures to ensure a complete ban on smoking in schools, colleges and other educational institutions. She added that smoking in government offices, public transport and other public places was a punishable offence and strict implementation of relevant laws would be ensured. Expressing concern over the growing use of tobacco products and vaping among young people, she said smoking and e-cigarette use could be among the major causes of heart attacks and other serious health complications in youth. The CM said protecting the younger generation from tobacco addiction was a top priority and the government was committed to taking all possible measures in this regard. She emphasized that awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco was not only the responsibility of the government but also a shared social obligation. She urged citizens to provide their families and loved ones with a healthy, smoke-free environment and appealed to the public to make a commitment on World No-Tobacco Day to quit smoking and embrace a healthier way of life.—APP



KHANPUR: Boats at the bank of Khanpur Lake as the citizen arrives to spend their holidays.

## China Window emerging as strong symbol of Pakistan-China friendship

PESHAWAR: Director General (China) of Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muhammad Tariq Wazir paid a visit to China Window, the state-of-the-art Chinese cultural and information center in Peshawar, where he lauded the institution's remarkable contribution to promoting people-to-people contacts and deepening the historic friendship between Pakistan and China. During his visit, Muhammad Tariq Wazir toured the various galleries of China Window, which showcases Chinese history, culture, technological advancement, tourism, education, and the enduring bond between the peoples of Pakistan and China. He expressed keen interest in the center's diverse exhibits and appreciated the efforts made to present China's rich civilization and modern achievements to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Director General also signed the Friendship Wall and recorded his impressions in the Visitors' Book, commending the vision and dedication behind the establishment

of the cultural center. Speaking on the occasion, he said he was delighted and excited to visit China Window, adding that he had heard much about the institution before coming to see it personally. "I would like to commend the organizers and everyone associated with this remarkable initiative. What has been achieved here is truly impressive. China Window has already done wonders in promoting Pakistan-China friendship, and I am confident that its role will become even more significant in the years ahead," he remarked. He noted that a platform like China Window was greatly needed in Peshawar and that its establishment had filled an important gap in cultural diplomacy and mutual understanding between the two countries. "An institution like this, based in Peshawar, was always needed. We believe its activities should be expanded in many directions so that more people can benefit from learning about China and the longstanding friendship between our two nations," he said.

The Director General emphasized that cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections remain the cornerstone of Pakistan-China relations. He assured the management of China Window of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' support in promoting collaborative initiatives that bring the people of the two countries closer together. "I assure you, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Pakistan, that such collaborations are essential. We will continue to encourage and facilitate Pakistan-China cooperation on various platforms. However, platforms like China Window are among the most important because they directly connect the people of both countries and help build mutual understanding," he stated. Expressing optimism about the future of bilateral relations, he said that Pakistan and China would continue to support each other in various fields and that institutions such as China Window would play a pivotal role in strengthening this enduring partnership.—DNA

## Minister orders sports facilities upgradation

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar visited the Tehsil Sports Complex Dhoobi Ghat Murree and reviewed available sports facilities, ongoing administrative affairs, and existing infrastructure on Sunday. During the visit, concerned officials briefed the minister on various sports activities, operational matters, and requirements of the complex. He conducted a detailed inspection of all facilities and issued directives aimed at improving the overall standard and functionality of the sports complex. The minister ordered the immediate repair and restoration of non-functional lights to ensure proper training and playing conditions for athletes. He directed that the assigned contractor must complete the work within the stipulated timeframe, after which the Project Management Unit (PMU) would submit a compliance report. He also instructed the immediate repair or replacement of the damaged basketball ring and the broken glass panel of the swimming pool. Emphasizing maintenance, he stated that keeping all sports facilities fully functional is a key responsibility of the department and must remain a top priority. Taking notice of missing infrastructure, the minister directed officials to incorporate spectator shades, practice cricket pitches, GI fencing, and other necessary facilities into the development plan and initiate the required procedures for their provision. Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar highlighted that modern sports infrastructure is essential for nurturing young talent and promoting healthy sports activities. He also instructed the Divisional Sports Officer to prepare comprehensive proposals regarding fee structures and staff shortages across sports complexes in Rawalpindi Division to improve administrative efficiency and service delivery. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the Punjab government is taking serious steps to modernize sports infrastructure and improve management of sports facilities across the province. He added that sports complexes would gradually be shifted toward a sustainable and self-sustaining operational model to ensure better maintenance and efficient resource management. He further announced that the appointment of a Tehsil Sports Officer (TSO) for Murree would be processed on a priority basis to strengthen local sports administration and support athletes. The minister reaffirmed that, under the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the government is committed to reviving sports grounds, engaging youth in constructive activities, and providing world-class sports facilities across the province. He reaffirmed the government's resolve to promote sports at every level and create greater opportunities for young athletes to excel at national and international platforms.—DNA

## IWT violations by India put aquatic biodiversity at risk in KP, Punjab

PESHAWAR: As the first rays of sunlight illuminate the banks of the River Indus in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, fish farmer Naseer Khan begins another day of work at his fish farm in Swabi district amid growing concerns of Indus Water Treaty (IWT) violations by India that had threatened aquatic biodiversity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Alongside the routine of feeding fish and managing ponds, a growing concern weighs heavily on his mind about the potential impact of India's continued suspension of the 1960 historic Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) on Pakistan's fisheries sector. Standing beside his five-kanal fish farm, Naseer said uninterrupted water flow is critical for sustaining native fish species, particularly the prized Mahseer and trout population, which thrives in the water of River Kabul and glacier-fed waters of the Indus River system respectively. "Mahseer farming depends on clean and continuous river flows," he told APP. "If restrictions on western rivers continue, fish populations will decline, affecting thousands of families associated with this trade." Naseer feared that Mahseer, Rohu, and several other indigenous fish species found in the Indus and Kabul rivers could face serious threats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

and Punjab if water flows become irregular. "The decline of these species would not only hurt fishermen but also create food security challenges for local communities that rely on fish as an affordable source of protein," he said. Former Director General Fisheries Department Ayaz Khattak warned that Mahseer and trout populations are among the most vulnerable species in the event of prolonged disruptions to river ecosystems. "If water availability in the western rivers becomes uncertain, how will people associated with the fisheries sector survive?" he questioned. Thousands of fishermen, fish farmers, traders, transporters, and vendors across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa depend on freshwater fish species such as Mahseer, Rohu, Carp, and Trout to meet market demand throughout the year, particularly during wedding seasons and religious festivals. Khattak argued that the continued abeyance of the Indus Waters Treaty has created uncertainty among communities whose livelihoods largely depend on river-based resources. "Water is not merely an economic resource; it is directly linked to food production, nutrition, and livelihoods," he said. "Any disruption to the ecological balance of rivers can have far-reaching consequences for

fisheries, agriculture, and human well-being." He warned that reduced water availability could affect fish breeding grounds, migration routes, and aquatic biodiversity across Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Gilgit-Baltistan. According to fisheries experts, Pakistan's fisheries sector contributes significantly to rural employment and national income. Khattak said that Pakistan exports fish and seafood products to several international markets, including China, Thailand, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Japan. "Freshwater fish species such as Mahseer and trout have considerable economic value," he said. "Any decline in their population would affect both domestic markets and export opportunities." Official estimates place Pakistan's total fish production at approximately 790,000 tonnes annually, including around 510,000 tonnes from marine capture fisheries and nearly 280,000 tonnes from inland fisheries and aquaculture. The sector contributes about 0.31 percent to the national GDP and provides direct and indirect employment to nearly one million people across the country.—DNA


## Renewable energy hold vast potential

LAHORE: Convener of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Committee on Food, Shahid Imran, on Sunday said Pakistan could unlock inclusive low-carbon growth by harnessing its vast renewable energy resources, promoting climate-smart agriculture and adopting innovative green financing mechanisms. Talking to a delegation of progressive farmers led by Maj (Retd) Muhammad Raza Arain here, he said Pakistan possessed abundant solar and wind resources, extensive agricultural residues and a young workforce, yet continued to face energy insecurity and climate-related challenges. He said the quickest and most effective step was the expansion of distributed solar energy, adding that rooftop solar systems and agrivoltaics could reduce transmission losses, free grid capacity and provide stable income opportunities for farmers. Cou-

pled with net metering, concessional microloans and local manufacturing, such initiatives could significantly boost adoption and create employment opportunities, he added. Shahid Imran said agriculture could transform waste into economic value through biogas production, biofertilizers and drip irrigation technologies, while mangrove restoration and climate-smart crops could strengthen environmental resilience and generate carbon-related economic benefits. He stressed the importance of green financing instruments, including sovereign sustainability bonds, diaspora green sukuk and results-based grants, to reduce investment risks and attract capital for sustainable projects. The FPCCI convener said the wind corridors of Sindh and Balochistan offered significant opportunities for utility-scale renewable energy projects integrating solar, wind and battery storage systems to ensure reliable power






supply. He emphasized the need to modernize transmission infrastructure, particularly high-voltage connections to major demand centres, and digitize distribution networks to reduce losses and encourage private sector investment. Highlighting urban opportunities, he said energy-efficient buildings, modern appliances and electric two- and three-wheelers could help reduce energy costs and curb air pollution. Clear regulatory standards, time-of-use tariffs and leasing models would further accelerate the transition towards a greener economy, he added. Shahid Imran said unlocking Pakistan's green potential required a combination of bold policymaking, smart financing and local innovation working together. He noted that stable tariffs, transparent auction systems and streamlined regulatory approvals were essential to building investor confidence and translating the country's natural advantages into sustainable and inclusive economic growth.—APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

June 02/Italy National/Independence Day
June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day
June 06/Sweden National Day
June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)
June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution & Army Day
June 11/United Kingdom Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth
June 12/Philippines Independence Day
June 12/Russian Federation Day of Sovereignty of the Russian Federation (National Day)
June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day
June 17/Iceland National Day
June 18/Seychells National Day
June 25/Croatia National Day
June 25/Mozambique National Day
June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day

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



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Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

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



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



### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480
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# Murree's progress eclipsed by selective rule violations

Unfortunately, during the Eid holidays, several vehicles, including luxury Land Cruisers carrying influential families, were openly seen driving through Mall Road in clear violation of the rules. Shockingly, even some police vehicles transporting family members were spotted using the restricted route

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

MURREE: Murree, the picturesque hill station often referred to as the "Queen of Hills," has witnessed remarkable improvements in recent years due to the efforts of the Punjab government. Better roads, improved cleanliness, enhanced tourist facilities, and stricter traffic management have significantly upgraded the overall environment of the city. Visitors arriving in Murree today can immediately notice the positive transformation compared to previous years. However, one disturbing issue continues to undermine these achievements, the selective violation of rules on the famous Mall Road. Mall Road remains the heart of Murree's tourism activity and is officially prohibited for vehicular movement in order to provide pedestrians and families a safe and peaceful environment. Unfortunately, during the Eid holidays, several vehicles, including luxury Land Cruisers carrying influential families, were openly seen driving through Mall Road in clear violation of the rules. Shockingly, even some police vehicles transporting family members were spotted using the restricted route. This unfortunate situation sends a damaging message to the public: that laws apply only to ordinary citizens while the powerful remain above the law. Such incidents not only hurt public confidence but also overshadow the commendable efforts made by the Punjab government for the development and beautification of Murree. Tourists visiting Murree expect fair implementation of rules. When ordinary visitors are stopped from entering restricted areas while influential individuals move freely without fear of accountability, frustration naturally grows among the public. Authorities must ensure that rules are



MURREE: A private vehicle is seen parked in front of a shop on the Mall Road on the 2nd day of Eid. The car remained parked until and unless the family finished the shopping. DNA

enforced equally, regardless of status or position. Strict action against violators, including officials misusing authority, is essential to restore public trust. At the same time, the growing influx of tourists has exposed the urgent need for further expansion and planning around Mall Road. Families, especially those with children and elderly members, find it increasingly

difficult to move freely due to overcrowding. Large groups of youngsters gathering on the narrow roads create congestion and discomfort for visitors seeking a peaceful experience. Another major concern is parking. Despite improvements in infrastructure, parking remains a nightmare during peak tourist seasons. Visitors often spend hours trying to reach des-

ignated parking areas due to traffic jams and poor traffic flow. Moreover, parking operators frequently charge excessive amounts without proper regulation, adding further frustration to tourists already burdened by heavy traffic and long delays. Murree is one of Pakistan's most important tourist destinations and deserves world-class management. The Punjab government

has undoubtedly made substantial progress, but selective enforcement of laws and unresolved parking issues continue to tarnish the city's image. Equal application of rules, expansion of pedestrian areas, and better parking management are now essential to ensure Murree remains welcoming and enjoyable for all visitors not just the privileged few.

## APBF calls for strategic energy security measures

He maintained that lower fuel prices, combined with strategic investments in energy infrastructure, could support industrial growth, encourage investment and strengthen Pakistan's economic resilience

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has welcomed the government's decision to reduce petrol and high-speed diesel prices by Rs22 per litre, describing it as a timely relief measure for consumers, businesses and the industrial sector. The forum, however, stressed the need for long-term energy security policies to protect the economy from future global supply disruptions and price shocks. In a joint statement issued here today, APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood and Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said the substantial reduction in fuel prices would help lower transportation costs, ease inflationary pressures and provide some breathing space to businesses facing rising operational expenses. They noted that fuel prices directly affect almost every sector of the economy, including manufacturing, agriculture, trade and logistics. A significant reduction in petroleum prices would therefore contribute to lowering production and distribution costs, ultimately benefiting consumers through more stable prices of

goods and services. Syed Maaz Mahmood said the government's decision to pass on the benefits of declining international oil prices to consumers was a positive development and reflected improving economic management. He added that lower fuel prices could stimulate economic activity by increasing consumer spending power and reducing business costs. "At a time when industries are struggling with high energy costs, expensive financing and global economic uncertainty, this relief will support economic activity and improve market sentiment," he said. The APBF president observed that reduced fuel costs would particularly benefit export-oriented industries by helping lower transportation and logistics expenses. This, he said, could improve the competitiveness of Pakistani products in international markets. Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said the recent developments also highlight Pakistan's vulnerability to international energy market fluctuations. He emphasized that while temporary price relief is welcome, the country needs a comprehensive strategy to strengthen its long-term energy security. Referring to the government's proposal to estab-

lish strategic petroleum reserves and expand storage facilities, he termed the initiative a step in the right direction. According to him, Pakistan's heavy dependence on imported oil and liquefied natural gas makes it vulnerable to geopolitical tensions and disruptions in global supply chains. He stressed that the establishment of strategic reserves would help protect the economy from sudden supply interruptions and extreme price volatility. At the same time, he called for increased investment in domestic oil and gas exploration, refinery modernization and energy infrastructure development. The APBF president also supported plans to enhance storage capacity through public-private partnerships and greater participation by international energy companies. They said improved storage facilities would strengthen supply management and reduce risks associated with external shocks. Syed Maaz Mahmood urged the government to ensure that future energy policies focus on affordability, sustainability and security. He maintained that lower fuel prices, combined with strategic investments in energy infrastructure, could support industrial growth, encourage investment and strengthen Pakistan's economic resilience.

## Healthy fuel habits power savings drive

ISLAMABAD: As geopolitical tensions between the United States and Iran pushed global oil markets higher, Islamabad motorists felt the impact at local pumps by prompting a swift turn toward fuel efficient behaviour. Faced with rising retail petrol costs, drivers across the capital are adopting practical measures to protect household budgets and make every litre count. Domestic petrol prices reflect a mix of international market movements, taxation and exchange rate effects. Nevertheless, many residents reported immediate increases at the pump and adjusted daily routines to reduce fuel use and control expenses. "Efficiency matters more than ever," said Ustad Amir, a mechanic in Khadda Market. "Smooth acceleration, maintaining steady speeds, and switching off engines at prolonged stops can reduce fuel consumption by up to 20 percent." Commuters in other sectors of capital like F-10, G-9 and G-13 described changes including carpooling, consolidating errands into single trips, and conducting pre-trip tyre checks. One teacher in G-9 said she now monitors mileage closely to manage transportation costs. Regular vehicle maintenance remains a cost effective way to improve fuel economy. Worn tyres, clogged air filters and degraded engine oil lower mileage; timely servicing and minor repairs can deliver immediate savings and help households offset higher wholesale prices. Transport specialists and community leaders note that short term behavioural changes are essential while broader measures by authorities and energy planners address long term stability and affordability. On the ground, residents recommend avoiding peak hour congestion in the Blue Area, reducing unnecessary trips, and using air conditioning judiciously to conserve fuel. A recent community survey found more than 60 percent of respondents reported taking steps to reduce fuel consumption since regional tensions increased market volatility. Although global events influence price trends, Islamabad motorists retain control over daily consumption. Through disciplined driving habits and routine maintenance, households can realize measurable savings at the pump even as government measures and market conditions continue to evolve. —APP

## E-commerce policy draft finalised

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce has finalised the draft of Pakistan's second National E-Commerce Policy, marking significant progress in policy reforms aimed at promoting e-commerce across the country. The draft stated that the policy seeks to accelerate Pakistan's access to the global e-commerce market by 2030. Special emphasis has been placed on the interoperability of digital payments, expansion of logistics infrastructure, facilitation of cross-border trade and strengthening cyber security measures. The policy also addresses data privacy, fraud prevention and the removal of barriers to digital trade. A nationwide one-window digital onboarding system will be introduced to simplify participation in the e-commerce sector, the Ministry of Commerce said. The ministry stated that a robust monitoring mechanism will also be introduced to support effective implementation of the policy. According to official documents, the policy was prepared following extensive consultations and a comparative review of international best practices. Stakeholders, including e-commerce platforms, financial institutions, small and medium-sized enterprises.—APP

## SPARC calls for stronger tobacco control

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of World No Tobacco Day 2026, the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) emphasized the importance of strengthening tobacco control efforts, enhancing the regulation of emerging nicotine products, and protecting children and youth from tobacco addiction in Pakistan. Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager at SPARC, stated that this year's World No Tobacco Day theme, "Unmasking the Appeal – Countering Nicotine and Tobacco Addiction," highlights the tactics used by the tobacco industry to attract new users through flavored products, deceptive marketing, attractive packaging, and the promotion of emerging nicotine products such as e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, and nicotine pouches. He further added that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco use kills more than 8 million people globally every year, including approximately 1.3 million non-smokers who die from exposure to second-hand smoke. In Pakistan, tobacco use causes more than 192,000 deaths an-

nually, equivalent to over 526 deaths every day. Alarmingly, nearly 1,200 children between the ages of 6 and 15 begin smoking every day, exposing a new generation to life-long nicotine addiction and serious health risks. He highlighted that tobacco use is not only a public health crisis but also a major economic burden. Pakistan loses an estimated Rs. 1,835 billion annually due to tobacco-related healthcare costs, lost productivity, and premature deaths. These losses significantly outweigh the revenue generated through tobacco taxation and divert valuable resources away from national development priorities. Dr. Khalil added that Pakistan ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and has made important progress through the implementation of MPOWER measures, including smoke-free laws, restrictions on tobacco advertising, prohibition of sales to minors, pictorial health warnings, and tobacco tax increases. However, significant gaps remain in enforcement and regulation. He highlighted the importance of increasing tobacco taxes to reduce affordability, expanding graphic health warnings in line with international best practices, ensuring effective

enforcement of bans on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS), and establishing a comprehensive regulatory framework for emerging nicotine and tobacco products. Dr. Khalil Ahmad further stated, "World No Tobacco Day serves as a powerful reminder that tobacco addiction continues to threaten the health, well-being, and future of millions of Pakistanis, particularly children and youth. While Pakistan has achieved important milestones in tobacco control, much more needs to be done to counter aggressive tobacco industry tactics and the growing availability of emerging nicotine products. We call upon the government to strengthen tobacco taxation, enforce comprehensive advertising bans, regulate all nicotine products, and invest in sustainable tobacco control programs. Protecting children from nicotine addiction is not only a public health obligation; it is an investment in Pakistan's future." He highlighted the role of government institutions, parliamentarians, healthcare professionals, educators, civil society organizations, parents, and the media in supporting initiatives aimed at creating a tobacco-free environment and safeguarding future generations from tobacco and nicotine addiction.

## AFFIDAVIT REGARDING THE CONTRACT

I, Ms. Saleem Akhtar, widow of Zahoor Ahmed, holder of CNIC No. 37301-2214637-8, resident of Abdullah Street, Kolpur, Post Office, Tahlianwala Tehsil, District Jhelum.

I hereby declare that:-

1. That the name Muhammad Jamil son of Zahoor Ahmed, holder of identity card number 37301-2275972-9, is my real son and is currently residing in Italy. He is extremely rude, selfish, arrogant and disobedient and uses social media indiscriminately and unnecessarily. I, myself has repeatedly explained to him and has even told him and made him say to the respected people of the village to take the right path, but he is not ready to listen to anyone and is stubborn and is involved in such associations and activities that me, my family and other relatives fear that it can cause trouble for them at any time. It is not only a headache for the family but also not in the interest of the country because he uses social media indiscriminately and unnecessarily.
2. That I, Man Mazhara, am fed up with the behavior of my son Muhammad Jamil, son of Zahoor Ahmed, and I am disinheriting him from my movable and immovable property. I am not responsible for any of his words, actions, transactions, or social media posts. I have no connection with any type of property of Man Mazhara. I have no connection with any of his external transaction. Me and my other children, daughters and sons, are not responsible for his words and actions.
3. That it is the request of the decedent that after the death of the decedent, the above statement of the decedent be honored and that no connection or transfer of the said movable and immovable.

## Briefs

Erasmus+  
framework to  
strengthen  
partnership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-EU collaboration in higher education through the Erasmus+ framework continued to strengthen a long-standing and mutually beneficial knowledge partnership, anchored in shared commitments to academic excellence, youth mobility, research cooperation, and capacity-building. Congratulating the 98 awardees, Pakistan Embassy in Belgium said, the large selection of scholars was a testament to the depth of academic cooperation. Topping the global charts for the fifth consecutive year reflects both the excellence of Pakistan's youth and the growing strength of their knowledge partnership. "The Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels remains committed to advancing its Science Diplomacy agenda and further intensifying Pakistan-EU partnerships in higher education, research, innovation, and emerging technologies, building bridges between institutions, researchers, and innovators on both sides," the Pakistan Embassy said in a post on X on Saturday.

Pakistan works  
tirelessly  
to bridge  
differences

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China and the United Nations, Sardar Masood Khan said here Sunday that Pakistan emerged as the central facilitator in ongoing efforts to secure a diplomatic settlement between the United States and Iran. In a statement, he expressed confidence that sustained engagement and pragmatic diplomacy could lead to the successful conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) currently under discussion. Khan said that the present phase should not be viewed as a tactical pause before renewed hostilities, but rather as a serious diplomatic effort aimed at ending escalation and establishing a framework for lasting engagement between Washington and Tehran. He noted that Pakistan has been working tirelessly to bridge differences, convey messages between the two capitals, and create the trust necessary for meaningful negotiations.

He remarked that Pakistan's role has gone beyond communication, helping both sides identify common ground and encouraging flexibility at a time when rigid positions could derail the entire process. He described the task as exceptionally challenging, given the adversarial relationship that has existed between the United States and Iran for nearly five decades. Ambassador Masood Khan observed that while public statements from both sides often include threats and warnings, these should be understood within the broader context of negotiations. He noted that President Donald Trump frequently combines conciliatory messages with strong rhetoric as part of his negotiating style, while Iran also seeks to demonstrate its capability and resolve in order to strengthen its bargaining position.—APP

## Govt speeds up work to add water storage

Besides dam construction, WAPDA has expanded its hydro-meteorological monitoring and telemetry systems to enable real-time tracking of river flows, transboundary streams, reservoir levels and rainfall patterns. The system is designed to support timely operational decisions and improve preparedness for floods and droughts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has accelerated work on four major dam projects that are expected to add more than eight million acre-feet (MAF) of water storage capacity. According to official data available with Wealth Pakistan, the country receives nearly 80 percent of its annual river flows during only 92 days between June and August, while the remaining 20 percent is spread over the other 273 days of the year, said a news release issued here on Saturday. This uneven distribution has long created major challenges for irrigation management, flood control and water availability during dry periods. To address the issue, the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has developed major reservoirs with a combined live storage capacity of 13.168 MAF, which play a critical role in regulating water flows across the Indus Basin

Irrigation System throughout the year. Pakistan's three principal reservoirs include Tarbela Dam with a live storage capacity of 5.580 MAF, Mangla Dam with 7.277 MAF, and Chashma Barrage with 0.311 MAF. According to the data, the storage capacity lost in Mangla Reservoir due to sedimentation was partially restored through the Mangla Dam Raising Project, which added 2.88 MAF of storage capacity. Wapda has also declared the current period as the "Decade of Dams" and accelerated work on several large-scale water infrastructure projects aimed at strengthening national water security amid climate change and increasing demand. Over the past decade, the authority completed four projects that collectively added 3.914 MAF of live storage capacity. These include the Mangla Dam Raising Project, Gomal Zam Dam with 0.892 MAF, Satpara Dam with 0.053 MAF and Darawat Dam with 0.089 MAF. Currently, four major projects with a combined

live storage capacity of 8.136 MAF are under implementation. These include the strategically important Diamer-Bhasha Dam, which alone will provide 6.4 MAF of storage capacity, along with Mohmand Dam with 0.676 MAF, Kurram Tangi Dam with 0.90 MAF and Nai Gaj Dam with 0.16 MAF. In addition, several new reservoir projects with an estimated live storage capacity of 15.88 MAF are at planning and design stages. These include Sindh Barrage with 2.0 MAF, Shyok Dam Multipurpose Project with 5.5 MAF, Akhori Dam with 7.0 MAF, Chiniot Dam with 0.93 MAF and Murunj Dam with 0.45 MAF. Besides dam construction, WAPDA has expanded its hydro-meteorological monitoring and telemetry systems to enable real-time tracking of river flows, transboundary streams, reservoir levels and rainfall patterns. The system is designed to support timely operational decisions and improve preparedness for floods and droughts.

Al-Shifa launches 1st Pak-specific  
ophthalmic genetics database

She said the initiative could help reduce avoidable disability, lower long-term treatment costs, and improve educational and employment opportunities for children living with inherited vision disorders, while also strengthening Pakistan's role in global genomic research

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital has launched Pakistan's first Ophthalmic Genetics Gene-Disease Variation Database, a major step toward improving the diagnosis and treatment of inherited eye diseases through precision medicine and locally relevant research. The database, developed by the hospital's Department of Ophthalmic Genetics under geneticist Dr Rutaba Gul and senior bioinformatician Abu Bakar, records mutations linked to inherited retinal diseases, congenital cataracts, glaucoma, and corneal dystrophies. The initiative aims to address a major gap in global genomic medicine, where most reference data comes from European or East Asian populations and often does not accurately reflect South Asian genetic patterns. Pakistan carries a comparatively high burden of inherited eye disorders because cousin marriages increase the risk of recessive genetic diseases. According to Al-Shifa data, hereditary and congenital conditions account for nearly 40% to 60% of childhood blindness cases in Pakistan. Specialists believe earlier diagnosis through genetic screening can help doctors identify at-risk children before symptoms worsen, improve family counselling, and support future gene-therapy planning. The hospital's dedicated ophthalmic genetics laboratory, established



in January 2025, has already completed free genetic testing for 150 patients across the country, leading to the identification of 45 different eye-related genetic diseases. Officials said each test can cost nearly Rs100,000 in the

private market, making access difficult for many families. President of Al-Shifa Trust Maj Gen (Retd) Rehmat Khan said the organisation plans to expand the programme into a broader national database and integrate genet-

ic screening services across its hospital network. "This database is not just a scientific tool; it is a step toward better outcomes for future generations," Dr. Rutaba Gul said. She said the initiative could help reduce avoidable dis-

ability, lower long-term treatment costs, and improve educational and employment opportunities for children living with inherited vision disorders, while also strengthening Pakistan's role in global genomic research.

Pakistani engineers,  
staff celebrate Eid at  
duddar project

ISLAMABAD: Chinese company at Duddar project treated the Pakistani staff and their families at Daddar project like a family, while participating in Eid's festival. It arranged a range of activities and prepared everything we needed for Eid, said Muhammad Naeem, an engineer at the project, according to Gwadar Pro. I never expected to celebrate Eid al-Adha so grandly, respectfully and joyfully far from home. This made the holiday unforgettable. The company arranged warm and thoughtful Eid celebrations for all Pakistani staff. We exchanged Eid greetings, offered prayers together and took part in sports matches, including cricket and football. The project prepared traditional Eid food, delicious meals, meat, sweets and gift packages for us. Everything was well prepared, as if it were a celebration at home. All our Chinese colleagues, including managers and engineers, came to greet us. They said "Eid Mubarak" warmly, shook hands with us and wished us happiness, health and peace. At that moment, I felt respected, valued and deeply moved. I truly felt that we were one big family in Duddar. The Duddar Lead-Zinc Mine is located in Lasbela District, Balochistan, near the Kanraj Valley, about 200 km from Karachi. It is Pakistan's largest underground facility for the extraction of lead and zinc. Construction of the Duddar project began in 2004 under MCC Tongsin Resources Ltd. I joined the project in 2017, and since then our Chinese colleagues have worked side by side with us. What makes me proud to work here is that the Duddar project always cares about the local community. The company provides jobs for local people, supports local development, donates to the community, helps improve local facilities and participates in public welfare activities. It also provides professional training, safety education and career development opportunities for local employees. We are proud to work for such a responsible company. This Eid, as I stood with my Pakistani brothers and our Chinese colleagues, sharing food and laughter, I realised something important. They have shown us that true partnership means standing together in celebration as much as in work. Respect for our culture, religion and dignity is reflected in the way they work every day. This Eid in Duddar was more than a celebration. It was proof that any place can feel like home when people work together with mutual respect and understanding. Naeem, a mining engineer from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan stated that for the past nine years, he has been working at the Duddar lead-zinc mine project, and this year's Eid will stay with me for a lifetime. Before joining the Duddar project, I used to celebrate Eid at home with my family. We would wake up early, put on new clothes, go to the mosque for Eid prayers, share breakfast together and prepare the animals for Qurbani. The most memorable scene was sitting with my parents and siblings, sharing sweets and talking happily. This Eid was by far the most special. Although I was at the project site, I felt at home, he add.—DNA

## PIAF welcomes Rs 200b tariff relief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has welcomed the government's decision to provide approximately Rs200 billion in import-duty relief to the industrial sector under the second phase of the Tariff Reform Plan (2025-2030), describing it as a significant step towards reducing production costs, improving industrial competitiveness and promoting export-led economic growth. In a statement issued after consultations with representatives of trade bodies, exporters, manufacturers and various industrial sectors, PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, who is also President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), said the proposed tariff rationalisation measures would help address some of the longstanding challenges faced by the country's industrial sector. He said Pakistani industries have been struggling with high production costs due to expensive energy, elevated financing costs, multiple taxes and duties, and increasing competition from regional economies.

The proposed reduction in additional customs duties (ACD), regulatory duties (RD) and customs duties on thousands of tariff lines would provide substantial relief to manufacturers by lowering the cost of imported raw materials, machinery and industrial inputs. Faheemur Rehman Saigol observed that the government's decision to gradually reduce excessive tariff protection in selected sectors reflects a shift towards a more competitive and export-oriented economic framework. He noted that industries operating under very high effective tariff rates often become less efficient and less capable of competing in international markets. "The objective should be to create a competitive industrial environment that encourages productivity, innovation and investment while ensuring that local industries have sufficient time to adjust to changing market conditions," he said. He added that tariff rationalisation would particularly benefit sectors dependent on imported components and raw materials, including engineering, textiles, chemicals, plastics, pharmaceuticals and value-added manufacturing industries. Lower input costs, he said, would ultimately improve the competitiveness of Pakistani products in global markets and support export growth.

SSP reviews  
security  
arrangements  
at churches

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza visited various churches in the federal capital and reviewed security arrangements to ensure safety of worshippers and religious gatherings. An official told on Sunday that the SSP Qazi also met church administration representatives and discussed security-related matters and coordination mechanisms. Qazi inspected security points and directed officers deployed on duty to remain fully alert and further strengthen checking and monitoring measures. He emphasized the importance of maintaining effective security arrangements at places of worship and ensuring a peaceful environment for all communities. According to the official, Islamabad Police was taking all necessary measures to safeguard religious sites and protect citizens across the federal capital.—APP

Travel  
advisory for  
tourists

ISLAMABAD: The district authorities in Naran have issued a travel advisory for Babusar Top, urging tourists, travellers, and transport operators to exercise caution and avoid unnecessary travel due to persistent snowfall and hazardous road conditions. The district administration, with a special travel advisory on media platforms, stated that ongoing snowfall across the region is expected to create severe difficulties for travellers, urging all visitors to verify weather updates before planning any movement towards the mountain pass. According to the advisory, traffic on the Babusar Top route and adjoining areas has been significantly disrupted by continuous snow accumulation, with certain stretches currently restricted to one-way passage only. Officials cautioned that travel along the route becomes extremely hazardous after 6 pm due to rapidly worsening snowfall intensity and sharply reduced visibility conditions. They further highlighted that icy surfaces, mechanical brake failures, glacial movements, rockfalls, and potential landslides collectively pose grave threats to both life and property. The administration appealed to tourists, transport operators, and the general public to avoid all non-essential journeys until further notice and to strictly comply with instructions issued by local authorities and law enforcement agencies.—APP

Azfar honored by  
UAE for boosting  
Pak-UAE eco ties

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Azfar Ahsan, Founder & Chairman of Nutshell Group and former Minister for Investment, was honored by the Government of the United Arab Emirates through H.E. Dr. Bakheet Ateeq Alreameithi, Consul General of the United Arab Emirates, in recognition of his continued efforts to promote Pakistan's investment potential and strengthen Pakistan-UAE economic cooperation. The recognition highlights his sustained engagement in advancing constructive policy dialogue and fostering stronger institutional and business linkages between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. Over the years, he has played an active role in promoting a more enabling narrative around Pakistan's investment climate through strategic platforms, international forums, and multi-stakeholder engagements. The acknowledgment also reflects his contribution to deepening economic connectivity between the two countries, particularly by encouraging collaboration between business communities, investors, and policy influencers. His efforts have consistently focused on building bridges for dialogue, improving mutual understanding, and identifying opportunities for sustainable economic partnership. This honor underscores the importance of continued engagement between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates in areas of trade, investment, and economic cooperation, and recognizes the role of individual leadership in advancing shared regional and economic objectives.—DNA

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## Eurasia and Return of Mackinder's Geopolitics



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

**M**ORE than a century ago, British geographer and political thinker Halford Mackinder presented a theory that continues to shape debates on global power politics. Writing in 1904, Mackinder argued that geography was not merely a backdrop to international affairs; it was one of the decisive forces determining the rise and decline of great powers. His famous "Heartland Theory" proposed that the vast landmass of Eurasia stretching from Eastern Europe to Central

Asia and Siberia constituted the strategic pivot of world politics. At the time, the theory appeared to many as an abstract geopolitical formulation rooted in imperial competition. Yet in the twenty-first century, the renewed contest over Eurasia has once again brought Mackinder's ideas into sharp focus.

Mackinder famously wrote: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; who rules the World Island commands the world." By "World Island," he referred to the combined continents of Europe, Asia and Africa the largest concentration of population, resources and economic activity on earth. The "Heartland," meanwhile, was the interior of Eurasia, particularly the territories dominated by the Russian Empire and Central Asia. His central argument was simple: a power capable of controlling Eurasia's core would possess immense strategic advantages over maritime rivals. For much of the twentieth century, Mackinder's theory influenced strategic thinking in both Europe and the United States. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union's domination of Eastern Europe appeared to validate his assumptions. Western policymakers feared that Moscow's control over the Eurasian interior could translate into overwhelming geopolitical influence. Consequently, the policy of containment pursued by the United States and its allies was partly rooted in preventing Soviet expansion across Eurasia.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led many observers to believe that geopolitics itself had lost relevance. Economic globalisation, technological interdependence and liberal internationalism were expected to replace territorial competition. Borders seemed less important in an increasingly connected world. Yet the events of the past two decades have demonstrated that geography remains central to international politics. In many respects, Eurasia has once again become the arena where major powers seek influence, security and strategic advantage. The resurgence of Russia under Vladimir Putin reflects this reality. Since coming to power, Putin has consistently sought to restore Russian in-



fluence in the former Soviet space. Moscow views Eastern Europe and Central Asia not merely as neighbouring regions but as essential buffers for its national security. The conflict in Ukraine, therefore, is not only a territorial dispute; it is also a geopolitical struggle over the balance of power in Eurasia. From the Russian perspective, the eastward expansion of NATO represents an encroachment into a region historically considered vital to Russian security interests. Mackinder's theory gains renewed relevance in this context. Eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine, remains strategically significant because it connects European power centres with the Eurasian interior. Control over this corridor has historically shaped the security calculations of both Russia and Western powers. The ongoing war has therefore revived classical geopolitical concerns that many assumed belonged to the past. At the same time, China has emerged as another major actor reshaping Eurasian politics. Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative is perhaps the clearest contemporary example of a Eurasian strategy grounded in geography. Through roads, railways, ports and energy corridors, China seeks to connect East Asia with Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Although presented primarily as an economic initiative, the project also carries significant geopolitical implications. By strengthening continental trade routes, China reduces its dependence on maritime pathways vulnerable to American naval power. In strategic terms, Beijing is attempting to integrate large parts of Eurasia through infrastructure and economic connectivity. Central Asia, once viewed as a remote periphery, has become a crucial crossroads linking Chinese industry to European and Middle Eastern markets. This transformation echoes Mackinder's emphasis on the strategic importance of the Eurasian interior. The growing significance of Central Asia further underlines the return of geopolitics. Countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan possess vast energy resources and occupy key transit corridors. As competition intensifies between Russia, China, the United States and regional powers such as Turkey, Central Asia has become a zone of overlapping strategic interests. The region's political orientation and economic partnerships increasingly carry implications beyond its immediate geography. Nevertheless, geography has not disappeared from global politics. Energy pipelines, transport routes, military bases and territorial control remain central to state strategy. The war in Ukraine, tensions in the South China Sea and competition over Arctic routes all demonstrate that physical space continues to shape international affairs. The enduring relevance of Mackinder's theory lies not in its deterministic view of geography but in its recognition that space, resources and connectivity continue to influence political power. Eurasia today is not simply a geographic entity; it is the principal theatre where competing visions of global order are unfolding. Russia seeks strategic depth, China pursues economic integration, and the United States aims to preserve balance and influence. Between these competing ambitions lies a vast region whose importance has once again become impossible to ignore. More than a hundred years after Mackinder formulated his Heartland Theory, the struggle for Eurasia continues to shape the direction of world politics. The methods and technologies may have changed, but the central question remains remarkably familiar: who will shape the political and strategic future of the world's most important landmass?

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## Trump's War of Contradictions

Qamar Bashir



The disagreement became especially visible when reports emerged of tensions between Trump and Netanyahu regarding ceasefire proposals. According to media accounts, Trump appeared willing to explore a temporary diplomatic window while Netanyahu favored maintaining military pressure. Whether these disagreements represent genuine strategic differences or merely negotiating tactics remains uncertain. Yet their existence underscores how much the trajectory of the conflict has become intertwined with personal relationships and political calculations

**F**ROM the beginning of the Iran conflict on February 28 until today, one question has increasingly puzzled diplomats, military analysts, investors, and ordinary citizens alike: What exactly is the United States trying to achieve? In less than three months, President Donald Trump has threatened Iran, announced impending peace, imposed deadlines, delayed deadlines, declared military success, pursued negotiations, revived military action, demanded regional concessions, and repeatedly altered the stated objectives of the conflict. The result has been a growing perception of inconsistency that is now affecting not only diplomacy but also global markets, energy prices, and America's international credibility.

Few critics have articulated this concern more forcefully than former UN weapons inspector and former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer Scott Ritter. In a recent interview, Ritter described the United States as "agreement incapable," arguing that Washington's constantly shifting positions make it nearly impossible to sustain meaningful negotiations. According to Ritter, Iran has remained relatively consistent in its demands, while American positions have repeatedly changed during the course of talks. Ritter argues that President Trump approaches diplomacy not as a treaty-maker but as a deal-maker, meaning that any agreement can be revised, renegotiated, or abandoned if it no longer appears politically advantageous.

This contradiction became increasingly visible throughout the Iran negotiations. On multiple occasions, senior American officials signaled that a ceasefire framework, memorandum of understanding, or broader peace arrangement was close to completion. Financial markets reacted immediately. Oil prices retreated, stock markets rallied, and investors began pricing in the prospect of regional stability. Yet just as optimism gained momentum, military strikes resumed, new conditions emerged, or negotiations abruptly stalled. Each reversal erased confidence that had only recently been restored.

The latest example involves Oman. For decades, Oman has served as one of America's most reliable diplomatic intermediaries with Iran. Yet recent threats directed toward Muscat shocked many observers throughout the Gulf region. If Oman, one of Washington's most dependable partners, can be publicly pressured in such a manner, Gulf governments naturally wonder how secure their own relationships with Washington truly are. The issue is no longer simply military power; it is predictability. Allies need confidence that commitments made today will remain valid tomorrow. Ritter argues that the deeper problem is that Trump himself is unpredictable. In one of the most contro-

versal portions of his interview, Ritter characterized Trump's behavior as reflecting traits associated with narcissistic personality disorder. These remarks represent Ritter's personal opinion and not a medical diagnosis. Nevertheless, Ritter contends that Trump's decision-making is heavily influenced by personal considerations, making policy outcomes difficult to forecast through traditional geopolitical analysis. In Ritter's view, analysts are often attempting to apply rational strategic frameworks to decisions that may be driven by entirely different motivations.

Complicating matters further is the role of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Since Trump's return to office, Netanyahu has maintained unusually frequent contact with Washington. Several reports suggest that key conversations between the two leaders coincided with major shifts in American policy toward Iran. While close coordination between the United States and Israel is expected, critics argue that negotiations often appear to move forward until regional security concerns or Israeli objections re-enter the discussion. Supporters of Israel counter that military pressure is precisely what forces Iran to negotiate. Regardless of which interpretation proves correct, the repeated sequence of diplomacy, escalation, consultation, and renewed escalation has created an impression that negotiations remain vulnerable to external political pressures.

The disagreement became especially visible when reports emerged of tensions between Trump and Netanyahu regarding ceasefire proposals. According to media accounts, Trump appeared willing to explore a temporary diplomatic window while Netanyahu favored maintaining military pressure. Whether these disagreements represent genuine strategic differences or merely negotiating tactics remains uncertain. Yet their existence underscores how much the trajectory of the conflict has become intertwined with personal relationships and political calculations.

Perhaps Ritter's most consequential argument concerns the military balance itself. He contends that the United States failed to achieve its strategic objectives against Iran and that Washington's military posture is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Ritter points to publicly discussed production timelines for Tomahawk missiles, THAAD interceptors, Patriot systems, and other advanced weapons as evidence that replenishment could take years rather than months. According to Ritter, America has become dependent on highly sophisticated but difficult-to-replace technologies, while potential adversaries have prepared for long-term attritional warfare.

These assessments remain disputed by U.S. defense officials, but they have gained attention because they raise uncomfortable questions about industrial capacity and military sustainability.

Ritter also argues that sanctions, long considered one of America's most effective geopolitical tools, are gradually losing their power. He points to the increasing use of alternative currencies, cryptocurrency transactions, and non-dollar payment mechanisms among countries seeking to reduce dependence on the American financial system.

In Ritter's analysis, Washington's extensive use of sanctions over the past two decades may have accelerated efforts by major economies to develop alternatives. If that trend continues, the ability of the United States to compel compliance through economic pressure could diminish significantly.

At the heart of the current crisis lies another controversial demand: Trump's insistence that several Muslim-majority countries support or join the Abraham Accords framework as part of a broader regional settlement. Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Jordan each face distinct domestic realities. Public opinion throughout much of the Muslim world remains heavily influenced by the Palestinian issue. Critics argue that linking normalization with Israel to an Iran settlement creates an additional obstacle rather than a pathway to peace. Supporters argue that broader regional integration is essential for long-term stability. The debate continues, but the political difficulty of imposing such conditions is undeniable.

Three months into the conflict, the most important issue may no longer be whether America possesses sufficient military or economic power. Few seriously question what it does. The more important question is whether Washington can maintain a coherent strategy long enough to translate power into sustainable political results. Allies require consistency. Adversaries require clarity. Investors require predictability. Diplomatic agreements require trust.

From missed deadlines and contradictory statements to market-moving announcements, shifting negotiation frameworks, and ongoing military tensions, the period between February and May has produced what many now describe as a crisis of credibility. Scott Ritter's analysis may be controversial, and many of his conclusions remain vigorously disputed. Yet his central warning resonates far beyond his supporters: a superpower's greatest strength is not merely its military arsenal or economic influence, but the confidence that others place in its word. In international affairs, power commands attention. Credibility commands trust. And without trust, even the most powerful nation can struggle to achieve its goals.

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

## Pakistan and the Abraham Accords: A Question of Principle

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The Abraham Accords, signed initially between Israel and certain Arab states under the patronage of the United States, were presented as a pathway to peace in the Middle East. Yet peace without justice resembles a magnificent palace built upon sand. The accords bypassed the central question that has haunted the region for more than seven decades...

**I**N the turbulent theatre of modern diplomacy, nations are often compelled to choose between expediency and principle. Some surrender their convictions upon the altar of temporary political advantage, while others, though tested by storms and isolation, remain steadfast to the moral compass that defines their national soul. Pakistan belongs to the latter category. Despite persistent speculation and recurring whispers in diplomatic corridors, Pakistan is neither likely nor morally prepared to become part of the Abraham Accords.

The reasons are neither emotional nor reactionary. They are rooted in history, faith, international law, and the collective conscience of the Pakistani people. Pakistan came into existence not merely as a geographical entity but as an ideological state founded upon the aspiration of justice, dignity, and solidarity with the oppressed. The question of Palestine is therefore not a passing diplomatic issue for Pakistan; it is a matter deeply interwoven with the nation's moral identity.

The Abraham Accords, signed initially between Israel and certain Arab states under the patronage of the United States, were presented as a pathway to peace in the Middle East. Yet peace without justice resembles a magnificent palace built upon sand. The accords bypassed the central question that has haunted the region for more than seven decades: the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to an independent homeland. By normalising relations with Israel before a just settlement of the Palestinian issue, the accords effectively reduced the suffering of Palestine to a secondary matter.

The spirit of the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Hadith stand firmly against oppression and dispossession. Islam does not merely encourage ritual devotion; it demands moral courage in the face of injustice. The Quran repeatedly commands believers to stand for justice even when it is inconvenient or politically costly. The Palestinian tragedy, marked by occupation, displacement, bom-

bardment, and the denial of fundamental human dignity, cannot be separated from this moral framework. No Muslim nation guided by the ethical spirit of Islam can remain indifferent to the cries rising from the ruins of Gaza.

The sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) further reinforce this obligation. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) taught the believers to act as one body: when one part suffers, the entire body feels the pain. This principle transcends ethnicity, nationality, and political calculation. To ignore the anguish of Palestinians while pursuing strategic convenience would not merely be a diplomatic adjustment; it would amount to a betrayal of the spiritual and ethical foundations that sustain Muslim unity.

Beyond the religious dimension lies the equally important realm of international law. The United Nations Charter is founded upon the principles of self-determination, sovereign equality, and the protection of human rights. Numerous United Nations resolutions have affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to an independent state and condemned the expansion of settlements in occupied territories. The unresolved status of Jerusalem, the continued occupation of Palestinian lands, and the recurring humanitarian catastrophes in Gaza remain in direct conflict with these resolutions.

In this context, the Abraham Accords appear less as an instrument of comprehensive peace and more as a diplomatic rearrangement that seeks to normalise an unresolved occupation. By rewarding Israel with recognition absent a final settlement, the accords risk undermining the very framework established by international law and the United Nations. A durable peace cannot emerge by bypassing justice; rather, such arrangements deepen resentment and perpetuate instability. The recent Gaza peace initiatives and negotiations in which Pakistan participated further illuminate this contradiction. Pakistan has consistently advocated an

immediate ceasefire, humanitarian relief for civilians, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders with Al Quds as its capital. These positions are not ceremonial statements; they represent Pakistan's declared diplomatic doctrine. To subsequently join a framework that effectively sidelines these demands would create a glaring contradiction in Pakistan's foreign policy and erode its credibility before the Muslim world and the international community alike.

It is therefore reasonable to ask whether attempts to insert the Abraham Accords into a broader Gulf settlement are part of a deliberate strategic design. Great powers have long understood that fragmented societies are easier to influence than united ones. By embedding normalisation within regional economic and security arrangements, there appears an effort to transform Palestine from a central moral cause into a negotiable political detail. Such a shift would gradually dull the collective conscience of the Muslim world and redefine resistance to occupation as diplomatic inconvenience. Pakistan, however, has historically resisted such pressures. From the days of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who unequivocally supported the Palestinian cause, to the present era, Pakistan's position has remained remarkably consistent. The nation recognises that true peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved through selective diplomacy or transactional alliances. Peace will only endure when justice is restored, occupation ends, and the Palestinian people are granted the rights promised to them under international law.

The winds of geopolitics may shift, alliances may emerge and dissolve, and economic temptations may intensify, yet nations ultimately survive through fidelity to their principles. Pakistan understands that some causes are too sacred to be traded for transient advantage. Palestine is one such cause. Until justice speaks louder than power, Pakistan is unlikely to walk the path of the Abraham Accords.

## Briefs

## IRGC tells US to choose between...

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adding to growing concerns over a widening regional conflict despite ongoing diplomatic efforts. The latest developments underscore the fragile security situation across the Middle East, with diplomatic efforts struggling to contain escalating tensions involving Iran, Israel and regional armed groups. Meanwhile, Iran's chief negotiator said Sunday that Tehran would not agree to any deal with the United States unless it fully secures Iranian rights, as reports emerged that Washington had sent a tougher peace proposal back to Iran. Any tweaks to the proposal could further delay an agreement to formally end the Middle East war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz after weeks of fraught negotiations marked by sharp rhetoric and occasional flare-ups of violence. The New York Times and Axios reported on Saturday that Trump had sent back a new framework to be considered by Iran with "tougher" terms, though details remain unclear.

## Trump claims Iran agreed...

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Fox News programme on Saturday night. But Tehran has previously cast doubt on Trump's assertions and the parties appeared far apart on their key priorities. Iran has said it requires the release of \$12 billion in frozen assets before it moved to substantive talks on issues such as its nuclear programme and called earlier Trump comments that its enriched uranium — a precursor for nuclear weapons — would be destroyed "baseless", according to Iranian media. Tehran has also insisted that Lebanon must be included in any end to the war despite ongoing fighting, with Beirut accusing Israel of a "scorched-earth policy" as its forces advanced and carried out further airstrikes.

## Kaja Kallas visit puts Pak-EU...

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Brussels has also raised reservations about aspects of Pakistan's 2024 general elections and has repeatedly emphasized the need for adherence to international commitments linked to the GSP+ framework. Nevertheless, diplomatic observers believe Pakistan's prospects for retaining GSP+ status remain favorable. They argue that while compliance with governance and human rights benchmarks remains an important consideration, the final decision is likely to be influenced by broader strategic and political factors, including the EU's interest in maintaining engagement with Pakistan in a region of growing geopolitical significance.

## Leghari rejects reports...

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Leghari said the purpose of the reforms is to compile consumer data through the QR code system and ensure that subsidies reach deserving beneficiaries. He said consumers receiving subsidies were being asked to provide details through the registration process. The power minister further said the number of electricity subsidy beneficiaries had increased from 9.5m to 21.5m over the past four years. Currently, around 29.57 million domestic consumers, or 86% of the total, are receiving subsidies.

## Afghanistan reportedly...

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security cooperation with regional powers. Neither Russian nor Afghan officials have publicly confirmed the type of air defense system involved, but the reports have generated considerable interest among regional security experts regarding their potential strategic implications.

## Pakistani students aspire to deepen China-Pak ties

Knowing President Xi conveyed deep concern for international students made him treasure this learning opportunity even more. Shoaib stated: "I am now more determined than ever to bring my expertise back to Pakistan"

DNA

BEIJING: "Hearing this news filled my heart with warmth and inspiration!" said Usama Afzal, a PhD student at the School of Microelectronics of Tianjin University. For Afzal, his excitement stemmed not from his impressive academic record—including 28 papers published in reputed international journals—but from the profound encouragement he felt after Chinese President Xi Jinping mentioned the joint letter he co-wrote. The letter, penned by Pakistani students at Tianjin University, expressed their shared aspiration to become builders of cooperation, promoters of exchanges, and guardians of friendship between the two countries. During a meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on May 25, President Xi Jinping shared his pleasure in receiving the letter, noting that he was heartened to see that the cause of China-Pakistan friendship has dedicated young successors. Inspired by this recognition, Afzal is now more determined to focus on key areas like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). "Science knows no borders, and cooperation has no limits," he stated. "I hope to apply my expertise in micro-

electronics to align with the needs of China-Pakistan sci-tech cooperation, boosting the synergistic development of high-tech fields in both countries. Meanwhile, I also shoulder the mission of youth communication, aiming to share the true stories of China's education and development with my home country and the world." For Muhammad Shoaib, a PhD student at the School of Civil Engineering of Tianjin University, the journey has been transformative. He once struggled with the depth of academic theories and the repetitive nature of lab experiments but found strength in the university's supportive environment. "Tianjin University has surrounded me with warmth, care, and unwavering support," Shoaib said. Knowing President Xi conveyed deep concern for international students made him treasure this learning opportunity even more. Shoaib stated: "I am now more determined than ever to bring my expertise back to Pakistan and dedicate myself wholeheartedly to building the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, contributing to the enduring friendship between our two nations." Imad Alam, a PhD student from the School of Electrical and Information Engineering, Tianjin University, expressed his gratitude. "I feel deeply honored and inspired. I hope

to continue contributing to academic cooperation, innovation, and stronger Pakistan-China relations through education, research, and cultural exchange," said Alam, who also volunteered last year for a teaching program at Nanyang Middle School in Tanchang County, Gansu Province. Reflecting on this experience, Alam recalled: "My heart was filled with immense joy seeing students who were initially too shy to speak eventually stand confidently on stage for a speech contest. These experiences helped me understand the true meaning of using knowledge to serve others." Aqsa Anwar, an undergraduate student from the School of Chemical Engineering and Technology of Tianjin University, felt deeply moved: "The fact that President Xi mentioned our letter at such a significant diplomatic event shows that he truly keeps ordinary international students close to his heart." A recipient of the Grand Prize (International Track) at the 2025 National Undergraduate Chemical Engineering Design Competition, Anwar credited her growth to the inclusive campus culture. "My access to top-tier engineering training at Tianjin University would not have been possible without the help of my Chinese teachers and classmates. Looking ahead, she plans

to pursue her master's degree at Tianjin University. "I will use what I've learned to contribute to China-Pakistan cooperation," she affirmed. Asma Bibi, a PhD student from the School of Architecture of Tianjin University and a recipient of the Dr. R.K. Pachauri Award for Youth-Led Climate Action 2025, plans to bridge her academic research with practical action. The bond between the two countries is also vividly reflected in the journey of Awan, a PhD student at the School of Civil Engineering of Tianjin University. Awan also shared a unique personal connection with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In 2017, when Mr. Shehbaz Sharif visited Tianjin, China, Awan participated in the reception work. As one of the leading Chinese universities admitting high-achieving Pakistani postgraduates, Tianjin University currently hosts 373 students from Pakistan. In recent years, aligning closely with the demands of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Tianjin University has leveraged the strengths of its "Emerging Engineering Education" initiatives. Professor Yang Xianjin, Secretary of the CPC Tianjin University Committee, stated that the warm concern from President Xi Jinping has greatly inspired the entire university community.



ISLAMABAD: Girls talking interest in the newly installed statues of Quaid-e-Azam and his companions at Pakistan Monument in the Federal Capital. — Online

## Pakistan Secures Awards for Hajj 2026 Success

MAKKAH MUKARRAMAH: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf announced Sunday that Pakistan has successfully concluded its Hajj 2026 operations, securing the international "Labbaitum Excellence Award" for the second consecutive year alongside three global awards for its private Hajj scheme. Speaking at a post-Hajj press conference at the Pakistan Hajj Mission in Makkah, the minister revealed that the grievance rate plummeted to less than one percent this year due to exemplary arrangements. He was accompanied by Director General of the Pakistan Hajj Mission Abdul Wahab Soomro, Chief Coordinator Mirza Ali Mahsood, and Director Hajj Makkah Muhammad Arif Aslam Rao. The minister stated that this success is the direct result of exemplary cooperation between the Government of Pakistan, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Pakistan Hajj Mission, and Saudi authorities. Following the special directives of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, top-tier facilities were provided to the pilgrims. With a quota of 180,000 pilgrims, Pakistan stands as the second-largest regulatory manager of Hajj in the world. The country's performance was highly praised at an international forum led by the Saudi Minister of Hajj, where Pakistan's state and private sectors received significant honors for their outstanding performance. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf highlighted that excellent arrangements in accommodation, transport, and catering kept complaints under one percent. Furthermore, expanding the "Road to Makkah" project to Lahore allowed 80 percent of Pakistani pilgrims to benefit from streamlined immigration processes. In Madinah, premium hotels ranging from five-star to one-star categories were secured within the central Markaziya district. — APP

## Lionel Messi leads Argentina squad for sixth World Cup

Emiliano Martinez, Enzo Fernandez and Julian Alvarez return for Argentina World Cup squad

THE 38-year-old Inter Miami forward will play in his sixth World Cup, extending his national record, while Emiliano Martinez, Nicolas Otamendi, Rodrigo De Paul, Alexis Mac Allister, Enzo Fernandez, Julian Alvarez and Lautaro Martinez are among 17 players returning from the squad that lifted the trophy in Qatar in 2022. Coach Lionel Scaloni retained the core of the side that won Argentina's third world title, although veteran winger Angel Di Maria was not considered after retiring from international football following the 2024 Copa America. Midfielder Giovanni Lo Celso, who missed the 2022 World Cup through injury, returned for his second finals after being part of Argentina's squad in Russia in 2018 without making an appearance. Argentinas Lionel Messi kisses the trophy as he celebrates winning the World Cup, Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 - Final - Argentina v France - Lusail Stadium, Lusail, Qatar - December 18, 2022. Argentina's Lionel Messi kisses the trophy as he celebrates winning the World Cup, Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 - Final - Argentina v France - Lusail Stadium, Lusail, Qatar - December 18, 2022. — Reuters Argentina also included several younger players expected to lead the team's next generation, including Valentin Barco, Nicolas Paz and Giuliano Simeone, while forwards Jose Manuel Lopez and Thiago Almada are among those set for their first World Cup appearances. Local media reports said left back Marcos Acuna, part of

the 2022 title-winning squad, missed out because of fitness concerns. Argentina will open their Group J campaign against Algeria on June 16 before facing Jordan and Austria. Squad: Goalkeepers: Emiliano Martinez, Geronimo Rulli, Juan Musso. Defenders: Leonardo Balerdi, Gonzalo Montiel, Nicolas Tagliafico, Lisandro Martinez, Cristian Romero, Nicolas Otamendi, Facundo Medina, Nahuel Molina. Midfielders: Leandro Paredes, Rodrigo De Paul, Valentin Barco, Giovanni Lo Celso, Exequiel Palacios, Alexis Mac Allister, Enzo Fernandez. Forwards: Julian Alvarez, Lionel Messi, Nicolas Gonzalez, Thiago Almada, Giuliano Simeone, Nicolas Paz, Jose Manuel Lopez, Lautaro Martinez. — APP



## FIFA, AFC push for urgent PFF constitutional reforms

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) have called for urgent revisions to the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Constitution, stressing that the federation must align its statutes with international governance standards while warning that any third-party interference in football affairs will not be tolerated. This outcome emerged on the first day of the Governance and Statutes Revision Workshop organized by the Pakistan Football Federation, where FIFA's Head of Member Associations Governance, Rolf Tanner, and AFC Senior Manager of the South Asia Unit, Sonam Jigmi, addressed members of the PFF Congress. The FIFA and AFC officials underlined the importance of safeguarding the autonomy of the federation, making it clear that external interference in the affairs of the PFF is unacceptable under international football regulations. The PFF Constitution was last comprehensively revised in 2014, although some clauses were amended ahead of last year's Elective Congress, which was conducted under the FIFA-appointed Normalisation Committee. During the workshop, members of the PFF

Congress were briefed on key principles of good governance. Tanner and Jigmi emphasized the separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial bodies of the federation, describing it as a cornerstone of transparency and accountability. The discussions also focused on conflict-of-interest regulations, gender equality, transparency, competence-based governance and institutional accountability. FIFA and AFC officials stressed that constitutional reform is essential to creating a

modern and stable football administration structure in Pakistan. "The distinction of powers ensures effective checks and balances and significantly reduces the risk of corruption," Tanner said. He added that revision of the 2014 PFF Constitution is an urgent requirement set by FIFA and the AFC to ensure long-term stability and sustainable development within Pakistan football. "FIFA and AFC directed that the PFF Constitution be revised within one year of the elections, and

this workshop is an important step towards ensuring that the process is completed as soon as possible," he said. Highlighting the direct link between governance and sporting success, Tanner added that stronger institutions ultimately lead to better performances on the field. "You are not going to progress at a sporting level with an archaic federation. Our ultimate objective is to create an environment where football can develop, flourish and be played at the highest level," he remarked. AFC official Sonam Jigmi assured Congress members that the constitutional review process would be transparent, inclusive and consultation-based. He also warned that failure to comply with FIFA and AFC regulations could have serious consequences. "A federation that does not comply with FIFA and AFC obligations risks losing its rights and privileges as a member association," Jigmi said. PFF President Syed Mohsen Gilani welcomed the reform process, describing governance reforms as essential for the future of football in Pakistan. "The revision of the statutes has remained pending for more than a decade while other federations have moved far ahead. We must complete this process now and lay the foundations for a stronger and more progressive football federation," Gilani said.



## Mayor says construction work near Hill Park...

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Wahab clarified that the KMC had not "auctioned or allotted any land to anyone" He recalled that a week before Eidul Azha, he received a complaint, following which he sent a KMC team to the area. "I instructed them that if the construction is taking place within the KMC land, then proceed with demolition," he said. "Not even an inch of KMC land has been allotted," the mayor reiterated, dismissing MQM-P's claims of granting permission for construction work as political point-scoring. Mayor Wahab stressed that Hill Park "had always been KMC's property and will continue to remain as such". In the Saturday statement, the KMC spokesperson noted that legal action had been initiated as its Land Department "sent a letter to the police asking that the construction be stopped and action should be taken against those responsible". As per the statement, "an investigation into the public complaints revealed that the KMC made no allotment or that any construction permission was issued".

## Gilani son denies he was...

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The Pakistani passport seems to have no value. So much for our valuable democracy." Reiterating his dismissal of the deportation reports in a second post, Musa said: "Let me assure people with official passports that the government of the UAE is upholding the agreement to the letter and spirit. The fake news circulating regarding deportation is FAKE." He also posted a photo of himself, which he said was from his "recent trip". Referring to the post shared by Haque — which has now been deleted — he tagged the National Cybercrime Investigation Agency (NC-CIA), Federal Investigation Agency and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, and called for action.

## Jordan condemns storming...

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Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, has witnessed frequent clashes — including Israeli settler raids and restrictions on Muslim worshippers — since East Jerusalem was occupied in June 1967. The mosque is administered by Jordan's Ministry of Awqaf, which holds the legal authority to manage the compound and control access. Jordan cautioned against settlers' efforts to create a new reality that would temporally and spatially divide the landmark. Settlers, who refer to the area as the Temple Mount, seek to establish a presence in the compound to perform Jewish prayers at certain times. Several Israeli ministers publicly endorsed these plans, including Itamar Ben-Gvir, the far-right national security minister.

## Zardari urges people to say no...

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including about 1.6 million deaths from second-hand smoke exposure. He said successive governments around the world, working with civil society, have taken a range of measures through regulation and awareness to reduce tobacco use. Asif Ali Zardari said the time has come that besides other issues, our national parliament and provincial legislatures make laws and create effective enforcement mechanisms to protect our people and future generations and effectively resist the merchants of death. He said change at the household and community level can contribute meaningfully to national progress in public health.

## Briefs

**Palestinian nurse killed, others injured in Israeli airstrike**

GAZA: A Palestinian nurse was killed in an Israeli strike on Saturday, hospital authorities said. The strike hit a Hamas-manned police point in the central city of Deir Al-Balah. At least three other people were wounded, according to the city's Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital, which received the casualties. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The nurse was identified as Jamal Abu Aoun, who worked at Yafa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah. His funeral was held at noon in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital's courtyard. He was the latest fatality among Palestinians in the coastal enclave since a fragile October ceasefire deal attempted to halt a more than two-year war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Medical sources in the Gaza Strip announced on Saturday that the death toll from the Israeli military offensive on Gaza had risen to 72,938 Palestinians killed and 172,919 injured since October 2023. According to the sources, hospitals across the Gaza Strip received the bodies of seven Palestinians over the past 24 hours, including six newly killed victims and one person who succumbed to previous injuries.—APP

**WHO chief hails 5 Ebola recoveries**

BUNIA, Congo: Five patients have recovered from a rare type of Ebola, the head of the World Health Organization said Sunday during a visit to eastern Congo's Bunia, a city at the heart of an outbreak. "Four people will be discharged today and there was one that was discharged the day before yesterday," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during the opening of a new Ebola treatment center in Bunia, the provincial capital of Ituri. "Of course, we're still working on vaccines and treatments but that doesn't mean that people cannot recover from Ebola," he added. The WHO said Friday a patient had recovered from the Bundibugyo virus, the current kind of Ebola, which has no approved treatment or vaccine. It was the first documented recovery of a confirmed Bundibugyo patient during the current outbreak. The health organization said latest official figures showed 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths. Neighboring Uganda has confirmed nine cases and one death, the Ugandan Health Ministry said Friday. The virus continues to spread faster than the response despite better-organized health facilities and new aid arrivals, Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, said Saturday, calling for the immediate expansion of testing, faster deployment of aid workers and sustained access for medical supplies.—APP

**Australian researchers teach brain cells to play 'Doom'**

MELBOURNE: Australian researchers have trained lab-grown brain cells on a silicon computer chip to play the nineties shooter "Doom" and say they are just scratching the surface of what the neurons could be capable of doing. It's the science-fiction work of biotech boffins at Cortical Labs, who researched and developed the technology that harnesses the workings of the brain's networking system. Each so-called "biological computer" contains around 200,000 living human brain cells, grown from stem cells that were harvested from blood donations. Having mastered the simple computer game "Pong," where a paddle is moved up and down to send a ball across a screen, the brain cells have moved on to bigger things. Initially, the neurons were at the "level of a beginner who's never played a video game before," Alon Loeffler, Cortical Labs' senior application scientist, told AFP.—APP

# PUC chairman lauds Saudi leadership for successful Hajj

Ashrafi said the success of this year's Hajj reflected the Saudi leadership's unwavering commitment to serving the Two Holy Mosques and the millions of pilgrims who travel annually to the holy sites from around the world

DNA

MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH: The Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has congratulated the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the successful management of the Hajj season 1447 AH, describing it as an extraordinary achievement made possible through the grace of Almighty Allah and the visionary leadership of 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. In a statement, Ashrafi said the success of this year's Hajj reflected the Saudi leadership's unwavering commitment to serving the Two Holy Mosques and the millions of pilgrims who travel annually to the holy sites from around the world. He said the comprehensive planning, continuous supervision, and ongoing development of Hajj services under the guidance of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had resulted in one of the most successful pilgrimage seasons in recent years. "The successful organization of Hajj 1447 AH is a remarkable and well-deserved accomplishment. It is the result of Allah's blessings, the generous directives of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and the vision, dedication, and around-the-clock oversight of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to continuously improve every aspect of the Hajj experience," Ashrafi said. He particularly praised the crowd management strategy implemented during the pilgrimage, describing it as a model of international excellence. "The operational plan for managing pilgrim movement represented a world-class example of effective crowd management. It was part of a comprehensive system that was executed with exceptional precision, professionalism,



and meticulous attention to detail," he added. Ashrafi also commended the Kingdom's efforts to enhance programs, infrastructure, and services designed to ensure the safety, comfort, and well-being of pilgrims from their arrival in Saudi Arabia until their departure after completing the sacred rites. He highlighted the significance of the Makkah Route Initiative, saying the project had greatly facilitated travel procedures for pilgrims and provided unprecedented convenience

to thousands of Hajj participants from different countries. "The Makkah Route Initiative has become one of the most successful programs serving pilgrims. Its positive impact has been widely acknowledged by pilgrims and participating nations alike," he said. The Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman expressed appreciation for all Saudi institutions involved in serving the pilgrims, including princes, ministers, government agencies, military and civil institutions, and particularly the security

forces. He paid tribute to the Supreme Hajj Committee, headed by Minister of Interior Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, for its effective leadership and coordination among all ministries and agencies involved in Hajj operations. Ashrafi said the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, in cooperation with service providers and security authorities, had achieved notable success in improving services and ensuring strict compliance with regulations governing the pilgrimage. Referring to Pakistan's religious guidance on Hajj regulations, Ashrafi said Darul Ifta Pakistan had issued a ruling declaring the performance of Hajj without an official permit to be impermissible under Islamic law. He emphasized the importance of adhering to all rules and instructions issued by the relevant authorities, adding that compliance with regulations was essential for ensuring the safety, security, and smooth management of the pilgrimage. Ashrafi reaffirmed Pakistan's support for Saudi Arabia's efforts to serve the pilgrims, saying the Kingdom had made the service of the Guests of Allah a central national mission and a source of pride for both its leadership and people. "We deeply appreciate the efforts undertaken under the directives of the Saudi leadership. Serving the pilgrims has become a noble responsibility embraced by the entire Saudi nation. The results of these efforts are clearly visible on the ground, and the Kingdom continues to dedicate its resources to serving Islam, Muslims, and the visitors of the Two Holy Mosques," he said. Congratulating the Saudi leadership on the historic achievement, Ashrafi said the success of this year's Hajj served as a clear reflection of the progress achieved under Saudi Vision 2030. He described Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as a visionary and capable leader whose reforms and leadership had contributed significantly to the Kingdom's development across various sectors, particularly in enhancing services for pilgrims.

## US says it struck commercial ship trying to breach blockade

The US official previously told The Associated Press that the US has not found or destroyed any mines in the strait

WASHINGTON: The US military stopped a merchant vessel trying to break through its blockade of Iranian ports by firing a missile into its engine room, the US Central Command said on Saturday. The Gambia-flagged cargo ship Lian Star ignored more than 20 warnings from US forces overnight as it tried to enter an Iranian port, the military said. The ship remained adrift in the Gulf of Oman and US forces have not boarded it, said a US official with knowledge of the situation, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations. With the latest action, US military has stopped six ships trying to breach the blockade. One was allowed to proceed. Another 116 ships have been redirected, the military said. The US launched the blockade on April 17 in response to Iran effectively closing the strait after the war in the Middle East began with US and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28. A fragile ceasefire has held since April 7. Now the region awaits word on whether a deal can be reached to extend it by 60 days while talks would be held on Iran's disputed nuclear program. Events in the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway between Iran and Oman, have shaken the global economy. Shipments of significant amounts of oil, natural gas and related supplies like fertilizer are largely stranded, increasing the strain on consumers and food producers. The US blockade seeks to limit Iran's own shipments and further weaken its access to cash, creating more pain for its long-weakened economy. US President Donald Trump met with advisers on Friday but has yet to decide on whether to move ahead with a deal to extend the ceasefire and reopen the strait. Iran has said the deal had not been finalized. Commercial traffic has quietly continued to flow through the strait, despite Iran's assertions that it must approve any transits, though at a much lower volume than before the war. "Any violation of these regulations will place the security of their passage at serious risk," Iran's joint military command said Saturday in a statement carried by state TV, warning that any military vessels trying to interfere with that would be targeted. Iran has even charged tolls for transit as high as \$2 million, which experts have called a violation of a principle of international maritime trade: freedom of peaceful navigation. Qatar's deputy prime minister, Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali Al Thani, said on Saturday that the Gulf nation opposes charging fees to transit, "but for certain times when they say they are going to use it for mine clearing or some usage of the fees for a temporary time, this is something that is negotiable, and it could be something that will help the transit of the Strait of Hormuz to be back to normal stage." The US official previously told The Associated Press that the US has not found or destroyed any mines in the strait.—Agencies



BUCHAREST: These images are not from Ukraine but from Romania, European Union. A Russian drone crashed this morning in Gala, slaming into a residential. It caused a powerful explosion and fire on the 10th floor. Over 100 innocent civilian residents were evacuated. There were 4 victims: 2 with injuries hospitalized and 2 treated for panic attacks on site. —DNA

## Saudi dates gain popularity in India as healthier sugar alternative

NEW DELHI: Saudi dates are becoming increasingly popular in India, dry fruit traders and the Kingdom's regulator say, as Indian buyers look for healthier alternatives to sugar and better-quality fruit than the Iranian dates that used to dominate the market. Saudi Arabia's National Center for Palms and Dates, the government body responsible for developing the Kingdom's date industry, said earlier this month that exports to India rose 25 percent in 2025 from a year earlier, "yielding numerous benefits for the sector and supporting its expansion into further global markets." Indian importers have also seen a similar rise in local demand, especially for Safawi dates — known in India as Kalamani — and Sukkari. "Saudi dates' quality and price are both competitive," said Tariq Tabrez, owner of the Hindustan Foreign Traders, who has been importing dates to the Indian market since 2012. "Their quality and price are balanced. If you compare them with Iranian dates, the quality of Iranian dates is not as good. Mazafati dates from Iran are not as good as Sukkari dates from Saudi Arabia. Saudi dates have a longer shelf life and better quality.—APP

## Syria scales back Euphrates Dam's water flow

DAMASCUS: Technical teams at Syria's Euphrates Dam have begun closing a spillway gate to manage water levels along the Euphrates River following a decline in water inflows from Turkey, the Ministry of Energy has announced. The single gate was releasing about 300 cubic meters of water per second prior to the closure. With the gate closed, the total water discharged through the Euphrates Dam will be scaled back to about 1,400 cubic meters per second. Officials said the operational measure was intended to gradually and safely restore water levels to their normal range along the river's course through the provinces of Raqqah and Deir Ezzor. Mohammad Al-Bashir, the Syrian Arab Republic's energy minister, confirmed via a post on X that water levels along the Euphrates were already showing gradual improvement due to the technical measures implemented. Al-Bashir added that authorities would continue to monitor conditions closely until river levels returned to normal. In tandem with the energy sector's actions, Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management Raed Al-Saleh said that operations rooms remained on high alert and were working at full capacity. Al-Saleh noted that following the closure of the gate, the levels of the Euphrates River in Deir Ezzor and Raqqah would gradually decrease. Technical and engineering teams are conducting round-the-clock assessments to regulate water releases, according to the Ministry of Energy. The ongoing field monitoring efforts are designed to satisfy technical requirements, protect vital water infrastructure, maintain hydrological stability along the river, and ensure the uninterrupted delivery of essential services to local residents.—APP

## China patrols Scarborough Shoal after Philippines warns of threat

BEIJING: China's military and coast guard said they carried out patrols near Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea on Sunday, a day after the Philippine defense minister said Manila remained under threat from Beijing despite a recent easing in US-China tensions. Scarborough Shoal is one of Asia's most contested maritime features and has become a frequent flashpoint between China and the Philippines over sovereignty and fishing rights. The People's Liberation Army's Southern Theatre Command said in a statement on the WeChat platform that its naval and air units carried out combat readiness patrols in the "territorial sea and airspace" of the atoll and its surrounding areas. "Such patrols serve as an effective countermeasure to cope with all sorts of rights violation and provocative acts," the command said. China's coast guard said in a separate statement it conducted law enforcement patrols near the Scarborough Shoal, adding that since this month it had dealt with ships engaged in "illegal rights-violation activities in accordance with laws and regulations," without elaborating. The Philippine embassy in Beijing did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.—APP

## Japan pushes back against accusations of 'new militarism'

SINGAPORE: Japanese defense minister Koizumi Shinjiro denied accusations of "new militarism" in a speech delivered at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Asia's premier forum for defense leaders, militaries and diplomats. "Think about it. There's a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers. Japan has neither of such weapons, and yet Japan is labelled 'new militarism'," he said on Sunday, in pointed remarks aimed at China. "Since the end of the Second World War, Japan has consistently respected international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and has made sincere efforts to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order," he added. In May, China's foreign ministry called on Asia-Pacific countries to be vigilant and "jointly resist the reckless actions of Japan's neo-militarism." Koizumi added he felt "sad" about not being able to meet his Chinese counterparts at the dialogue.—APP

## Middle East eco resilience tested as conflict risks mount

RIYADH: The Middle East's economic resilience is being tested by the Iran war, with Fitch Ratings warning that "significant risks" from the conflict could trigger broader rating downgrades across the region. The ratings agency said no Middle East issuer has been downgraded since the conflict escalated in late February, but several ratings have been placed on Rating Watch Negative or had outlooks revised lower, reflecting heightened uncertainty linked to the war and the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz. "The persistence of significant risks around the conflict that, if crystallised, could lead to broader rating downgrades," Fitch said in a report released on May 28. The disruption has already prompted Fitch to raise its 2026 base-case Brent crude oil price assumption to \$87 per barrel from \$70 previously. The revision is based on expectations that the Strait of Hormuz will begin reopening around July after remaining effectively closed for about five months. Before the conflict, the waterway carried around 15 million barrels of crude oil per day and 5 million barrels of oil products, accounting for roughly 20 percent of global oil consumption, as well as a significant share of global liquefied natural gas and fertilizer shipments. Fitch said supply-chain disruptions have been compounded by damage to Qatar's LNG infrastructure and volatile funding conditions across the region. In an adverse scenario, where flows through the strait do not return to near-normal levels until late in the third quarter or early in the fourth quarter, oil prices could average around \$100 per barrel in 2026, the agency said. While higher oil prices may support some Gulf hydrocarbon producers, Fitch noted that the benefits depend

on their ability to export through routes that bypass the strait. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have benefited from pipeline infrastructure that allows substantial hydrocarbon exports to avoid the waterway, while Oman remains the most insulated Gulf economy because its exports do not rely on the strait. Fitch said Oman is the only GCC sovereign for which it improved 2026 growth and fiscal forecasts in its latest assessment. Despite the disruption, sovereign credit profiles across the Gulf have largely remained stable. "Most GCC sovereigns have proved resilient since the start of the war," Fitch said, noting that apart from placing Qatar and Ras Al Khaimah on Rating Watch Negative, the conflict has not led to rating or outlook changes for Fitch-rated GCC sovereigns. The agency cautioned, however, that a prolonged conflict or a renewed escalation of hostilities could test the resilience of sovereign ratings and have broader implications across the region's credit landscape. Among corporate sectors, Fitch identified airlines, hotels, chemicals and homebuilders as facing the most significant risks. Airlines are contending with aviation disruptions and higher fuel costs, while hotels face weaker occupancy as security concerns and travel disruptions weigh on tourism demand. Chemical producers continue to grapple with rising feedstock costs and supply-chain challenges. "A longer period of hostilities may reduce the attractiveness of the GCC as a destination for residential housing investment," the report said, warning that some homebuilders could face pressure if investor sentiment weakens. Banks across the Gulf also face risks through deteriorating asset quali-

ty and tighter liquidity conditions if the conflict drags on. "The two main transmission channels to the banking sector from the conflict are liquidity and asset quality," Fitch said. Weaker performance in sectors such as infrastructure, tourism, aviation, logistics and real estate could place pressure on loan portfolios, particularly in the UAE and Qatar. Dubai's property market remains a key area of focus. Fitch noted that property prices in the emirate have risen about 60 percent over the past four years and were already expected to undergo a moderate correction due to new supply entering the market. A prolonged conflict and potential expatriate outflows could deepen that adjustment and weigh on banks with significant real estate exposure. Even so, the agency said Gulf banks remain supported by strong liquidity buffers and government backing. "Funding and liquidity are rating strengths for the region," Fitch said, adding that government and government-related deposits account for 20 percent to 30 percent of banking-sector deposits across the GCC. Fitch estimates that about 85 percent of GCC bank ratings and many government-related corporate ratings depend on sovereign support, meaning any negative action on sovereign ratings would likely ripple across the wider financial system. Looking ahead, the agency said investors should monitor efforts to bring the conflict to a lasting end, along with its impact on growth, inflation, energy markets, supply chains and financing conditions. Sector-level consequences for tourism, aviation, real estate, infrastructure and financial institutions will also remain key indicators of the region's ability to withstand a prolonged geopolitical shock. —DNA

## Briefs

### US chemical spill death toll rises to 11

LOS ANGELES: The death toll from a chemical spill at a paper plant in Washington state has risen to 11 as rescuers recovered the bodies of all nine missing people, US authorities said on Saturday. A huge tank holding tens of thousands of gallons of a highly caustic substance imploded on Tuesday at the plant in Longview, Washington state, sparking a major search operation. "We have recovered the ninth and final missing employee of this incident," Brad Hannig, fire chief of Longview Fire Department, told a news conference. Rescuers said on Wednesday that two people had died while nine others remained missing. The accident at the Nippon Dynawave Packaging Company happened during an early morning shift change when a 900,000-gallon (3.4 million-liter) tank containing a large quantity of a substance called white liquor ruptured. - APP

### As many as eight dead in Türkiye bus accident

ISTANBUL: A bus crashed and caught fire in western Turkey early Sunday, leaving eight people dead, including a 9-month-old baby boy, local media reported. The bus, owned by Pamukale Tourism, crashed into highway barriers in Denizli province at 1:40 a.m. local time while carrying 38 passengers and three staff from Izmir to the Mediterranean city of Antalya, the Demirören News Agency said. Some 33 people were injured in the incident. Among the dead were the 50-year-old driver and the father of the infant boy. Images of the aftermath of the crash showed the burned out frame of the bus by the roadside. Saturday was the final day of Eid al-Adha. The religious festival usually sees a spike in traffic accidents across Turkey as people travel to visit family and take vacations. - APP

### 'Chinese nationals' security tops priority

FAISALABAD: City Police Officer (CPO) Tanveer Hussain said that the security of Chinese nationals and Chinese-backed projects remains among the highest priorities of the Government of Pakistan and any negligence or complacency in security duties would not be tolerated under any circumstances. The CPO expressed these views while chairing an important meeting with Chinese representatives and the management of Time Ceramics at the FIEDMC Industrial Area.

## 'To curb human trafficking'

# FIA offloaded nearly 39,800 passengers in 2025

At least 132 passengers were offloaded from their scheduled flights at various airports across the country in the past year by FIA immigration officers, while 85 of its officials were penalised for misuse of authority during this period, according to a report submitted to the Senate

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) offloaded 39,786 passengers in 2025 under a "lawful, intelligence-driven and risk-based system" to curb irregular migration and human smuggling, a top official said on Sunday. Speaking to a select group of senior journalists, Immigration Additional Director General Nouman Siddiqui said passenger offloading, often criticised publicly, was primarily a preventive step aimed at saving lives, protecting citizens from exploitation abroad and safeguarding Pakistan's international image. "Offloading decisions are not arbitrary," he asserted. They are based on immigration concerns, suspicious travel patterns, document verification, destination-country requirements and established standard operating procedures. The primary objective, he said, was "the protection of human life and prevention of exploitation

at the hands of human traffickers". At least 132 passengers were offloaded from their scheduled flights at various airports across the country in the past year by FIA immigration officers, while 85 of its officials were penalised for misuse of authority during this period, according to a report submitted to the Senate. A National Assembly standing committee was told in December that at least 51,000 passengers were offloaded at airports in 2025 after failing immigration checks, with a large number of them being offloaded at Lahore and Karachi airports. Rising risks and deadly consequences Siddiqui said the crackdown followed multiple tragedies linked to illegal migration routes. Over the past three years, around 460 Pakistanis have fallen victim to such incidents, with at least 377 reported deaths. According to International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) data, 109 Pakistani nationals lost their lives in 2025 alone while attempting irregular migration. He said the issue gained urgency after the June 2023 Greece boat tragedy, in which a large number of Paki-

stani migrants perished in the Mediterranean Sea. A high-level inquiry committee formed by the prime minister subsequently recommended stricter enforcement measures, many of which are now being implemented. To dismantle criminal networks, the FIA registered 2,421 cases since December 2024, resulting in the arrest of 3,130 agents. Authorities seized property worth Rs961.71 million, recovered Rs87.7m and froze bank accounts amounting to Rs239.63m. "These figures reflect the scale and seriousness of human smuggling and trafficking in Pakistan," he said. In many cases, passengers were found travelling through suspicious routes, fake overseas employment schemes, forged documents, fraudulent sponsorships or high-risk transit patterns linked to organised smuggling and trafficking networks, he added. The FIA's Risk Analysis Unit developed five risk profiles to help immigration officers segregate suspected travellers from genuine passengers. The profiles

are reviewed and updated periodically. The measures led to a 75 per cent reduction in deportations related to beggary and a 31pc decrease in deportations due to forgery. Overall deportations from various countries fell 16pc in 2025 compared to 2024. The agency also cited a 64pc reduction in illegal border crossings into Europe by Pakistani nationals in the first two months of 2025-26, according to Frontex data. Two categories of offloaded passengers fell into two categories: those offloaded by FIA on immigration or risk grounds, and those not offloaded by FIA, including cases involving airline issues, technical faults, flight cancellations, bad weather, self-offloading, seasonal border closures or requests from other departments. Besides the 39,786 passengers offloaded by FIA in 2025, another 34,688 were offloaded for non-FIA reasons. These included airline-related disruptions and arrests required by Customs, Anti Narcotics Force, Airport Security Force and the police.

### Ukraine drones hit several target in Russia

MOSCOW: Ukrainian drones struck energy and industrial targets across several Russian regions overnight, Russian authorities said on Sunday, in an escalating campaign of strikes against infrastructure. In Saratov, a region on the Volga River with several oil refineries that has come under regular Ukrainian attack in recent years, governor Roman Busargin said on Telegram that "civil infrastructure" had been damaged. In the Kirov region, northeast of Moscow and around 1,300km (800 miles) from Ukrainian-held territory, governor Alexander Sokolov said drones had hit a facility in the Urzhumsky district. Governors in Rostov, Voronezh and Belgorod regions, all of which border Ukraine, also reported strikes, with three civilians injured in Belgorod. On the Russian-controlled Crimean peninsula, Moscow-backed governor Sergei Aksyonov said authorities were introducing restrictions on sales of petrol. He did not say why, but Ukraine has for months been attacking fuel infrastructure in southwestern Russia, close to Crimea. - APP

## Solar panels, electric vehicles may become expensive in 2026-27

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Consumers planning to buy solar panels, electric vehicles or hybrid cars may face higher costs in the upcoming Budget 2026-27, as the government reviews tax proposals amid ongoing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Sources say the IMF has refused to support new tax exemptions and is instead pushing for significant increases in General Sales Tax (GST) on electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles and solar energy equipment. According to sources, the IMF has recommended raising GST on electric vehicles from 1% to 18%. The international lender has also proposed increasing the tax rate on hybrid vehicles from 8% to 18%. In addition, GST on solar panels could rise from 10% to 18%, a move that may significantly increase costs for consumers shifting toward renewable energy solutions. If the proposed tax changes are approved,

prices of electric and hybrid vehicles are expected to increase substantially. The impact could extend across the entire electric mobility sector, including electric cars, motorcycles, rickshaws, trucks and buses. Sources also indicate that electric pickups, tractors and double-cabin vehicles may face additional taxation under the new budget proposals. Industry observers fear that higher taxes could slow the adoption of electric vehicles and alternative energy technologies in Pakistan. The proposed tax measures have emerged even before the government formally unveils its new auto policy. According to sources, the government had planned to encourage electric vehicle adoption by gradually reducing the average tariff on the auto sector from 10.6% to 6% over the next five years. Officials were also considering abolishing the 1% advance tax on exports in the upcoming budget. However, the IMF's demand for an 18% GST on vehicles has complicated those plans and created uncertainty around incentives for the auto sector.

### Govt plans Rs 980m mineral resource centre in Peshawar

ISLAMABAD: The government has planned a Rs979.621 million project for the establishment of a mineral resource centre, analytical laboratory, and mineral detection facility at the PCSIR Labs, Peshawar to promote mineral exploration, value addition and exports. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the project will be executed by PCSIR under the Ministry of Science and Technology during 2026-2028, said a press release. The proposed facility aims to strengthen mineral processing and analytical capabilities through modern scientific technologies and advanced laboratory infrastructure. The project scope includes ore beneficiation, analytical services, mineral identification and detection, geological surveys of local ores, and minerals extraction and processing technologies. According to the document, the key technologies to be installed include Optical Emission Spectrometer, Atomic Absorption Spectrometer, XRF, and X-Ray Diffraction systems to ensure accurate mineral analysis and testing. The project is expected to improve indigenous technological capabilities, encourage value addition in mineral products, enhance exploration activities, and support import substitution in the mineral sector. - APP

## Sri Lanka raise fuel prices after IMF loan instalment

President Anura Kumara Disanayake, in a letter to the IMF made public by the Washington-based international lender, said fuel subsidies will be phased out by September

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka raised fuel prices by up to six percent on Sunday, in line with IMF plans to recover energy costs and phase out subsidies to stabilise the economy. Petrol was raised to 434 rupees (\$1.33), up from 410, while diesel increased to 407 rupees a litre from 392, the state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation said. The price hike came days after the International Monetary Fund released a \$695 million instalment of a \$2.9 billion bailout loan, agreed in early 2023 to stabilise the cash-strapped South Asian nation. The IMF wants Sri Lanka to ensure cost recovery for both fuel and electricity tariffs, which have been subsidised by the government since the start of the conflict in the Middle East in February. President Anura Kumara Disanayake, in a letter to the IMF made public by the Washington-based international lender, said fuel subsi-

dies will be phased out by September. Since the United States and Israel began attacking Iran on February 28, triggering a global energy crisis, Sri Lanka has raised petrol and diesel prices by about 48 percent. Electricity has increased by a third. The Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway through which about 20 percent of global oil exports pass in peacetime, has been effectively closed by Iran. Sri Lanka imports all its oil and also buys coal for electricity generation. Colombo has warned that the fighting in the Middle East, and any prolonged conflict, could seriously undermine its efforts to emerge from the economic meltdown of 2022. Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt in 2022 after running out of foreign exchange. Since then, Colombo has been drawing down the IMF bailout loan to stabilise the country. - APP

## US Treasury prepares for \$250 bill featuring Donald Trump portrait

DNA

WASHINGTON: The Donald Trump administration is preparing contingency plans for a new \$250 commemorative bill that could feature a portrait of President Donald Trump, although the proposal faces significant legal and legislative hurdles before it can become a reality. The proposal stems from legislation introduced by Republican lawmakers that would authorize the issuance of a \$250 note as part of celebrations marking the United States' 250th anniversary. Current federal law prohibits the depiction of living individ-

uals on U.S. currency, meaning congressional action would be required before any such note could be produced. A spokesperson for the US Treasury Department said the agency is conducting planning and due diligence in response to the legislation. The department said the Bureau of Engraving and Printing is preparing for the possibility that Congress could approve the measure. "Should this legislative mandate be signed into law, the BEP is moving proactively to produce a \$250 commemorative note which will appropriately recognize the 250th anniversary of our great nation," the spokesperson said.

## PTI 'seriously considering' exiting system

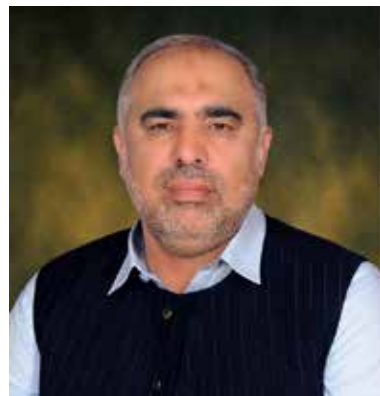
Talal says govt had no intention of stopping Qaiser, insists "whatever happened was due to security concerns"

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader and former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser has warned that his party is "seriously considering" exiting the system, while stressing the need for a new Charter of Democracy in the country. Qaiser's comments came hours after he claimed restrictions on his movement prevented him from reaching Islamabad airport in time, causing him to miss a flight to Skardu, where he was scheduled to take part in the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) election campaign. Speaking on Geo News' programme 'Naya Pakistan', the PTI leader said police detained him for 40 minutes and released him only after the flight had departed. "Who will accept such an election? It is better to make a selection than holding such polls," Qaiser said, referring to the GB elections scheduled to take place on June 7. Responding to a question on holding talks with the government, the PTI leader Qaiser said: "We have adopted a principled policy and believe that there must be a Charter of Democracy in the country. "By a Charter of Democracy, we mean that fresh, free, and fair elections should be held. Moreover, all political parties should have confidence in an Election

Commission that is capable of conducting free and fair polls. Only then can the country move forward." However, the former NA speaker said the PTI had other options as well if the Imran Khan-founded party was not given political space in the country. "If this does not happen, we will exit the system. We are striving to secure our legal rights, and our mandate must be respected. If our mandate is not respected, we can take any decision," he warned. When asked whether the former ruling party was mulling en masse resignations from the legislature as well as dissolving the PTI-dominated KP Assembly, Qaiser said: "There are various ways of leaving the system, but no final decision has been made so far. However, we are seriously considering that we will not be left with any option [but to exit the system] if the system continues to function in the same manner."

Speaking on the same programme, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said a "high alert" is in place in the twin cities owing to the presence of Australia's cricket team in Rawalpindi. Rejecting PTI's claims of being denied a level playing field, the state minister said the government did not want any questions raised about the electoral process in GB. Responding to a question about Qaiser's arrest, Talal said: "Whatever happened was due to security concerns. If the intention had been to stop Qaiser, there were many other ways to do so."





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