



Islamabad POST

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Mamdani does not attend parade honoring Israel

Detailed News On Page-08

Ahsan says development key govt goal

Detailed News On Page-08



Pakistan peace role praised at Russia moot

Detailed News On Page-07



Islamabad biggest GSP beneficiary

EU foreign policy chief lauds Pak role in regional stability

she emphasized that the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP Plus) trade status is not merely an economic arrangement but is deeply tied to good governance, environmental protection, human rights, and labor standards

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: European Union Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kalas underscored Pakistan's importance in regional and global affairs during a joint press conference with Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar in Islamabad. Addressing a wide range of issues, she emphasized that the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP Plus) trade status is not merely an economic arrangement but is deeply tied to good governance, environmental protection, human rights, and labor standards. Kalas noted that Pakistan has been the largest recipient of GSP Plus benefits since the program's inception, which has provided significant trade advantages to the country. She stressed that continued access to these benefits depends on Pakistan's commitment to upholding democratic values, protecting workers' rights, and ensuring sustainable development. "GSP Plus is not just about trade; it is about values and responsibilities," she remarked. Turning to regional security,

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Pakistan values ties with EU, says PM

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Ms. Kaja Kalas, European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, at the Prime Minister House today. Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Sen. Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Sen. Azam Nazeer Tarar, Attorney General of Pakistan Mr. Mansoor Usman Awan, SAPM Tariq Fatemi and other senior officials were also present.

The Prime Minister welcomed the EU High Representative and stated that Pakistan was keen to further strengthen the multifaceted partnership between Pakistan

and the European Union. While expressing satisfaction at the 8th round of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue held earlier today, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to enhancing cooperation with the EU in key areas including trade and investment, climate change, security, migration, sustainable development, and connectivity. In this regard, the Prime Minister highlighted the important role of GSP+ in ensuring stronger trade ties between Pakistan and the EU. Discussions also focused on the regional and international situation. The Prime Minister thanked the EU leadership for its strong support for Pakistan's peace efforts in the Gulf region. He said that Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission H.E. Ms. Kaja Kalas called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on 1 June 2026. - DNA

Aleema denies Imran meeting with ex-army chief

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan, the sister of PTI founder Imran Khan, on Monday dismissed reports about the former premier's meeting with an ex-army chief at Adiala jail as "totally fake". "All the news circulating on social media that a former army chief met Imran Khan in Adiala jail [is] fake," she said in a post on the social media platform X. She said the claims had been verified with PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, who also confirmed that "this is totally fake". "It is disinformation, especially spread to distract from the fact that Imran is being tortured through total isolation," she said. She added that the claims were an attempt to distract from Imran not being provided

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Rain predicted in upper parts of Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Monday forecast dust-thunderstorm rain in various parts of the country from June 02 to 05 under the influence of a westerly wave likely to approach the upper parts of the country on Tuesday (June 2). According to the PMD, scattered dust-thunderstorm rain, accompanied by isolated heavy falls and hailstorms, is expected in Islamabad and several districts of Punjab, including Rawalpindi, Murree, Galliat, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum,

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Middle East situation

Iranian FM briefs Ishaq Dar on US ceasefire violations

Iran stopping message exchanges with US, may block Hormuz on Lebanon attacks

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi held a detailed conversation with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar to discuss the rapidly evolving regional situation and matters of mutual concern. During the call, FM Araghchi expressed deep concern over recent developments, including US violations and attacks on Iranian installations, which he said had pushed Iranian patience "to its limits." He also highlighted ceasefire violations in Lebanon by Israel and the Israeli government's reported orders for potential strikes in parts of Beirut, describing these actions as destabilizing and contrary to international norms. The Iranian Foreign Minister appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in regional diplomacy, acknowledging Islamabad's consistent efforts to promote peace and dialogue among neighboring states.

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Hamas to hold talks with Gaza mediators in Egypt

AGENCIES

A Hamas delegation is due to meet with mediators in Egypt on Wednesday to discuss ways of advancing the fragile Gaza ceasefire, officials from the Palestinian Islamist movement told AFP. "Egypt has invited Hamas and other factions to participate in talks with mediators on Wednesday... which will also include Qatari and Turkish officials," a Hamas official said, declining to be identified as he was not authorised to speak publicly on the matter. The official said the Hamas delegation, headed by chief negotiator Khalil al-Hayya, as well as representatives from other Palestinian

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Six tourists killed in road accident

DNA

GILGIT: At least seven people were killed after a tourist vehicle en route to Fairy Meadows plunged into the Tattu Nala ravine in Gilgit-Baltistan's Chilas city, police and rescue officials said on Monday. The victims were travelling to the popular tourist destination of Fairy Meadows when their jeep met with an accident, police said. According to police, all seven occupants, including the driver, died in the crash. The driver was identified as Ziaullah, a resident of Darel in Diamer district, rescue officials said, adding that two of the deceased tourists were identified as Ali and Sajjad, both from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Four other deceased tourists are believed to be from Punjab, with efforts underway to confirm their identities, rescue officials said.

NCCIA challenges SC deadline

FARRUKH SHEHZAD

ISLAMABAD: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) has moved the Supreme Court seeking withdrawal of its May 12 order that directed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to decide on the suspension of sentences pleas filed by lawyer and

Another news on Back Page

rights activist Imaan Mazari and her husband, Hadi Ali Chhattha, in a case related to controversial tweets. In January, a district and sessions court in the federal capital sentenced the couple to a total of 17 years in prison each under different sections of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) - just a day after their arrest in another case.

Electioneering gets momentum GB's rights should be protected, says Bilawal at polls rally

"When elections are held in Gilgit-Baltistan and the rest of Pakistan at the same time, progress in GB's struggle for right of rule will be made in the true sense"

STAFF REPORT

GILGIT: PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhatti-Zardari said on Monday that any possible constitutional amendment should provide protection to the rights of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). "If any constitutional amendment has to be made anywhere, it is very important that the rights of GB are protected under it," he said while addressing a rally in GB's Shigar while addressing a public gathering ahead of June 7 elections in the region. In this connection, he said, "We can take forward their struggle for their right of rule



(haq-i-hakimiyat)". For this, the first step would be to hold elections in GB and the rest of Pakistan at the same time, he said. "When elections are held in Gilgit-Baltistan and the rest of Pakistan at the same time, progress in GB's struggle for right of rule will be made in the true sense," he added. "If we want to ensure the right of rule [for GB], demands or aims should be to hold elections in GB at the same time as general elections in Pakistan." Speaking of right to ownership (haq-i-malkiyat) for GB, he claimed that the difference between the PPP and other parties was that "they want to run everything from Islamabad; they want to run Gwadar from Islamabad; they want to run Karachi from Islamabad". Addressing the rally's participants,

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France seizes oil tanker with ties to Iranian magnate

Macron posted a video of the seizure, which showed commandos rappelling from a helicopter onto the ship

DNA

BREST: President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday that France had detained a Russia-linked oil tanker in the Atlantic, with the Kremlin comparing the latest seizure aimed at tackling Moscow's sanctions-busting shadow fleet to "international piracy." Since September, France has boarded three other ships believed to belong to the shadow fleet, used by Russia to circumvent Western sanctions on its fossil fuel exports imposed over the Kremlin's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The Tagor was detained on Sunday morning in international waters with the help of Britain and other partners, after its Russian captain refused to comply with orders, prosecutors said. Macron posted a video of the seizure, which showed commandos rappelling from a helicopter onto the ship. "We consider these acts illegal. They border on international piracy," said President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov. "Russia is taking measures to ensure the safety of its cargo." Suspected of carrying Russian or Iranian oil despite international sanctions, the Tagor is linked to petroleum shipping magnate Mohammad Hossein

Continued on Page 06

Kuwait condemns Iran's attack

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Kuwait has condemned Iran's "heinous" and repeated attacks, which it described as a dangerous escalation and a direct assault on the country's security. "The heinous and repeated Iranian attacks ... represent a dangerous escalation and a direct assault on the security and stability" of Kuwait, a statement from the Kuwaiti foreign ministry said, "not to mention the grave threat they pose to the safety of civilians and vital facilities in the country." The continuation and repetition of these aggressions undermine efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and threaten security and stability in the region, the statement added. Kuwait's air defenses intercepted missile and drone attacks on Monday as sirens sounded across the country. Saudi Arabia, in a statement from its

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Boy killed after falling from rickshaw

SIALKOT: 14-year-old boy died after falling from a loader rickshaw on Adamke Gujran Road in Daska tehsil on Monday. According to Rescue 1122, Abdullah, son of Adil, was travelling on a loader rickshaw with his brother when he fell onto the road after the vehicle jolted while crossing a speed breaker. The rickshaw's wheel ran over the boy, causing severe head injuries that resulted in his death on the spot. Rescue 1122 officials reached the scene, shifted the body to the THQ Hospital Daska after completing necessary formalities, and urged citizens to observe safety precautions while travelling in loader rickshaws and other vehicles to prevent such accidents.—APP

Over 800 suspects held in anti-crime operations

KARACHI: Acting on the directives of Additional IGP Karachi Azad Khan, Karachi Police carried out successful anti-crime operations across the city during the past week, resulting in the arrest of more than 800 suspects. According to a spokesperson for Karachi Police on Monday, district police engaged in 17 encounters with armed robbers during anti-crime operations. Three suspects were killed and 19 others, including 17 injured robbers, were arrested following exchanges of fire. Police recovered 22 illegal weapons of various types, one hand grenade and seven motorcycles from the arrested suspects.—APP

First post hajj flight arrives with 151 pilgrims

MULTAN: The first post-Hajj flight arrived at the Multan International Airport from Jeddah on Monday. Airblue flight PA-873 landed with 151 pilgrims on board, who were warmly welcomed by officials and family members. Chairman of the Kashmir Committee Rana Qasim Noon, Director Hajj Rehman Khokhar and airport authorities received the pilgrims, presenting them with flower garlands and congratulating them on completing the pilgrimage. According to Hajj authorities, around 13,000 pilgrims from South Punjab travelling under both government and private Hajj schemes will return through various flights.—APP

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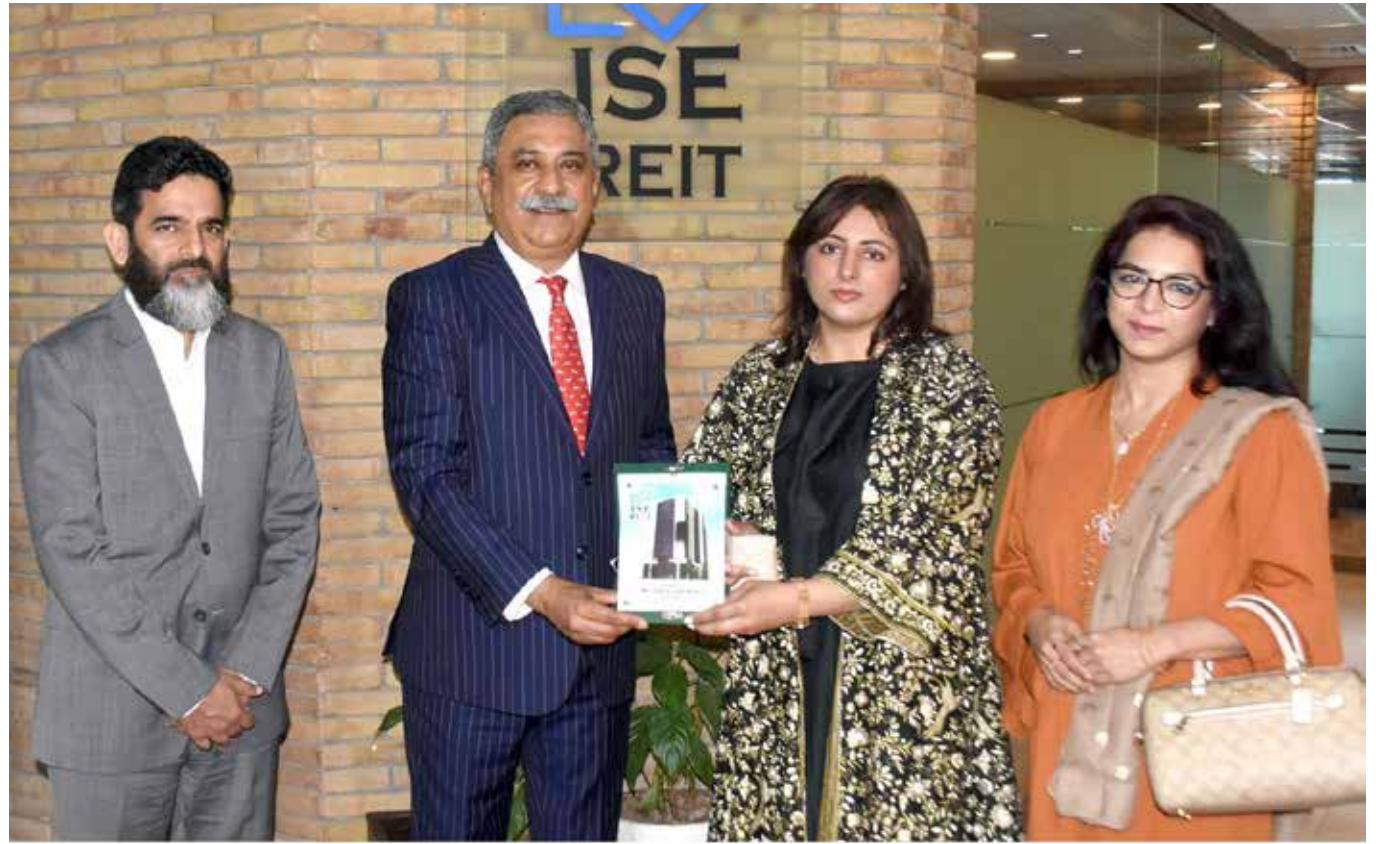
In the Court of Imtiaz Ahmed Noor, Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) Jhelum, suit for dissolution of marriage besis of khalah
Case title: Shamsa Bashir vs Muhammad Riaz, son of Raja Kala Khan, residing at 13 Chak Bhalwal, Sargodha (currently residing in England). As there is not possible to call the defendant through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 04.06.2026 at 08:00 AM, otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.

Pak-Japan business leaders discuss startup ecosystem

The participants noted that startups play a vital role in the economic development of any country by driving innovation, creating employment opportunities, and attracting investment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting was held in Islamabad between Mr. Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman of ZLK Group, and Ms. Hinza Asif, President of Asia Web3 Alliance Japan (AWAJ), to discuss avenues for attracting international investment to Pakistan and strengthening the country's startup ecosystem. The meeting was also attended by Ms. Sadaf Abbas of Oak Business Consultant, who participated as the Financial Consultant of AWAJ. During the discussion, participants explored practical strategies for bringing international investors to Pakistan and creating pathways for local startups to successfully transition toward Initial Public Offerings (IPOs). The meeting emphasized the importance of facilitating startups and providing them with the necessary financial, regulatory, and institutional support required to access capital markets. The participants noted that startups play a vital role in the economic development of any country by driving innovation, creating employment opportunities, and attracting investment. They discussed measures that could help Pakistani startups achieve sustainable growth and eventually become publicly listed companies. The meeting also focused on making investment in the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) more accessible for international investors. Various options were discussed regarding how foreign investors can efficiently invest in Pakistan's established companies and participate in the country's growing capital markets. In addition, the participants exchanged views on promoting Islamic startups and advancing the concept of Islamic capital markets and Islamic stock exchange initiatives to attract a broader range of investors seeking Shariah-compliant investment opportunities. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Zahid Latif Khan stated that Pakistan offers significant opportunities for foreign investors and that substantial support is available for international businesses looking to enter the market. He highlighted that recent regulatory reforms and investor-friendly policies introduced by the government have made it easier for foreign investors to invest and operate in Pakistan. At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Zahid Latif Khan presented a



commemorative shield to Ms. Hinza Asif in recognition of her efforts to promote international business cooperation and investment linkages between Pakistan and Japan. The participants expressed optimism

that enhanced collaboration between Pakistani and international stakeholders would contribute to economic growth, innovation, and increased foreign investment in the country.

KP CM okays provincial youth policy 2026

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, has accorded in-principle approval to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Policy 2026. The policy will be submitted to the Provincial Cabinet for final approval. Chairing a meeting of the Sports and Youth Affairs Department at the Chief Minister's House, Peshawar, the Chief Minister directed the relevant authorities to undertake comprehensive legislation for the protection and promotion of youth interests. He emphasized that with young people constituting a significant proportion of the province's population, safeguarding their interests and investing in their development is both a strategic necessity and a moral imperative. "The next provincial budget will be a youth-focused budget," the Chief Minister stated, adding that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government is investing

in human capital. The Chief Minister directed the quarters concerned to ensure the establishment of Jawan Markaz facilities in every district of the province and instructed that empowered local governing bodies be constituted to ensure their effective management and sustainability. He further emphasized the need to prioritize the provision of digital skills training to equip young people for emerging economic opportunities. The meeting was informed that more than Rs. 7 billion would be invested in youth development initiatives over the next two years under the proposed youth policy framework. The policy is built around four core pillars: education, employment, environment, and youth engagement in social and civic affairs. Participants were briefed that key policy objectives include universalizing secondary education, particularly for females, and

expanding access to higher education. The policy also envisages scholarships and training opportunities for females, the establishment of Jawan Markaz facilities, and mobile outreach services in rural and newly merged districts. The meeting was further informed that the policy incorporates measures to promote inclusion and equitable access to opportunities. These include assistive facilities for young persons with disabilities, livelihood support for transgender youth, and dedicated quotas for minority youth across various programmes. In addition, the policy seeks to align technical education curricula with market requirements while expanding access to digital skills training and future-ready competencies. The proposed framework also includes interventions aimed at creating employment opportunities across multiple sectors.—APP

SU, AAWO partner to promote support programs

HYDERABAD: The University of Sindh and Al-Asar Welfare Organization (AAWO) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote collaboration in disability rehabilitation, inclusive education, research and community welfare initiatives. Sindh University Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Fateh Muhammad Mari and President Al-Asar Welfare Organization Imdad Ali put their signatures on the MoU at a ceremony held in the VC office on Monday. According to the SU spokesperson Nadir Ali Mugheri, under the agreement, both institutions will jointly work on student internships, research projects, training programs, workshops and awareness campaigns aimed at empowering persons with disabilities. The MoU would also provide opportunities for Sindh University students to gain practical experience through placements at AAWO rehabilitation centres.—APP

Reforms to enhance PR efficiency, passenger services

Reiterating his vision for a modern, efficient and people-centric railway network, Hanif Abbasi said all available resources would be utilized to upgrade railway services and provide better travel facilities to passengers across the country

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Monday reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing safe, comfortable and punctual travel facilities to the public, saying that passenger welfare remains the foremost priority of Pakistan Railways. Chairing a high-level meeting to review the operational performance of Pakistan Railways, ongoing reform initiatives and future development plans, he directed officials to adopt effective strategies aimed at further strengthening the railway system and improving operational efficiency.

During the meeting, a comprehensive review of railway operations and the department's overall performance was conducted. Senior officials briefed the minister on the progress of various operational, administrative and development projects, as well as the performance of different railway divisions across the country. The meeting also discussed a range of proposals focused on enhancing passenger convenience, improving service quality and raising travel standards. Hanif Abbasi instructed the relevant authorities to expedite ongoing projects and ensure the timely achievement of all set targets. The measures to

modernize railway services in line with contemporary requirements were reviewed, while participants explored various options to increase the capacity, efficiency and sustainability of Pakistan Railways. Emphasizing the importance of continuous institutional improvement, the minister directed officials to address public complaints promptly and maintain the highest standards of service delivery. Reiterating his vision for a modern, efficient and people-centric railway network, Hanif Abbasi said all available resources would be utilized to upgrade railway services and provide better travel facilities to passengers across the country.—APP

Youth empowerment agenda highlighted

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has announced that the upcoming 2026-27 annual budget will place special focus on empowering the province's youth through education, skills development, and employment opportunities. Speaking at a meeting with Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) parliamentarians at Governor House Quetta, Mandokhail said the government recognizes young people as the architects of the future and partners in present development. He emphasized that tackling poverty and unemployment in the province requires practical measures, and a new program has been designed to provide thousands of youth with dignified jobs and modern career pathways. The Governor revealed that at Bolan Medical University, more than ten new medical courses and diploma programs have been launched, enabling graduates to secure employment immediately upon completion. He added that similar investments are being made across public sector universities to integrate quality education with modern skill-building programs, including professional training, online IT courses, and medical diplomas. Jaffar Mandokhail stressed that by equipping students with both academic knowledge and practical skills, they will be prepared to enter a dynamic job market and lead in diverse fields aligned with the demands of the 21st century. He urged young people to harness their hidden talents, strengthen their patriotism, and play an active role in national development. He assured that with proper education, training, and empowerment, Balochistan's youth will not only become educated and capable but also emerge as leaders, innovators, and contributors across multiple sectors. The meeting was attended by PML-N Parliamentary Leader Mir Saleem Khosa, Provincial General Secretary Jamal Shah Kakar, MNA Akhtar Bibi, provincial ministers Mir Shoaib Nosherrwani, Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani, Muhammad Khan Lehri, Mir Asim Kurd Gillo, Zarak Khan Mandokhail, Haji Barkat Rind, Hadia Nawaz, Naseem-ur-Rehman Malakhail, and other senior leaders.

KP gov't proposes new agri sector schemes

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Agriculture, Mian Muhammad Umar has said that several new development projects have been proposed under Annual Development Programme (ADP) 2026-27 to promote agricultural growth, modern technology, efficient utilization of water resources, climate change adaptation and farmers' welfare. He stated that proposed initiatives aim to increase agricultural productivity, strengthen rural economy, and create new opportunities for agricultural development across the province, particularly in the merged districts. He expressed these views while chairing a review meeting on Agriculture Department's Annual Development Programme. The meeting was attended by Secretary Agriculture Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, Special Secretary Agriculture Parvez Khan, Director Generals of various wings of the Agriculture Department and other relevant officials. During the meeting, the advisor on agriculture was given a detailed briefing on ongoing and proposed develop-

ment projects under Annual Development Programme for 2026-27. It was informed that 16 projects under proposed ADP and seven projects under the Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP) would be launched in merged districts. The proposed initiatives include promotion of innovate farming through advanced agricultural machinery, installation of solarized tube wells and efficient groundwater management systems to enhance agricultural production, promotion of biological pest control and feasibility studies for cold chain infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses, expansion of olive cultivation, strengthening of virus-free seed potato production systems, establishment of a tissue culture laboratory for Dhakki dates and upgradation of germplasm resource centres. To empower youth and develop human resources in agricultural sector, the government is also introducing interest-free loans for agriculture graduates, educational scholarships in agricultural sciences and internship programmes. Other important initiatives include the establishment of a Mountain Agricultural Research Centre

in Lower Dir, promotion of temperate horticultural crops, estimation of greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural sector, improvement of crop estimation systems, development of command areas of small dams, enhancement of irrigation infrastructure and expansion of smart irrigation projects. Agriculture Department has also proposed a major project titled "Protection of Vulnerable Agricultural Land through Land Stabilization Structures in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" to address the challenges posed by climate change and land erosion. Under this project, 1,150 agricultural land stabilization structures will be constructed across the province, including merged districts, to protect farmland from erosion, rainwater runoff and declining soil fertility. Similarly, proposed programme includes projects aimed at supporting women farmers in the merged districts, promoting small businesses, encouraging cultivation of high-value crops and seasonal vegetables in Tirah Valley, establishing a Tribal Agricultural Research Centre, promoting honey production and ensuring sustainable management of water resources.—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
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- June 25/Croatia National Day
- June 25/Mozambique National Day
- June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day

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- Potohar Town.....9209224
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Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Budget to be traders-friendly, announces: Abbasi

“The real strength of Pakistan lies in its people and business community,” he said, adding that the country’s economic progress must now be translated into tangible benefits for the people

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Railways, Hanif Abbasi, said that the upcoming federal budget would be a breath of fresh air for traders and industrialists, emphasizing that no country can achieve sustainable development without a strong industrial base. He expressed these views while addressing participants at a dinner hosted in his honor at the residence of Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General of the United Business Group (UBG), on the occasion of congratulating Zahid Bakhtawari on his election as Vice President of the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board. Among those present were Tariq Sadiq, Chairman of the Founder Group ICCI; former Chairmen Khalid Javed and Khalid Iqbal Malik; former ICCI President Zahid Maqbool; former RCCI President Dr. Hassan Surosh; prominent business leader Wajid Ayub; Abid Bakhtawari; former Senior Vice President RCCI Hamza Surosh; former ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari; former President of Chakwal Chamber Waqar Bakhtawari; and Uzair Bakhtawari. Hanif Abbasi stated that he has always presented the concerns of the business community before the Prime Minister. He noted that electricity tariffs have declined over the past two years and that key economic indicators are showing signs of improvement. He further said that Pakistan has strengthened its



identity as a peaceful and stable country in the region, and the international community is increasingly recognizing Pakistan as an important and trustworthy nation. “The real strength of Pakistan lies in its people and business community,” he said, adding that the country’s economic progress must now be translated into tangible benefits for the people. He urged investors to reinvest their earnings within Pakistan to further strengthen the national economy. The Federal Minister also remarked that Pakistan’s standing in the world has improved

significantly and that various global powers now acknowledge the country as an important mediator. He said that countries and regions including the Middle East, China, Russia, the United States, the European Union, Central Asia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are increasingly recognizing Pakistan’s constructive role on the international stage. Referring to his long-standing relationship with the Bakhtawari family, Hanif Abbasi said that Zafar Bakhtawari is like an elder brother to him. He described Zahid Bakhtawari’s election as Vice President of

the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board as an excellent and positive decision. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Hanif Abbasi has always demonstrated a supportive and caring attitude toward the business community. He added that during his two-year tenure as President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), the Federal Minister regularly provided guidance through monthly meetings and played an important role in arranging meetings with the Prime Minister.

Imran Ghaznavi joins Privatisation Commission as Chief Media Officer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Imran Ghaznavi Joins Privatisation Commission as Chief Media Officer and Principal Spokesman Mr. Imran Ghaznavi has joined the Privatisation Commission as Chief Media Officer and Principal Spokesperson, assuming a key role in strategic communication and external relations. He will focus on shaping public narrative, strengthening stakeholder confidence, and supporting the country’s reform agenda through



a strategic communication initiatives. With over 20 years of experience across the public and private

sectors, Mr. Ghaznavi holds MS Mass Communication and MBA (Marketing) degrees with distinction, along with specialized training from the United States. He has served in senior roles at PIA, FBR, SECP, CCP, the Planning Commission, and leading media organizations. Most recently, he took farewell from OGRA, where he served as Spokesperson & Senior Executive Director Corporate and Media Affairs. A well-known figure in his field, Mr. Ghaznavi brings extensive expertise in strategic communication, regulatory affairs, and corporate governance.

Rs 5.3m in excess fares returned to passengers

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has returned Rs5.3 million to passengers charged excess fares by transport operators as part of its ongoing nationwide campaign against overcharging and overloading. According to an NHMP spokesperson, the special enforcement drive is being carried out on the directions of Inspector General NHMP Sultan Ahmed Chaudhry to protect passengers from exploitation and ensure safe travel on highways and motorways. The spokesperson said that more than Rs5.3 million collected unlawfully in excess fares had been recovered from transporters and returned to passengers. In addition, over 20,000 challans have been issued to passenger vehicles for overloading, overcharging and operating with incomplete travel documents during the campaign. The NHMP has advised citizens to lodge complaints directly with Motorway Police officers, through the helpline 130, or via the official social media handle @NHMP. The spokesperson added that Motorway Police personnel are also conducting awareness campaigns at toll plazas across the country to educate road users about traffic laws and road safety measures. The NHMP reiterated its commitment to ensuring safe, fair and comfortable travel for the public and warned that strict action would continue against violators.—APP

Dialogue held on examining ‘Climate Change Strategies’

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), in collaboration with Secours Islamique France (SIF) Pakistan, organized a high-level Science-Policy Dialogue titled “From Global Stocktake to Implementation: Catalyzing Effective Climate Action” to examine pathways for translating global climate commitments into practical and regionally relevant implementation strategies. The dialogue brought together representatives from international organizations, government institutions, development agencies, academia, and civil society to deliberate on the evolving climate governance landscape following the first Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement and subsequent international climate negotiations, said a press release issued on Monday. Speaking at the event, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, highlighted the urgency of climate action, noting that Pakistan remains highly vulnerable to climate-induced disasters despite its minimal contribution to global emissions. He stressed that climate change, water scarcity, environmental degradation, population growth, and sustainable development are interconnected challenges requiring a comprehensive national strategy. He also emphasized stronger climate financing, resilient infrastructure, public awareness, and coordinated governance to build long-term resilience. Shiraz Shah, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Pakistan, emphasized translating policy commitments into effective delivery mechanisms and resilient governance systems for long-term climate adaptation and sustainable development. He highlighted stronger institutional coordination, locally driven solutions, integrated policy frameworks, and partnerships among governments, development institutions, and communities to advance inclusive climate resilience. Mr. Thomas Conan, Deputy Country Director, WFP Pakistan, highlighted growing climate threats to food security and stressed resilient food systems, climate-smart agriculture, anticipatory action, and stronger social protection mechanisms to address vulnerabilities affecting agriculture, livelihoods, and supply chains.—DNA

Senate panel reviews internet disruptions, telecom theft

ISLAMABAD: A Senate Sub-Committee on Monday reviewed the growing challenges posed by internet service degradation and widespread diesel theft from telecommunications infrastructure across the country. The meeting, chaired by Senator Sadia Abbasi, was attended by senators Kamran Murtaza and Afnan Ullah Khan, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications. The committee discussed key threats affecting the country’s telecom infrastructure and service continuity. The members expressed serious concern over more than 9,200 incidents of theft and vandalism reported across Pakistan during an eleven-month period, affecting nearly 16 percent of the country’s cellular infrastructure. According to the briefing, Sindh recorded the highest number of incidents, with 3,938 cases across 31 districts. Punjab reported 2,827 cases in 38 districts, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 1,668 incidents across 25 districts, while Balochistan recorded 716 cases across 26 districts. During the meeting, the

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) informed the committee that prolonged power outages continue to disrupt telecom services by draining backup batteries and overburdening generator systems. To improve network resilience, PTA said it has engaged the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) and the Power Division to secure dedicated electricity feeders for telecom infrastructure and accelerate the installation of smart transformers at critical telecom sites. Representatives of the Universal Service Fund (USF) briefed the committee on ongoing connectivity projects in Balochistan. They said that while 80 percent of targeted areas had been identified through competitive bidding, security challenges and recurring diesel theft were hampering infrastructure expansion. The committee directed the relevant departments to identify high-risk theft locations and instructed district administrations and provincial authorities to address complaints in accordance with the law and imple-

ment stronger preventive measures to protect telecom installations. The committee also reviewed ongoing network modernization efforts, including recent spectrum auctions that added 480 MHz of bandwidth and the issuance of commercial 5G licences in March 2026. Officials informed the committee that the upgrades aim to increase average 4G speeds from 4 Mbps to 20 Mbps, ensure the rollout of 1,000 new sites annually, and introduce Voice over LTE (VoLTE) and Voice over Wi-Fi (VoWiFi) services. To improve service quality, PTA has introduced strict network downtime standards. Cellular operators will be required to keep network downtime within 5 percent at the Union Council level, 3 percent at the Tehsil level, 2 percent at the District level, and 1 percent nationwide. The committee reiterated that internet access should be treated as an essential service and directed all telecom operators to take immediate and effective measures to prevent fuel theft and ensure uninterrupted connectivity across the country.—APP

SC terms supplementary statement weak evidence

The Court clarified that the observations made in the judgment were tentative in nature and would not influence the final determination of the case during trial

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has held that, at the bail stage, courts cannot ignore authenticated official records that raise serious questions about the prosecution’s case, while the subsequent nomination and identification of an accused person also require careful scrutiny. According to a detailed judgment approved for reporting, a two-member bench comprising Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan allowed the pre-arrest bail appeal of Jamshed Rashid and set aside the decision of the Lahore High Court’s Multan Bench. The judgment noted that the appellant was not named in the original FIR and was implicated several days later through a supplementary statement. Counsel for the appellant argued that the accused had travelled to Saudi Arabia after the occurrence and that official travel records confirmed his presence abroad. The prosecution, however, maintained that he had subsequently been identified locally. The Supreme Court observed that the nomination of a person through a supplementary statement is, by itself, considered a weak piece of evidence, particularly when it is not supported by independent and reliable material. The Court held that the travel documents and other material available on record warranted further examination of the prosecution’s stance. The judgment further stated that three co-accused nominated in the same case had already been granted bail. Therefore, under the principle of consistency and equal treatment, the appellant was also entitled to the same relief. The Court observed that the purpose of pre-arrest bail is to protect citizens from mala fide actions, abuse of authority and unnecessary arrest. It held that, in light of the available record, the appellant was entitled to the benefit of further inquiry. Consequently, the Supreme Court converted the petition into an appeal, allowed it, and restored the pre-arrest bail of Jamshed Rashid subject to furnishing surety bonds of Rs100,000 along with one surety in the like amount. The Court clarified that the observations made in the judgment were tentative in nature and would not influence the final determination of the case during trial.—DNA

Call for accelerated awareness campaign to eliminate Hepatitis C

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal stressed the need to accelerate public awareness campaigns to maximize screening for Hepatitis C, urging citizens to avail themselves of free testing facilities available at health centres in Islamabad. He expressed these views while chairing a review meeting on the ongoing pilot project in capital aimed at eliminating Hepatitis C here, according to the Ministry of Health on Monday. The meeting was attended by the Federal Secretary for Health, the Head of Hospitals, and the District Health Officer (DHO) Islamabad. “The success of this programme is not possible without public cooperation,” the minister said. During the meeting, participants conducted a detailed review of the challenges facing Hepatitis C screening and elimination efforts. Kamal noted that Pakistan continues to bear a high burden of Hepatitis C cases and reaffirmed the government’s commitment to eliminate the disease by mobilising all available resources. “Effective measures must be accelerated to eliminate Hepatitis C,” he said, emphasizing the need to ensure screening of the maximum number of people. Describing the eradication of Hepatitis C as a national cause, the minister directed hospital heads and health officials to intensify their efforts to ensure the success of the programme. He also stressed the importance of timely referral and treatment of individuals who test positive, adding that early detection and intervention are critical to control the disease. “Prevention is better than cure,” Kamal remarked.—APP

NCCIA file appeal in SC to withdraw order in Iman case

ISLAMABAD: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) has filed an application in the Supreme Court seeking withdrawal of its May 12 order in the case relating to the suspension of sentences awarded to lawyers Imaan Mazari and Hadi Chattha. In its petition, the NCCIA contended that the Supreme Court cannot interfere in matters that are already pending before a High Court. The application stated that in its May 12 order, the apex court had issued certain directions to the High Court, whereas the authority to decide an application for suspension of sentence rests with the concerned High Court, which is required to hear all parties and decide the matter in accordance with law. The NCCIA argued that, in keeping with the principle of equal treatment, the Supreme Court should withdraw its said order. It maintained that Imaan Mazari and Hadi Chattha are not entitled to any special concession or preferential treatment merely because they are members of the legal fraternity. According to the applicant, a party cannot directly approach the Supreme Court against a High Court’s decision to issue notice to the opposing side for hearing. The NCCIA requested the apex court to recall its order dated May 12, 2026, so that the matter may proceed before the relevant High Court in accordance with the law. It may be recalled that the case concerning the suspension of sentences of Imaan Mazari and Hadi Chattha is currently pending before the High Court, while the NCCIA has already filed a review petition before the Supreme Court against its earlier order.—APP

Notices issued to CDA chief, others in contempt case

ISLAMABAD: The IHC on Monday has issued notices to the Chairman of the CDA, the Director General Enforcement and others in a contempt of court petition filed over disciplinary actions taken against guest houses despite a court order restraining such actions.—APP

DOCUMENTS LOST

Police Station: Aabpara, Islamabad Report Number: AAB-5/19/2026-1433; CMS Date of Report: 19/05/2026 Date of Incident: 19/05/2026 Complainant Name: Zahir Mand Yousof Address: House No. 25, Street No. D-15, Sector G-6/2, Islamabad. Details of Incident: On 19/05/2026 at around 20:07 hours, the complainant reported that several motorcycles were parked near his house. The motorcycles included models from the years 1990, 1998, 2000, 2003, and 2008. The complainant stated that one of the motorcycles, registered in 2003, was stolen on 05/02/2026. He requested that the police take necessary action regarding the theft. Police Remarks: The report has been registered for further investigation.

Briefs

Pak EPS center introduces tablet-based UBT system

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan EPS (Employment Permit System) Center announced that it will officially introduce and operate the tablet-based UBT (Ubiquitous-Based Test) system for the Employment Permit System-Topik (EPS-TOPIK) starting in 2026. This next-generation digital assessment framework will entirely replace the existing Computer-Based Testing (CBT) method, marking a major milestone in modernizing the examination process. The newly adopted UBT system is a sophisticated digital assessment platform designed to administer large-scale examinations through a secure, closed wireless local network without requiring live internet connectivity. The system enables seamless, real-time synchronization between supervisors' control tablets and examinees' individual devices, ensuring highly efficient and stable test operations. To ensure the utmost integrity of the examination, the system integrates advanced AI-powered facial recognition technologies and real-time monitoring functions, which are expected to substantially strengthen security and uphold absolute fairness throughout the testing process. Pakistan's selection as an inaugural country for the 2026 UBT rollout comes in direct response to the rapidly growing local demand for the Korean language test, paired with the practical challenges of unstable power grids and fluctuating internet infrastructure. The UBT system addresses these environmental vulnerabilities through its built-in real-time data backup and instant recovery mechanisms. Even in the event of sudden power outages or localized network disruptions, applicant test progress and data remain securely protected, drastically improving the overall resilience and stability of test administration. A representative from the Pakistan EPS Center highlighted the operational advantages of the transition, stating: "The introduction of the UBT system fundamentally relieves us of the financial and logistical burdens associated with establishing and maintaining fixed, large-scale CBT centers. Instead, we can now conduct highly secure and flexible examinations utilizing highly portable, state-of-the-art equipment."

Pulses import decreases 25.01% in last 10 months

ISLAMABAD: The import of leguminous vegetables (pulses) into the country during last 10 months of the current financial year decreased by 25.01 percent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April, 2025-26, over 1.159 million metric tons of pulses costing \$6887.357 million were imported as compared to the imports of 1.324 million metric tons valued at \$917.891 million of the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, the import of wheat into the country during the period under review recorded 100 decrease as against the import of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The import of soyabean oil into the country decreased by 61.15 percent as compared to the imports of the same period of the last year as about 97,521 metric tons of soyabean valued at \$108.683 million was imported as compared to the import of 262,106 metric tons costing \$279.768 million of the same period of the last year. However, the imports of palm oil into the country during the period under review grew by 15.41 percent and over 3.075 million tons of the palm oil worth of \$3.313 billion were imported as compared to the imports of 2.751 million tons valued at \$2.871 billion of the same period of the last year. The food group imports into the country during the first 10 months of current financial year grew by 13.81 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April, 2026, food commodities worth of \$7.848 billion were imported as compared to the imports of \$6.898 billion of the same period of the last year.—APP

Iqra University business school H-9 campus welcomes delegates

Dr. Azam also expressed gratitude to the National Business Education Accreditation Council (NBEAC) for organizing the conference and conveyed his best wishes for productive deliberations and meaningful outcomes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Iqra University Business School (IUBS), H-9 Campus Islamabad, proudly hosted the Pre-Conference Welcome Dinner for the 13th NBEAC Deans & Directors Conference 2026, welcoming distinguished deans, directors, professors, researchers, and academic leaders from business schools across Pakistan. On the occasion, Dr. Muhammad Azam, Dean, Faculty of Business Administration, Iqra University, extended a warm welcome to all conference participants and guests. "At IU Business School, we are committed to providing high-quality education in the field of business management. Our programs are designed to develop ethical entrepreneurs and leaders with strong moral values, intellectual depth, and professional competence to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Reflecting our commitment to academic excellence and impact, Iqra University has achieved notable recognition in the QS Asia Rankings 2026, including 2nd in Sindh, 8th in Pakistan, 37th in South Asia, and 133rd in Asia." Dr. Azam also expressed gratitude to the National Business Education Accreditation Council (NBEAC) for organizing the conference and conveyed his best wishes for productive deliberations and meaningful outcomes. The welcome dinner marked the official commencement of conference activities ahead of the conference theme, "Business Schools in the AI Era," which focuses on the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence in business education, research, leadership, and



workforce development. Addressing the gathering, Prof. Dr. Etazz Ahmed, Iqra University Islamabad Campus, emphasized the importance of collaboration among higher education institutions in preparing future-ready graduates and strengthening the contribution of business schools to innovation and national development. Dr. Sajid Bashir, Associate Dean, Iqra University Business School, highlighted the growing importance of Artificial Intelligence and underscored the need for business schools to continuously adapt curricula, teaching methodologies, and research priorities to meet the demands of an increasingly

digital and data-driven economy. A video presentation showcasing Iqra University's achievements, academic excellence, and the facilities of the H9 Campus was screened for the participants. As a gesture of appreciation, commemorative shields were presented to distinguished guests, including Dr. Nukhse Sarwar (Chairperson, NBEAC), Dr. Farooq Cheema (Vice Chairperson, NBEAC), Dr. Zaki Rashdi, and Ms. Sania Tufail, in recognition of their contributions to business education and their valued participation in the conference. The ceremony reflected the university's commitment to recognizing academic leadership and promoting meaningful

engagement among business education professionals from across Pakistan. Guests were subsequently given a guided tour of the H-9 Campus, including its academic and learning facilities, followed by a networking dinner that encouraged discussions on accreditation, research collaboration, innovation, and the future of business education in Pakistan. The university expressed its sincere appreciation to NBEAC for the opportunity to host the welcome dinner and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting initiatives that advance higher education, strengthen industry-academia collaboration, and prepare future business leaders for the age of Artificial Intelligence.

SECP introduces CSC framework

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has notified the introduction of a Certificate of Statutory Compliance (CSC) to be issued by the Registrar of Companies. The CSC was issued through S.R.O. 875(1)/2026, aimed at strengthening corporate governance, said a press release issued by the SECP on Monday. The CSC is an official regulatory certification that provides verified confirmation, based on SECP records, that a company is duly incorporated under the Companies Act, 2017, remains active on the register, and has complied with applicable statutory filing and disclosure requirements as of the certificate's issuance date. This framework benefits domestic and international stakeholders, including investors, financial institutions, government authorities, business counterparties, and other market participants, by offering reliable verification of a company's statutory and compliance status, thereby enhancing regulatory certainty. The CSC will not be issued if a company is inactive, undergoing strike-off or liquidation, involved in disputes/inquiries/investigations, has outstanding filings or pending approvals, or where SECP records are incomplete, inaccurate, or misleading. The CSC forms part of SECP's broader regulatory reform agenda aimed at strengthening corporate governance, improving the integrity of corporate records, promoting transparency, and facilitating ease of doing business in Pakistan. Applications for the CSC shall be submitted to the Registrar of Companies.—DNA

Kamal briefs PM on projects

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal on Monday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and briefed him on ongoing and upcoming projects in the health sector. During the meeting, they discussed matters related to the ministry, according to a PM Office press release. The prime minister appreciated the ministry's efforts regarding ongoing reforms in the health sector and its initiatives to eradicate polio, hepatitis, and other fatal diseases.—APP

Shops to close at 8pm, restaurants, event venues at 10pm

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has announced new business operating hours under ongoing austerity measures, directing shops, markets and shopping malls to close by 8:00pm throughout the week. The revised notification, effective from June 1, 2026, also requires restaurants, grocery stores and event venues to close by 10:00pm, while several essential services have been exempted from the restrictions. According to the notification, all shops, markets and shopping malls will remain open only until 8:00pm on weekdays as well as weekends. However, a number of sectors have been exempted from the closing-time restriction due to the nature of their services. The exempted facilities include pharmacies, medical stores, medical supply outlets, laboratories and hospitals. Petrol pumps and CNG stations will also continue to operate under their existing schedules. Milk and dairy shops have been excluded from the restriction as well. In addition, sports facilities, including gyms and padel courts, will remain operational beyond the specified closing time. Call centres and information technology companies working with international clients have also been granted exemption. The notification further states that restaurants, food outlets, tandoors, grocery stores, kiriyana shops, meat shops, fruit and dry fruit sellers, vegetable vendors and bakeries must close by 10:00pm. However, takeaway and home delivery services will continue without any time limitation. Marriage halls, marquees and other commercial venues hosting ceremonies and festive gatherings will also be required to close by 10:00pm throughout the week. The same closing time will apply to similar events held at private premises. Authorities said the revised timings are part of measures aimed at reducing energy consumption and managing resources more effectively. The notification will come into force on June 1, 2026, and will remain effective until further orders.—DNA

PDMA activates heatwave, flood preparedness plan

ISLAMABAD: DG PDMA Punjab Umar Javed on Monday appealed for public vigilance, stating that under the Chief Minister's directives, a comprehensive and scientifically guided flood and heatwave preparedness plan has been activated across the province, while warning that South Punjab is likely to experience a heatwave and light to moderate rainfall activity is expected to continue till 6 June. While speaking exclusively to a private news channel, he said that lessons learned from the 2025 flood situation have strengthened preparedness measures, adding that this year the response system has been made more active and efficient under the Chief Minister's leadership to better manage potential risks and ensure timely action across vulnerable areas. DG said that all relevant departments have been placed on high alert and weather advisories have already been issued to ensure timely preparedness and response. He added that under the Chief Minister's strict directives, continuous monitoring is being carried out in high-risk areas, especially those that were affected during last year's flooding, with special focus on vulnerable regions identified for potential risk escalation. He further said that additional sensitive zones have also been identified and a coordinated monitoring mechanism is in

place to ensure swift action, minimize possible damage and strengthen early warning and response systems across the province. He said that from 2 to 6 June, light rainfall is expected across parts of North to West Punjab, while a heatwave advisory has been issued for South Punjab, urging citizens to take precautionary measures amid rising temperatures. He urged the media to play an active role in creating public awareness and guiding citizens about precautionary measures, while also advising people to immediately contact emergency helplines 1122 and 1129 in case of any emergency or assistance requirement. He also issued an agriculture advisory, urging farmers to remain vigilant and take precautionary measures to protect crops and livestock amid the expected heatwave and intermittent rainfall, ensuring timely care to minimize potential losses. He advised citizens, particularly in South Punjab, to avoid direct exposure to sunlight between 10am and 4pm and to drink plenty of water to stay properly hydrated amid the prevailing heatwave conditions. He said that under the Chief Minister's directives, authorities are establishing relief and heatwave response centers across vulnerable areas, along with ensuring the provision of clean drinking water, ORS and first aid facilities for the public.—APP

Record-smashing Eid rush turns KP into tourism hotbed

He said efforts are underway to improve road infrastructure, visitor facilities and promotional activities to open up new areas for tourism and sustain the sector's rapid growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director General of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority Shahid Khan on Monday said tourist arrivals to the province's scenic destinations surged to a record 1.2 million during the Eid holidays, doubling from 600,000 previously, with South Waziristan emerging as the newest and most sought-after travel destination. While speaking to a local news channel, Shahid Khan said popular tourist destinations including Kumrat, Naran, Kaghan, Kalam, Swat and Hazara Galyat witnessed an unprecedented influx of visitors during the Eid holidays. He said tourist arrivals at these scenic locations doubled compared to the corresponding period last year, reflecting the growing popularity of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

as a preferred travel destination. He attributed the surge in tourist activity to improved infrastructure, enhanced security measures and the provincial government's efforts to promote tourism across the region. The record influx, he said, also brought economic benefits to local communities, businesses and hospitality services. Shahid Khan further said South Waziristan, Bajaur and Orakzai emerged as new tourist hotspots, witnessing a significant rush of visitors for the first time. He described the growing interest in these districts as a major achievement for the tourism sector and a sign that travelers are increasingly exploring the province's previously untapped destinations. He attributed the unprecedented surge in tourist arrivals to the extended Eid holidays, favorable weather conditions and growing public interest in

domestic tourism. He said the combination of pleasant temperatures and improved accessibility encouraged families and adventure seekers to visit scenic destinations across the province in record numbers. Shahid Khan noted that the tourism boom had a positive impact on local economies, benefiting hotels, restaurants, transport operators and small businesses in tourist areas. He added that the influx of visitors created temporary employment opportunities and helped showcase the cultural and natural diversity of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The DG further said the authority is actively working to identify and develop at least five more unexplored tourist destinations over the next few years. He said efforts are underway to improve road infrastructure, visitor facilities and promotional activities to open up new areas for tourism and sustain the sector's rapid growth.

First post-Hajj flight carrying 370 pilgrims lands

He said the successful organization of Hajj and the smooth return of pilgrims reflected the coordinated efforts of all relevant departments

ISLAMABAD: The first post-Hajj flight carrying 370 Pakistani pilgrims landed at Islamabad International Airport on Monday, marking the beginning of the return phase of Hajj 2026. The pilgrims, who belonged to different parts of the country, arrived after completing their religious journey in Saudi Arabia. They were warmly received at the airport by Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry. Speaking to the media on the occasion, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said that a total of 180,000 Pakistanis performed Hajj this year, including 120,000 under the government scheme and 60,000 through private operators. He said the returning pilgrims expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs for Hajj 2026, particularly in terms of accommodation, travel, and other facilities in the holy cities. He added that it was a matter of satisfaction that all pilgrims were able to perform Hajj smoothly this year. Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry further said that some pilgrims from the previous year, despite having paid their dues, could not travel due to administrative issues. However, this year all such cases were resolved, and no additional charges were taken, as arrangements were managed within the previously collected funds. He also appreciated Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf and his team for their efforts in ensuring effective Hajj management. He acknowledged that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif closely monitored the arrangements and continuously issued directives to ensure maximum facilitation for pilgrims. He said the successful organization of Hajj and the smooth return of pilgrims reflected the coordinated efforts of all relevant departments.—DNA

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The Swift Passage of Time

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

IN the days of my childhood, when the world still seemed vast and full of unhurried promise, Sunday stood as a weekly beacon of delight. It was a holiday awaited with the keenest anticipation, the sort that filled the heart with restless joy. Plans for its arrival were laid well in advance, whispered among friends and pondered in quiet moments. So eager was I that on Saturday nights sleep often eluded me, my mind alive with the question of how best to greet the dawn and set those cherished schemes in motion. Would we play a spirited match of cricket upon the green fields, or make our way to the home of some dear relative? Most beloved of all was the journey to maternal grandmother's house, where the air carried the warmth of familiar stories and the gentle wisdom of maternal grandparents. The calm waves of love and care are something we can only experience while our grandparents are still with us. Such visits belonged chiefly to that golden season of life, when innocence wrapped every hour in simple grace.

Later, as circumstances shifted with the turning of ages, Friday took the place of Sunday as the day of rest. Yet the spirit of anticipation endured for a time, carrying forward the same innocent delight. The years, however, did not stand still. Time, that subtle companion, began to hasten its pace. What once stretched before us in leisurely measure now slips away with startling swiftness. Fridays arrive and depart almost before we have savoured their blessing, unlike the long-awaited Sundays of our student years. Days blend into one another, months dissolve like morning mist, and years pass with the speed of a rushing stream. An old saying captures this truth with quiet wisdom: the journey of ascent lingers, while the descent unfolds in but a few moments. Thus unfolds the path of every mortal soul, pressing onward toward its final and eternal destination.

This acceleration of time is no mere fancy of the aging mind. It echoes a profound reality that the wise have long observed. The Holy Qur'an, in its inimitable eloquence, swears by the passage of time itself in Surah Al-Asr: "By time, verily man is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to truth and enjoin one another to patience." In these sacred words lies a solemn reminder that the fleeting hours are not to be squandered, for each

moment carries within it the weight of accountability. Time, once spent, returns to no man; it bears us steadily toward that inevitable meeting with our Creator.

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, likewise drew our attention to this hastening of days as one of the signs preceding the final Hour. He informed us that time would draw near such that a year would feel like a month, a month like a week, a week like a day, and an hour like the flicker of a flame. In another narration, he urged the faithful to seize five blessings before five others overtake them: youth before old age, health before sickness, wealth before poverty, free time before preoccupation, and life before death. How aptly these words resonate with the experience of every soul that has watched the carefree days of childhood give way to the swift current of maturity.

In youth, time appeared abundant, a generous friend that allowed space for dreams and detours. The excitement of a holiday or the simple pleasure of a family gathering filled the heart to overflowing. Yet as the burdens and responsibilities of life accumulate, one perceives how swiftly those same hours escape our grasp. The cricket matches and visits to grandmother's house, once the centre of our universe, recede into memory like distant stars. What remains is the realisation that this earthly life is but a transient stage, a brief sojourn in preparation for the everlasting abode. The descent, as the proverb notes, hastens because the destination draws near. This truth calls not for melancholy, but for mindful gratitude and purposeful living. The same time that rushes past offers each day a fresh opportunity to draw closer to goodness, to strengthen the bonds of family, and to perform deeds that endure beyond the grave. The believer finds solace in the knowledge that while worldly joys are fleeting, the rewards of faith and virtue are eternal. Grandmothers and grandfathers pass on their wisdom, friends scatter with the winds of fate, and youthful vigour fades; yet the soul, enriched by sincere effort, ascends toward its true home.

Let us, then, reflect upon the days that have gone before and the ones that remain. May we greet each Friday—or whichever day Providence grants us rest—with the same eager spirit of our youth, not for idle play alone, but for the cultivation of what truly matters. In the quiet hours, when memories of cricket fields and ancestral homes stir the heart, let them serve as gentle prompts to value time's precious gift. For in the end, it is not the length of days that defines a life, but the faith, patience, and righteousness with which they are filled. Thus does every traveller complete his journey, setting forth at last toward the eternal mercy of his Lord.

After Iran, Is Turkey Israel's Next Target?

Qamar Bashir



Turkey is not Iran, Lebanon, Gaza, or Syria. It is a major NATO power with a large population, deep military traditions, a growing defense industry, advanced drones, naval reach, missile development, and strategic depth. In any conventional comparison, Turkey is not an easy target. Its manpower, geography, industrial base, and NATO membership make a direct Israeli attempt...

ISRAEL'S rising confrontation with Turkey has opened a disturbing new chapter in Middle Eastern geopolitics. After its war with Iran and its continuing campaigns against Hezbollah and other regional actors, Israel now appears to be widening its strategic lens toward Ankara. Former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's warning that "Turkey is the new Iran" was not an isolated slogan; it reflected a growing Israeli security debate that increasingly views Turkey, Qatar, Syria, Hamas, and even Pakistan-linked regional alignments as part of a new strategic challenge to Israeli supremacy.

This raises a central question: how can a tiny state, with a population smaller than many regional cities, speak with such confidence about confronting Iran, Turkey, and even Pakistan? The answer is not conventional military size alone. Israel's confidence rests on four pillars: its advanced air force, elite intelligence network, U.S. strategic backing, and, above all, its undeclared nuclear arsenal. Together, these have created a state mentality in which Israel does not merely seek security; it seeks regional dominance.

Turkey is not Iran, Lebanon, Gaza, or Syria. It is a major NATO power with a large population, deep military traditions, a growing defense industry, advanced drones, naval reach, missile development, and strategic depth. In any conventional comparison, Turkey is not an easy target. Its manpower, geography, industrial base, and NATO membership make a direct Israeli attempt to "destroy" or subjugate Turkey almost impossible. Turkey has no shared border with Israel, and any major war would require complex operations through Syria, the Mediterranean, or proxy corridors. This is not a battlefield where Israel can easily repeat its air campaigns against weaker or fragmented enemies.

Yet Israel's confidence comes from a different calculation. It knows that conventional imbalance can be overturned by nuclear deterrence. Israel's undeclared nuclear capability is the hidden card behind its regional posture. Even if Turkey is stronger in manpower, tanks, drones, ships, and strategic depth, Israel's nuclear ambiguity gives it a psychological edge. It tells every regional rival: you may hurt Israel, but you cannot safely push Israel to existential panic. This is the dangerous "madness card" — the belief that if Israel feels cornered, it may escalate beyond normal rules. This creates a frightening asymmetry. Turkey may dominate a conventional confrontation, but Israel may believe

that nuclear shadow power gives it the final word. That is why the Turkey-Israel rivalry cannot be judged only by aircraft, tanks, or soldiers. It must be judged by escalation control. Turkey can defeat pressure, but it must avoid giving Israel the pretext to internationalize, nuclearize, or Americanize the conflict. Many argue that conventional military strength, diplomacy, missile defenses, or asymmetric capabilities can compensate for a nuclear imbalance. Yet the modern strategic record suggests that nuclear weapons remain the ultimate deterrent. Countries that possess a credible nuclear capability are rarely subjected to the kind of existential military pressure faced by states that do not. More importantly, when rival states both possess nuclear weapons, the risk of total war often declines because the consequences become catastrophic for both sides.

The example of India and Pakistan is frequently cited in this context. Before both states became overt nuclear powers, the possibility of large-scale conventional war remained a persistent concern. After nuclearization, despite crises and tensions, leaders on both sides have had to calculate under the shadow of mutually assured destruction. The existence of nuclear weapons has not eliminated conflict, but it has significantly raised the threshold for full-scale war.

A similar argument is made regarding the Korean Peninsula. North Korea's strategic leverage does not come from economic strength or global influence. Rather, its nuclear capability has created a deterrent that makes direct military action against it far more difficult to contemplate. Whatever one thinks of the regime, its nuclear arsenal has fundamentally altered how other powers approach it. Viewed through this lens, the debate over Iran becomes even more significant. Supporters of nuclear deterrence argue that if a state lacks a nuclear capability while facing a nuclear-armed adversary, it remains vulnerable to coercion and military pressure. They contend that possession of nuclear weapons by both sides can create a balance that discourages war, whereas a monopoly of nuclear power creates strategic inequality.

For this reason, some analysts believe that the central issue in the Middle East is not simply conventional military superiority but the unequal distribution of nuclear deterrence. As long as one state is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons while its rivals do not, the strategic balance

will remain tilted. From this perspective, the debate is less about military hardware and more about whether lasting stability can exist when deterrence is available to some states but denied to others. Turkey must therefore think carefully about the changing strategic environment around it. The challenge is not merely military competition with Israel but understanding how nuclear deterrence shapes regional behavior, perceptions of risk, and calculations of power. Whether one supports or opposes nuclear proliferation, it is difficult to ignore the argument that nuclear capability has become one of the most powerful guarantees against external coercion in the modern world.

Turkey must read the warning signs carefully. Israel's strategic culture has shifted from survival to expansion, from deterrence to domination, from defense to preemption. A state that sees itself as divinely entitled to security beyond its borders will always identify new enemies after old ones are weakened. Today Iran is the enemy. Tomorrow Turkey is described as the "new Iran." After that, Pakistan's nuclear capability may again be framed as a future threat.

If Israel continues to treat every independent regional power as the next Iran, it may achieve short-term military successes while creating long-term instability across the Middle East. From Ankara's perspective, the lesson of recent conflicts is that diplomatic appeals, international institutions, and conventional military capabilities alone may not always be viewed as sufficient safeguards against a state that believes it enjoys overwhelming strategic superiority. Turkey's challenge, therefore, is to develop a level of strategic deterrence—political, economic, technological, military, and diplomatic and nuclear—that convinces any potential adversary that the costs of confrontation would far outweigh any conceivable gains.

History suggests that lasting peace is rarely preserved by goodwill alone; it is preserved when both sides recognize that conflict would be mutually damaging and strategically unwinnable. Only such a credible balance can prevent rivalry from escalating into the next great catastrophe of the Middle East.

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

The silence around Western Azerbaijan

Farid Mustafayev

The international importance of this issue lies in the fact that it concerns not only Azerbaijan—Armenia bilateral relations but also universal principles such as minority rights, the right of return for displaced populations, protection of cultural heritage, and historical justice. Without recognition of this truth, the establishment of a fair and sustainable peace in the region is impossible. To properly understand the Western Azerbaijan issue, the historical timeline must begin in 1828. This date marks the Treaty of Turkmenchay between the Russian Empire and Qajar Iran, a geopolitical turning point that reshaped the entire South Caucasus. Before the Treaty of Turkmenchay, the territory of present-day Armenia was largely governed as Azerbaijani khanates. The Erivan and Nakhchivan Khanates constituted the main political entities of this region. The Erivan Khanate, formed after the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, functioned as an independent state ruled by Azerbaijani Turkic dynasties. Its capital, Erivan (modern-day Yerevan), was a vibrant Azerbaijani city with fortresses, palaces, mosques, and bazaars. After the Russian occupation, a policy of demographic engineering was implemented. Under General Paskevich, large-scale resettlement of Armenians from Iran and Ottoman territories into the region was carried out. Between 1828 and 1830 alone, more than 40,000 Armenians from Qajar Iran and over 84,000 from the Ottoman Empire were relocated to these areas, according to Russian archival sources. At the same time, the Muslim Azerbaijani population was gradually marginalized and dispossessed. Nevertheless, until the early 20th century, Azerbaijanis made up approximately 40% of the population of the Erivan Governorate. This was not a small minority; nearly half of the population consisted of Azerbaijani Turks. Their villages, lands, religious sites, mosques, and cemeteries covered the entire region. The beginning of the 20th century marked a period of bloody ethnic clashes in the South Caucasus. In 1905, revolutionary waves in the Russian Empire escalated into armed conflicts between Azerbaijanis and Armenians in Baku, Erivan, and Ganja. These events resulted in civilian casualties on both sides, but the process of Azerbaijani displacement from their historical lands accelerated. More severe events

THE majority of the international community recognizes this territory simply as the "Republic of Armenia." However, Azerbaijani society, historians, and internally displaced communities assess these lands from a fundamentally different perspective. A significant part of present-day Armenia is considered historically inhabited, governed, and culturally developed by Azerbaijanis over centuries. The term "Western Azerbaijan" is used to describe these territories—geographically referring to the historical Azerbaijani homeland located west of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijanis living in these areas were subjected to gradual demographic pressure beginning in 1828, Soviet deportations during 1948–1953, and ethnic violence during 1988–1991, resulting in their expulsion from their ancestral lands.

The international importance of this issue lies in the fact that it concerns not only Azerbaijan—Armenia bilateral relations but also universal principles such as minority rights, the right of return for displaced populations, protection of cultural heritage, and historical justice. Without recognition of this truth, the establishment of a fair and sustainable peace in the region is impossible. To properly understand the Western Azerbaijan issue, the historical timeline must begin in 1828. This date marks the Treaty of Turkmenchay between the Russian Empire and Qajar Iran, a geopolitical turning point that reshaped the entire South Caucasus. Before the Treaty of Turkmenchay, the territory of present-day Armenia was largely governed as Azerbaijani khanates. The Erivan and Nakhchivan Khanates constituted the main political entities of this region. The Erivan Khanate, formed after the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, functioned as an independent state ruled by Azerbaijani Turkic dynasties. Its capital, Erivan (modern-day Yerevan), was a vibrant Azerbaijani city with fortresses, palaces, mosques, and bazaars. After the Russian occupation, a policy of demographic engineering was implemented. Under General Paskevich, large-scale resettlement of Armenians from Iran and Ottoman territories into the region was carried out. Between 1828 and 1830 alone, more than 40,000 Armenians from Qajar Iran and over 84,000 from the Ottoman Empire were relocated to these areas, according to Russian archival sources. At the same time, the Muslim Azerbaijani population was gradually marginalized and dispossessed. Nevertheless, until the early 20th century, Azerbaijanis made up approximately 40% of the population of the Erivan Governorate. This was not a small minority; nearly half of the population consisted of Azerbaijani Turks. Their villages, lands, religious sites, mosques, and cemeteries covered the entire region. The beginning of the 20th century marked a period of bloody ethnic clashes in the South Caucasus. In 1905, revolutionary waves in the Russian Empire escalated into armed conflicts between Azerbaijanis and Armenians in Baku, Erivan, and Ganja. These events resulted in civilian casualties on both sides, but the process of Azerbaijani displacement from their historical lands accelerated. More severe events

occurred between 1918 and 1920. Following the collapse of the Russian Empire, three republics were declared in the South Caucasus: the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the Republic of Armenia, and the Georgian Democratic Republic. Territorial disputes immediately began between them. Erivan province, Zangezur, Karabakh, and Nakhchivan became central points of conflict. During this period, Armenian forces led by Andranik Ozanian systematically burned Azerbaijani villages in Zangezur, Vedi, and Sharur and massacred civilians. These events are referred to in Azerbaijani historiography as "Dashnak massacres." Thousands of Azerbaijanis were killed and hundreds of villages destroyed. At the same time, in March 1918 in Baku, the so-called "March massacres" took place, during which tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis were killed by the Bolshevik-Dashnak alliance. This historical period laid the foundation for deep mutual distrust and fear between the two peoples. However, the suffering of Azerbaijanis during this period has not been highlighted in international discourse to the same extent as other narratives. In 1920, the Red Army occupied the entire South Caucasus.

The Bolsheviks began restructuring the region. Decisions taken during this period defined both political and ethnic balances, the consequences of which are still felt today. In 1921, the Soviet leadership defined the administrative map of the South Caucasus. Nakhchivan was granted autonomous status within the Azerbaijan SSR. Nagorno-Karabakh, despite its predominantly Armenian population, was placed under Azerbaijani jurisdiction. Zangezur district was transferred to the Armenian SSR, separating Nakhchivan from mainland Azerbaijan. At that time, a significant Azerbaijani population still lived in present-day Armenia. Initially, Soviet policy was relatively tolerant. Azerbaijani villages existed within the Armenian SSR administrative system, with Azerbaijani-language schools, collective farms, and local institutions operating. However, over time, Soviet nationalization policies weakened the position of Azerbaijanis in Armenia. Property was nationalized, land was collectivized, and independent cultural and political organization became impossible. This event fits the definition of ethnic cleansing: systematic violence, lack of state protection, property confiscation, threats of death, and destruction of cultural traces. Another deeply damaging aspect of the Western Azerbaijan issue is the systematic destruction of cultural heritage. This process began before displacement, continued during it, and persists afterward. Mosques built by Azerbaijanis over centuries were destroyed or repurposed. The Blue Mosque in Yerevan, for example, was used as a warehouse during the Soviet period and later as a cinema. It was restored in the 1990s with Iranian funding, but outside the context of Azerbaijani heritage.

Azerbaijani cemeteries were destroyed or erased, with inscriptions removed or stones broken. Place names were systematically changed, replacing Azerbaijani toponyms such as Goycha, Zangibasar, and Vedibasar. This was not merely a linguistic change but an attempt to erase historical connection to the land. Many historical monuments attributed to Azerbaijanis were later reclassified under different ethnic origins, with no reference to their Azerbaijani heritage. Organized under the "Western Azerbaijan Community," displaced Azerbaijanis and their descendants have increasingly raised the right of return at the international level. This demand is based not on political claims but on universally recognized principles of international law. UN resolutions affirm the right of displaced persons to return to their homes. However, this principle is inconsistently applied. The European Convention on Human Rights also guarantees property rights regardless of ethnicity. The 1951 Refugee Convention protects individuals displaced on ethnic grounds. Azerbaijan insists that this issue be included in comprehensive peace negotiations. However, international mediators in Brussels, Paris, and Washington have tended to avoid placing it on the core agenda. The right of return is not an unrealistic aspiration. It represents concrete legal claims of tens of thousands of people, many of whom or whose descendants still know the exact locations of their ancestral homes. The limited international media coverage of this issue has structural causes. First, strong Armenian diaspora lobbying in Western political systems significantly shapes narrative framing. Second, historical memory of earlier conflicts influences perception patterns, often casting Armenians as victims and Azerbaijanis as aggressors. Third, limitations in media dissemination from Azerbaijan reduce global visibility. Fourth, recent geopolitical developments have reinforced simplified narratives that obscure Azerbaijani displacement history. Since 2022, peace negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia have continued under international mediation. However, key issues remain unresolved. Will the right of return for Azerbaijanis be included in formal negotiations? How will property claims, cultural heritage, and religious sites be addressed? Will legal mechanisms be established for the protection and restoration of Azerbaijani heritage in Armenia? Without answers to these questions, any peace agreement risks remaining incomplete. The Western Azerbaijan Community has become increasingly active in international forums, engaging in legal and diplomatic advocacy. Although tangible results remain limited, the visibility of the issue is gradually increasing. The purpose of this narrative is not to increase hostility, but to highlight a historical reality that remains underrepresented internationally. Both peoples have suffered greatly, and both have victims in their histories. However, the displacement of Azerbaijanis from their ancestral lands is rarely acknowledged in global discourse. This imbalance represents both an intellectual and ethical challenge. International media, academia, and human rights institutions are encouraged to examine and address this gap. "Progress" social and economic research public union deputy chairman, Member of the New Azerbaijan Party, Member Of The Western Azerbaijan Community, Board Member Of The Youth Anti-Drug Public Union.

Briefs

EU foreign policy chief lauds Pak...

FROM PAGE 01

Kalás praised Pakistan's constructive role in the U.S.-Iran standoff, describing its diplomatic efforts as "laudable." She revealed that the European Union is prepared to engage directly with Iran to seek a peaceful resolution, but insisted that Tehran must address concerns related to its nuclear program. "Dialogue is the only way forward, and Iran must be willing to talk openly about nuclear issues," she said. On Pakistan's security concerns, Kalás affirmed that the country has the right to defend itself against any aggression, a statement that drew attention to ongoing tensions in South Asia. She cautioned, however, that strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan could trigger instability across the region. "Peace in Afghanistan is essential for stability in South Asia, and Pakistan's role will be critical in ensuring that tensions do not escalate," she added. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar echoed her sentiments, highlighting Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and its determination to meet international obligations under the GSP Plus framework. He reiterated that Pakistan values its partnership with the European Union and sees it as a cornerstone of its foreign policy.

Pakistan values ties with EU...

FROM PAGE 01

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir were playing a crucial role in these efforts. He laid special emphasis on the need for the international community, including the EU to work collectively to ensure lasting peace in the region. The Prime Minister also shared Pakistan's perspective on the regional situation in South Asia, as well as on Afghanistan, with the EU High Representative. He also conveyed his best wishes to EU Council President Antonio Costa as well as to EU Commission President Ms. Ursula von der Leyen and reiterated his cordial invitations to both leaders to visit Pakistan soon.

GB's rights should be protected...

FROM PAGE 01

Bilawal said, "You have been facing it. You have faced the consequences of your fate being decided in Islamabad." He asserted that the people of GB should make decisions for the region. The PPP chairperson also questioned the need for the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and GB. "What is the benefit of having a minister for Kashmir affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan? End this ministry. They say that the Centre has no resources. If that is the case, the first thing that should be done is end this ministry. And then all political, financial and administrative authority should be transferred to the assemblies in Gilgit and Muzaffarabad," he said.

Rain predicted in upper...

FROM PAGE 01

Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Wazirabad, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Sialkot, Narowal, Sahiwal, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Nankana Sahib, Chiniot, Faisalabad, Okara, Kasur, Khushab, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Mianwali, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Khanewal, Lodhran, Muzafargarh, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan and Layyah from June 02 to 05 with occasional gaps. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, scattered rain-wind/thunderstorms, with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms, are expected in Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber and Mirpur from June 02 to 05 with occasional gaps. The PMD said rain-wind/thunderstorms are also expected in Gilgit-Baltistan, including Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche and Shigar, from June 04 to 06 with occasional gaps.

IRS-SIF holds dialogue on examining 'Climate Change Strategies'

The dialogue brought together representatives from international organizations, government institutions, development agencies, academia, and civil society to deliberate on the evolving climate governance landscape following the first Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement and subsequent international climate negotiations, said a press release issued on Monday



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), in collaboration with Secours Islamique France (SIF)-Pakistan, organized a high-level Science-Policy Dialogue titled "From Global Stocktake to Implementation: Catalyzing Effective Climate Action" to examine pathways for translating global climate commitments into practical and regionally relevant implementation strategies. The dialogue brought together representatives from international organizations, government institutions, development agencies, academia, and civil society to deliberate on the evolving climate governance landscape following the first Global Stock-

take (GST) under the Paris Agreement and subsequent international climate negotiations, said a press release issued on Monday. Speaking at the event, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, highlighted the urgency of climate action, noting that Pakistan remains highly vulnerable to climate-induced disasters despite its minimal contribution to global emissions. He stressed that climate change, water scarcity, environmental degradation, population growth, and sustainable development are interconnected challenges requiring a comprehensive national strategy. He also emphasized stronger climate financing, resilient infrastructure, public awareness, and coordinated governance to build long-term resilience. Shiraz Shah,

Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Pakistan, emphasized translating policy commitments into effective delivery mechanisms and resilient governance systems for long-term climate adaptation and sustainable development. He highlighted stronger institutional coordination, locally driven solutions, integrated policy frameworks, and partnerships among governments, development institutions, and communities to advance inclusive climate resilience. Mr. Thomas Conan, Deputy Country Director, WFP Pakistan, highlighted growing climate threats to food security and stressed resilient food systems, climate-smart agriculture, anticipatory action, and stronger social protection mechanisms to address vulnerabilities

affecting agriculture, livelihoods, and supply chains. Muhammad Arif Goheer, Executive Director, GCISC, outlined Pakistan's climate vulnerabilities, including extreme weather events, glacial melt, water stress, and rising temperatures. He emphasized science-based planning, stronger climate data systems, research, and institutional capacities for informed policymaking and long-term adaptation. Mr. Amir Khan Goraya, CEO, NDRMF, underscored the importance of risk financing, institutional strengthening, and innovative financing mechanisms to scale climate resilience. He stressed sustained investments in preparedness, disaster risk reduction, community-level adaptation, and stronger coordination among public institutions, development partners, and financial actors. Concluding the session, Dr. Altaf Abro, Head of Mission, SIF Pakistan, stressed enhanced climate governance, innovative risk financing, and stronger partnerships to address humanitarian and environmental challenges. He called for integrated efforts among government institutions, academia, development partners, the private sector, and local communities, while underscoring the importance of green technologies and practical climate solutions. Dr. Anjum Rasheed, Head of the Climate Resilience Program at IRS, noted that the first Global Stocktake concluded at COP28 in 2023 marked a historic assessment of collective climate progress. She observed that the world remains off-track in limiting warming to 1.5°C, with widening adaptation gaps and inadequate climate finance for vulnerable countries. She stressed the need to accelerate implementation, strengthen NDCs, scale up climate finance, and enhance international cooperation.

Cancer trial shows results for treatment-resistant tumors

BAKU: Doctors on Saturday praised "unprecedentedly strong responses" to an injection that eradicated entire tumors in otherwise treatment-resistant cancer cases during a trial, according to Daily Sabah. It shrank the tumors for 42% of patients in the study by the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), London. Scientists gave amivantamab to people with recurrent and/or metastatic head and neck cancer that had stopped responding to standard treatments. Amivantamab is a small injection, unlike many cancer medications that require intravenous drips. One participant with tongue cancer said the treatment reduced his pain and swelling and he is no longer experiencing the "life-impacting" side effects he had during chemotherapy. Professor Kevin Harrington, professor in biological cancer therapies at the institute and consultant oncologist at The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, said: "These are unprecedentedly strong responses in patients whose disease has become resistant to both chemotherapy and immunotherapy. "This is a group of patients for whom treatment options are extremely limited, so seeing this level of

benefit is very striking." He added: "This treatment has the potential to benefit many thousands of patients each year." Head and neck cancer is the sixth most common cancer worldwide and it affects around 12,800 people in the U.K. each year. This phase of the OrigAMI-4 trial looked at 102 people with recurrent or metastatic head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC), whose cancer had continued to grow despite immunotherapy and platinum-based chemotherapy. The patients, from 55 hospitals in 11 countries, only

received amivantamab, which is being developed by Johnson & Johnson. Tumors shrank in 43 participants, 15 had them disappear completely and 28 saw their tumors shrink significantly. Patients with amivantamab lived for a median of 12.5 months after starting the treatment, despite having a cancer type with "very poor outcomes" once standard treatments stop working, the ICR said. Tumors started to respond within about six weeks and patients had a median of a little more than six-and-a-half months before the cancer started to grow again, it found. - APP

Chinese-backed \$1.12 billion coal-to-urea project to diversify Pak

ISLAMABAD: Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) is moving ahead with a proposed \$1.12 billion coal-to-urea project under the CPEC 2.0 framework after signing a Front-End Engineering Design agreement with China's Hualu Engineering and Technology Co. Ltd., Gwadar Pro reported quoting the company's statements. FFC has described the project as Pakistan's first coal-to-fertilizer venture. The proposed plant is expected to produce about 717,000 tonnes of urea annually and consume around 2.1 million tonnes of indigenous coal each year. Commercial operations are planned for 2030-31 or by 2031, according to reported company details. The project would mark a shift for Pakistan's fertilizer industry, which largely relies on natural gas as feedstock for ammonia and urea production. Analysts say a coal gasification route could diversify the country's fertilizer manufacturing base and reduce exposure to gas supply constraints. Pakistan's fertilizer sector is already largely self-sufficient in urea, but periodic supply gaps have required imports. Analysts cited in regional media said the planned additional capacity could help bridge such shortfalls and, if domestic demand remains stable, may create room for exports. - APP

Program for Restoration of Road Infrastructure

LAHORE: On Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's directions, a historic program for the restoration of road infrastructure in the province is underway, as construction and repair of roads in various districts under CM Local Roads Program are swiftly moving toward completion. She directed the authorities concerned to ensure timeliness, quality, and transparency in all projects of road construction, repair, and restoration. She declared lane discipline and line adherence mandatory in all major cities, including Lahore; besides approving billions of rupees for the construction of transport infrastructure and bus stops in Faisalabad, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, and Multan. She noted that on her directions, work is ongoing on mass transit projects in Faisalabad and Gujranwala to provide modern travel facilities to the public. Chief Minister Punjab directed the relevant authorities to implement a modern traffic system in major cities of Punjab, including Lahore. She made the installation of solar streetlights mandatory on all newly constructed roads; and has launched mega projects worth billions of rupees to improve road infrastructure and modern transport in Punjab. - DNA

How a Village in Beijing reinvented itself

BEIJING: In a village 91 kilometers from downtown Beijing, a once-forgotten hamlet surrounded by over 30,000 acres of peach blossoms is reinventing itself. Cafés, glass-house lounges, book bars, farmers' markets, and pet-themed playgrounds now line the village lanes. Hsana Afzal Khan, Coordinator to Pakistani Prime Minister on Commerce, noted institutional features of the village rarely found elsewhere: China's five-tier system of government allows decisions to be made efficiently; extremely long-term planning ensures continuity through successive Five-Year Plans. Beside what was once little more than a drainage ditch, a retro-style coffee house is opening soon. "In summer, it becomes a waterway; in winter, it turns into a light-show venue. This single site now generates over RMB 500,000 (about \$70,000) annually for the village," Li Na, a person in charge, told China Economic Net (CEN). Just three years ago, fewer than one-third of the village's homes were occupied. Most young people had left in search of work elsewhere. But over the past two years, the number of returnees has risen by 20 percent, as long-abandoned houses were renovated, rented out, and turned profitable. The once-overlooked settlement has become a popular countryside retreat for urban white-collar workers seeking an escape from city life. Many come to admire the peach blossoms and nearby Jinhai Lake. "During this year's May

Day holiday alone, more than 5,000 visitors arrived each day in search of a slower pace of life," according to Li. The village, home to just over 2,200 residents, now hosts 32 themed homestays. Depending on the season and holiday calendar, local organizers curate pet exhibitions, graffiti parties, mountain concerts, traditional wellness classes, agricultural fairs, and heritage health therapies to attract different groups of visitors. "Household income used to be below RMB 100,000 a year. Now, rental income alone has increased that sixfold," Li said. "E-commerce platforms have also boosted the local economy. Fresh produce, homestays, and recreational activities can now all reach urban consumers online." By the end of 2020, China had declared victory in its campaign to eradicate extreme poverty. Since then, the country's anti-poverty focus has shifted toward preventing people from falling back into poverty and addressing relative deprivation. Health insurance coverage among formerly impoverished populations has remained above 99 percent, while rural tap-water access has reached 96 percent, according to data from the International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRC). In the 2026 "No. 1 Central Document" - the government's most important annual rural policy directive - the country calls for the institutionalization of "regularized precision assistance". - DNA

Pakistan Football on Right Track, Says FIFA Official

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: FIFA has backed the progress made by Pakistan football over the past year, describing it as being on the right track while calling for immediate constitutional reforms within the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF). FIFA officials emphasized that modern governance structures and greater stakeholder empowerment are essential for accelerating the sport's development and bringing Pakistan in line with global football standards. Addressing a joint press conference in Islamabad alongside PFF President Syed Mohsen Gilani and Vice President Naveed Aslam, FIFA Head of Member Associations Governance Rolf Tanner said he had held extensive discussions with various football stakeholders during his two-day visit to Pakistan. Based on those consultations, he stressed that governance reforms within the PFF were both necessary and unavoidable. Tanner noted that Pakistan football has made positive progress over the last year, but improvements in governance structures are required to meet international standards. He

expressed confidence that Pakistan would soon implement the necessary constitutional amendments to modernize the federation and strengthen stakeholder participation in decision-making processes. "Empowering stakeholders through constitutional reforms is one of FIFA's key objectives," Tanner said, adding that FIFA's relevant committees are currently reviewing

financial matters related to the PFF Normalisation Committee (NC). He also stressed the importance of collective efforts from all stakeholders to promote football across the country. Speaking to the media, PFF President Mohsen Gilani said the federation's constitution had not undergone any major changes since 2013, making reforms essential in line with FIFA directives. He warned

that Pakistan football would continue to lag behind if it failed to keep pace with developments in the global game.

Gilani stated that FIFA's recommendations are aimed at improving football governance in Pakistan and confirmed that FIFA also holds the authority to audit the work of the former Normalisation Committee. Despite limited financial resources, he said, the federation has continued to organize domestic and international football activities while ensuring the participation of Pakistani teams in international competitions. Highlighting PFF's future plans, Gilani revealed that the federation is focusing on strengthening domestic football structures and is preparing to launch the Pakistan Football League in the near future. He clarified that the proposed constitutional amendments do not seek to expand presidential powers but are intended to ensure broader representation of all football stakeholders, particularly women. Gilani reaffirmed PFF's commitment to accelerating the growth of football in Pakistan, stressing that collaboration among all stakeholders would be crucial to achieving the long-term success and development of the sport.



Kuwait condemns Iran's attack

FROM PAGE 01

foreign affairs ministry, has strongly condemned the repeated Iranian attacks against Kuwait. The UAE also issued a statement condemning the "Iranian terrorist attacks" on Kuwait with missiles and drones. Jassem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, in a statement condemned the Iranian attacks as "a dangerous and unacceptable escalation." "These actions represent a dangerous and irresponsible escalation and a blatant violation of the sovereignty of Kuwait," he said in the statement.

Hamas to hold talks with Gaz...

FROM PAGE 01

factions, was expected to arrive in Cairo starting Tuesday for the talks to be held in the Mediterranean town of El-Alamein. "Hamis believes a breakthrough and progress are possible if Israel does not create new obstacles and if there is a genuine Israeli will to reach a solution," the official added. "The resistance factions will not accept disarmament under conditions imposed by the occupation," a second Hamas official told AFP.

Aleema denies Imran meeting...

FROM PAGE 01

proper treatment for his eye condition, not being allowed to speak to his sons, not being provided books for the past six months and not having access to television in his cell. "He has not been allowed contact with anyone from the outside world in the past 6 months, except two visits by his lawyer on the orders of the court," she said. "There is a full bench court order that allows for at least 18 people to visit him every week. Six family members and six lawyers on Tuesdays, and six party members on Thursdays," she said, adding that the concerns she stated were Imran's "lawful rights, under Pakistan's laws and international laws". The statement from Aleema comes after social media chatter over the weekend about a former army chief meeting with Imran at Adiala jail, where the latter is incarcerated.

France seizes oil tanker...

FROM PAGE 01

Shamkhani, according to open-source database Open-sanctions.org. According to French authorities, the Tagor was on its way from Murmansk in northwestern Russia when it was boarded. French soldiers ahsail from a helicopter as they intercepts an oil tanker that was traveling from Russia under international sanctions. (French Army via AP) The ship was falsely flying a Cameroonian flag and was heading toward Limbe, a seaside city in the west of the African country, said a spokesperson for France's Atlantic maritime prefecture. Shadow fleet vessels frequently change the flags they fly, a practice known as flag-hopping, or use invalid registrations in an attempt to escape tracking.

Iranian FM briefs Ishaq Dar...

FROM PAGE 01

He urged Pakistan to continue using its good offices to help facilitate de-escalation and support efforts aimed at maintaining the fragile ceasefire in Lebanon and preventing further escalation. In response, Deputy Prime Minister Dar conveyed Pakistan's serious concern over the deteriorating security environment and emphasized the need for all parties to exercise restraint. He reiterated that sustaining the ceasefire was essential to avoid a breakdown of existing understandings and to preserve regional stability. Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact and coordinate diplomatic efforts to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

Briefs

Gold price decreases by Rs 4,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold declined in the local market on Monday, with 24 karat gold per tola shedding Rs4,400 to settle at Rs 471,762 compared to Rs476,162 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 3,773 to Rs 404,459 from Rs 408,232, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold fell by Rs 3,459 to Rs 370,767 against Rs 374,226. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$44 to \$4,494 per ounce from \$4,538. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs 46 to Rs 8,059, while the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs 40 to Rs 6,909. The price of silver in the international market increased by \$0.46 to \$75.75 per ounce, the association reported.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 03 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.47 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.50. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.25 and Rs 279.50, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.56 and closed at Rs 324.65 from the previous day's close of Rs 324.09, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs1.19 and closed at Rs 375.03 compared to the previous day's Rs 373.84. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham stood stagnant to close at Rs75.82, and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 paisa to close at 74.20.—APP

Jamarat gates closed until next year's pilgrimage

MAKKAH MUKARRAMAH: Following the smooth and successful conclusion of the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, the relevant Saudi authorities have officially sealed all security gates at the historic Jamarat Complex in Mina, where the ritual of stoning the devil takes place. According to officials responsible for security and administrative affairs at the Holy Sites, the operation to close all entry and exit points across all levels of the Jamarat Complex was executed immediately after the pilgrims completed their stoning rituals.—APP

Pakistan peace role praised at GCTP moot

Senator Mushahid Hussain said world was in an historic transition marked by Turbulence and Transformation, with the Iran War accelerating the process of unraveling of the Western-led international order

DNA

SKOPJE, NORTH MACEDONIA: Senator Mushahid Hussain Said thanked an International Conference organised by Global Council for Tolerance & Peace (GCTP), where Pakistan was praised by President of host country, North Macedonia, as well as by the UAE President of GCTP for its efforts to promote peace between Iran and the United States. The conference was attended by Speakers of Tanzania & Malta, as well as parliamentary, political, think tank and opinion leaders of 22 countries of Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. Senator Mushahid Hussain Said met the President of North Macedonia, Mrs Gordana Davkova, who appreciated Pakistan's pivotal role in hosting peace talks between Iran and the US, and wished good luck for their success. In his speech to the Conference today, Ambassador Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Jarwan, who is from the UAE and was previously Speaker of the Arab Parlia-



ment, profusely praised Pakistan's initiatives for peace to end the conflict in the Gulf and for hosting Iran-US peace talks. Senator Mushahid Hussain said world was in an historic transi-

tion marked by Turbulence and irreversible process, as the Western-led order was based on double-standards and hypocrisy on issues facing the Global South. He condemned the US-Israeli aggression against Iran, terming its fail-

ICCI President raises key business issues with PM

Terms one-window digital approval system essential for investment growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has urged the government to address the pressing challenges confronting the business community, particularly those affecting the real estate, construction, and industrial sectors, during a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House here on Monday. The meeting was attended by Presidents of various chambers of commerce and leading business figures from across the country, who presented their budget proposals and highlighted the major obstacles hindering business growth and economic expansion. Representing the business community of the federal capital, Sardar Tahir Mehmood drew the Prime Minister's attention to the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) irrational Floor Area Ratio (FAR) charges, stating that these charges have significantly increased the cost of doing business and are discouraging

investment in Islamabad. He also raised concerns over Sections 236C and 236K of the Income Tax Ordinance related to immovable property transactions, noting that these taxes have adversely impacted the real estate and construction sectors, which support nearly 70 allied industries and generate substantial economic activity and employment across the country. The ICCI President further emphasized the urgent need for introducing a One Window Digital Approval System and implementing a fast-track approval mechanism for business and construction-related projects. He maintained that such reforms would reduce bureaucratic delays, improve the ease of doing business, enhance transparency, and restore investor confidence. During the extensive consultation session, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif listened to attentively the proposals and recommendations put forward by the business community for their possible incorporation into the Federal Budget 2026-27. The participants underscored the importance of promoting exports, encourag-

ing industrial growth, and creating a more business-friendly environment. The business leaders also proposed the rationalization of energy tariffs and the removal of hurdles affecting export-oriented industries, stressing that competitive energy costs are essential for increasing Pakistan's exports and strengthening the national economy. The Prime Minister assured the participants that the government values the input of the business community and is committed to addressing their concerns. He directed the relevant ministries and departments to maintain close coordination with chamber presidents and business representatives and to resolve the issues faced by the business community on a priority basis. Sardar Tahir Mehmood expressed hope that the government would incorporate the business community's recommendations into the upcoming budget and take practical measures to facilitate investment, revive economic activity, and accelerate sustainable growth.

Bangladeshi doctors brace for surge in deadly measles outbreak

DHAKA: Bangladesh's deadliest outbreak of measles does not appear to be slowing despite nationwide vaccination efforts, doctors say, as they fear a new surge in infections following increased transmission during Eid Al-Adha homecoming. Since the 1990s, Bangladesh's vaccination campaigns have been able to contain the highly contagious airborne disease, which is especially dangerous for children under the age of five. But immunization was disrupted amid political turmoil in 2024, after student-led protests ousted the previous administration. The caretaker Cabinet, which ruled the country until late February, has missed the supplementary mass vaccination that should have taken place during its tenure. The outbreak was officially recorded on March 15, and 585 children have since died with measles symptoms, while 71,000 have been hospitalized, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services released on Monday. While the new government started a nationwide campaign to reach 20 million children on April 20, so far only one vaccine dose has been administered. One dose gives 90 percent immunity to the disease, but it is not enough to bring the outbreak under control. "There is no sign of a downturn in measles infection rate across the country," Dr. Ariful Bashar from Mohakhali Contagious Disease Hospital told Arab News. "Measles is a highly contagious disease, even six times more than COVID-19. So, unless 95 percent immunity is achieved through vaccination, there will be no downturn in the infection rate." Fuelling concern is the fact that last week millions of Bangladeshis traveled to their hometowns to celebrate Eid Al-Adha, with no measures in place to prevent the infectious virus from spreading. The incubation period is typically 10-14 days from exposure. "I fear that we may witness a future increase in the infection rate due to this Eid travel rush, as health protocols were not maintained properly," Bashar said. "We don't have sufficient facilities to run contact tracing for measles patients. Without contact tracing, it's very tough to contain the outbreak. It's the most contagious disease in the world." Since March, hospitals across the country have been overwhelmed as they struggle to isolate and treat hundreds of children admitted every day. Dr. Mirza Ziaul Islam, director of the Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, which specializes in pediatrics, told Arab News that the facility's intensive care units and dedicated measles wards remained fully occupied. "During the Eid travel period, it was not possible to keep infected patients isolated, prompting fears that the number of new cases will remain high in the coming days," he said. "However, we have already achieved 110 percent of our vaccination target, and the campaign is ongoing. It takes four to six weeks for the immunity to develop. I hope the situation will begin to improve within the next two weeks.—DNA

Hamas to hold talks with Gaza mediators in Egypt

GAZA CITY: A Hamas delegation is due to meet with mediators in Egypt on Wednesday to discuss ways of advancing the fragile Gaza ceasefire, officials from the Palestinian Islamist movement told AFP. The Palestinian territory remains gripped by daily violence, with the Israeli military and Hamas accusing one another of violating the truce in effect since October. A transition to the second phase of the ceasefire, which was supposed to involve Hamas's disarmament and a gradual withdrawal of the Israeli army, has been stalled for months. "Egypt has invited Hamas and other factions to participate in talks with mediators on Wednesday... which will also include Qatari and Turkish officials," a Hamas official said, declining to be identified as he was not authorized to speak publicly on the matter. "The mediators have presented ideas for formulating a new, revised proposal acceptable to both Hamas and Israel." The official said the Hamas delegation, headed by chief negotiator Khalil Al-Hayya, as well as representatives from other Palestinian factions, was expected to arrive in Cairo starting Tuesday for the talks to be held in the Mediterranean town of El-Alamein. "Hamas believes a breakthrough and progress are possible if Israel does not create new obstacles and if there is a genuine Israeli will to reach a solution," the official added. One of the key sticking points to advancing the ceasefire negotiations has been the issue of Hamas's disarmament. "The resistance factions will not accept disarmament under conditions imposed by the occupation," a second Hamas official told AFP. Hamas has repeatedly said it is not opposed to handing over some of its arsenal, but only as part of a Palestinian political process. Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had ordered the military to take control of 70 percent of the Gaza Strip, in defiance of the ceasefire's terms. Hamas at the time accused Netanyahu of a "blatant violation," condemning the "complete silence" of US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace and its high representative for Gaza, Nickolay Maladenov.—APP

Israeli settlers' storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque condemned

LONDON/DUBAI: Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan have strongly condemned the storming of the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli settlers in occupied East Jerusalem, including the raising of the Israeli flag within its courtyards. Qatar, through a foreign affairs ministry statement, stressed that Al-Aqsa Mosque is an "exclusively Muslim place of worship and that all unilateral measures aimed at altering the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem and its sanctities are null and void under international law." A continuation of such violations and repeated provocations could fuel further violence and escalation in the region, the statement added. In a statement, the UAE mentioned that the settlers have stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of Israeli police, considering these actions as "a provocation and an unacceptable act of extremism." The UAE foreign ministry statement emphasized the need to respect the historical and legal status quo of Al-Aqsa Mosque and ensure the protection of all holy sites. It also held the "Israeli authorities responsible for halting these escalatory actions and called for the implementation of efforts to avoid exacerbating tensions and instability in the region.—APP

UK, Germany concerned on Israeli advance into S Lebanon

VIENNA: The Israeli army's push further into southern Lebanon is cause for serious concern, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl said in a statement on Sunday, urging all sides to cease hostilities. "The Israeli army's advance further into southern Lebanon is cause for serious concern," the statement said, adding: "Any further escalation will exacerbate the already tense situation and trigger new waves of displacement within Lebanon." The Israeli military's escalation of activities in Lebanon has led to civilians being killed and displaced, destroyed infrastructure and eroded space for diplomacy and it must end, British Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper said on Sunday. "All sides must respect the ceasefire and engage with negotiations in good faith," Cooper said in a post on X, adding that Hezbollah must also end its attacks on Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday he had ordered troops to move further into Lebanon in the battle against the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group, despite a ceasefire announced more than six weeks ago. The fighting in Lebanon has been the broadest spillover of the Iran war, displacing more than 1.2 million Lebanese through Israeli strikes and evacuation orders since March 2, when Hezbollah began firing rockets.—APP

Operation divine bytes and rise of digital battlefield

IZMI HERLANI

The operation underscored a defining reality of contemporary conflict: modern wars are no longer fought solely with bombs and bullets; they are increasingly contested through cyber power, information dominance and technological superiority. Operation Divine Bytes stood as a compelling testament to Pakistan Air Force's rapidly advancing cyber warfare prowess. Executed under the stewardship of Air Commodore Attaullah Zeb, DG PAF Cyber Force, and guided by the strategic vision and direct oversight of the Chief of the Air Staff, the operation showcased PAF's growing ability to project power and achieve operational effects across the digital battlespace. It reflected the growing integration of PAF's cyber power within a broader multi-domain military framework. It illustrated how modern Air Forces are increasingly combining cyber operations, electronic warfare, surveillance capabilities and conventional combat power into a synchronized operational architecture. While fighter aircraft and Air Defence systems remained central to the conflict, cyberspace quietly emerged as an equally influential front. Reports during the conflict pointed toward disruptions in Indian communication networks, instability within sections of power infrastructure and interruptions affecting logistical systems across parts of India. In an era defined by interconnected systems, even temporary digital disruption can create operational uncertainty, slow coordination mechanisms and affect decision-making during critical moments. This is the defining feature of modern warfare: strategic effects can now be achieved without large-scale physical destruction. A compromised communication network, delayed command response or disrupted logistics chain may influence military effectiveness

as significantly as a conventional strike. This, PAF Cyber operations have altered the very meaning of battle damage in the contemporary battlespace. Equally important was the role of information dominance during the conflict. Modern military operations increasingly revolve around the acquisition, interpretation and management of data. Nations capable of penetrating digital ecosystems, securing strategic intelligence and controlling information flows possess a substantial operational advantage long before physical engagement begins. Within this evolving environment, Open-Source Intelligence has become a powerful force multiplier. Publicly accessible satellite imagery, geospatial data, digital footprints and social media activity now provide unprecedented situational awareness in conflict zones. During Marka-e-Haq, PAF OSINT reportedly assisted in identifying unusual online activity and coordinated information patterns ahead of the crisis, contributing to operational preparedness and early threat assessment. As the conflict progressed, open-source digital analysis also enabled rapid Battle Damage Assessment through satellite imagery verification and publicly available evidence. This reflects the growing importance of information-centric warfare where strategic awareness is increasingly shaped in real time through digital monitoring and analysis. What distinguished Pakistan Air Force's operational approach was the apparent synchronization between cyber capability and conventional military operations. Cyber warfare was not treated merely as a supporting technical function operating in isolation. Instead, it appeared integrated into a wider operational doctrine encompassing electronic warfare, artificial intelligence, surveillance systems and precision air power. Such integration reflects the future trajectory of mil-

itary strategy globally. Contemporary warfare is steadily evolving toward a net-centric model in which dominance depends upon the seamless coordination of multiple operational domains. Cyber capability now functions as a force multiplier capable of shaping both digital and physical dimensions of conflict simultaneously. The development of this capability also reflects long-term institutional foresight within Pakistan Air Force. Recognizing the rapidly changing nature of warfare, the service leadership accelerated modernization efforts focused on emerging technologies including cyber warfare, AI-enabled operational systems and integrated command structures. This doctrinal transformation led by Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu sought to prepare Pakistan Air Force for con-

licts where technological integration would become as critical as conventional combat strength. The recognition recently accorded to PAF Cyber Force during the Marka-e-Haq Commemoration Ceremony further highlighted the strategic importance of cyber operations within Pakistan's national defence framework. It also underscored the emergence of cyber specialists as indispensable actors in modern military operations. International defence analysts increasingly view cyber-integrated warfare as the future of military competition. The ability to synchronize digital operations with conventional combat capability is now regarded as a hallmark of advanced military preparedness. In this environment, PAF's cyber resilience and information superiority are becoming central pillars of deterrence and op-

erational effectiveness. Beyond its technical dimensions, cyber warfare also carries significant psychological and strategic implications. Modern conflicts are fought not only across physical terrain but also within the information sphere where narratives, perception and strategic signaling shape both domestic morale and international opinion. Demonstrating technological sophistication and cyber preparedness therefore serves not only operational objectives but also broader strategic messaging. Operation Divine Bytes ultimately symbolized far more than a cyber campaign; it reflected the broader transformation underway in modern warfare and highlighted Pakistan Air Force's emergence as a technologically advanced and future-oriented fighting force. Under the visionary leadership of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, PAF has steadily expanded its operational doctrine beyond conventional air power into the realms of cyber warfare, artificial intelligence and integrated multi-domain operations. The battlefield of the future now extends far beyond traditional frontlines into servers, networks, satellites and digital ecosystems where silent operations may shape strategic outcomes before conventional engagements even begin. The May 2025 conflict served as a powerful reminder that future wars will not be defined solely by firepower or troop strength, but increasingly by the ability to dominate across interconnected domains through technology, cyber capability and information control. In demonstrating this evolving warfare model, Pakistan Air Force reinforced its reputation as a modern, adaptive and strategically forward-looking air arm prepared to confront the challenges of next-generation conflict. The era of digital warfare is no longer a distant possibility; it has already become an operational reality.



Briefs

US strike on drug boat kills 3

WASHINGTON: The US military said it carried out another strike Saturday on a boat accused of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing three men in the fourth attack this week and putting the total death toll at 205. US Southern Command announced the strike with its usual language that the vessel was "engaged in narco-trafficking operations" and operated by a designated terrorist organization. It provided no evidence for the allegation. It's the latest in a monthslong campaign against alleged drug boats traversing the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific. Video released by the military on social media shows a small vessel floating in the ocean before it's hit and engulfed in a fireball. The attack brings the death toll to 205 in a series of US strikes that began in early September, with other attacks announced on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. The Trump administration has declared that the US is at armed conflict with Latin American drug cartels, saying they are behind the flow of drugs into American communities. US Southern Command said in its post on X that the strike came at the direction of Gen. Francis L. Donovan, the top US commander in Latin America. - APP

Pakistan crew members still in Somali pirates custody

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Nearly a dozen Pakistani crew members taken hostage by Somali pirates aboard an oil tanker remain in captivity 40 days after the vessel was hijacked off the Somali coast. According to diplomatic sources, the tanker, Honour 25, was seized by pirates on April 21 while sailing near Somalia. A total of 17 crew members were taken hostage, including 10 Pakistanis, four Indonesians, one Indian and one Myanmar national. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs had confirmed the incident, saying that immediate steps were initiated to ensure the safe recovery of the crew. Despite efforts to secure their release, no crew members have been freed so far. Diplomatic sources said the vessel remains anchored off the Somali coast while negotiations continue. According to the sources, the Somali government is communicating with the pirates through the owner of Honour 25 in an attempt to secure the release of the hostages. The pirates initially demanded a ransom of \$10 million before lowering their demand to \$4 million, but negotiations have yet to yield any results. Family members of the Pakistani crew have voiced growing concern over the fate of their loved ones and appealed to the government to step up efforts for their release.

Germany, Pakistan sign €40.5 million agreement

Ambassador Lepel highlighted the importance of the collaboration, stating that Germany and Pakistan are "investing in a more resilient and sustainable future together"



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Germany and Pakistan have taken another step toward strengthening their long-

standing partnership with the signing of a €40.5 million agreement aimed at supporting projects in climate action, renewable energy, and social protection. The agreement was signed by Ina

Lepel, German Ambassador to Pakistan, and Humair Karim, representing Pakistan's Economic Affairs Division, through the German development agency GIZ. The funding will support nine pro-

jects designed to enhance resilience, sustainability, and inclusive growth in Pakistan.

Ambassador Lepel highlighted the importance of the collaboration, stating that Germany and Pakistan are "investing in a more resilient and sustainable future together." She emphasized that the projects will not only address pressing environmental challenges but also contribute to social welfare and energy reforms. The Economic Affairs Division welcomed the initiative, noting that the partnership reflects Pakistan's commitment to tackling climate change and improving social protection systems. Deputy officials stressed that the projects will help Pakistan transition toward cleaner energy sources while strengthening its ability to protect vulnerable communities. Germany has long been a key development partner for Pakistan,

particularly in areas of renewable energy, vocational training, and governance reforms. This latest agreement builds on decades of cooperation and signals a shared determination to confront global challenges such as climate change and energy security.

Observers believe the funding will provide Pakistan with much-needed technical expertise and financial support to accelerate reforms in the energy sector, expand social safety nets, and implement climate adaptation strategies. The collaboration also underscores the EU member state's broader commitment to supporting sustainable development in South Asia. With this agreement, Germany and Pakistan reaffirm their partnership as one rooted in shared values and mutual goals, aiming to deliver tangible benefits for communities across Pakistan while contributing to global climate action.

Five killed in South Korean plant explosion

DNA

SEOUL: An explosion at a plant run by South Korean defense firm Hanwha Aerospace killed five people on Monday, local fire authorities said. The explosion was reported to authorities at around 11:00 am (0200 GMT) at Hanwha's plant in Daejeon, about 150 kilometers south of Seoul. A representative of the Daejeon Fire Headquarters told AFP that five people were killed and two others injured, without providing further details. Hanwha Aerospace is a major South Korean defense manufacturer which produces weapons, artillery systems and aerospace components. Its Daejeon facility focuses on research and development, including advanced weapons technologies and space-related systems. The blast may have happened during the cleaning process involved in the production of rocket propellants, Hanwha Aerospace CEO Son Jae-il said at a news briefing.

Hundreds of youths protest outside Kenya's Ebola quarantine center

NAIROBI: Hundreds of youths in Kenya's central town of Nanyuki on Monday demonstrated against the establishment at the Laikipia Air Base of an Ebola quarantine center for American citizens exposed to the virus. The protests come two days after Kenya's High Court suspended the establishment of the facility and the arrival of any foreign patients pending the hearing of a case filed by the Law Society of Kenya and a constitutional watchdog. The two organizations cited Kenya's fragile health system as the reason why foreign Ebola patients should not be quarantined in the country. US officials said Thursday that the United States was planning to send Americans exposed to Ebola while abroad to a new facility in Kenya instead of flying them home. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the administration's plans. They said the facility would be at Laikipia Air Base and would be operational with 50 quarantine beds by Friday. On Monday, hundreds of youths marched to the gates of the air base, chanting anti-Ebola slogans. Health Minister Aden Duale on Sunday said the quarantine center was for "everyone" and not exclusively for US nationals. The US government intends to commit \$13.5 million toward Kenya's Ebola preparedness efforts, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement. Local leaders, including Laikipia Governor Joshua Irungu, had told journalists that they were opposed to the establishment of an Ebola quarantine center. "This will expose our people to Ebola," he said, adding that many locals work inside the air base and could be exposed. Kenya has not recorded Ebola cases, but neighboring Uganda has reported nine and closed its border with Congo. - DNA

Mamdani does not attend parade honoring Israel

The city's police commissioner, Jessica Tisch, who is Jewish, did attend the parade. "It is the mayor's decision not to march, and it is my decision to march proudly," she had said

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani did not attend an annual parade honoring Israel breaking with a decades-long political custom because of his support of Palestinian rights. Though it has gone by different names over the years, the Israel Day parade has always been a must-attend event for mayors, governors and other political leaders eager to win over the throngs of flag-waving revelers who congregate on Fifth Avenue to celebrate the birth of the Jewish state in 1948. Not so for Mamdani. Two weeks ago the mayor's office released a video commemorating the Nakba, an Arabic word for "catastrophe" that is used to describe the displacement of an estimated 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed Israel's establishment. "I said on the campaign trail that I wouldn't be attending the parade, and I've made my views on the Israeli government abundantly clear," Mamdani said at a news conference Thursday. But he also promised a robust police presence to make sure it went off "seamlessly and peacefully." The city's police commissioner, Jessica Tisch, who is Jewish, did attend the parade. "It is the mayor's decision not to march, and it is my decision to march proudly," she had said Thursday as she stood alongside Mamdani at police headquarters. The mayor's absence, though long expected, has given fresh fuel to opponents who view his criticism of the Israeli government as antisemitic. A delegation of members of Israel's hard-line government, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, attended the parade. The visit came nearly two weeks after the far-right settler leader said the International Criminal Court was seeking an arrest warrant against him and

marked his first trip to the United States since March 2025. Rabbi Marc Schneier, founding senior rabbi of The Hampton Synagogue on Long Island and president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, which advocates for better relationships between Jews and Muslims, called Mamdani's decision not to attend the parade "a slap in the face to all Jewish New Yorkers." "Do us a favor, stay home," he said. "We don't need you. We don't want you." Schneier also slammed Mamdani's Nakba video as "propaganda," echoing concerns from other Jewish leaders who said it excluded context about Jewish peoples' displacement during the period. The video, which appeared to be the first such recognition from a sitting New York City mayor, featured the story of a woman who was displaced at 9 years old, interspersed with text about the Nakba, as she described a feeling of missing home, saying "it's the soft hills of Palestine that actually touched me." "I've lived in different places, and I've always been an outsider," said the woman, Inea Bushnaq. Supporters of Israel were outraged, saying the video should have acknowledged the mass displacement of Jews from Muslim-majority countries or the role that the mass slaughter of Jews in the Holocaust played in the drive to establish a Jewish state. Mayors in New York City, which has America's largest Jewish population, have long been visible supporters of Israel, often visiting the country. Support for Israel among Americans has deeply eroded in recent years, though, a trend that accelerated amid the outcry over Israeli military action in Gaza. Mamdani, the city's first Muslim mayor, has remained steadfast in his pro-Palestinian advocacy. He has said he believes Israel has a right to exist but not as a hierarchy that favors Jewish citizens. Simultaneously he has pledged to protect Jewish New Yorkers and highlighted the work of the city's Office to Combat Antisemitism.

Taiwan leader hopes to win grate US trust

NEWS DESK

TAIPEI: Taiwan's main opposition leader said Monday she hopes to "gain deeper trust" from the United States, before departing for the country where she is expected to be grilled over her party's stance on China and defense spending. Kuomintang chairwoman Cheng Li-wun's trip comes two months after her "peace" visit to Beijing, where she met Chinese President Xi Jinping - the first such meeting in a decade - and weeks after US President Donald Trump's summit with Xi in the Chinese capital. It also comes after the KMT recently thwarted the Taiwanese government's plan to spend nearly \$40 billion on critical weapons, including US arms and domestically produced drones. Speaking to reporters before departing for the United States - Taiwan's most important security backer - Cheng said she hopes her party can play a key role in regional peace efforts and "gain deeper trust from the US."

PSX comes under pressure on US-Iran uncertainty, budget caution

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Stocks came under pressure on Monday as uncertainty over a US-Iran peace deal and the upcoming federal budget kept investors cautious, with global markets also weighed down by renewed Middle East tensions. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 170,600.20 points, down 3,362.61 points, or 1.93%, from the previous close of 173,962.81. During the session, the index touched an intraday high of 174,171.64, gaining 208.83 points, or 0.12%, and a low of 170,396.85, down 3,565.96 points, or 2.05%, from the previous close.

"The market is choppy due to constant swings in the US-Iran deal. We need to hear tangible announcements of the deal in the next few days for the market to pick the direction," said AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. "Budget-related uncertainty will ensue next week," he added. European shares slipped on Monday as heightened tensions in the Middle East tempered hopes for an imminent end to the conflict. Iran's chief negotiator warned Sunday that Tehran would not trust Washington or agree to any deal unless its rights were fully secured, underlining the gap between the two sides as talks drag on. Reports that US President Donald Trump had sent back a tougher proposal further complicated negotiations.

Ahsan stresses prioritisation of development projects


DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday stressed the need to prioritise and complete ongoing development projects, saying limited fiscal space and a growing throw-forward had made it impossible to fund all schemes under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). Addressing the Annual Plan Coordination Committee (APCC) meeting for the 2026-27 budget, the minister said the country's development budget was insufficient to finance projects promptly, describing the situation as a major challenge for the planning process.

He said the government would have to increase development spending in the long run while ensuring that priority projects were completed and removed from the development portfolio. Ahsan said some less important projects might not be continued due to resource constraints, adding that the completion of ongoing programmes remained the government's foremost priority. He said Pakistan's economy was on a path to recovery and that the government would continue its efforts to provide relief to the common man through effective development planning.






Highlighting the scale of the challenge, the minister said the federal development portfolio carried a throw-forward of around Rs10 trillion, while ministries had sought nearly Rs4 trillion for ongoing projects. He said ministries had projects worth Rs3.377 trillion under implementation and had also proposed around 720 new schemes, besides submitting more than 5,500 additional project proposals for consideration. He said against total development demands of Rs4.097 trillion, the Ministry of Finance had allocated only Rs1.126 trillion for the PSDP 2026-27, leaving an unmet demand of about Rs3 trillion. "This means we have to allocate Rs1.126 trillion against demands exceeding Rs4 trillion selectively," he said, adding that many important projects could not be accommodated within the available fiscal envelope despite their significance for national development. Ahsan termed the situation a major dilemma for the Ministry of Planning, saying development allocations were being made within a shrinking budget despite growing infrastructure and social sector needs. The minister said the PSDP allocation of Rs1.126 trillion included Rs125 billion earmarked for the N-25 Highway project in Balochistan, which, he said, was a non-negotiable priority identified by the Prime Minister and would be completed at all costs.



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