



# Islamabad POST

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**France committed to gender equality, climate diplomacy**

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**PPP believes in serving the masses: Bilawal**

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**Govt to present budget on June 10: Aurangzeb**

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## Briefs

**'Israel must end 'occupation' of Lebanon territory'**

NEWS DESK

PARIS: French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu has called on Israel to end its "illegal occupation" of Lebanese territory, warning that the country's military strategy risks undermining regional stability, Anadolu reports. Addressing the French National Assembly, Lecornu says the fragile ceasefire in Lebanon must be respected and criticises the ongoing Israeli military operations. "It is clear that not only must the ceasefire be respected, it is fragile, to say the least, even resembling a kind of 'ceasefire through fire,' which is unacceptable, but Israel must put an end to this war and to the illegal occupation it maintains on Lebanese territory," he states. Lecornu argues that the conflict in Lebanon cannot be separated from wider efforts to address tensions involving Iran, saying France repeatedly warned its allies against sidelining the Lebanese issue.

**Iranian envoy meets KP governor**

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi met Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam at the Governor House on Wednesday to discuss regional peace, bilateral relations, trade cooperation, and economic opportunities between Pakistan and Iran. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said an end to the Iran-US conflict and the establishment of lasting peace were essential for regional and global prosperity. He said Pakistan desired peace and was making efforts to promote stability in the region. Faisal Karim Kundi said Pakistan's civil and military leadership, including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Field Marshal were actively engaged in efforts to promote peace. He said peace in Iran would contribute to the development and prosperity of both countries and described Pakistan's role in facilitating dialogue between Iran and the United States as a diplomatic success.

**BD increase power prices**

DNA

DHAKA: Bangladesh raises electricity prices in latest Mideast war-related hike Bangladesh has raised electricity prices by 16 per cent, the latest increase as the government seeks to ease pressure on state finances caused by the conflict in the Middle East, AFP reports. Jalal Ahmed, chairman of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, announced the 16pc hike two days after fuel prices were raised, taking kerosene to 135 taka (\$1.09) per litre up from 130, and petrol to 140 taka from 135. Diesel was unchanged. According to the government's Bangladesh Power Development Board, around 44pc of installed capacity comes from natural gas, 24pc from coal, and another 24pc from oil and diesel. The South Asian nation of 170 million people depends heavily on imports for its energy needs. Repeated price hikes have added strain on people struggling with long-running inflation which hit 9.04 per cent in April.

## Sino-Pak ties

# PM wants CPEC 2.0 get going

Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong calls on the Prime Minister; Other issues discussed during the meeting included the fast-tracking of KKH realignment project

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House. Adviser to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Amb. Anna Baloch were also present. The Prime Minister conveyed his warm regards and best wishes to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang and fondly recalled his most productive and substantive meetings with the Chinese leadership during his recent visit to China. While conveying his firm resolve to ensure the further strengthening of Pakistan-China All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, the Prime Minister emphasized the need to immediately initiate necessary actions for follow up on the important decisions taken during his visit to China. He particularly stressed upon the need to expand cooperation in key areas under CPEC 2.0, particularly agriculture, IT, industries, including SEZs, and mines & minerals.

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**PM says upcoming budget to provide public relief**

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the upcoming FY2026-27 federal budget would include measures aimed at providing relief to the public while advancing the government's export-led growth agenda. He said the government was pursuing an export-led growth strategy, which was the central pillar of the economic policy. Talking to the leading industrialists and prominent business leaders at the PM House, the prime minister underscored that measures were being taken to bring the informal economy into the tax net. Welcoming the business leaders, the prime minister

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## Middle East tensions

# Trump says he would like to meet Khamenei

On Lebanon, Trump acknowledged having a harsh exchange with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying in the interview that he was not happy with Israel's fighting with Lebanon

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said he "would like to meet" Iran's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei, in an interview published Wednesday. "I would like to meet him, and we probably will meet at some point, depending on how it all works out," Trump told the New York Post's "Pod Force One." Trump said that Iran has agreed to not have a nuclear weapon and that Iran's Ayatollah is involved in negotiations with the United States. "They've already agreed they're not going to have a nuclear weapon," he said. On Lebanon, Trump acknowledged having a harsh exchange with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying in the interview that he was not happy with Israel's fighting with Lebanon. "I did," Trump said. "I wouldn't say angry. I was a little bit perturbed at his constantly fighting with Lebanon, you know." Trump went on to say he and Netanyahu get along very well.

**Gulf countries condemn renewed Iranian attacks**

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Gulf countries have condemned renewed Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait and Bahrain earlier on Wednesday. Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman's office responded with a post hours after Iran's attacks that targeted Bahrain and Kuwait. Bader Al Asaker, head of the private office of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, said in a post on X.com: "O God, protect our people in Kuwait and Bahrain and safeguard our Gulf from all evil." The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs also strongly condemned the Iranian attacks on Kuwait and Bahrain.

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# US proposes tariffs on 60 economies, including Pakistan

Govt filing shows proposed tariffs of 10-12.5%, with public comments to follow before final decision

DNA

WASHINGTON: The US Trade Representative has proposed new duties targeting 60 economies, including Pakistan and India, for alleged failures to act against forced labour, as the Trump administration seeks to rebuild its tariff agenda following legal setbacks. The proposed tariffs range from 10% to 12.5%, according to a government filing, and they will undergo a public comment period before a final decision is made. The move comes months after Washington launched investigations into trading partners including China, the European Union and Japan. The probes looked into whether they took action against the import of goods made with forced labour, and if this impacted US commerce. On Tuesday, the USTR said that 54 of the economies "failed to impose and effectively enforce a forced labour import prohibition." This group includes China, Vietnam, Taiwan and the United Kingdom. Six other economies - Canada, Ecuador, the EU, Indonesia, Mexico and Pakistan - were deemed not to have effectively enforced such prohibitions. "The failure of our most important trading partners to address the importation of goods made with forced labour is unacceptable," USTR Jamieson Greer said in a statement.

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ISLAMABAD: Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

**Govt to present budget on June 10**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday said that the federal budget for fiscal year 2026-27 will be presented on June 10, as the government works to build consensus among allies on proposals. The finance minister said that the government's discussions with coalition partners were positive, adding that another meeting was scheduled by the end of the ongoing week. He reiterated that the government must move forward in coordination with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), coalition partners and other stakeholders, while improving tax collection through enforcement and widening the tax net. "Efforts afoot to ensure no new taxes are imposed," he said.

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**Israel plans major expansion of West Bank**

NEWS DESK

TEL AVIV: Israel's hardline finance minister announced on Wednesday a major expansion by more than 2,000 homes of three Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank that Palestinians hope will be part of a future independent state. Most nations consider Israeli settlements there to be illegal under international law and a major obstacle to a two-state solution for long-term peace. Bezalel Smotrich, who holds authority over parts of Israel's civilian administration in the West Bank, said a planning committee approved

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**PTI alleges 'pre-poll rigging'**

**Govt, PTI at loggerheads over alleged restrictions on GB election campaign**

Rana Sanaullah rejects allegations as PTI claims discriminatory treatment before polls

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have traded barbs over alleged restrictions on political campaigning ahead of the Gilgit-Baltistan elections, with the ruling coalition rejecting claims of discrimination and the opposition alleging efforts to sideline its supporters. Political activity in GB reached its peak ahead of the elections on 24 Assembly seats, as senior leaders of major parties arrived in the region to campaign on Tuesday. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif reached Gilgit on a short visit, while PPP leader Aseefa Bhutto Zardari arrived in Skardu to address an election rally in constituency GBA-7. The polls for Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly seats are scheduled to be held on June 7. Rana said no federal minister had visited Gilgit-Baltistan to campaign and maintained that there had been no official interference in the electoral process.

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**Centre notifies new austerity timings**

Punjab govt extends market closure timings amid hot weather

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday notified new restriction timings imposed under the fuel conservation and additional austerity measures for businesses, asking the provincial governments to implement the same. According to an official notification issued on Wednesday, shops, markets, malls and general retail outlets will now close at 9pm, while restaurants, cafes and eateries will be allowed to operate until 11pm.

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## Action against unregistered vehicles intensified

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to establish 72 Chief Minister Model Schools across all districts of the province during the next fiscal year as part of its education reform agenda. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by KP CM Muhammad Sohail Afridi on Wednesday, where officials presented the proposed plan and initial framework for the project, said an official release. The meeting was informed that separate model schools for boys and girls would be established across the province with an estimated cost of Rs 9.5 billion. A dedicated legal framework, including rules and regulations, will be developed for the institutions, while a centralized Board of Governors will be set up to oversee their administration. Directing authorities to immediately begin work on the required legislation, the chief minister said the initiative would mark a significant step towards improving the quality of education in the province. He said the schools would be equipped with modern teaching systems, trained faculty and facilities meeting international standards, ensuring students receive quality education in a conducive learning environment. Afridi reiterated that access to quality education is the right of every child and said the government remains committed to introducing long-term reforms to address challenges in the education sector. He expressed confidence that the CM Model Schools would emerge as a model for modern and quality education in the province, adding that investment in education is essential for sustainable human development and a brighter future.—APP

## Nawaz's GB visit changes political atmosphere: Azma

LAHORE: Punjab Information and Culture Minister Azma Bokhari on Wednesday said that an extraordinary level of enthusiasm is being witnessed among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan ahead of the upcoming elections, with political activity reaching its peak across the region. In a statement, she said that the arrival of PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif in Gilgit-Baltistan has significantly changed the political atmosphere and energized party supporters. She added that the warm welcome and public reception accorded to Nawaz Sharif in Gilgit reflected the affection and respect the people of the region have for him. Azma Bokhari said that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan continue to regard Nawaz Sharif highly and view the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as a symbol of development, prosperity and public service. She maintained that the region had witnessed major development projects and public welfare initiatives during PML-N governments, while other political parties failed to meet public expectations despite their promises. The minister further stated that PML-N candidates are running an energetic election campaign and receiving widespread support from voters.—APP

# Chinese envoy encourages academic exchanges with Pak

Referring to the 75-year diplomatic partnership between Pakistan and China, Mr. Wang said the relationship has remained a model of mutual trust, respect, and unwavering support

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) hosted Mr. Wang Shengjie, Political and Press Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, for an interactive session with students and faculty aimed at strengthening academic and people-to-people ties between Pakistan and China. Mr. Wang was received by Rector NUML, Major General (R) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, who presented him with a souvenir. The session was organized by Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Riaz Shad. Addressing the participants, Mr. Wang highlighted the enduring Pakistan-China friendship and emphasized opportunities for enhanced cooperation in education, technology, and research. He encouraged NUML students to benefit from academic exchange programs and scholarship opportunities in China. Highlighting Pakistan's importance in China's regional development vision, Mr. Wang described Pakistan as a key partner in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and noted that Chinese investments in highways, power projects, and industrial corridors are contributing significantly to the country's economic transformation. He emphasized that people-to-people connectivity and academic collaboration remain vital pillars for further strengthening bilateral relations.



Referring to the 75-year diplomatic partnership between Pakistan and China, Mr. Wang said the relationship has remained a model of mutual trust, respect, and unwavering support. Describing the friendship as "higher than

mountains, deeper than oceans, and sweeter than honey," he noted that both countries have consistently stood by each other

during challenging times, including natural disasters and public health emergencies. During the question-and-answer session,

students shared suggestions for expanding academic collaboration through joint research initiatives and student exchange programs.

## Punjab farmers moving towards prosperity : CM

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the Kissan Card programme was transforming the lives of farmers and helping them achieve financial independence. In a statement, she said Punjab's farmers would no longer remain indebted to commission agents (aarthis) and would be able to live with dignity. The chief minister said it was her vision to see farmers of the province moving towards financial autonomy and prosperity through modern agricultural reforms. She said that under the government's initiative to introduce innovation in the agriculture sector,

more than 832,000 farmers across Punjab had been issued Kissan Cards for the first time. Through the scheme, farmers had utilised loans amounting to Rs2.54 billion, while during the wheat season agricultural inputs worth over Rs100 billion were purchased using the facility. The CM said recoveries amounting to Rs67 billion were due from 538,000 farmers and an encouraging recovery rate of 86 per cent had been achieved. She added that farmers had set an exemplary precedent by repaying instalments worth Rs57 billion on time. CM Maryam Nawaz said that for

the ongoing kharif crop season, agricultural inputs worth Rs90 billion had been made available through the Kissan Card programme. So far, around 300,000 farmers had obtained agricultural inputs valued at Rs30 billion under the scheme. She said the Kissan Card was changing the fortunes of Punjab's farming community and ensuring that farmers were no longer dependent on middlemen for financial support. The chief minister also appreciated farmers for the timely repayment of agricultural loans, saying they had demonstrated responsibility and commitment by setting an outstanding example.—DNA

## Meeting discusses off-grid power projects

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti chaired a high-level meeting at the Chief Minister Secretariat to review projects aimed at improving electricity supply and transmission in the province's remote and underdeveloped areas. The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary (Development) Zahid Saleem, Secretary Energy Asfandyar Kakar, QESCO Syed Yousaf Shah, and other officials. During the session, the Energy Department presented proposals for sustainable, uninterrupted, and low-cost electricity supply to far-flung regions. Officials highlighted that Balochistan's vast geography and scattered population make traditional long transmission lines and complex infrastructure both costly and technically challenging.

As a solution, mini power stations and off-grid energy projects were identified as more effective and feasible. The briefing revealed that after encouraging results from pilot projects, the government is now assessing the potential to establish off-grid power stations in 17 districts. These projects aim to provide affordable and reliable electricity to areas not connected to the national grid or facing persistent supply issues. Additionally, a plan was presented to strengthen transmission systems in on-grid areas. To ensure swift progress, it was decided to accelerate work on the regulatory framework, including tariff determination and legal procedures, in close coordination with NEPRA and other relevant institutions. Sarfraz Bugti directed that the on-grid station policy be finalized soon with input from all stakeholders. He stressed that

the provincial government is committed to delivering affordable, sustainable, and uninterrupted electricity to the people of Balochistan. He added that modern, localized, and sustainable energy solutions are being adopted to integrate remote areas into the national development stream. The Chief Minister emphasized that these energy projects will not only meet basic needs but also boost economic activity, job creation, and investment in the province. He reaffirmed that providing basic facilities to every citizen is both a constitutional and moral responsibility of the government, and all available resources will be utilized to achieve this goal. Sarfraz Bugti said that through energy sector reforms, modern planning, and promotion of alternative energy sources, the long-standing deprivation of Balochistan's remote areas will be addressed.—DNA

## Precision agri must to empower women farmers

ISLAMABAD: Experts have stressed that precision agriculture can only achieve its full potential if women farmers are given equal access to modern technologies, training opportunities, financial resources and decision-making processes. The observations were made during a webinar titled "Gender & Inclusion in Precision Agriculture: Bridging the Gap," organized by Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), said a press release issued here on Wednesday. The event examined the challenges faced by women in adopting modern agricultural technologies and discussed practical measures to make precision farming more inclusive and accessible. Speaking on the occasion, Principal Scientist at the Soil Chemistry Section of the Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (AARI), Faisalabad, Dr. Hina Javed, highlighted the transformative role of precision agriculture in improving farm productivity, resource efficiency and environmental sustainability. She said the use of technology, sensors, data analytics and smart equipment enables farmers to make informed decisions regarding irrigation, fertilization, pest management and crop production. However, she noted that women farmers, despite their significant contribution to agriculture through crop handling, livestock management and harvesting activities, continue to face barriers that limit their participation in technology-driven farming systems. Participants were informed that women also face economic constraints, including limited access to credit, agricultural financing, land ownership and modern farm machinery, which hinder their ability to adopt precision agriculture tools. Social and cultural factors, such as restrictions on mobility, household responsibilities and limited interaction with agricultural extension services, further widen the gender gap. The webinar emphasized that inclusive precision agriculture can increase farm productivity, strengthen food security, improve household incomes and contribute to sustainable development. Experts recommended involving women farmers in the design, testing and implementation of agricultural technologies to ensure that solutions address their practical needs. Among the key recommendations presented were the introduction of affordable technology models, including equipment leasing, community-shared machinery and flexible payment plans, as well as the development of user-friendly digital platforms featuring local-language support and audio guidance. The speakers also stressed the importance of tailored training programmes, women-led mentorship initiatives and multi-channel support systems to enhance digital literacy and technology adoption among women farmers. The webinar highlighted several government initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in agriculture, including agricultural extension services, digital agriculture programmes, financing schemes and skill-development projects across the provinces. Participants noted that gender-responsive approaches to precision agriculture could significantly increase technology adoption rates, improve agricultural productivity and strengthen the resilience of farming communities. Concluding the discussion, the speakers called for greater collaboration among policymakers, researchers, development organizations and the private sector to ensure that precision agriculture becomes accessible and beneficial for women farmers.


## KP-China cultural centre proposal, discussed

The law minister instructed all concerned departments to ensure timely implementation of the committee's decisions and recommendations to improve governance and public service delivery in the province.

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Wednesday reviewed a number of key legal, administrative and policy matters, including proposed amendments to development authority laws, the establishment of a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-China Cultural Centre, protection of forest resources and restructuring of the Civil Defence Department. The issues came under discussion at a meeting of the cabinet standing committee chaired by Provincial Minister for Law, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam. Addressing the meeting, Aftab Alam said the provincial government was committed to promoting the rule of law, transparency and institutional reforms. He said matters of public importance would be resolved in accordance with the Constitution and legal requirements. The committee examined recommendations regarding proposed amendments to the Peshawar

Development Authority (PDA) Act 2017 and the Urban Areas Development Authority (UADA) Act 2020. It also reviewed legal and administrative issues related to allotment policies in light of court rulings. The meeting discussed a proposal for providing land for the establishment of a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-China Cultural Centre. Participants were informed that the project would help strengthen cultural ties between Pakistan and China while creating new opportunities for educational and cultural activities in the province. Relevant departments were directed to complete legal formalities and submit recommendations. The committee also reviewed measures to prevent illegal timber extraction from forests in Chitral and Upper Kohistan. Officials were directed to devise a comprehensive strategy, strengthen monitoring mechanisms and ensure action against those involved in illegal


logging. Proposals for restructuring the Civil Defence Department were also discussed. The committee emphasized the need to modernize the department's administrative and financial systems to enhance its capacity to respond effectively to emergencies. The meeting further reviewed financial matters related to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and the Peshawar Cantonment Board. Officials informed the committee that efforts were underway to resolve pending issues through consultation. The committee directed authorities to prepare a practical roadmap for the early settlement of outstanding matters in accordance with legal requirements and public interest. The law minister instructed all concerned departments to ensure timely implementation of the committee's decisions and recommendations to improve governance and public service delivery in the province.—DNA




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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

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

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



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- Railway Exchange 9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi...5555489
- CAA.....9218300-09



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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



### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Dr Irfan, Tahir discuss roadmap for trade expansion

ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that Türkiye has always enjoyed a special place in the hearts of the people of Pakistan and remains one of the country's most important economic partners

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, has emphasized the need for Pakistan and Türkiye to capitalize on the immense untapped potential in bilateral trade and investment, stating that the strong political, cultural, and historical bonds between the two brotherly countries should be translated into deeper economic cooperation. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by its President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, which visited the Turkish Embassy to discuss avenues for promoting trade, investment, and business-to-business collaboration between the two countries. The Ambassador recalled the longstanding and exemplary relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and noted that both nations share common values, mutual trust, and a strong sense of brotherhood. He said that despite excellent diplomatic relations, the existing volume of bilateral trade does not reflect the true potential of the two economies. He stressed the need for greater interaction between the private sectors, chambers of commerce, and investors of both countries to unlock new opportunities for growth and prosperity. Dr. Neziroglu assured the ICCI delegation of the Embassy's full support in facilitating stronger linkages between the business communities of Pakistan and Türkiye. He underscored the importance of regular exchange of trade delegations, business networking, and institutional cooperation to enhance commercial ties and encourage joint ventures in diverse sectors. Speaking on the occasion, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that Türkiye has always enjoyed a special place



in the hearts of the people of Pakistan and remains one of the country's most important economic partners. He noted that both countries possess significant potential for collaboration in sectors such as construction, tourism, information technology, agriculture, food processing, healthcare, education, renewable energy, and manufacturing. He said that the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry is committed to strengthening economic engagement with Türkiye and creating new opportunities for the business community. He informed the Ambassador that ICCI is planning to take a high-level

business delegation to Türkiye in August 2026 to explore investment opportunities, establish direct business contacts, and promote bilateral trade. He sought the cooperation of the Turkish Embassy in arranging meetings with leading Turkish chambers of commerce, trade bodies, and business leaders during the visit. Sardar Tahir Mehmood further observed that enhanced collaboration between the private sectors of Pakistan and Türkiye can play a pivotal role in increasing trade volumes, attracting investment, and fostering sustainable economic growth in both countries. He expressed

confidence that stronger institutional linkages and regular business exchanges would help transform the existing friendship into a more robust economic partnership. Both sides agreed to continue working closely to promote trade and investment cooperation and facilitate meaningful engagement between the business communities of the two countries.

The ICCI delegation included Vice President Irfan Chaudry, former President Sheikh Amir Waheed, Executive Member Zulqurnain Abbasi, and Secretary General Ghulam Murtaza.

## Deported passenger handed over to FIA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad Zone initiated legal action against a Pakistani passenger deported from Kuwait for allegedly entering the country illegally from Saudi Arabia. An official told APP on Wednesday that passenger Shawring, son of Miram Shah, arrived at Islamabad International Airport on flight J9511 from Kuwait after being deported by Kuwaiti authorities. The official said the passenger was deported on allegations of illegally entering Kuwait from Saudi Arabia and reached Pakistan on an emergency passport. Following initial scrutiny and legal formalities at the airport, the accused was handed over to FIA Anti Human Trafficking Circle (AHTC) Islamabad for further investigation and legal proceedings.

The official said the passenger's passport, travel record and other relevant documents had also been taken into custody as part of the investigation.

FIA Islamabad Zone continues its crackdown against illegal immigration and human smuggling and is taking action against individuals involved in immigration-related violations in accordance with the law, he added.—APP

## Leghari orders action against field officers

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awaish Ahmed Khan Leghari, on Wednesday issued strict directions to all electricity Distribution Companies (DISCOs) across Pakistan to initiate immediate disciplinary proceedings against their worst-performing Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) and Executive Engineers (XENs). Acting swiftly on the minister's directive, Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) and Sukkur Electric Power Company (SEPCO) have become the first DISCOs to initiate immediate disciplinary action — including suspension — against their worst-performing officers on account of failure in resolution of consumer complaints registered through the national 118 Call Centre system (CCMS PLUS), said a statement.—APP

## CJP chairs meeting on judicial reforms

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan held an interactive and consultative meeting with representatives of various bar associations at the Supreme Court on Wednesday as part of ongoing stakeholder engagement aimed at strengthening the justice sector. Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan also attended the meeting, which brought together representatives from the Lahore High Court Bar Association, District Bar Association Bahawalnagar, Tehsil Bar Associations of Kabirwala, Mian Channu and Yazman, District Bar Association Sheikhupura, and Islamabad Bar Association. During the meeting, bar representatives appreciated the consultative process and acknowledged the reform measures being undertaken in the justice sector. Discussions focused on judicial reforms, facilitation of lawyers and litigants, im-

provement of case management systems, reduction of procedural delays, enhancement of access to justice, and capacity-building opportunities for young lawyers. The Chief Justice observed that the legal fraternity is a key stakeholder in the justice system and emphasized that effective and efficient dispensation of justice depends on continued cooperation and constructive engagement between the bench and the bar. The participants were briefed on ongoing reform initiatives being implemented through the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee and the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan. These initiatives included digitization of judicial processes, e-filing, video-link hearings, public facilitation centres, alternative dispute resolution and mediation frameworks and other citizen-centric judicial reforms. The Chief Justice

also highlighted continuing legal education programmes being conducted by the Federal Judicial Academy, including online and in-person training opportunities for young lawyers and province-specific initiatives aimed at improving professional competence and legal practice standards. He further informed the participants about reforms relating to women facilitation centres, establishment of e-libraries, solarization of court complexes, provision of clean drinking water, improved digital connectivity, and modernization of judicial infrastructure at the district level. The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment of the bench and the bar to strengthening judicial independence, improving access to justice, enhancing institutional efficiency, and promoting a responsive, inclusive and citizen-centric justice system in the country.—APP

## Kundi, Abbasi discuss reforms, national issues

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi Wednesday met with Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and discussed matters of mutual interest, including railway reforms, national development and public welfare initiatives. During the meeting, Kundi appreciated the ongoing reform measures and improvement initiatives being undertaken in Pakistan Railways, describing them as important steps towards enhancing public convenience and service delivery. He said that reforms in the railway sector were helping improve travel facilities and restoring public confidence in the national transport system. Governor Kundi expressed hope that continued modernization and administrative improvements would further strengthen the performance of Pakistan Railways. The two leaders also exchanged views on the country's overall political and economic situation, as well as measures aimed at addressing public issues and improving governance. They reaffirmed their commitment to national development, effective governance and the promotion of public service, emphasizing the need for coordinated efforts to ensure sustainable progress and better facilities for citizens. Both leaders expressing their resolve to continue working towards initiatives that contribute to economic growth, institutional strengthening and the welfare of the people.—APP

## Ombudsman orders overhaul of Islamabad airport services

ISLAMABAD: A team of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) on Wednesday directed authorities at Islamabad International Airport to improve passenger services, address recurring complaints of maladministration and negligence, and establish dedicated counters for senior citizens following an inspection prompted by a growing number of public grievances regarding immigration delays, mishandling of luggage and poor treatment of travellers. The inspection was carried out under the directives of Wafaqi Mohtasib Naveed Kamran Baloch amid increasing complaints from passengers, particularly overseas Pakistanis, about service deficiencies at the country's airports. The Ombudsman's team stressed that all passengers,

especially members of the Pakistani diaspora who contribute significantly to the national economy through remittances, deserve respectful and efficient treatment. Taking serious notice of complaints related to delayed baggage delivery, loss of luggage and prolonged immigration procedures, the team called for comprehensive corrective measures to prevent such issues from recurring. It also urged airport authorities to enhance the effectiveness of the One Window Facilitation Desks (OWFDs) established at international airports to ensure prompt resolution of passenger complaints on the spot. During the visit, the inspection team interacted directly with passengers and issued immediate instructions for

addressing their concerns. Officials were informed that the majority of complaints lodged by incoming and outgoing travellers revolved around lengthy immigration processing times, mishandling of baggage and alleged high-handed behaviour by some officials. The team specifically directed airport authorities to establish separate counters for senior citizens to facilitate faster and more convenient processing. The inspection also reviewed the implementation status of recommendations made during previous visits by Ombudsman teams. Officials heading various government agencies operating at the airport were instructed to remain vigilant, improve service delivery and ensure timely redressal of public complaints.—APP

## Health minister highlights key reforms, vaccine plans

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Syed Mustafa Kamal highlighted the government's key initiatives aimed at strengthening Pakistan's healthcare system, ranging from improving basic health facilities to advancing vaccine production. According to the ministry on Wednesday, the minister shared these views during a meeting with World Bank Group Vice President for Human Development, Mamata Murthy, and a high-level delegation comprising senior World Bank officials, the Pakistan Country Director, regional representatives and health sector experts. During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on the challenges facing Pakistan's health sector and explored effective solutions to improve healthcare delivery across the country. The World Bank delega-

tion underscored the importance of strengthening primary healthcare, improving maternal and child health services, and addressing the issue of stunting. Discussions also covered ongoing health-sector programmes being implemented with World Bank support. Briefing the delegation on the government's priorities, the minister said his foremost objective was to transform Pakistan's existing healthcare structure into a truly effective healthcare system. He noted that efforts were underway to strengthen primary healthcare through telemedicine and establish a robust referral system to reduce pressure on major hospitals. "My top priority is to prevent people from getting sick," the minister said, adding that special attention was being paid to preventive healthcare and public health protection measures. Kamal also stressed the importance of local vaccine manu-

facturing, stating that domestic vaccine production was essential before 2030. He said significant progress had already been made in this area and revealed that discussions with Indonesia were advancing for the local production of vaccines targeting 13 diseases. The minister further informed the delegation that Pakistan had formulated its first-ever national vaccine policy, describing it as a major step towards strengthening the country's immunisation system. The World Bank delegation appreciated the ongoing reforms and the minister's vision for improving healthcare services. Murthy also invited Kamal to participate in the Universal Health Coverage Forum, scheduled to be held in December 2026. She reaffirmed the World Bank's commitment to supporting Pakistan's efforts to strengthen its health system and expand access to quality healthcare services.—DNA

## Tobacco control steps reduced consumption by 15.7% over 10 years

ISLAMABAD: Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2024 unveiled its reports indicating that Pakistan has reduced tobacco consumption by 15.7 percent between 2014 and 2024 through measures implemented under the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The survey, conducted by the Government of Pakistan in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the CDC Foundation, said a press release received here on Wednesday. However, despite progress, tobacco products are still consumed by 16.1% of the Pakistani population aged 15 and above. As a result, each year, tobacco continues to cause 164,000 deaths and economic losses of over PKR 1,800 billion (around US\$6.6 billion), the report added. The GATS 2024 results were presented today, as per vision and leadership of the Honourable Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal, as part of the extended celebrations of World No Tobacco Day and the international campaign launched by WHO with the theme "Unmasking the appeal — countering nicotine and tobacco addiction." The survey follows a science-based global standard protocol for systematically monitoring adult tobacco use, offering the last decade's trends and a comparison with the 2014 round. This survey was conducted by the National Institute of Population Studies Training and Research in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, through its Tobacco Control Cell, and WHO. More than 11,000 interviews were completed with an overall response rate of 95.6%. GATS enhances countries' capacity to design, implement and evaluate tobacco control programs. It also assists countries in fulfilling their international obligations under WHO's FCTC — signed by Pakistan in 2004 — and in generating comparable data within and across countries. Secretary Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Muhammad Aslam Ghauri while addressing the event said that "This year's WNTD theme, "Unmask the Appeal — Countering Tobacco and Nicotine Addiction," serves as a timely reminder of the evolving tactics employed by the tobacco and nicotine industries to target young populations and create lifelong addiction. The emergence of electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, heated tobacco products, and digital advertising platforms has transformed the tobacco epidemic into a more complex public health challenge. The aggressive targeting of youth through flavored products, social media influence, and misleading perceptions regarding "safer alternatives" demands urgent and coordinated policy action. Pakistan also continues to face a significant burden of tobacco use. The findings of the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) Pakistan 2024 reveal that approximately 22.7 million adults currently use tobacco products in the country. Exposure to secondhand smoke and tobacco advertising remains widespread, particularly in public spaces and among younger age groups. Approximately 163,600 Pakistanis die due to causes related to tobacco. Counting for 448 deaths / day, 1200 Pakistani Children aged 6-15 years started smoking every day, 2 in 5 smokers initiate smoking in any form before age of 10 years, the survey said. At the same time, the survey findings provide hope and direction. A considerable proportion of tobacco users are considering quitting, and strong public support exists for evidence-based measures such as increasing tobacco taxation, restricting advertising, and strengthening cessation services. The MONHSRC-Government of Pakistan remains fully committed to strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Let us reaffirm our collective resolve to build a healthier, tobacco-free future for coming generations as it is an investment in Pakistan's future health, productivity, and prosperity" "The GATS 2024 results confirm that, together, we can protect and save lives thanks to international cooperation and the implementation of specific measures such as taxation and banning tobacco advertisements that are particularly targeting our children and teenagers," said WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr Luo Dapeng. "The science is very clear: all tobacco products are killers. WHO will always stand with Pakistan to protect our children and our families from this public health threat."—DNA

## Briefs

## ANF arrests two suspects

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) arrested two suspects and recovered 12 kilograms (kgs) of narcotics worth more than Rs 1 million during an operation near Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza on Wednesday. According to an ANF spokesperson, the operation was carried out as part of ongoing efforts to curb drug trafficking across the country. During the raid, ANF recovered 2.4 kgs of opium and 9.6 kgs of hashish from a vehicle and apprehended two suspects. A case has been registered against the accused under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act (CNSA) 1997, while further investigations are underway.—APP

## Footwear export rise 3.02% to \$152.909 m

ISLAMABAD: The export of footwear from the country witnessed an increase of 3.02 percent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the exports of the corresponding months of last year. The country exported footwear worth US\$ 152.909 million during July-April 2025-26 as opposed to the export of US\$ 148.432 million during July-April 2024-25, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the footwear products, the exports of leather footwear witnessed a nominal decline of 2.35 percent, from US\$ 115.261 million to US\$ 112.552 million during the months under review.

The exports of canvas footwear also decreased by 42.30 percent by going down from US\$ 2.062 million last year to US\$ 1.190 million, the PBS data revealed. However, the exports of all other footwear rose by 25.90 percent to US\$ 39.168 million from US\$ 31.109 million in the same months last year. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the footwear exports increased by 12.99 percent during the month of April 2026 as compared to the same month of last year. The footwear exports during April 2026 were recorded at \$10.336 million against the export of \$9.148 million in April 2025. During the period under review, the export of leather and canvas footwear appreciated by 2.73 and 422.60 percent, respectively. In addition, export of all other footwear export also surged by 46.82 percent. On a month-on-month basis, the exports of footwear commodities went down by 4.48 percent during April 2026 as compared to the exports of \$10.821 million in March 2026, the PBS data revealed.—APP

# KSrelief completes 3,500 shelter NFI kits distribution

The project also reflects the enduring humanitarian partnership and strong bonds of solidarity between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in serving communities affected by crises and disasters

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has successfully concluded the fifth phase of its Shelter Non-Food Items (NFI) assistance project in the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, providing critical humanitarian support to vulnerable communities. As part of this initiative, a total of 3,500 Shelter NFI Kits were distributed among deserving families across seven regions, including Upper Kurram (500 kits), Lower Kurram (500 kits), Mohmand (500 kits), Orakzai (500 kits), North Waziristan (500 kits), Lower South Waziristan (500 kits), and Upper South Waziristan (500 kits). Each Shelter NFI Kit included a tent, solar panel with LED lighting system, two thermal blankets, plastic mats, a kitchen set, a water cooler, and antibacterial soap items carefully selected to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable households and strengthen their preparedness during emergencies. The project was implemented in close collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Hayat Foundation, ensuring effective coordination, transparency, and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to the targeted beneficiaries. Through this collective effort, the initiative successfully reached and benefited more than



24,129 individuals, reaffirming KSrelief's unwavering commitment to supporting vulnerable communities and improving living conditions. The project also reflects the enduring humanitarian partnership and strong bonds of solidarity between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in serving communities affected by crises and disasters.

## IRSA releases 198,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 198,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 239,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1450.17 feet which was 50.17 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 122,200 cusecs and 90,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1169.30 feet, which was 119.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 43,000 cusecs and 34,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 152,800, 87,700, 51,400, and 19,310 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 48,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 7,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Over 833,345 metric tons fertilizers imported

ISLAMABAD: Over 833,345 metric tons of fertilizer manufactured worth of \$535.452 million were imported during the last 10 months of the current financial year as compared to the imports of 841,854 metric tons valued at \$516.256 million of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April 2026, the imports of fertilizer into the country grew by 3.72 percent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of the last year, according to the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Meanwhile, 37,943 metric tons of insecticides valued at \$175.179 million were also imported during the period under review as compared to the imports of 25,491 metric tons worth of \$127.395 million of the same period of the last year. The imports of insecticides into the country during last 10 months of current financial year grew by 37.93 percent as compared to the imports of the same period of the last year. On the other hand over 2.044 million metric tons of plastic materials valued at \$2.348 billion were imported during the period under review as compared to the imports of 1.804 million metric tons worth of \$2.254 billion of the same period of the last year.—DNA

# Remand exceptional power, not routine Practice, rules SC

The Supreme Court observed that the family dispute had remained pending since 2017 and had not reached a final resolution despite the passage of nearly a decade. Since family cases involve the rights of spouses and children, prompt and conclusive adjudication is essential

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has held that the power to remand cases to subordinate courts for a fresh hearing is an exceptional and corrective jurisdiction that cannot be exercised as a matter of routine. The Court observed that appellate courts are duty-bound to decide disputes themselves where the record is complete, rather than subjecting litigants to unnecessary and prolonged litigation. According to a detailed judgment, a two-member bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan converted a petition filed by Muhammad Zubair into an appeal and allowed it in a family dispute involving khula, dower (haq mehr), gold jewellery, and maintenance of children. The Court held that a remand may be ordered only where a significant legal or factual issue has been completely overlooked, essential evidence has not been considered, or a party has been denied a fair opportunity of hearing. However, the power of remand cannot be used to prolong litigation, reopen concluded matters, or provide a party with a second opportunity to remedy weaknesses in its case. According to the case record, Raheela Gul and her daughters filed a suit in 2017 before a Family Court in Dera Ismail Khan seeking khula, recovery of dower, gold jewellery, maintenance for the children, and a share in a residential house. The Family Court granted a decree for khula and ordered payment of the value of one-fourth share of the house, five tolas of gold, and monthly maintenance for the children. Subsequently, the appellate court remanded the matter to the trial court for a fresh hearing. However, the Dera Ismail Khan Bench of the Peshawar High Court set aside the remand order and restored the Family Court's judgment. The Supreme Court observed that the Family Court had framed appropriate issues in light of the parties' pleadings, recorded evidence, and delivered a detailed judgment. The record did not indicate that any material issue had remained unaddressed or that either party had been prevented from producing evidence. The Court further noted that the husband had appeared in the proceedings, submitted a written statement, and participated in the case, but later chose to remain absent, resulting in ex parte proceedings in accordance with law. Such a party, the Court held, cannot subsequently rely on his own negligence as a ground for reopening the case. The judgment stated that while ordering remand, the appellate court had failed to identify any specific issue requiring further consideration and instead sent the entire case back for retrial, which was contrary to the proper exercise of appellate jurisdiction. The Supreme Court observed that the family dispute had remained pending since 2017 and had not reached a final resolution despite the passage of nearly a decade. Since family cases involve the rights of spouses and children, prompt and conclusive adjudication is essential.—DNA

# Royalty on finished product akin to tax, observes FCCP

At this stage, the Additional Advocate General Punjab requested time to obtain fresh instructions from the provincial government

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan on Wednesday observed that the government could levy royalty only on minerals and that imposing royalty on a finished product appeared, prima facie, to be equivalent to a tax. A three-member bench headed by Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi heard a case relating to the imposition of royalty on cement production. During the proceedings, the court expressed serious concern over the Punjab government's decision regarding the levy. Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi remarked that royalty should be charged on minerals rather than on bags of cement, questioning how the government could impose royalty on a finished product. He directed law officers to inform the government that the current method of imposing royalty did not appear appropriate. The bench also sought details on how much the price of a cement bag would increase as a result of the levy. During the hearing, Justice Rozi Khan observed that the burden of royalty imposed on cement bags would ultimately be passed on to consumers, as factory owners would recover the additional cost from the public. He noted that such a measure would harm consumers rather than factory owners. Counsel for the petitioners, Ahsan Bhoon, argued that the government was empowered to collect royalty only on minerals and that royalty on a finished product was, in effect, a tax. He contended that imposing royalty on cement bags amounted to collecting excise duty twice. At this stage, the Additional Advocate General Punjab requested time to obtain fresh instructions from the provincial government. The court accepted the request, granted time to the Punjab government for further directions, and adjourned the hearing.—DNA

# Punjab allows summer camps in schools

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab School Education Department has allowed the establishment of summer camps in public and private schools across the province during summer vacations from June 1 to June 30, 2026, subject to strict terms and conditions. According to an official notification, the camps will be held from Monday to Thursday, while Friday will remain off. The timing for all activities has been fixed from 7:00 am to 10:00 am. The notification stated that participation in the camps will be voluntary and subject to the prior consent of parents. It added that no extra or additional fee will be charged by private schools, while government schools and teachers have also been barred from collecting any tuition fee. The notification further directed that all activities

must be conducted indoors to ensure the safety of students amid prevailing weather conditions. Schools have been instructed to ensure provision of basic facilities, including cleanliness, availability of clean drinking water, fans, seating arrangements, and electricity backup in case of load shedding. Moreover, school administrations have also been directed to arrange first aid facilities with sufficient supplies. Students attending the camps will not be required to wear uniforms and may use weather-friendly clothing. The department has warned that strict legal action will be taken against institutions found violating the instructions, directing chief executive officers (DEAs) and heads of institutions to ensure full compliance in letter and spirit.—APP

# Gilani vows to strengthening Pakistan-Italy relations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its longstanding and friendly relations with Italy. During an informal discussion with Italy's Ambassador to Pakistan, Marilina Armellini, at a reception marking the 80th National Day of the Italian Republic, he extended congratulations to the government and people of Italy on behalf of the Senate and the people of Pakistan, said a news release. He described Italy as a trusted friend and emphasized that bilateral ties are built on mutual respect, shared interests, and cooperation on regional and international issues. The Chairman Senate highlighted the importance of

parliamentary diplomacy and growing trade and investment. He also appreciated Italy's support for Pakistan's GSP+ status and its development cooperation in the fields of healthcare,

education, and sanitation. Gilani commended Ambassador Marilina Armellini for her efforts to promote bilateral relations and expressed confidence that Pakistan-Italy friendship and

cooperation would continue to grow in the years ahead. The Chairman Senate also cut a commemorative cake and conveyed his best wishes to the government and people of Italy.



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## Morgenthau in Contemporary US Foreign Policy



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

**T**HE debate over the direction of American foreign policy has rarely been as contested as it is today. Between renewed great-power rivalry, regional conflicts, and the strain on the international order, policymakers in Washington find themselves navigating a world that is neither fully cooperative nor entirely chaotic. In this unsettled environment, the intellectual legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau once again finds renewed relevance. Writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, Morgenthau offered a sober interpretation of international politics that continues to echo through contemporary strategic thought. At the heart of Morgenthau's argument lies a simple but powerful claim: international politics is governed not by moral aspirations, but by power and national interest. States, regardless of their ideological claims, pursue survival and influence in an anarchic global system. Moral rhetoric may decorate foreign policy, but it rarely determines it. This tension between ideals and interests remains visible in the conduct of the United States in the twenty-first century.

In the current global landscape, the most significant challenge to American primacy comes from the rise of China. Economic interdependence between Washington and Beijing has not prevented strategic rivalry from intensifying. Competition over technology, maritime influence in the South China Sea, and the restructuring of global supply chains all point toward a shifting balance of power. From a Morgenthauian perspective, this is not an ideological confrontation but a structural one. As power diffuses across the international system, states naturally adjust their policies to preserve advantage. American foreign policy responses reflect this logic with increasing clarity. The strengthening of alliances in the Indo-Pacific, the revitalization of groupings such as the Quad, and restrictions on sensitive technologies are all expressions of strategic calculation. Even when articulated in the language of democracy and human rights, these measures are fundamentally shaped by the imperatives of power competition. Morgenthau would likely recognise in this a classic case of balance-of-power politics in action.

A similar dynamic is visible in relations with Russia. The deterioration of ties following conflicts in Eastern Europe has revived concerns reminiscent of Cold

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War geopolitics. Sanctions, military deterrence, and NATO's expanded posture reflect a return to traditional realist logic. The emphasis is not merely on punishment or ideology, but on constraining a rival state's capacity to alter the regional order. Morgenthau's insistence that diplomacy must be grounded in an understanding of power distribution appears particularly relevant in this context. Yet Morgenthau was not an advocate of reckless interventionism. On the contrary, he was one of the earliest critics of American overreach during the Cold War. His opposition to the Vietnam War stemmed from a belief that American policymakers had misjudged both the limits of military power and the complexity of local political realities. In his view, foreign policy failures often arise not from a lack of resources, but from an excess of confidence. This caution resonates strongly with the experiences of the United States in the post-9/11 era. The long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq exposed the difficulties of reshaping societies through external force. Despite overwhelming military superiority, political outcomes proved fragile and often unstable. Morgenthau's warning about the limits of power projection appears, in retrospect, remarkably prescient. The gap between strategic ambition and political reality remains one of the central dilemmas of American foreign policy. Another key element of Morgenthau's thought is prudence. He regarded it as the highest virtue in international politics, requiring leaders to carefully balance moral intentions with practical consequences. Prudence does not reject ethics, but it insists that ethical goals must be pursued within the constraints of power. In contemporary Washington, however, this balance is often difficult to maintain. Domestic political pressures, ideological divisions, and media narratives frequently shape foreign policy debates in ways that complicate long-term strategic thinking. The contemporary international order is also more complex than the one Morgenthau directly analyzed. Globalization has deepened economic interdependence, while technological transformation has introduced new domains of competition such as cyberspace and artificial intelligence. Non-state actors, multinational corporations, and transnational movements now influence outcomes that were once the exclusive domain of states. These developments suggest that while Morgenthau's realism remains foundational, it requires adaptation to fully capture the complexity of modern global politics. Critics of classical realism argue that it underestimates the role of international institutions, norms, and cooperative frameworks. Institutions such as the United Nations and global trade regimes have, at least partially, moderated state behaviour and provided platforms for negotiation. Yet even these institutions function within the broader constraints of power politics. Their effectiveness often depends on the willingness of major powers to support or ignore them. In this sense, Morgenthau's central insight that power underlies all political arrangements continues to retain explanatory force. For the United States, the challenge is not simply to preserve its global influence, but to define the limits of its commitments. Overextension remains a persistent risk, particularly as domestic economic pressures and political polarization constrain foreign policy options. Morgenthau's emphasis on national interest suggests a disciplined approach: prioritizing essential strategic regions, avoiding unnecessary military entanglements, and recognizing the limits of transformative ambitions.

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## Pakistan: From Peace Mediation to the Heart of FIFA 2026

Qamar Bashir



The 2026 FIFA World Cup is unlike any tournament in history. For the first time, 48 nations will participate. For the first time, three countries—the United States, Canada, and Mexico—will jointly host the event. The tournament is scheduled to begin on June 11, 2026, and conclude with the final on July 19, 2026. Spread across 16 stadiums and lasting more than a month, it is expected to become the most watched, most technologically advanced...

**W**HEN a journalist recently asked President Donald Trump whether Iranian players and officials would be granted visas to participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026, the president paused briefly before responding in a relaxed tone: "Let them come and play." The remark was simple, even reassuring. Yet behind those few words lies a far more complicated reality—one that has transformed what should have been a celebration of global unity into a tournament overshadowed by war, diplomacy, sanctions, and geopolitical rivalry. Pakistan's contribution to the 2026 FIFA World Cup extends far beyond manufacturing. In recent months, Pakistan has been widely recognized for playing a constructive diplomatic role in encouraging dialogue and helping facilitate efforts that contributed to a ceasefire from April 7 onward in one of the world's most consequential and potentially economically devastating conflicts. Had a wider war erupted, the global economy could have suffered losses running into trillions of dollars. By supporting dialogue over confrontation, Pakistan demonstrated how mediation can help prevent destruction and preserve stability. Now, in a remarkable parallel, Pakistan will once again be at the center of a global story—not through diplomacy alone, but through football. The same nation that helped promote peace between opposing sides will provide the football that connects players, supporters, and nations from every continent. Billions of viewers watching from homes around the world, on television screens and digital devices, will witness a Pakistani-made football at the center of the action, symbolizing connection rather than conflict. The football itself—the very heart and soul of the tournament—will be manufactured in Sialkot, Pakistan. For decades, Sialkot has been recognized as one of the world's leading producers of footballs, supplying an estimated majority of premium match balls used globally. There is profound symbolism in this reality. At a time when Pakistan has been acknowledged for encouraging dialogue and de-escalation in international affairs, a football produced by Pakistani craftsmen will sit at the center of every match played in North America. The same ball will travel across stadiums, connect nations, inspire fans, and perhaps even help create moments of reconciliation between rivals. Just as diplomacy seeks common ground between adversaries, football creates a shared arena where competition remains peaceful and mutual respect can flourish. In a strange twist of history, while Pakistan sought dialogue between opposing sides in the geopolitical arena, a Pakistani-made football may become the instrument through which those same rivals compete peacefully on the sporting field. This is, after all, the essence of sport.

Football provides an alternative battlefield—one where competition replaces conflict, goals replace missiles, and victory is measured not by destruction but by skill, teamwork, and perseverance. Yet the ongoing conflict has unquestionably affected the atmosphere surrounding the tournament. Many supporters who would ordinarily travel freely now face uncertainty. Political tensions have entered discussions that should ideally focus on football. Questions of visas, security, sanctions, and diplomacy have become part of the World Cup narrative. The 2026 FIFA World Cup is unlike any tournament in history. For the first time, 48 nations will participate. For the first time, three countries—the United States, Canada, and Mexico—will jointly host the event. The tournament is scheduled to begin on June 11, 2026, and conclude with the final on July 19, 2026. Spread across 16 stadiums and lasting more than a month, it is expected to become the most watched, most technologically advanced, and most commercially successful sporting event ever organized. Yet as the countdown to kickoff continues, the shadow of the Iran–United States conflict hangs heavily over the tournament. For Iran, qualification for the World Cup was already a matter of national pride. Memories remain fresh of the extraordinary celebrations that followed Iran's victory over the United States in a previous World Cup. Although Iran did not win the tournament, that single victory was celebrated across the country as a triumph of national dignity and resistance. Players returned home to hero-like receptions, welcomed as champions who had humbled a global superpower on football's biggest stage. Now history threatens to repeat itself under even more dramatic circumstances. The difference is that this time the two nations are not merely football rivals. They are adversaries emerging from a dangerous military confrontation that shook global markets, disrupted international trade routes, and pushed the Middle East to the brink of a wider regional war. Yet football has a unique way of transforming adversity into motivation. If the two countries meet again on the field, it will undoubtedly become one of the most watched matches in World Cup history. It will not merely be a football game. It will be a contest loaded with symbolism, emotion, and political significance. The United States will enjoy home-ground advantage, but Iran will arrive carrying the passion of a nation determined to prove itself once again against a powerful rival. Beyond the geopolitical drama, the World Cup itself promises to redefine sporting entertainment. The opening ceremonies across the three host nations are expected to feature some of the world's most recognizable artists. FIFA has announced that the first-ever FIFA World Cup final half-

time show will be curated by Coldplay's Chris Martin and Phil Harvey in partnership with Global Citizen. While FIFA has not yet officially confirmed the complete lineup for the opening ceremony, closing celebrations, or halftime performers, the involvement of Chris Martin and Phil Harvey has already generated significant global interest. Major celebrations are planned in Los Angeles, Mexico City, Toronto, and Vancouver. For FIFA, the challenge is immense. The organization must preserve the spirit of inclusivity and neutrality while navigating one of the most politically sensitive tournaments in modern history. The hope shared by football lovers across the world is simple: that peace returns before the opening whistle is blown. If diplomacy succeeds and tensions subside, FIFA World Cup 2026 could become a powerful symbol of reconciliation. If hostilities continue, the conflict risks overshadowing what should be humanity's greatest sporting celebration. The world will be watching not only to see who lifts the trophy in New Jersey on July 19, but also to see whether football can once again accomplish what politics often cannot—bringing together nations divided by ideology, conflict, and history. You could replace the concluding paragraph with the following stronger version: From the battlefields of the Middle East to the football grounds of North America, the intertwined stories of the Iran conflict and FIFA World Cup 2026 may ultimately remind humanity that nations are far better served competing with a football than with missiles and bombs. History may also remember Pakistan for playing a unique dual role in both events. In one of the most dangerous geopolitical crises of recent times, Pakistan emerged as a voice for dialogue, de-escalation, and peace, helping encourage diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing a wider regional war that could have devastated the global economy. At the same time, in the world's largest sporting spectacle, the very football that will unite 48 nations and captivate billions of viewers will be manufactured in Sialkot, Pakistan. Thus, in both a historic quest for peace and a historic celebration of sport, Pakistan occupies a symbolic place at the center of the story—serving as a mediator in one arena and providing the central element of the game in the other. It is a rare moment when a nation becomes associated simultaneously with the pursuit of peace and the spirit of global unity through sport.

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## The Exploitation of Innocents: Women as Weapons in Balochistan's Terror Campaign

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) forbade the killing of women and children even in the heat of legitimate battle, condemning such acts as contrary to mercy and justice. In one narration, when a woman was found slain in a campaign, the Messenger of Allah disapproved strongly and forbade the killing of women and children

**I**N the rugged and resource-rich expanse of Balochistan, a troubling new chapter has unfolded in the long-standing insurgency waged by the Baloch Liberation Army and its affiliates. What was once a campaign marked by sporadic guerrilla strikes has evolved into a calculated exploitation of women, drawn or compelled into the ranks of terrorism as instruments of violence. This shift not only reveals the desperation of these separatist elements but also underscores the profound human cost borne by the people of the province, where families are torn apart and communities live under the shadow of fear. As the Holy Qur'an declares, "Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely" (Al-Ma'idah, 5:32). Such sacred words remind us that the taking of innocent life stands as a grave transgression against the divine order, a corruption upon the earth that no cause can sanctify. Yet the militants persist in their path, heedless of this eternal injunction. The Balochistan Liberation Army has increasingly turned to female operatives, deploying them in suicide missions that target security forces, infrastructure, and even civilian-linked sites. This tactic marks a grim departure, transforming women—traditionally pillars of Baloch society—into weapons in a war that promises only destruction. Pakistani authorities have documented multiple such cases, many involving young women who were either radicalised or, as confessions later revealed, coerced through manipulation, blackmail, or false promises of empowerment. One of the earliest and most notable instances came in April 2022, when Shari Baloch, a 30-year-old science teacher and mother of two, detonated explosives at the Confucius Institute within Karachi University. The blast claimed the lives of three Chinese instructors and a Pakistani driver. Claimed by the BLA as its first female suicide operation, it signalled the group's intent to expand its reach beyond traditional battlegrounds. Shari's involvement stunned many, raising questions about how educated women from seemingly stable backgrounds could be drawn into such extremism.

Subsequent cases followed a similar pattern. In June 2023, Sumaiya Qalandrani Baloch carried out an attack on a military convoy in Turbat. Later operations saw Mahal Baloch and others participating in assaults. By early 2026, the trend had accelerated dramatically. During coordinated attacks across Balochistan in late January and February, women played prominent roles. Asifa Mengal, a 24-year-old who had reportedly joined the group on her 21st birthday, was among those involved in strikes on security installations. Hawa Baloch featured in videos released by the BLA, shown engaging forces before her death in Gwadar. Zareena Rafiq rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into paramilitary headquarters in Nokundi in November 2025, becoming one of several female bombers in a short span. Many of these women, when captured before completing their missions, have offered confessions that paint a darker picture of exploitation rather than voluntary zealotry. Adeela Baloch, for instance, a former health worker, revealed under interrogation how she had been subjected to psychological pressure and coercion by BLA handlers. Others described being lured with narratives of resistance only to find themselves trapped in networks that brooked no exit. Pakistani officials note that while some may embrace the ideology, a significant number appear manipulated, their personal vulnerabilities—economic hardship, family pressures, or social grievances—weaponised against them and, ultimately, against the state. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) forbade the killing of women and children even in the heat of legitimate battle, condemning such acts as contrary to mercy and justice. In one narration, when a woman was found slain in a campaign, the Messenger of Allah disapproved strongly and forbade the killing of women and children. How then can those who claim kinship with the faith justify thrusting their own daughters and sisters into the fires of suicide attacks, acts that Islamic tradition further condemns as self-destruction? The Qur'an warns, "And do not kill yourselves. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful" (An-Nisa, 4:29), and "do not throw yourselves into destruction with your own hands" (Al-Baqarah, 2:195). These divine and prophetic teachings stand as a solemn rebuke to the militants' cynical strategy.

This brazen use of women as suicide attackers has not gone unnoticed on the international stage. The Western world, including the European Union and several allied nations, has firmly endorsed Pakistan's right to employ all lawful and proportionate measures to counter this sponsored terrorism. Statements from global forums have condemned the attacks unequivocally, stressing the need to dismantle networks that export violence and instability. There is broad recognition that such acts threaten not only Pakistan's security but regional peace, particularly given Balochistan's strategic importance and ongoing development projects. Yet even as the international community lends its voice to Pakistan's defensive stance, troubling allegations persist regarding external patronage. Pakistani authorities have long pointed to India and certain like-minded actors as playing a shadowy role, providing support from behind the scenes to fuel discontent and sabotage progress in Balochistan. New Delhi has consistently rejected these claims, but the pattern of accusations, bolstered by intelligence reports and past incidents, continues to strain relations and complicate efforts to isolate the true sponsors of terror. The human toll remains the most poignant aspect of this conflict. Balochistan's women, whether victims of coercion or willing participants, embody a tragedy that extends far beyond the battlefield. Captured operatives often express regret once removed from militant influence, highlighting how terrorism preys upon the vulnerable. Pakistani security forces, in response, have intensified operations to neutralise threats while emphasising rehabilitation for those misled. As this insidious strategy unfolds, it serves as a stark reminder of the lengths to which insurgent groups will go to perpetuate chaos. The people of Balochistan deserve peace and prosperity, not to be sacrificed in a war that exploits their daughters and sisters. Pakistan's resolve, backed by international solidarity and rooted in the timeless principles of justice and mercy enshrined in faith, must remain steadfast in rooting out these elements while addressing genuine local grievances through development and dialogue. Only then can the cycle of violence, and the cynical use of women within it, be brought to an end.

## Briefs

## Gulf countries condemn renewed...

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In a statement, the ministry affirmed that these attacks constitute a flagrant violation to the two countries' sovereignty and a breach of international law. UAE presidential advisor Anwar Gargash called for a firm and unified Gulf stance against repeated Iranian aggression. "In light of the repeated Iranian aggression against the sisterly State of Kuwait and Kingdom of Bahrain, there must be a firm, unified, and cohesive Gulf stance," Anwar Gargash wrote on X. "No Gulf state should be left to face the targeting alone, as the security of Arab Gulf states is interconnected, their interests are shared, and their fate is one." Iran on Wednesday claimed responsibility for the new attacks targeting US military assets in Kuwait and Bahrain, including the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet. Kuwait said it suspended flights at the Kuwait International Airport after its building suffered 'significant material damage' because of the 'criminal Iranian aggression.' Kuwait said on Wednesday an Iranian attack targeting its international airport killed at least one person and wounded others, even as it condemned Tehran's latest barrage of drone and missile attacks against it. Kuwait has demanded that two Iranian embassy staff leave the country within 24 hours after an Iranian attack on the country's airport killed one person and injured dozens more, AFP reports.

## Govt, PTI at loggerheads over...

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He noted that PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan was freely holding public meetings and gatherings in the region, arguing that other PTI leaders could also campaign if they followed the same legal procedures. "If Barrister Gohar can travel there after obtaining permission, then Salman Akram Raja should do the same," he said. The PML-N senator further claimed that PTI did not have any candidate directly contesting the elections and insisted that the upcoming polls would be free, fair and credible. Responding to the government's stance, PTI leader Shafi Jan alleged that all political parties except PTI were being allowed to conduct election campaigns in Gilgit-Baltistan. He pointed out that both Nawaz and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari were actively campaigning in the region and claimed the Election Commission would have immediately taken notice had a PTI minister been involved in similar activities. "The Election Commission's silence is difficult to understand," he said.

## Centre notifies new austerity...

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The decision was taken during a meeting of the Committee for Monitoring and Implementation of Austerity Measures, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday. Under the revised schedule, takeaway and delivery services will remain exempt from the restrictions. Marriage halls and event venues, however, will continue to close at 10pm, with no changes to their current operating hours. Essential services such as pharmacies, hospitals, fuel stations, and IT and telecom services will also remain exempt from the updated closing-hour regulations. The committee further instructed provincial governments to ensure the effective enforcement of the guidelines in coordination with federal authorities. Meanwhile, uncertainty persists as provincial governments have yet to notify revised business closure timings within their respective jurisdictions, despite the federal government's announcement of new restrictions.

## Army, WAPDA, Navy Shine in Inter-Departmental Kabaddi Championship



## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Army, WAPDA, Navy and Air Force secured impressive victories on the second day of the Inter-Departmental National Kabaddi Championship (Asian Style) being organized by the Pakistan Kabaddi Federation

(PKF) at Liaquat Gymnasium, Islamabad. Six departments – Pakistan Army, Pakistan Navy, Pakistan Air Force, WAPDA, Police and Airport Security Force (ASF) – are participating in the round-robin championship, competing for top honours. Secretary Army Fitness and Sports Directorate, Colonel Nabeel Ahmed Rana, attended the event as the chief guest. He watched

the matches alongside Pakistan Kabaddi Federation Secretary Muhammad Sarwar Rana, Deputy Director Navy Sports Directorate Lieutenant Commodore Kaleemullah, and other distinguished guests. In the day's matches, Pakistan Army defeated Airport Security Force (ASF) by 55-39 points. Air Force edged past Police in a thrilling contest, claiming

a narrow 50-49 victory. Pakistan Navy also recorded a convincing win, defeating ASF by 41-25 points, while WAPDA outclassed Air Force with a 50-35 victory. The championship continues to provide exciting kabaddi action, with the participating departments displaying a high level of skill and competitiveness in their quest for the national title.

## Philippine president urges senators to end boycott

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos warned on Wednesday that important laws may be derailed as senators backing Vice President Sara Duterte stopped attending sessions ahead of her impeachment trial next month. Pro-Duterte lawmakers began a Senate boycott this week after losing majority control, with one lawmaker arrested for large-scale corruption and another in hiding to avoid arrest by the International Criminal Court. "The legislature is now in disarray," Marcos told reporters. "Get back to work

because it's important; we have a lot of work to do ... We have to pass a lot of laws." Marcos said his team was looking at possible laws and amendments to aid Filipinos as the Middle East war sends shockwaves through the global economy. "We are trying to achieve some form of stability so that people can go on with their lives and plan ahead for their future; so that people can count on the assistance of government during this time of an emergency," the president said. "We cannot do that if the legislature decides to stay at home and have a vacation."

The Philippine Constitution states that the executive is co-equal to the legislature, limiting Marcos's options. "We cannot tell them what to do; we cannot punish them for what they are doing. They have to regulate themselves. And they haven't been doing much of a good job right now," Marcos said. Last month, the 13 lawmakers allied with Duterte took control of the 24-seat Senate just hours before the majority of the House of Representatives voted to impeach the vice president. Four days later, Duterte ally Ronald Dela Rosa fled after

the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against him. Another pro-Duterte senator, Jose "Jingoy" Estrada, was arrested on Monday for allegedly receiving kickbacks worth more than 573 million pesos (\$9.3 million) over a flood control project. The resulting 11-11 deadlock means it is difficult to pass a bill into law unless senators cross party lines. Duterte ally and Senate President Alan Peter Cayetano justified the boycott by saying the body is being "held by the throat" and that majority members are being eliminated. – APP

## PM wants CPEC 2.0 get going

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The Prime Minister further stressed upon the need to ensure timely follow-up of the various MoUs signed between Pakistani and the Chinese companies, at the B2B Investment Conference, held in Hangzhou, during his visit. The Prime Minister appreciated the Chinese Ambassador's efforts to make the visit successful, in every aspect, while observing that it was now incumbent upon the two sides to work together to deliver on the decisions taken by the leadership of the two countries. Other issues discussed during the meeting included the fast-tracking of KKH realignment project, expanding security, counter-terrorism and defence cooperation, as well as economic and financial support. The evolving regional situation and international developments were also discussed. Amb. Jiang Zaidong thanked the Prime Minister for receiving him and congratulated him on Eid ul Adha, as well as on his successful visit to China from May 23-26. He assured the Prime Minister that China remained committed to strengthening its iron-clad brotherhood with Pakistan and expand cooperation across all spheres.

## Military seeks prison time for Indonesian soldiers in acid attack

JAKARTA: Indonesian military prosecutors sought two-and-a-half years in prison on Wednesday for each of the four soldiers charged over an acid attack on an activist critical of the armed forces' perceived expanding role in government. Andrie Yunus, 27, of the KontraS rights group, suffered serious injuries when two men on a scooter threw acid at him in March while he was riding a motorbike. He had just finished recording a podcast about the military's influence on the Indonesian government. Four members of the military's Strategic Intelligence Agency (BAIS) were arrested, and BAIS head Yudi Abramantyo stepped down in what officials said was a "form of responsibility." Defendants Edi Sudarko, 45; Budi Hariyanto Widhi Cahyono, 43; Nandala Dwi Prasetya, 40; and Sami Lakka, 41, are charged with premeditated assault for the attack that left Andrie blind in one eye. "The actions of the defendants constitute an extrajudicial act of revenge that caused physical suffering to the victim and reputational damage for the military," prosecutor Wasinton Marpaung told a military court in Jakarta. The prosecution contends the soldiers did not act on orders but on their own initiative, fueled by anger over Andrie and another activist interrupting a lawmaker's meeting in 2025 to protest a revision to Indonesia's armed forces law. The amendment, passed by parliament last year, made it possible for active-duty military personnel to work in 14 government ministries and state institutions – up from 10 before. – DNA

## Lebanon launches safety audit of Middle East Airlines amid pilot groups' complaints

BEIRUT: Lebanon's aviation regulator has launched a safety audit of Middle East Airlines (MEA) as pilot groups raised concerns that crews were being asked to fly close to airstrikes and penalized for reporting safety incidents, according to letters seen by Reuters. The audit puts scrutiny on the Beirut-based flag carrier, which has kept the country connected through war and financial collapse even as many foreign airlines have avoided large parts of Middle East airspace because of missile and drone risks since the US-Israeli war against Iran began in February. MEA, which has a fleet of around 20 planes operating in the Middle East, Europe and West Africa, has been praised at home for continuing to fly during regional conflict and helping to prop up a weak economy that is more dependent than ever on tourism and remittances from expatriates. The airline said it has a strong and proven safety record, and that any flights during military hostilities were conducted based on risk assessments developed alongside Lebanon's government and aviation regulator, the Lebanese Civil Aviation Authority (LCAA). But since 2024, multiple Israeli airstrikes have landed near Lebanon's largest airport, raising concerns among the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), a global federation of pilot unions, given the history of civilian aircraft being shot down in or near conflict zones. The aviation concerns have grown as Is-

raeli strikes on Lebanon stepped up this year during a widening conflict with Iran-backed Hezbollah. "While some may think that flying civilian aircraft and passengers in high-risk and conflict zones during war conditions is heroic, we consider this an unconscionable risk," IFALPA President Ron Hay wrote in a May 12 letter to Lebanon's central bank, which holds a majority share in MEA. The central bank, known as the Banque du Liban, referred Reuters to MEA. "The son of the chairman of MEA and the son of the chairman of LCAA are both captains at MEA and flew throughout the period," the airline said. Lebanese regulator conducts safety audit of MEA. LCAA head Mohammed Aziz, an air crash investigator, told IFALPA in a May 15 letter that his team would conduct an aviation safety audit on MEA and "engage in a dialogue with MEA to discuss the concerns you stated in your letter." MEA said oversight activity conducted by the LCAA on MEA from May 18 to June 1 confirmed the carrier's compliance with "regulatory and operational safety requirements." Aziz told Reuters a closing meeting with the airline was held on Monday, but the LCAA audit was still being processed, and "we were in the process of mediating" between the pilots and MEA. One MEA pilot interviewed by Reuters said aviators had a financial incentive to fly since per-flight payments made up a majority of their salaries, with their base salary slashed due to a Lebanese economic collapse that began in 2019. – DNA

## PM says upcoming budget to provide...

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said that they were Pakistan's ambassadors and represent the country's identity around the world. "We are grateful to the business community for supporting the government during difficult economic conditions," he said adding that a strong partnership between the government and the private sector was the guarantee of economic growth. He said consultation with the business community was of critical importance in economic policymaking.

## US proposes tariffs on 60 economies...

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The war has hit economic growth prospects worldwide, with a more severe shock likely should no effective ceasefire be agreed before 2027, the OECD warned Wednesday.

## Govt to present budget on...

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The finance minister's confirmation comes after reports emerged that the budget was facing delays due to challenges in convincing the provinces to align their higher development allocations with overarching national priorities and the inability to finalise budgetary figures with the IMF. The National Assembly and Senate are set to meet in Islamabad on June 5 for proceedings related to the federal budget for the fiscal year 2026-27. The NA session will begin at 5pm, while the Senate will meet at 6pm the same day, read a statement issued by the President House. The government plans to complete budget deliberations and adopt the budget proposals by June 24. Under constitutional requirements, the budget must be passed before June 30 to take legal effect from July 1 across the country. The federal government has proposed a development budget of more than Rs1.1 trillion for the upcoming financial year 2026-27, according to budget documents detailing the sector-wise allocation of development spending.

## Israel plans major expansion...

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the construction of 1,262 new Jewish homes. They include 1,006 units in a new settlement near Jerusalem, 922 near the Palestinian city of Nablus and 234 near Hebron. We are continuing to build the Land of Israel in practice," said Smotrich, an ultra-nationalist sanctioned by Britain, France and others who accuse him of inciting violence against Palestinians. Smotrich has denounced the sanctions against him, saying the measures would not change Israeli policy. The new homes would "strengthen our hold on the land, reinforce Israel's security, and establish clear facts on the ground that prevent the creation of an Arab terror state in the heart of the country," Smotrich said in a statement, without specifying when construction would begin.

Australia beat Pakistan in second ODI to level series 1-1  
Visitors defend 232-run target as Nathan Ellis leads bowling attack with four wickets

DNA

LAHORE: Australia clinched victory over Pakistan in the second ODI to level the three-match series 1-1 by defending a modest 232-run target at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Tuesday. Set to chase 232, the Green Shirts could muster 190 before getting bowled out in 44 overs despite a valiant half-century by Shadab Khan. Pakistan got off to a shaky start to the pursuit as they lost both their openers, Maaz Sadaqat (zero) and Sahibzada Farhan (three), inside two overs with just six runs on the board. Following the early setback, experienced batter Babar Azam showed signs of counterattack by smashing two boundaries but fell victim to Nathan Ellis in the fifth over after making a run-a-ball 16. Pakistan then suffered two more setbacks in quick succession as Salman Ali Agha and Abdul Samad perished cheaply for seven and two, respectively. Wicketkeeper batter Ghazi Ghori, who kept the scoreboard ticking singlehandedly during the collapse, was eventually cleaned up by Adam Zampa in

the 17th over and walked back after scoring a gritty 37 off 48 deliveries with the help of five fours. With the scoreboard reading 78/6, Arafat Minhas joined Shadab Khan in the middle, and the all-rounder duo batted sensibly to raise an important 59-run partnership for the seventh wicket, which culminated with the former's dismissal off Ellis in the 32nd over. Minhas contributed with a defiant 33 off 43 deliveries with the help of four fours. Shadab was then involved in a brief 31-run partnership with captain Shaheen Shah Afridi, who could muster 11 before Matthew Short got him caught behind in the 37th over. The experienced all-rounder then raised a completely one-sided 21-run partnership for the ninth wicket with Haris Rauf, who fell for a 15-ball duck to Nathan Ellis on the final delivery of the 44th over. Shadab was ultimately removed by Tanveer Sangha on the first delivery of the next over, which rounded up a hard-earned victory for the visitors. He remained the top scorer for Pakistan with 71 off 104 deliveries with the help of three sixes and a four. Ellis spearheaded Australia's bowling charge with four wickets for 33 runs in his nine overs, followed

by Short with three, while Matthew Kuhnemann, Adam Zampa and Sangha chipped in with one scalp apiece. Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi's decision to field first paid dividends as the visitors could accumulate 231/9 in their 50 overs despite half-centuries from Josh Inglis and Cameron Green. Australia got off to a dismal start to their innings as Pakistan captain Shaheen cleaned up their left-handed opener Alex Carey (zero) on the first delivery of the innings. Carrey's dismissal on the first delivery of the innings paved the way for fellow wicketkeeper batter and captain Inglis to walk out and bat at No.3. Inglis launched a decent recovery for Australia as he put together 46 runs for the second wicket with Matthew Short, who made a cautious 15 off 24 deliveries, before falling victim to Abrar Ahmed in the eighth over. Australia suffered another setback 17 deliveries later as Arafat Minhas dismissed Marnus Labuschagne (five), which brought their total down to 51/3. Following the back-to-back dismissals, Inglis was joined by Green in the middle, and the duo batted sensibly to put together an important

51-run partnership, which saw the former bring up his fifth ODI half-century. The Australian captain, however, was soon removed by Minhas and walked back after scoring a gritty 51 off 74 deliveries with the help of five fours. Green, on the other hand, was then involved in another crucial partnership for Australia – a 65-run stand for the sixth wicket with Matt Renshaw – until eventually falling victim to Abrar in the 40th over. The all-rounder remained the top-scorer for Australia with a 92-ball 53, comprising two sixes and a four. Short followed suit 21 balls later as he was cleaned up by Haris Rauf after scoring a run-a-ball 43 with the help of three fours. Shaheen inflicted another blow to Australia's batting expedition in the 47th over by casting Matthew Kuhnemann (five) and struck again in the penultimate over to get rid of Nathan Ellis. Meanwhile, batting all-rounder Oliver Peake added valuable runs at the backend to Australia's total with a run-a-ball 31. Skipper Shaheen spearheaded Pakistan's bowling charge with three wickets for 36 runs in his eight overs, followed by Minhas, Rauf and Abrar with two each.

## Briefs

## Gold price declines by Rs 8,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold registered a significant decline in the local market on Wednesday, with 24 karat gold per tola shedding Rs 8,600 to settle at Rs 467,762 compared to Rs 476,362 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 7,373 to Rs 401,030 from Rs 408,403, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold fell by Rs 6,759 to Rs 367,624 against Rs 374,383. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$86 to \$4,454 per ounce from \$4,540. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola declined by Rs 259 to Rs 7,894, while the price of 10 grams of silver dropped by Rs 222 to Rs 6,767. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$2.59 to \$74.10 per ounce, the association reported.—APP

## Pak oxygen's liquid plant acquisition approved

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the proposed acquisition of the liquid carbon dioxide (LCO2) plant of Pakistan Oxygen Limited by Pak Arab Fertilizers Limited following a Phase-I review conducted under the Competition Act, 2010. Pak Arab Fertilizers Limited submitted a pre-merger application to the Commission under Section 11 of the Competition Act, seeking approval to acquire the LCO2 plant of Pakistan Oxygen Limited pursuant to an Asset Purchase Agreement dated February 4, 2026, said a release issued here on Wednesday. Following a competition assessment, the Commission authorized the transaction under Section 31 of the Act. Pak Arab Fertilizers Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Fatima Fertilizer Company Limited, is engaged in the manufacturing, production, import, export and sale of fertilizers and chemicals. Pakistan Oxygen Limited is a longstanding industrial enterprise engaged in the manufacture of industrial and medical gases, welding electrodes and the marketing of medical equipment. During its review, the Commission's assessment examined the likely impact of the transaction on market structure, competition dynamics and market concentration. The Commission observed that the transaction involves the acquisition of a specific production asset and constitutes a horizontal merger, as both the acquiring group and the target operate within the same relevant market. However, the resulting increase in market share would be limited and would not materially alter competitive conditions in the market.—APP

## Australian high commissioner visits SCCI

SIALKOT : Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Timothy Kane visited the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and held an interactive session with the business community to discuss opportunities for strengthening bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Australia. The high commissioner was warmly received by President SCCI Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Senior Vice President Muhammad Murad Arshad, Vice President Salman Sheikh along with members of the Executive Committee and leading representatives of the local business community. In his welcome address, President SCCI Syed Ahtesham Mazhar highlighted Sialkot's position as one of Pakistan's premier export-oriented cities, renowned worldwide for its manufacturing and export of surgical instruments, sports goods, leather products, textiles, and apparel. He stressed the importance of expanding Pakistan-Australia trade relations through enhanced institutional collaboration, business-to-business networking, exchange of trade delegations, improved visa facilitation, and greater participation of Sialkot-based exporters in Australian trade fairs and exhibitions. Speaking on the occasion.—APP



ISLAMABAD: President FPCI, Atif Ikram Sheikh presenting shield to President of the Asia Web3 Alliance Japan (AWAJ), Hinza Asif at FPCI, in the Federal Capital.

## Pakistan, WB discuss human capital uplift

She noted that the forum is a collaborative initiative supported by the Government of Japan and jointly facilitated by the World Bank Group and WHO to advance progress towards Universal Health Coverage

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and World Bank (WB) delegation, led by Vice President for Human Development Ms. Mamta Murthi here on Wednesday discussed strengthening cooperation in human capital development, focusing on skills enhancement, improved health outcomes, education, social protection and technology-driven public service delivery. The delegation included Ms. Bolormaa Amgaabazar, Country Director for Pakistan; Ms. Keiko Inoue, Regional Director for Human Development; Ms. Sherin Varkey, Health Practice Manager; and Mr. Simon Andrews, IFC Director, according to press release issued by finance ministry. On the occasion, Aurangzeb appreciated the World Bank Group's continued partnership with Pakistan and acknowledged its support for the country's development and reform priorities. He noted that while Pakistan had made important progress in restoring macro-

economic stability, the government's focus has been increasingly directed towards improving social and human development outcomes through targeted investments in health, education, skills development, and social protection. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong focus on measurable outcomes and effective implementation under the World Bank's long-term Country Partnership Framework with Pakistan. The minister highlighted that Pakistan's large and youthful population presents both a significant opportunity and an important policy priority. He underscored the need to improve human capital indicators, strengthen workforce participation, and equip young people with skills aligned with evolving labour market requirements. He further emphasized that sustained economic growth and competitiveness would require continued investments in people, alongside reforms aimed at improving productivity, service delivery, and employment generation. Discussions focused extensively on Pakistan's human development agenda, including maternal and child health,

nutrition, immunization, early childhood development, education outcomes, and population-related challenges. Aurangzeb emphasized the need to prepare Pakistan's workforce for a rapidly evolving global economy, while the World Bank delegation shared international experiences relating to technology-driven service delivery, healthcare financing, and private sector participation. He emphasized the importance of upskilling and reskilling Pakistan's workforce to meet emerging economic needs and create pathways to higher-value employment opportunities. He noted that strengthening employability, particularly among young people, would remain central to the Government's broader economic transformation agenda. On the occasion, Ms. Mamta Murthi emphasized that long-term development outcomes would depend on sustained progress in key human capital indicators, particularly child nutrition, reduction in stunting, foundational learning, and access to quality healthcare and education services. She noted that the World Bank's

engagement was focused on supporting measurable outcomes and strengthening service delivery systems to ensure that essential interventions reach mothers and children effectively across the country. The meeting also covered opportunities to strengthen primary healthcare systems and expand access to essential services for mothers and children. Participants exchanged views on the growing role of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in healthcare, education, and workforce development. The meeting further explored opportunities for broader collaboration between the Government, the World Bank Group, and the private sector in support of Pakistan's human capital objectives. In this regard, Ms. Mamta Murthi invited Pakistan to participate in an upcoming global forum on Universal Health Coverage to be held in Japan later this year. She noted that the forum is a collaborative initiative supported by the Government of Japan and jointly facilitated by the World Bank Group and WHO to advance progress towards Universal Health Coverage.

## Lebanon launches safety audit of ME Airlines

BEIRUT: Lebanon's aviation regulator has launched a safety audit of Middle East Airlines (MEA) as pilot groups raised concerns that crews were being asked to fly close to airstrikes and penalized for reporting safety incidents, according to letters seen by Reuters. The audit puts scrutiny on the Beirut-based flag carrier, which has kept the country connected through war and financial collapse even as many foreign airlines have avoided large parts of Middle East airspace because of missile and drone risks since the US-Israeli war against Iran began in February. MEA, which has a fleet of around 20 planes operating in the Middle East, Europe and West Africa, has been praised at home for continuing to fly during regional conflict and helping to prop up a weak economy that is more dependent than ever on tourism and remittances from expatriates.

The airline said it has a strong and proven safety record, and that any flights during military hostilities were conducted based on risk assessments developed alongside Lebanon's government and aviation regulator, the Lebanese Civil Aviation Authority (LCAA). But since 2024, multiple Israeli airstrikes have landed near Lebanon's largest airport, raising concerns among the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), a global federation of pilot unions, given the history of civilian aircraft being shot down in or near conflict zones.—DNA

## Mukhtar visits children's national hospital Washington

WASHINGTON: As part of Pakistan's official mental health engagement mission to the United States, Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr Malik Ahmed Mukhtar, here visited Children's National Hospital to strengthen collaboration on child and adolescent mental health in Pakistan. The visit formed part of Pakistan's participation in the Global Mental Health Summer Institute at George Washington University and broader efforts to expand international cooperation in mental health systems and child wellbeing. The Minister was accompanied by Dr Syed Usman Hamdani, Founding Director of the Global Institute of Human Development (GIHD), Shifa Tameer e Millat University, Islamabad, and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at George Washington University. The delegation was hosted by Dr Karen Smith, Executive Medical Director, Global Services, and Dr Adelaide Robb, Division Chief, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, at Children's National Hospital. The visit began with an institutional tour highlighting innovative pediatric care and digital health models. The delegation visited the CICU Command Center, where discussions focused on telemedicine-enabled care delivery and technology-supported clinical coordination. The delegation also toured Sheikh Zayed Research Institute, where hospital leadership presented advances in translational research, engineering, and innovation in pediatric healthcare. A strategic discussion followed on opportunities for international collaboration and Children's National's global engagement portfolio. A dedicated session on Pediatric Mental Health at Children's National examined approaches to child and adolescent psychiatry, integrated behavioral health services, early intervention, and multidisciplinary care models. During the discussions, the Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening child and adolescent mental health through integration across health and education systems, expansion of community-based services, workforce development, and evidence-informed policymaking. The Minister emphasized that investment in the mental wellbeing of children and adolescents is essential to Pakistan's long-term social and economic development. The delegation also outlined Pakistan's ongoing efforts to advance the National Mental Health Policy and strengthen partnerships supporting Universal Health Coverage for Mental Health. Discussions highlighted priorities including support for vulnerable populations, school mental health, and climate-related mental health challenges. The engagement concluded with discussions on potential collaboration in child and adolescent mental health services, workforce development, tele-mental health, research partnerships, and sustained institutional engagement between Pakistan and leading international centers of excellence. The visit reflects Pakistan's continued commitment to building global partnerships and accelerating progress toward accessible, equitable, and high-quality mental healthcare for children, adolescents, and families.—DNA

## Taihu Lake emerges as one of eastern China's tourist destinations

WUXI: Nestled along the boundary of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, Taihu Lake continues to attract visitors from across China and around the world with its breathtaking natural scenery, rich ecological resources, and cultural heritage. As one of China's most celebrated freshwater lakes, Taihu Lake has become a flagship destination for tourism and recreation in the Yangtze River Delta region. Spanning the territories of Wuxi, Suzhou, and Changzhou in southern Jiangsu Province, Taihu Lake is the largest lake along China's eastern coastline and the country's second-largest freshwater lake. Over the years, the lake area has developed into one of China's most renowned scenic attractions, offering visitors a unique blend of natural beauty, cultural landmarks, and ecological diversity. The most popular tourist attractions around the lake include the Western Hills Scenic Area and Eastern Hills Scenic Area in Suzhou, as well as the famous Turtle Head Isle Scenic Area, commonly known as Tortoise Head Garden, in Wuxi. The latter is widely regarded as the symbol of Taihu Lake's scenic charm and remains one of the region's most visited destinations. Taihu Lake enjoys a distinguished status in China's tourism sector. It was among the first group of 12 state-level tourism and resort districts approved by the

Chinese government and was also selected as one of the country's earliest demonstration zones for tourism development recognized by the World Tourism Organization. The lake's landscape is enhanced by approximately 90 islands of varying sizes, creating a picturesque panorama alongside fleets of traditional fishing boats that continue to operate on its waters. Taihu Lake also supports a thriving fishing industry and is renowned for producing distinctive ornamental limestone rocks that have long been prized in traditional Chinese garden design. Among the many islands scattered across the lake, Turtle Head Isle stands out as a must-visit destination. Its scenic views, lush greenery, and lakeside vistas have made it a favorite among tourists and photographers alike. For visitors seeking panoramic views of the lake, travel guides frequently recommend several observation points in Wuxi. One of the most celebrated viewpoints is located in Xihui Park, west of the city, where the Dragon Light Pagoda offers sweeping views of both Wuxi and Taihu Lake. Another notable vantage point is Mount Longshan, where the renowned Song Dynasty poet Su Shi (1037-1101) is said to have composed poetry inspired by the area's natural beauty.

To further promote tourism and environmental conservation, the Wuxi municipal government established the Taihu Lake National Tourism Resort along the lake's shoreline. The resort encompasses an extensive natural landscape featuring 57 peaks, 41 streams, and 38 bays. Nearly 46 percent of the area is covered by forests, providing habitat for approximately 460 plant species and hundreds of animal species. The resort is also famous for producing the celebrated "Three Whites of Taihu Lake" — silver fish, white fish, and white shrimp — local delicacies that have become synonymous with the region's culinary heritage. Located about 17.5 kilometers from downtown Wuxi, the tourism resort is easily accessible by public transportation and private vehicles, making it a convenient destination for day-trippers and long-distance travelers alike. With its blend of ecological richness, cultural significance, and scenic splendor, Taihu Lake continues to strengthen its reputation as one of China's most important tourism destinations, contributing significantly to regional economic development while preserving its unique natural environment for future generations.—DNA

## Hujjaj underway as over 100,000 remain in KSA

MADINAH: The organized repatriation of pilgrims following the completion of Hajj rituals is progressing steadily. Over the past three days, 12,157 pilgrims have departed from Makkah for their home countries, while a significant number of pilgrims are simultaneously arriving in Madinah for their post-Hajj visits. According to a spokesperson for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 5,832 pilgrims have already arrived in Madinah. The Pakistan Hajj Mission has finalized comprehensive arrangements to facilitate the visitors and ensure a seamless hospitality experience. Currently, more than 100,000 government-sponsored pilgrims remain in Saudi Arabia, with over 71,000 expected to travel to Madinah in the coming phases. Upon arrival in the City of the Prophet, the primary focus for pilgrims is paying respects at the Roza-e-Rasool (SAW). Pilgrims are actively engaging in prayers at Riaz-ul-Jannah within the Prophet's Mosque and visiting other significant historical and sacred sites across Madinah. The Ministry has emphasized that the return flight operations are being executed with high efficiency. Authorities have confirmed that the post-Hajj flight schedule will continue uninterrupted until June 30, with all operational logistics fully mobilized to handle the influx of travelers. The Pakistan Hajj Mission has reiterated its commitment to utilizing all available resources to ensure that every returning pilgrim receives high-quality service and support throughout their departure process.—APP

## Lebanon says at least 9 dead as Israel pounds south, strikes near Beirut

BEIRUT: Lebanon said Israeli strikes on Wednesday killed at least nine people in the country's south, including two paramedics, while another raid hit a car near Beirut. The Israeli military, meanwhile, said it intercepted a "hostile aircraft" and two projectiles that crossed into Israeli territory from Lebanon. Israeli officials have warned the military will strike Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, if the group targets northern Israeli communities, a stance they say has backing from Washington. Hezbollah said its fighters on Wednesday attacked Israeli troops who have invaded southern Lebanon, but the group has not claimed a cross-border attack since Monday. Israeli and Lebanese diplomats are to hold a second day of direct talks in Washington — the fourth round since the fighting erupted on March 2, when Hezbollah entered the Middle East war on the side of its backer Iran with rocket fire at Israel. Hezbollah is sharply opposed to the direct negotiations.—APP

## Gulf, Arab countries condemn Iranian attacks

DUBAI: Gulf and Arab countries have condemned renewed Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait and Bahrain earlier on Wednesday. Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the Kingdom's strongest condemnation and denunciation of the repeated and heinous Iranian attacks against Kuwait and Bahrain. In a statement, the ministry said that the Kingdom reiterates its categorical rejection of these assaults that undermine the sovereignty of the sisterly states, which constitute a clear violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman's office responded with a post hours after Iran's attacks that targeted Bahrain and Kuwait. Bader Al-Asaker, head of the private office of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, said in a post on X.com: "O God, protect our people in Kuwait and Bahrain and safeguard our Gulf from all evil.—APP

**Briefs**

**OGDC makes significant oil**

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), the country's leading upstream energy company, has made a significant oil and gas discovery from its exploratory well Bobi Deep-1, located in Sanghar district of Sindh province. The well successfully tested the Massive Sand interval of the Lower Goru Formation and produced 2,000 barrels of oil per day (BOPD) along with 1.1 million standard cubic feet of gas per day (MMSCFD) of gas through a cased-hole Drill Stem Test (DST), confirming the hydrocarbon potential of the reservoir, said news release.

The achievement marks a major milestone for OGDC as the first hydrocarbon discovery from the Massive Sand play within the Bobi and Dhamraki Mining Lease. Beyond the discovery itself, the success has opened a new exploration window in the area, de-risking similar prospects in the surrounding region and creating opportunities for future reserve additions and resource growth. The discovery is particularly significant because the project had previously encountered complex subsurface challenges that led to the suspension of drilling operations. Rather than abandoning the prospect, OGDC relied on indigenous expertise and adopted an innovative approach to address the issue. A multidisciplinary team of geoscientists and engineers collaborated closely with the Centre for Pure and Applied Geology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, to investigate the phenomenon through advanced geophysical surveys, subsurface studies and field evaluations. - APP

**LHC upholds gang-rape culprits sentence Abid Raza**

LAHORE: A Lahore High Court (LHC) division bench on Wednesday dismissed appeals filed by the two men convicted in the 2020 Sialkot-Lahore Motorway gang rape case against their sentences. An anti-terrorism court had handed down death sentences besides life imprisonment and multiple jail terms to the two convicts, Abid Ali alias Malhi and Shafqat Ali alias Bagga, on March 20, 2021. They challenged their convictions on March 25, 2021. The appeals contended that several infirmities created doubts about the prosecution's version of the events and the trial court's judgement was harsh and against the settled principles of law. A two-judge bench, comprising Justice Syed Shahbaz Ali Rizvi and Justice Tariq Mehmood Bajwa, issued the verdict on their appeals today after the prosecution concluded its arguments. In his final arguments, the state prosecutor contended that the prosecution had overwhelming evidence against the convicts and requested the court to uphold their sentences. He said there was no flaw in the trial court's decision. - APP

## 'France committed to gender equality, climate diplomacy'

In Pakistan, the French Development Agency (AFD) has supported more than 40 projects since 2006, worth over 1.5 billion euros, with a strong focus on gender and climate co-benefits

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The French Embassy in Pakistan in collaboration with its partners such as UNDP, UN Women, hosted the 4th edition of the Gender and Climate Award ceremony. The event was presided over by H.E. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France to Pakistan, in the presence of Senator Sherry Rehman, Chair of the Senate Climate Committee, senior officials, representatives of civil society, international partners, and members of the diplomatic community. In his address, Ambassador Galey emphasized the growing importance of the award, created by the French Embassy to highlight the role of Pakistani women in climate action. He noted that the initiative has steadily expanded since its inception, with more than 350 applications received this year, reflecting the diversity and strength of women's contributions to climate resilience. The



Ambassador warmly congratulated the 2026 laureates: Zillya Mariam, recognized for her innovative work in green enterprise and technological solutions for plastic and organic waste. Songul Jamal, honored for her efforts in protect-

ing fragile coral ecosystems. He praised their perseverance and impact, underscoring that their achievements embody the spirit of the award. Ambassador Galey also reaffirmed France's commitment to gender equality

and climate diplomacy, recalling France's adoption of feminist diplomacy in 2019 and its continued leadership in global climate efforts. He highlighted France's role in hosting the United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC-3) in

Nice in 2025, and its annual commitment of over 6 billion euros to support climate transition and resilience projects in developing countries. In Pakistan, the French Development Agency (AFD) has supported more than 40 projects since 2006, worth over 1.5 billion euros, with a strong focus on gender and climate co-benefits. The Ambassador expressed gratitude to the Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), led by Aisha Khan, for organizing the event, and acknowledged the support of partners including UNDP, UN Women, the Aga Khan Foundation, and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund. He also welcomed the continued engagement of the EU Delegation in Pakistan. The ceremony concluded with a call to strengthen collaboration between governments, civil society, and international partners to address the urgent challenges of climate change in Pakistan, with inclusivity and gender equality at the forefront.

**KP CM moves court for meeting with Imran**

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: CM Afridi said the province was being deprived of its due share of resources and alleged that KP was being punished for supporting the PTI founder. He criticised the federal government's development allocations, claiming the province had been ignored in the previous federal budget and development programme. The chief minister also expressed concern over the country's economic situation, saying priority should be given to the economy and the welfare of poor citizens. He alleged that terrorism had seen a rise in KP and accused the federal government of treating the province unfairly. He announced that PTI would stage a protest outside Parliament during the budget session, which is expected to be held on June 10, and reiterated that, as chief minister, he was authorised to make decisions on behalf of the provincial government. Aslam told reporters that in the last meeting with the PTI founder last year, he had consulted him on budget matters. Aslam said the PTI founder had instructed that he be consulted before every budget is prepared. However, he said no meeting had taken place before the current budget exercise despite the importance of such consultations.

**Fire in Delhi hotel kills at least 21, say police**

At least 21 people were killed in a fire at a hotel in Delhi on Wednesday, police said, in one of the worst such incidents in the national capital in recent years. The hotel was located in Malviya Nagar in south Delhi, they said, a predominantly residential area popular with students and young professionals. At least 40 people have been rescued so far, police said. Television visuals showed a building on fire, smoke billowing out and charred exteriors as residents watched from a narrow lane nearby. They also showed two people jumping from a higher floor of the building. There was reportedly a restaurant operating on the ground floor of the building. - APP

**Bilawal urges early completion of Diamer-Bhasha Dam**

PPP chief urges prime minister to show "Shehbaz speed" in completion of the project at the earliest

DNA

GILGIT: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Wednesday urged the federal government to complete the Diamer-Bhasha Dam at the earliest, describing the project as a national necessity. "It [Diamer-Bhasha Dam] is not only Diamer people's right, but also Pakistan's need," he said while addressing an election rally in Diamer. Bilawal criticised India's violation of Indus Waters Treaty, saying that the Indian Prime Minister using water as a tool other project is more important than Diamer-Bhasha Dam," he said, urging Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to show "Shehbaz speed" in completion of the project at the earliest. The Diamer-Bhasha dam is a 4,500-megawatt project with an estimated cost of \$15 billion and is expected to be one of the largest dams in the world after completion. The project, viewed as positive stimulus for Pakistan's economy, will irrigate 1.2 million acres of agricultural land while extending the life of Tarbela Dam by 35 years. Addressing the participants, Bilawal urged voters in Gilgit-Baltistan to elect a PPP chief minister in the June 7 elections, saying the party continued to enjoy public trust.



## Hundreds flee as South Africa anti-migrant mobs go door-to-door

DNA

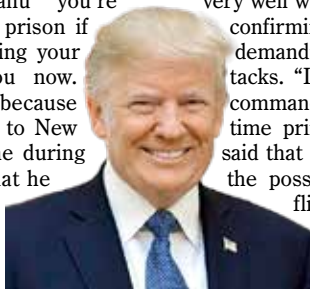
GANSBAAI: Hundreds of foreigners fearing for their lives have taken shelter in community halls on South Africa's south coast, saying mobs of locals were going door-to-door telling them to leave the country. Mostly nationals of Malawi and Mozambique, many told AFP they had fled their homes at the weekend and spent nights in the mountains and bush, before making their way to the small-town community centers. "They said 'you are a foreigner, you don't belong in South Africa, so you must go'," Mozambican Thomas Vincent Baloyi told AFP in Gansbaai, around 110 kilometers (70 miles) southeast of Cape Town. "I said, 'no, I got documents to be here in South Africa'. They didn't want to know," said Baloyi, who has been in the country for nearly 16 years working in construction and gardening. "They just chased us away like dogs... that is unfair because, actually, I'm a human being," the 32-year-old said. "We just stayed in the bush until six in the morning." Weeks of mostly small protests across South Africa against illegal foreign nationals exploded into violence at the weekend in the town of Mossel Bay, 250 kilometers up the coast, where 55 shacks were torched. The South African police say two people from Mozambique were killed but did not link the deaths to an anti-illegal migrant march held hours before. The Mozambique government said five of its citizens were killed as a "direct consequence of the xenophobic attacks." Around 300 fled back across the border on Saturday and hundreds more will follow, it said. The deaths would be the first linked to a new wave of anti-migrant protests by fringe groups that accuse undocumented foreign nationals of crime and taking scarce jobs and resources away from locals. After one anti-illegal migrant group set a June 30 deadline for undocumented migrants to go home, small bands of people brandishing whips, sticks, wooden clubs and sometimes axes are reported to have taken to the streets in various places to reinforce the ultimatum. Ghana has already flown home 300 of its citizens, with hun-

dreds more due to leave this weekend, and Nigeria has also announced emergency repatriation flights. "Dragged out" "They were dragging people out of their houses... whether you are legal or illegal, they say they don't want any foreign nationals in the township," local councillor Msa Nomatitii told AFP. Locals turned on foreigners in an informal settlement in Gansbaai on Monday, he said, alleging some of the groups going door-to-door to search for foreign nationals were accompanied by the police. More than 500 people had fled their homes Monday, he said. By late Tuesday, small groups could still be seen walking out of informal settlements in the area, hauling their belongings in the dark night and soft rain as they made their way to places of safety. "Some of them lost their passports because of the beatings and being dragged out of their houses," Nomatitii said. Government officials were sent to help with documentation and voluntary repatriations. Around 50 people huddled over large buckets of food at the tiny Gansbaai mosque, which was crammed with people and belongings, sharing one toilet and a single tap. "Better to go home alive" In the small coastal town of Kleinmond, 40 kilometers closer to Cape Town, nearly 100 foreigners, most of them Malawian, sought shelter at a local community hall. Large bags of clothing and blankets lined the walls and chairs were the only furniture. Volunteers served warm meals and donations from local residents trickled in. Landlords told non-South Africans on Saturday to leave immediately as locals were going door-to-door in search of foreign nationals, Malawian Michael Markson told AFP. "So we came out in the night hours, we went to the bush. There's a mountain up there, we slept there," said the 31-year-old, his eyes bloodshot. "They're taking pangas... dangerous tools. They can hunt someone," he said. In the town of Standford less than 20 kilometers inland, another Malawian national, Talibo Mbewe, said he had been sheltering at the community hall for two days. "The thieves, they have already taken all our stuff at home, so we don't have anything. But it's better to go home without anything than to lose our lives," he said.

## Trump confirms expletive-laden phone call with Netanyahu

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has confirmed that he had lashed out at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the latter's escalation in Lebanon in a recent expletive-laden phone call. On Monday, American news outlet Axios reported citing sources that Trump called Netanyahu "crazy" and accused him of ingratitude during the phone call. The report quoted a US official as saying that Trump told Netanyahu "you're f\*\*\*\*\* crazy. You'd be in prison if it weren't for me. I'm saving your a\*\*". Everybody hates you now. Everybody hates Israel because of this". Trump confirmed to New York Post's Miranda Devine during 'Pod One Force' podcast that he called Netanyahu "f\*\*\*\*\* crazy", but also insisted that they have "worked very well together".

Asked if the Axios report was true and whether he spoke to Netanyahu in those terms, Trump replied, "I did. I wouldn't say angry, I was a little bit perturbed at his constantly fighting with Lebanon. "At some point, I said Bibi, we're gonna stop this. We got to stop it," he added. At the same time, Trump said, "But I have a very good relationship. [...] We've worked very well together. I like Bibi a lot. And I work very well with him," Trump insisted after confirming his expletive-laden outburst demanding that Netanyahu cease attacks. "I'm a wartime president," the commander-in-chief said. "He's a wartime prime minister." Trump further said that although he was frustrated by the possibility of Lebanon-Israel conflict derailing a larger peace, he remained optimistic about having a deal with Iran "fairly quickly". - DNA



**NIFTYSPHERE INSTITUTE**

PRESENTS

### "POP REVOLUTION"

COLORS, CULTURE & CREATIVITY

Niftysphere Institute Showcases Creativity Through "Pop Revolution: Color, Culture & Creativity" Exhibition at PNCA

Islamabad: Niftysphere Institute of Arts & Design successfully organized an exhibition titled "Pop Revolution: Color, Culture & Creativity" at PNCA, Islamabad. The exhibition highlighted the creativity, innovation, and artistic talent of students from different departments of art and design. The event was attended by distinguished diplomats and representatives from the Vietnam Embassy, Denmark Embassy, and Sri Lanka Embassy, along with their teams. The ambassadors appreciated the creative work and cultural expression presented by the students.

The Chief Guest of the event was Zehra Wadud Fatemi, MNA of Pakistan Muslim League, who praised the efforts of the students and encouraged young talent. Misbah Khar Advisor To Chairman Senate Pakistan also attended the exhibition and appreciated the initiative.

During the event, Head of Department Ms. Sidra tul Muntaha presented a souvenir to the Chief Guest as a token of appreciation. Syed Usman Tahir, who is also the CEO of Niftysphere Institute of Arts & Design and Advisor to Federal Minister, warmly received the ambassadors and personally gave them a tour of the exhibition.

The event was also attended by Usman Shaukat President of RCCL, whose presence added further value to the occasion.

The exhibition served as a vibrant platform to promote culture, creativity, innovation, and artistic collaboration while encouraging the young generation of artists and designers in Pakistan.



## Illegal kidney trade exploiting poverty: Supreme Court

"In Punjab, a kidney can be easily obtained for 1.8 to 2 million rupees, with traffickers shamelessly exploiting the poverty of the donors," Justice Kakar remarked

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has expressed deep concern over the rising incidents of illegal organ trafficking and the illicit sale of kidneys, terming it a "highly serious and complex" issue that often implicates doctors, hospitals, and regulatory failures. A three-member bench, headed by Justice Hashim Kakar, made these observations on Wednesday while hearing an acquittal plea filed by Dr. Fawad Mumtaz Khan, a Taxila-based physician sentenced to seven years in prison for his involvement in organ trafficking. Officials from the Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority (PHOTA) were also in attendance. During the proceedings, the bench highlighted the growing trend of illegal organ extraction and transplantation. Justice Kakar noted that the regulatory control in Punjab

appears to be virtually non-existent, making it easy for individuals to procure kidneys from the province. "In Punjab, a kidney can be easily obtained for 1.8 to 2 million rupees, with traffickers shamelessly exploiting the poverty of the donors," Justice Kakar remarked. The Punjab government prosecutor informed the court that while the buyers pay millions, the donors typically receive only two to four hundred thousand rupees, with agents pocketing the remainder. Justice Salahuddin Panhwar, a member of the bench, questioned the alarming prevalence of these practices in the province. The court was further briefed on the specific charges against Dr. Khan, who is accused of luring a citizen with the promise of employment, rendering the victim unconscious, and extracting a kidney without consent. The prosecutor revealed that the accused doctor faces ten additional cases of a similar nature. Justice Panhwar emphasized that such crimes often point to a systemic failure, noting that doctors, hospitals, and relevant government institutions are sometimes complicit. The Supreme Court has directed all parties to appear at the next hearing with comprehensive records to facilitate a final decision on the complex case. The proceedings were subsequently adjourned until June 11. Dr. Fawad Mumtaz Khan had previously been sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment by a trial court, a verdict that was subsequently upheld by the High Court. He has now moved the Supreme Court to overturn his conviction.