



Islamabad POST

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Malaysia trains around 850 Pak professionals

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Bilawal Bhutto addresses grand rally Gilgit

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Foreign Office says

Efforts continue to secure release of 10 Pakistani crew

Spokesperson says situation has become more complicated because vessel is carrying dangerous and explosive cargo

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said that no action can be taken that would endanger the lives of Pakistani crew being held aboard an oil tanker hijacked by pirates in Somalia. Addressing a weekly press briefing on Thursday, the spox said that the release of 10 Pakistani crew members has not yet been made, adding that efforts continue to secure the release. The tanker, Honour 25, was seized by pirates on April 21 while sailing near Somalia, according to diplomatic sources. A total of 17 crew members were taken hostage, including 10 Pakistanis, four Indonesians, one Indian, and one Myanmar national. According to the Foreign Office, all relevant institutions, including the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, are coordinating closely on the matter. He said that nationals from other countries are also among the hostages. The foreign office spokesperson said that the Pakistani authorities remain in constant contact with the ship's owner and other relevant parties. He said that Pakistan's diplomatic mission in Somalia and the ambassador in Djibouti are continuously monitoring the situation. "A team from the Pakistani embassy also visited Mogadishu to obtain first-hand information about the case," he added. Andrabi said the situation has become more complicated because the vessel is carrying highly dangerous and explosive cargo, making any operation extremely sensitive. He said that Pakistan has urged the Somali government and the ship's owner to ensure that the hostages are provided with basic necessities, including food and drinking water. The spokesperson said the government is fully aware of the concerns and

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Bangladesh foils India attempt

NEWS DESK

DHAKA: Bangladesh said on Thursday it had foiled several attempts by India to force people into the country over the previous 24 hours, reviving a dispute over alleged undocumented migration and clouding efforts to improve ties between the South Asian neighbours. Their border is one of the longest land frontiers in the world, stretching for more than 4,000 km (2,500 miles) across all sorts of terrain, making it difficult to police. Border Guard Bangladesh said it had detected 10 attempted infringements by Indian authorities along several sections of the border. India's Border Security Force and ministry of external affairs did not respond to requests for comment. India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which governs the border states of Tripura, West Bengal and Assam, has said it would tackle undocumented migration as a priority and since last year it has been trying to push Bengali-speaking Muslims branded "illegal infiltrators" into Bangladesh. The issue has complicated efforts by both countries to mend ties following the 2024 ousting of Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's long-time India-aligned leader.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attending the Independence Day celebration of the United States of America. US Acting Ambassador Natalie Baker also present. - DNA

Forces kill 4 terrorists in KP: ISPR

Military says IBOs were carried out in Dera Ismail Khan and Mohmand districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed four terrorists belonging to India-sponsored Fitna al-Khawarij in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said the Inter-Services Public Relations in a statement on Thursday. The military's media wing said that intelligence-based operations (IBOs) were carried out in Dera Ismail Khan and Mohmand districts of KP province on the night between June 3 and 4, 2026. "On the reported presence of khawarij, an intelligence-based operation was conducted by security forces in Dera Ismail Khan district. During the conduct of the operation, troops effectively engaged khawarij location, and after intense exchange of fire, two khawarij, belonging to India-sponsored Fitna al-Khawarij, were sent to hell," the ISPR said.

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American Day event

PM Shehbaz Sharif highlights stronger bilateral ties with US

Ambassador Baker declared that "Pakistan-US ties are stronger than ever" as the two nations continue to deepen cooperation. She noted that the occasion also marked the celebration of 250 years of American independence and thanked Prime Minister Sharif for gracing the event as the chief guest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening relations with the United States during a reception hosted by Acting U.S. Ambassador Natalie Baker to mark America's National Day. Sharif said Pakistan "values its relations with the United States" and praised the leadership of President Donald Trump, stressing that constructive engagement between Islamabad and Washington is vital for regional stability and prosperity. Under the visionary leadership of President Donald Trump, the United States continues to progress, with Trump's unique style bringing energy and resolve to the pursuit of American interests. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized Pakistan's longstanding ties with Washington, noting that the partnership spans more than eight decades and covers cooperation in trade, investment, defense, and people-to-people exchanges. Sharif recalled that the United States was among the first nations to recognize Paki-

stan's independence. He highlighted the historic moment when U.S. President Harry S. Truman wrote a congratulatory letter to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, setting the foundation for bilateral relations. U.S. Ambassador Natalie Baker echoed these sentiments, declaring that "Pakistan-US ties are stronger than ever" as the two nations celebrated 250 years of American independence. She thanked Prime Minister Sharif for attending as chief guest, underscoring Islamabad's role in fostering dialogue and friendship. The event underscored the enduring Pakistan-US partnership, the visionary leadership of Donald Trump, and the historic recognition of Pakistan. In her address, Ambassador Baker declared that "Pakistan-US ties are stronger than ever" as the two nations continue to deepen cooperation. She noted that the occasion also marked the celebration of 250 years of American independence and thanked Prime Minister Sharif for gracing the event as the chief guest.

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Briefs

Bilawal says PPP to win GB polls

DNA

GAHKUCH: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressed a grand election rally in Gahkuch, Ghizer district of Gilgit-Baltistan on Thursday. Extending his greetings, the Chairman offered Deedar Mubarak to everyone present. He noted that while the people of Ghizer welcomed Prince Rahim Aga Khan to the region, the PPP leadership had the honor of receiving him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad. He recalled that during the first government of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, they had the opportunity to welcome the father of the current Agha Khan, the late Prince Karim Agha Khan, to Karachi. Most recently, Prince Rahim Aga Khan was hosted by President Asif Ali Zardari, and First Lady Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari received him at the airport.

Hezbollah rejects ceasefire plan

NEWS DESK

BEIRUT: Hezbollah rejected a ceasefire plan agreed by the Lebanese and Israeli governments in US-mediated talks, as Israel kept up strikes in southern Lebanon on Thursday and said it wouldn't be withdrawing from the south. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem, whose group was not a party to the talks, said the negotiations were shameless, rejecting the Washington declaration as "a roadmap for the annihilation of a section of the Lebanese people and the enslavement of the rest." "As long as the occupation exists, the resistance will continue," he said in a written statement. Qassem said a ceasefire must include southern Lebanon, where Israel has seized a self-declared security zone, which it says aims to shield northern Israel from Hezbollah attack.

Middle East issue

Iran's supreme leader says adversaries using 'hybrid warfare'

The head of the Quds Force, the foreign arm of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards, said Thursday that Israel must pull back from its current front lines in Lebanon, where it is fighting Tehran's ally Hezbollah

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei said on Thursday that his country's adversaries had turned to "hybrid warfare", aimed at creating divisions among Iranians, after receiving a "decisive blow". Mojtaba, who has not appeared publicly since being named as the supreme leader on March 8, made these remarks in his message on the death anniversary of Iran's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The message shared on his official X account and reported by the Iranian media. Mojtaba's message stated, "The malicious enemy has been defeated in its confrontation with the armed forces. Since it has received a decisive blow both in military combat and in Iran's public squares and streets, it's experiencing a

Continued on Page 06

Ceasefire a last option, says Lebanon president

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Lebanese President Michel Aoun has warned that the newly announced ceasefire agreement with Israel represents a "last opportunity" to halt escalating hostilities, as negotiations remain fraught with difficulty. The Trump administration confirmed on Wednesday that Israel and Lebanon have agreed to implement a ceasefire, raising hopes for progress toward a broader deal involving Iran. The agreement requires a

Continued on Page 06

Noor Mukadam case SC dismisses Jaffer's review plea, upholds death sentence


Advocate Khawaja Haris appeared as Zahir's counsel, while Shah Khawar was present from the respondents' side. Both presented their arguments during today's hearing, following which the bench announced its verdict

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday dismissed a review petition filed by Zahir Jaffer and maintained its earlier verdict upholding his death sentence in the Noor Mukadam murder case. Noor, aged 27, was found murdered at Zahir's Islamabad residence in July 2021, with the probe revealing she was tortured by him before being beheaded. Zahir was sentenced to death by a trial in February 2022 and his sentence has already been upheld by the SC once. Prior to that, the Islamabad High Court had also dismissed his plea challenging the trial court's verdict. A three-member bench comprising Justices Hashim Khan Kakar, Salahuddin Pahnwar and Ishtiaq Ibrahim heard Zahir's review plea on Thursday. Advocate Khawaja Haris appeared as Zahir's counsel, while Shah Khawar was present from the respondents'

side. Both presented their arguments during today's hearing, following which the bench announced its verdict. After today's ruling by the SC, a presidential pardon under Article 45 of the Constitution could possibly provide Zahir pardon, or, retrieve, or remit, suspend or commute his sentence. Zahir had sought a review of that SC verdict that upheld his death sentence on May 20, 2025. The SC's May 2025 ruling had commuted Zahir's death sentence on the rape charge to life imprisonment, as decided by the trial court, but did not acquit him of it. While he was acquitted of the 10-year sentence for kidnapping, a one-year term was handed down for wrongful confinement under Section 342 of the Pakistan Penal Code, according to the SC verdict. The 47-page review petition was filed by Advocate Khawaja Haris on behalf of Zahir under Article 188 of the Constitution (review of judgments or

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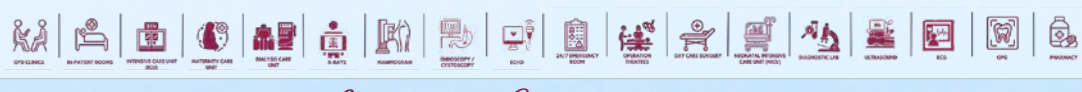
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Five fake anti-corruption officials

PESHAWAR: Police in Charsadda on Thursday arrested five persons posing as anti-corruption officials at the District Food Office. Among those detained was a Civil Defence employee. According to police report, the suspects claimed to be officials from the Anti-Corruption Department in Peshawar. Food Department staff became suspicious of their activities and contacted the Anti-Corruption Office in Charsadda for verification. For the investigation, the suspects were apprehended and presented before the Deputy Commissioner. Police said a case was registered on the complaint of Assistant Food Controller Wajid Ali. The accused have been booked under Sections 419 and 420 of the Pakistan Penal Code, along with six other charges, with a total of eight cases registered at City Police Station Charsadda. Police said the suspects had also visited the Al-Khidmat Foundation Hospital and allegedly been extorting money from private institutions for several days while impersonating government officials. The arrested men have been identified as Hanif, Azam Ahmad, Zakullah, Aqib Alam, Marjan Ali and Zubair. —APP

Religious scholars urged to ensure peace in Muharram

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has urged religious scholars, tribal elders and local communities to work together to ensure peace and harmony during the upcoming Muharram-ul-Haram. Speaking at a Grand Jirga in Kalaya, the Headquarters of Lower Orakzai, he said the district administration, police and security agencies had finalized comprehensive security arrangements to ensure the peaceful observance of Muharram and added that preservation of law and order is a shared responsibility of all citizens. The jirga was attended by Deputy Commissioner Orakzai Irfanuddin, District Police Officer Shaukat Ali, Commandant Orakzai Scouts Colonel Adnan Javed, religious scholars from different schools of thought, tribal elders and representatives of both Sunni and Shia communities. Maintaining the sanctity of Muharram, ensuring public safety and promoting religious harmony require collective efforts from all segments of society," he told the gathering. He said Orakzai had a long-standing tradition of inter-sect harmony, mutual respect and brotherhood expressing confidence that community leaders would continue to uphold these values during the holy month. The commissioner called on religious leaders and tribal elders to discourage rumors and hate rhetoric and remain in close coordination with the administration and law enforcement agencies to help maintain a peaceful environment. He emphasized that scholars and community elders play a vital role in promoting tolerance and strengthening social cohesion adding that their positive contributions would further reinforce the atmosphere of unity and brotherhood across the district. —APP

Pakistan Awami Qutb Party sets up media cell in Islamabad

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Central Media Cell of the Pakistan Awami Qutb Party has been formally established in Islamabad in a ceremony attended by party leaders, journalists, and officials. The media cell was inaugurated by the party's Secretary General, Malik Ijaz Hussain, on the instructions of party chief and Chairman of the Rawal Foundation, Khaqan Waheed Khawaja. The inauguration ceremony was attended by prominent journalist Intiaz Asi, President of the Pakistan Awami Qutb Party Women Wing Syeda Firdous, Natasha, and other party officials. During the event, prominent journalist Shakeel Awan was appointed as the in-charge of the newly established Central Media Cell. Addressing the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Malik Ijaz Hussain congratulated Shakeel Awan on his appointment and expressed confidence that the media cell would play a vital role in effectively promoting the party's ideology, manifesto, and narrative among the public. He said that the inclusion of Shakeel Awan in the party's media team would strengthen communication efforts and help deliver the party's message to the grassroots level. The Secretary General further expressed hope that the media cell would serve as a strong platform for presenting the party's policies and viewpoints to the

masses through effective media engagement. The ceremony concluded with participants extending their best wishes for the success of the newly est-

ablished media cell and its future role in strengthening the party's outreach and public awareness initiatives.



CG Sun highlights "Pakistan-China security partnership"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Consul General Lahore Sun Yan has emphasised China's stance to establish a "China-Pakistan Security Partnership," under the vision of military to military, collaboration, counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthen security measures in accordance with shared agreement between Pakistan and China. He expressed these views during a function of celebrations of 75th anniversary of Pak-China diplomatic relations organized by Chairman Institute of international relations and media research and Foreign affairs expert Muhamad Mehdi at the residence of Mr. Muhamad Mehdi. In his speech, He said that both countries have agreed to expedite cooperation on infrastructure development, industrial growth, and connectivity initiatives under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), while also enhancing collaboration on regional and global affairs. He reaffirmed China's commitment to supporting Pakistan's agricultural modernization by promoting advanced farming technologies and facilitating greater access for high-quality Pakistani agricultural products to the Chinese market. "China also welcomed two Pakistani astronauts for specialized training and expressed its anticipation of seeing a Pakistani astronaut become the first foreign national to participate in an early mission aboard the China Space Station," he added. Highlighting the impact of bilateral cooperation, he noted that Pakistan-China collaboration spans numerous sectors, including agriculture, industry, technology, and vocational training. These partnerships have played a significant role in Punjab's development by increasing agricultural productivity, creating employment opportunities, and improving livelihoods. As Pakistan's agricultural heartland and industrial center, Punjab has been one of the major beneficiaries of CPEC's early harvest projects and is expected to contribute further to strengthening the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between the two nations, he added. "China reiterated its unwavering support for Pakistan's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. It also reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with Pakistan to combat terrorism in all its forms, support Pakistan's growing role in regional and international affairs, pursue shared development objectives, and uphold international law and multilateral principles," he explained. Reflecting on the long-standing friendship between the two countries, he stated that over the past 75 years, Pakistan and China have consistently supported one another through both challenging and prosperous times, building

a bond often described as being "higher than the mountains and deeper than the oceans." This enduring friendship has been strengthened by history and remains vital for the future, he added. Addressing the gathering, Senator Pervaiz Rasheed welcomed Chinese Consul Gen-



eral in Lahore, Sun Yan, and emphasized that Pakistan-China friendship has remained steadfast and resilient regardless of changing regional or international circumstances. Muhammad Mehdi highlighted the importance of Pak-China trade activities especially in the context of business to business cooperations. Under the strategic vision of both countries' leadership, he said, Pakistan-China relations have evolved far beyond traditional diplomatic ties. Today, the relationship stands as an embodiment of lasting friendship, stable cooperation, and mutually beneficial engagement between nations with different cultures, civilizations, and social systems, he added. Muhammad Mehdi said that that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent official visit

to China provided additional opportunities for both countries to deepen cooperation and reach new understandings against cooperation on terrorism, respect for sovereignty, promotion of international law, and collaboration in regional and global affairs. Speaking on occasion,

senior journalist Sohail Warriach and Salim Bukhari talked about cotton crop decline in Punjab and sought Chinese technologies to help revive Pakistan's crops glory. They described the occasion as both a milestone in the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and China and a new starting point for building an even closer community with a shared future. Senior journalists Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Shami, Hafeezullah Niazi, Safdar Ali Khan, members of the Punjab Assembly Imran Javed, Rana Rashid Minhas, Secretary Revenue Punjab Shafiqullah Mushtaq, President IIRMR Yasir Habib Khan and Anjad Shirazi Advocate, member of the Supreme Court Bar Executive Committee, also attended the program.

Wheat stock auction completed

QUETTA: Acting on the directives of the Government of Balochistan, the open auction of wheat stocks at PRC Zhob was successfully completed in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations. The auction was supervised by Chairman CMIT Committee Noor Muhammad Jogezeai along with committee members, while flour dealers and representatives of flour mills actively participated in the bidding process. During the auction, a total of 10,503 wheat bags were offered, including 7,470 bags of local wheat and 3,033 bags of Punjab

wheat. The local wheat was auctioned at Rs. 8,630 per bag, while Punjab wheat fetched Rs. 10,250 per bag. The overall value of the auction stood at Rs. 95,554,350. Among the bidders, Syed Asadullah emerged as the successful bidder, while other participants included Abdul Sadiq Flour Mill, Samiullah Flour Mill Quetta, and Naeem Shah Traders. Speaking on the occasion, Director General Commodity Management Balochistan Shujaat Ali Khosa emphasized that the entire auction process was conducted with complete transparency, merit, and adherence to rules. He noted that ensuring transparency in the sale of government wheat stocks remains a top priority, with all stages carried out in the presence of the committee and bidders. The auction proceedings also saw the online participation of Additional Deputy Commissioner Zhob Aurangzaib Kakar, while Deputy Director Agriculture Extension Quetta Jehanzaib Malghani and Deputy Director Commodity Management Balochistan Salahuddin were present. Participants praised the transparent conduct of the auction, terming it a positive step in line with government policy. —APP

Balochistan declares primary schools gender-free

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has taken a landmark decision to abolish the uniform requirement in public primary schools and declare them "gender-free" institutions, allowing boys and girls to study together. The move aims to ease financial burdens on poor families, address the shortage of female teachers in remote areas, and expand access to education. The decision was made during a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, where reforms in education, health, and law and order were reviewed in light of the upcoming provincial budget. The Chief Minister also directed the immediate elimination of the outdated "tat culture" in schools, ordering the School Education Department to ensure the provision of desks in all classrooms. Officials explained that the gender-free policy will be presented to the provincial cabinet for approval, with expectations that it will significantly improve enrollment rates, particularly in underdeveloped and remote regions. The meeting also approved the introduction of a double-shift teaching system in 900 schools, enabling thousands of additional students to benefit from existing infrastructure. Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan briefed participants that construction of additional classrooms in 3,000 single-room schools will be completed by next year to meet growing demand. The meeting further resolved to introduce standardized reading and writing material across all government schools to ensure quality education. It was also agreed to increase the long-stagnant fixed salaries of NCHD teachers. Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti lamented that many children in Balochistan are still forced to study on mats. "This situation is unacceptable. Every child deserves a dignified learning environment," he said, warning that strict action will be taken against officials if students are found sitting on the floor after the deadline. He pledged surprise visits, even to remote mountain schools by helicopter, to ensure compliance. Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that instilling self-confidence, dignity, and respect in children is a fundamental part of quality education. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to mobilize all available resources to provide a brighter future for the province's youth through reforms in education, health, and security. The meeting was attended by Provincial Ministers Mir Shoaib Nosherrwani, Mir Zia Langove, Mir Zahoor Buledi, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, senior officials from education, health, and finance departments, and advisers to the Chief Minister. —DNA

Meezan Bank surpasses Rs 1b in PM's 'Apna Ghar Program'

ISLAMABAD: Meezan Bank's Easy Home Housing Finance has achieved a significant milestone under the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar Housing Finance Program - "Ghar Ho Tu Apna", surpassing Rs 1 billion in housing finance disbursements since the launch of the initiative. According to a news release of the bank, this achievement reflects Meezan Bank's strong commitment to supporting the government of Pakistan's vision of promoting affordable homeownership and expanding access to housing finance for underserved segments of society. As Pakistan's leading Islamic bank, Meezan Bank remains dedicated to making homeownership more accessible through Shariah-compliant financing solutions that address the needs of salaried individuals and low-to-middle-income households. The Bank is actively offering housing finance facilities under the program through its network of over 350 designated branches across Pakistan, with a particular focus on enabling lower-income and salaried customers to realise their dream of owning a home. Through its customer-centric and Shariah-compliant financing approach, Meezan Bank continues to play a key role in advancing financial inclusion and supporting the development of the housing sector in the country. The milestone also contributes to the State Bank of Pakistan's broader objective of promoting affordable housing and expanding access to formal housing finance, supporting national efforts aimed at financial inclusion. —APP

Pakistan's exports to US up by 1.70% to \$5.123 b

The overall imports into the country increased by 8.49 per cent, from \$48.624 billion to US \$52.753 billion, according to the data

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export of goods and services to the United States (US) witnessed an increase of 1.70 per cent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the exports of \$477.275 million in March 2026, the SBP data revealed. The overall exports to US were recorded at US \$5.123 billion during July-April (2025-26) against exports of US \$5.037 billion during July-April (2024-25), SBP data revealed. On a year-to-year basis, exports to US decreased by 0.82 per cent from \$493.826 million in April 2025, against the exports

of \$489.750 million in April 2026. Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, exports to US increased by 2.61 per cent during April 2026 as compared to the exports of \$477.275 million in March 2026, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed a decline of 5.43 per cent in the first ten months, from US \$27.307 billion to US \$25.824 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the other hand, the imports from US into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$2.540 billion against US \$1.909 billion

last year, showing an increase of 33.05 per cent in July-April (2025-26). On a year-on-year basis, imports from US increased by 117.60 per cent to US \$400.966 million in April 2026, against the imports of US \$184.261 million in April 2026. On a month-on-month basis, the imports from US into the country also increased by 81.89 per cent during April 2026, as compared to the imports of US \$220.436 million during March 2026, according to the data. The overall imports into the country increased by 8.49 per cent, from \$48.624 billion to US \$52.753 billion, according to the data.

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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
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Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Malaysia's MTCP trains 850 Pakistanis: Envoy

"Human capital is the key to nation-building and economic progress. Pakistan and Malaysia can further strengthen cooperation to enhance productivity and competitiveness in both economies,"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Malaysia's flagship Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) has played a significant role in developing human capital not only in Malaysia and ASEAN countries but across the globe, Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dato' Mohammad Azhar bin Mazlan, said on Wednesday. Addressing a gathering of alumni of the MTCP and Malaysian universities at the Malaysian Embassy in Islamabad, the envoy said that around 850 Pakistanis had completed various training programmes in Malaysia under the initiative, contributing to nation-building and human resource development. Malaysian High Commissioner said the programme had benefited participants from 144 countries, serving as an important platform for capacity building and international cooperation. Malaysia's MTCP trains 850 Pakistanis, strengthens "Human Capital Development": Malaysian envoy alyasia's MTCP trains 850 Pakistanis, strengthens "Human Capital Development": Malaysian envoy "Human capital is the key to nation-building and economic progress. Pakistan and Malaysia can further strengthen cooperation to enhance productivity and competitiveness in both economies," he said. The High Commissioner noted that more than 40,000 participants worldwide had been trained under the MTCP, which has been recognized for supporting the objectives of the United Nations, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He emphasized that policy consistency had been one of the key factors behind Malaysia's sustainable economic development and highlighted the country's effective management of natural resources, including food preser-



vation and seafood processing systems. The envoy said Malaysia MTCP had also trained diplomats from five Central Asian countries and provided training to around 1,200 Afghan english-language teachers to support educational development. Malaysia's MTCP trains 850 Pakistanis, strengthens "Human Capital Development": Malaysian envoy "We believe in working together with Pa for mutual development and prosperity. Our cooperation spans human resource development, trade, education and economic growth," he added. peaking on bilateral relations, he said the leadership of both countries remained engaged in expanding cooperation. He referred to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Malaysia, during which discussions focused on strengthening trade, investment and economic cooperation. A panel discussion, moderated by First Secretary of the Malaysian Embassy Amri

Kamrudi, focused on Malaysia-Pakistan relations and the experiences of MTCP and Malaysian university alumni. Speaking on the occasion, MTCP alumnus and academician at Riphah International University, Dr Jibril Raza, highlighted Malaysia's remarkable transformation from an agriculture-based economy in the 1960s to a high-income nation. He said Malaysia's success was driven by sustained investment in human capital, innovation and sustainable development policies. He also described Malaysia as a global leader in Islamic finance and fintech. Dr. Raza noted that Malaysia's capital market exceeds \$1 trillion, compared to Pakistan's approximately \$70 billion, underscoring the scale of Malaysia's economic development. He identified several areas for enhanced Pakistan-Malaysia cooperation, including agriculture technology, Islamic finance, Shariah-compliant

contracts, halal certification and fintech innovation. "Pakistan faces challenges related to productivity and competitiveness, and there is much to learn from Malaysia's development experience," he said. Another MTCP alumna, Asia Loudi, described the programme as a transformative bridge between the two nations that promotes cultural understanding, knowledge exchange and professional development. Senior journalists, Almas Naqvi participating in the discussion also highlighted the growing political, economic and people-to-people ties between Pakistan and Malaysia, stressing the importance of expanding cooperation in education, trade and human resource development. The event concluded with a renewed commitment from both sides to further strengthen bilateral relations and deepen collaboration through educational and professional exchange programmes.

Indian committing act of war by diverting water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Albert David, former member of the National Commission for Minorities, has issued a statement condemning India's construction of a water diversion tunnel in Himachal Pradesh as an act of water aggression and a blatant violation of the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. He warned that this misadventure – transferring water from the Chenab basin, a Western River allo-

cated to Pakistan, into the Beas basin, an Eastern River allocated to India – represents a structural breach of the Treaty's foundation. "This is not a matter of operational interpretation. It is a deliberate disregard of international commitments and a direct challenge to Pakistan's water security," he declared. David cautioned that such actions could escalate tensions between India and Pakistan to dangerous levels. "Water aggression of this nature risks igniting another Indo-Pak war, one that carries the grave potential of

becoming a nuclear flashpoint. The consequences of undermining the Treaty are not marginal – they threaten peace and stability across South Asia," he stated. He further emphasized that Pakistan has consistently upheld its obligations under the Indus Waters Treaty, while India's repeated violations erode trust and destabilize regional security. "This continuous disregard for international agreements must be recognized for what it is: a threat to peace, a provocation to conflict, and a reckless gamble with the future of millions," he concluded.

Key roads under drainage operations

ISLAMABAD: Rain in several parts of the federal capital on Thursday prompted district authorities to intensify water drainage operations across major roads and low-lying areas. In this regard, Assistant Commissioners remained in the field to monitor the situation, while sanitation teams worked to ensure the smooth removal of rainwater and maintain traffic flow. According to the district administration, rain was recorded in different sectors and surrounding areas of Islamabad. In response, Assistant Commissioners conducted visits to major roads, low-lying localities, and drainage channels to assess the situation and supervise ongoing operations. The administration said sanitation staff were actively engaged in removing accumulated rainwater from roads and public spaces. Water drainage activities were being carried out using de-watering pumps and

other machinery deployed at various locations across the city. Officials reported that drainage work was progressing at a fast pace on several important roads, including I.J.P. Road, where teams were working to prevent water accumulation and reduce inconvenience for commuters. Special attention was being given to areas that are usually affected during rainfall. Assistant Commissioners were also monitoring the condition of storm-water drains and nullahs to ensure the uninterrupted flow of water and to identify any potential blockages. Authorities said continuous inspections were being conducted to address issues promptly and prevent urban flooding. The district administration further stated that preparations for the monsoon season had already begun. As part of these efforts, a citywide cleanliness campaign was launched in advance

to clear drains, remove waste, and improve the overall drainage system before the arrival of heavier rains. Officials noted that preventive measures were aimed at reducing the risk of waterlogging and ensuring public safety during the upcoming monsoon period. Relevant departments have been directed to remain alert and respond quickly to any weather-related situation. Meanwhile, the administration said traffic movement on major roads was being monitored in coordination with the traffic police. Joint efforts were underway to keep roads open and ensure the smooth flow of vehicles despite the ongoing rainfall. The district administration advised residents to remain cautious during wet weather conditions and assured that field teams would continue monitoring the situation across Islamabad to facilitate citizens and maintain normal civic operations.—APP

Pre-emption claims require strict compliance

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has held that in pre-emption (Haq-e-Shufa) cases, strict compliance with all legal requirements, including Talb-e-Muwathibat and Talb-e-Ishhad, is indispensable, and that failure to specifically plead the date of Talb-e-Ishhad and other essential particulars may prove fatal to a claim. The Court dismissed a petition seeking leave to appeal against a judgment of the Peshawar High Court and upheld the concurrent findings of the lower courts. A two-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb issued a short order after hearing Civil Petition No. 4168 of 2022 filed by Ghulam Abbas. According to the judgment, the petitioner had instituted a pre-emption suit regarding four kanals of land situated in Mouza Karar, District Dera Ismail Khan. He contended that, being a co-sharer and owner of adjacent land, he possessed a preferential right to purchase the disputed property. He further claimed that upon learning of the sale, he performed Talb-e-Muwathibat and Talb-e-Ishhad in accordance with the law and served notices upon the vendees through registered post. However, the trial court dismissed the suit on March 30, 2011, holding that the petitioner had failed to establish compliance with the legal requirements relating to Talb-e-Ishhad. The appellate court and subsequently the Peshawar High Court upheld the trial court's decision. In its judgment, the Supreme Court observed that the right of pre-emption is a weak right in law, and therefore, a claimant must not only specifically plead all statutory requirements but also prove them through reliable evidence. The Court noted that the petitioner had failed to mention the date of Talb-e-Ishhad in his pleadings, which, in light of settled law and judicial precedents, constituted a fundamental and fatal defect. Referring to a number of earlier judgments, the Court held that the performance and proof of the statutory "Talbs" form the foundation of a pre-emption claim. If either Talb-e-Muwathibat or Talb-e-Ishhad is not proved in accordance with legal requirements, the entire claim becomes unsustainable.—DNA

High courts not subordinate to SC, or FCCP

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court has ruled in a significant judgment that the country's high courts are neither subordinate to the Supreme Court nor to the Federal Constitutional Court, emphasizing that each high court enjoys the status of an independent constitutional court and that its judicial and administrative powers cannot be subjected to unnecessary interference. According to the detailed judgment approved for reporting, Justice Aamer Farooq authored the verdict in the case of Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO) versus Master Tiles. Allowing the appeal, the court laid down important legal principles regarding the constitutional status, autonomy and case management powers of the high courts. The judgment noted that superior courts are often approached through petitions seeking directions to high courts for the early disposal of pending cases or for fixing matters for urgent hearing. However, it stressed that the constitutional independence of high courts must be kept in view while considering such requests. The court observed that Pakistan presently has five autonomous high courts, each functioning as an independent constitutional court. It held that although decisions of high courts may be challenged before the Supreme Court or the Federal Constitutional Court, the mere existence of appellate or review jurisdiction does not render one court subordinate to another. The judgment clarified that district courts and other courts established under Article 203 of the Constitution are subordinate to the high courts. High courts, however, possess a distinct constitutional status and their powers and authority must be respected. The Federal Constitutional Court further observed that high courts maintain their own case-fixation policies, independent rosters and case-management systems. Any order or direction that overrides these policies or interferes with the process of fixing cases for hearing could amount to encroachment upon the judicial and administrative independence of a high court. The court acknowledged that in certain situations the urgent nature of a case may require that, upon remand, the matter be fixed for hearing before the relevant high court at the earliest opportunity. Even in such circumstances, it said, directions should be framed in careful and appropriate language so as not to undermine the autonomy of the high court concerned. The judgment added that such directions are generally administrative rather than judicial in nature and should therefore be issued with due regard to the constitutional position and independence of the high courts. Allowing the appeal, the Federal Constitutional Court held that the relevant writ petition would be deemed pending before the Islamabad High Court and expressed the expectation that, considering the urgency of the matter, it would be fixed for hearing at the earliest possible date.—DNA

Logistics venture launched in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: YTO-HRL Logistics, a China-Pakistan joint venture between YTO Express and HRL Group, was officially launched here following an MoU signed in Beijing last year. The initiative aims to establish a modern, technology-driven logistics and supply chain platform connecting Pakistan with China, Central Asia, and wider international markets, Gwadar Pro reported. Speaking on the occasion, Zeeshan Qureshi, Director of YTO, said the venture is not merely a courier service but a comprehensive logistics platform designed to transform trade flows. He said it will offer ultra-fast cargo and freight services, bonded warehousing, AI-powered tracking systems, customs facilities, and end-to-end supply chain solutions for importers and exporters. He added that the platform will reduce trade costs, strengthen cross-border commerce with China and beyond, and position Pakistan as a regional gateway to Central Asian markets. Khalid Taimur Akram, who is currently hosting Chinese B2B investments in Pakistan, said the venture combines YTO Express's global logistics expertise with HRL Group's local infrastructure and market presence.—APP

Services' exports up by 17.68% \$ 8.269b

ISLAMABAD: The export of various services witnessed 17.68 percent increase during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year as compared to the exports of corresponding period of the last year. According to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Pakistan earned \$8.269 billion from the export of services during the period from July-April 2025-26 as compared to services' export of \$7.027 billion in July-March 2024-25.

The services' imports also witnessed an increase of 8.56 percent during the period under review and were recorded at \$10.310 billion as compared to the imports of \$9.497 billion in July-March 2024-25. During the period under review, the services trade deficit contracted by 17.38 percent as it was recorded at \$2.040 billion as against the \$2.469 billion. On year on year basis, the services trade deficit went down by 115.99 percent during the month of April 2026 as compared to the exports of the same month of the last year. In April 2026 services exports grew by 21.71 percent and reached to \$914.98 million as compared to the exports of \$751.75 million of the month of April 2025. Meanwhile, the services imports into the country decreased by 2.82 percent during the month under review and it was registered at \$888.92 million as compared to the imports of \$914.74 million of the same period of the last year.—APP

Briefs

Death sentence in Noor murder case upheld

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday dismissed the review petition filed by convicted murderer Zahir Jaffer against his death sentence in the Noor Muqaddam murder case, upholding the judgments of the lower courts. A three-member bench headed by Justice Hashim Kakar announced the short order, ruling that the arguments advanced by the convict did not justify any interference in the final judgments already rendered by the courts. During the hearing, defence counsel Khawaja Haris argued that his client was suffering from mental health issues at the time of the incident and had been undergoing psychiatric treatment. However, the court questioned the claim, observing that allegations of mental illness must be supported by credible medical records, treatment history and clear evidence, which had not been satisfactorily provided. The bench further noted that the documents presented, including a medical letter purportedly issued from abroad, lacked the consistency and reliability required under the law. Following the verdict, Noor Muqaddam's father, Shaukat Muqaddam, expressed satisfaction with the outcome while speaking to the media outside the Supreme Court.—APP

CJP discusses mediation reforms with SIMC delegation

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC), led by its Chief Executive Officer Chuan Wee Meng, called on the Chief Justice of Pakistan at the Supreme Court on Thursday and discussed measures to strengthen the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system in Pakistan. The delegation is visiting Pakistan to conduct an Accredited Mediation Skills Workshop and Assessment Programme for judges at the Federal Judicial Academy. Supreme Court Judge Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb also attended the meeting. During the meeting, the Chief Justice highlighted the importance of mediation as a cost-effective and efficient mechanism for resolving disputes and outlined ongoing reforms aimed at promoting ADR in the justice sector. The discussion focused on capacity-building, judicial training and international cooperation to improve mediation practices and reduce the burden of litigation. Mr. Chuan Wee Meng shared SIMC's experience in institutionalising mediation and expressed support for capacity-building initiatives and the sharing of international best practices. Both sides also explored cooperation in mediation training, accreditation and professional development, and reaffirmed their commitment to promoting mediation as an effective means of dispute resolution.—APP

IRSA releases 224,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 224,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 261,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1451.58 feet which was 51.58 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 133,800 cusecs and 110,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1169.90 feet, which was 119.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 43,000 cusecs and 29,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 146,700, 89,600, 53,200, and 18,900 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 53,500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 11,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Ethiopia, Pak agree to foster cultural, tourism coop

He also acknowledged the growing ties between the two countries and reiterated his commitment to carry forward the strong foundational relationship built over the years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan agreed on Thursday to strengthen bilateral cooperation in culture and tourism sectors to further enhance people-to-people relations between the two nations. The important discussion to this end took place during a meeting between Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia, and Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Pakistan's Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture. The meeting which held at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture in Islamabad, explored various avenues for strengthening bilateral cooperation, particularly through the exchange of delegations and knowledge sharing. During the discussion, the Ambassador highlighted the historical relations and shared values of the two nations, underscoring the importance of the Ethiopian Airlines in establishing seamless connectivity, not only between the two countries, but also Pakistan and Africa. The Ambassador also briefed the Federal Minister on Ethiopia's unique heritage, including its distinct calendar, traditional festivals, and rich ethnic and linguistic diversity. To strengthen people-to-people contacts, the Ambassador proposed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the cultural ministries of both countries to promote joint cultural and tourism initiatives. The Federal Min-



ister welcomed the Ambassador's proposal, assuring his full support for promoting cultural cooperation between the two nations. He also acknowledged the growing ties between the two countries and reiterated his commitment to carry forward the strong foundational relationship built over the years.

70% welfare work under Gwadar's Town Rehabilitation Project completed

GWADAR: Around 70 percent of the public welfare projects under the Old Town Rehabilitation Project in Gwadar have been completed as of June 3, a GDA official said, according to Gwadar Pro on Thursday. The remaining development projects, along with more than 20 mega projects under the Gwadar Master Plan 2026, are progressing expeditiously, he added. Under the project, work is underway on the construction and rehabilitation of roads, restoration of streets and lanes, improvement of the drainage system, installation and repair of sewerage lines, enhancement of the drinking water supply network, installation of streetlights, and the provision of other essential civic amenities, he said. On the special directives of Director General GDA Mo'in-ur-Rehman Khan, the primary objective of these initiatives is to provide modern urban facilities to the residents of Old Town in Gwadar, he added. Work is also underway on the establishment of Beach Model Parks at Gadani, Kund Malir, Ormara, Parni, and Gwadar, the official said. "The Old Town Rehabilitation Project team is continuously monitoring progress across different components of the project to ensure that all works are completed according to the prescribed standards and within the stipulated timeframe," he added. Other mega projects include the Central Business District, Special Economic Zones, the GDA Housing Scheme, ecological corridors, and the implementation of micro-planning under the master plan. Additional projects include commercial centers, public spaces, museums, heritage centers, coastal tourism resorts, foreign tourist resorts, Grab Beach Park, and the GDA Club. Special emphasis is being placed on modernizing urban infrastructure, environmental protection, socio-economic growth, and the provision of public amenities. "During the implementation of the project, GDA is prioritizing public needs and the convenience of the local population.—APP

Pak's responsible role commendable

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Renowned legal expert and High Court Advocate, Tanveer Abbas Bhatta, has praised Pakistan's positive, balanced and responsible role in the context of the Iran-US tensions, stating that the country has demonstrated a practical commitment to peace, stability and diplomatic prudence during a highly sensitive regional situation. In a press statement issued here, Bhatta paid tribute to Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for their visionary leadership and significant contributions towards safeguarding Pakistan's national interests, promoting regional peace and effectively presenting Pakistan's position at the international level. He said that Pakistan's political and military leadership has displayed foresight, wisdom and national unity, sending a clear message to the world that Pakistan firmly believes in peace, dialogue and mutual respect. He expressed confidence that the leadership's prudent policies would continue to guide the country towards greater stability, progress and international prestige. Tanveer Abbas Bhatta further stated that Pakistan has achieved notable successes in foreign policy and international relations in recent years. The country has strengthened its diplomatic engagement with the global community, effectively projected its viewpoint at regional and international forums, and played a constructive role in promoting peace, stability and mutual cooperation. He noted that the wise and coordinated approach of the current political and military leadership has enhanced Pakistan's international standing and reinforced its image as a responsible, peace-loving and dignified nation. He added that Pakistan's growing diplomatic influence and balanced foreign policy have earned respect and appreciation from the international community. Bhatta concluded by expressing hope that Pakistan would continue to contribute positively to regional harmony and global peace through its principled and constructive diplomacy.

Collective efforts vital to address climate challenges: Ayaz

ISLAMABAD Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Thursday said that safeguarding and promoting a clean, safe, and sustainable environment is a collective responsibility of all citizens. He said that climate change, environmental pollution, deforestation, and the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources pose grave threats to human health, economic stability, and the prospects of future generations. He expressed these views in his message on the occasion of World Environment Day, observed globally on 5 June under the auspices of the United Nations. Ayaz Sadiq said that the purpose of observing World Environment Day is to raise public awareness about environmental protection and to promote the responsible and sustainable use of natural resources. He said that although Pakistan's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions remains negligible, the country is among those most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of

climate change. Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that coordinated global strategies and effective measures are essential to protect the environment and combat environmental degradation. He stressed the need for enhanced international cooperation to address climate-related challenges and safeguard the planet for future generations. The Speaker said that environmental challenges can be effectively mitigated through afforestation, the prudent use of water and energy resources, the reduction of unnecessary plastic consumption, and the adoption of environmentally responsible lifestyles. He reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to playing a proactive role in advancing legislation aimed at environmental protection, sustainable development, and climate resilience. Highlighting the importance of renewable energy, Ayaz Sadiq said that the Parliament of Pakistan holds the distinction of being the world's first parliament to be fully powered by solar energy.—APP

Northern areas on edge as NDMA signals weather fury

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a weather alert for the next 12 to 24 hours, warning of thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, hailstorms, flash flooding, glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) and landslides across parts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, while directing all relevant authorities to remain on high alert to mitigate potential risks. According to the National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of NDMA, widespread rain accompanied by thunder and strong winds is expected in Islamabad and several districts of Punjab, including Rawalpindi, Murree, Attock, Chakwal, Talagang, Mandi Bahaudin, Gujrat, Jhelum, Gujrat Khan, Hafizabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Khushab, Jhang, Mianwali, Dera Ghazi Khan, Kasur, Okara, Sahiwal, Multan, Bahawalpur

and Rahim Yar Khan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rainfall with thunderstorms is forecast in Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir, Swat, Kalam, Mingora, Malakand, Batagram, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Charsadda, Kohat, Karak, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan. Similar weather conditions are expected in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, including Skardu, Hunza, Nagar, Ghizer, Diamer, Ghanche, Astore, Shigar, Kharmang, Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Bagh, Kotli, Poonch and Bimber. The NDMA warned that hailstorms may accompany rainfall in several areas, posing a threat to weak structures, vulnerable installations and standing crops. Strong winds could also disrupt power supply and damage infrastructure. The authority cautioned that rising temperatures and rainfall in northern mountainous regions may trigger glacial lake outburst floods, increase water flow in rivers and streams, and heighten the risk of landslides. Road closures are also possible due to flooding and slope failures. Areas facing a heightened landslide threat include Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Chilas, Astore, Shigar, Chitral, Kalam, Upper Kohistan and mountainous parts of Azad Kashmir. Critical routes identified as vulnerable include the Karakoram Highway, Naran Road, Jaglot-Skardu Road, Shigar Valley Road, Skardu Road and Deosai Road. The NDMA also declared road links between Shimshal Valley, Attabad Lake, Karimabad, Gulmit, Shishkat Bala and Passu as sensitive due to the potential for landslides and weather-related disruptions.—APP

Medical waste found during Rawal Lake clean-up drive

ISLAMABAD: Used syringes, medical waste and plastic debris were recovered from the banks of Rawal Lake during a clean-up drive organised ahead of World Environment Day, on Thursday, drawing attention to growing concerns over pollution at one of the capital's main water reservoirs. The campaign was organised by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) in collaboration with Nestlé Pakistan and hosted by the Punjab Small Dams Department as part of activities marking Environment Week. According to officials, volunteers collected a substantial quantity of solid waste from the lake's shoreline and adjoining areas. Among the waste recovered were discarded syringes and other medical materials, which environmental officials described as a serious threat to public health and the lake's ecosystem. Participants

included students, representatives of civil society organisations and members of the local community. Speaking on the occasion, Director General Pak-EPA said the presence of hospital waste and plastic pollution at the lake highlighted the need for sustained efforts to protect natural resources. "This drive is about more than collecting waste; it is about reshaping our relationship with nature. The presence of hospital waste and plastics in Rawal Lake is a stark warning," he said, urging citizens, particularly young people, to continue participating in environmental protection initiatives. Pak-EPA officials said the campaign also sought to raise awareness about the dangers of improper disposal of medical waste and the impact of plastic pollution on freshwater ecosystems. The agency's spokesperson said environmental degradation was affecting air, water and

soil quality across the country. He noted that vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, untreated wastewater and poor waste management practices were contributing to environmental challenges. Rawal Lake serves as an important water source for the twin cities and is also a popular recreational site. Environmental experts have long expressed concern over littering and pollution in and around the reservoir, warning that continued contamination could adversely affect both biodiversity and public health. Officials said the clean-up drive formed part of broader efforts to encourage public participation in environmental conservation and promote responsible waste disposal practices. World Environment Day is observed annually on June 5 to encourage awareness and action for the protection of the environment.—DNA

Tareemat Katha' launched

ISLAMABAD: The Department of Libraries Islamabad, has organized the book launch ceremony for "Tareemat Katha," authored by the renowned writer, journalist, and President of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, Dr. Sadia Kamal, at the Islamabad Public Library. The ceremony began with a recitation from the Holy Quran, presented by Mr. Ghulam Abbas, Junior Librarian at the Department of Libraries Islamabad. Following the recitation, Ishrat Naseem and Ghulam Abbas shared their impressions and critical reviews, shedding light on the book's various literary and social dimensions. Prominent researcher and critic, Dr. Wajid Tabassum, presented a comprehensive review of the book, praising the author's creative prowess and her significant contributions to Urdu literature. He noted that "Tareemat Katha" effectively mirrors the social, economic, and cultural challenges faced by women, portraying their emotions, struggles, and experiences with profound sensitivity. He further emphasized that the book not only invites reflection on women's rights and status but also has the potential to play a pivotal role in promoting awareness and positive change in society.—APP

Deadline for 'Skills of Tomorrow' program extended

ISLAMABAD: The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) has extended the deadline for its flagship "Skills of Tomorrow" program to apply by aspirants' learners across Pakistan till June 14, 2026 aimed at equipping youth with future-ready digital skills. The program offers three months of free professional training in some of the country's most in-demand and emerging fields, enabling participants to gain valuable expertise for the rapidly evolving digital economy, said a press release on Thursday. Under the initiative, applicants can choose from a range of specialized courses, including AI-Powered E-Commerce, AI-Augmented Graphic Design and Video Editing, AI-Augmented Digital Marketing and SEO, AI Financial Analysis with Power BI, Earning Money Through Freelancing, and AI for Everyone. The officials stated that the program has been designed to support youth such as fresh graduates, job seekers, and working professionals by providing them with industry-relevant skills aligned with current market requirements and technological advancements.—APP

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Lebanon: America's bargaining chip

OSAMA AL-SHARIF

LEBANON, home to millennia of human history, is being flattened as it is being used as a bargaining chip in the US-Iran standoff. President Donald Trump this week halted an Israeli onslaught on the capital, Beirut, claiming that he had managed to reinstate a ceasefire agreement between the pro-Iran Hezbollah and Tel Aviv, under which the militant group would suspend its drone attacks on Israel's north in exchange for an Israeli commitment not to bomb the Lebanese capital. This agreement does not include the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon and its military takeover of large swaths of territory in the south, which has so far displaced more than 1.2 million Lebanese, many of whom have seen their towns and villages erased from the map. From an Israeli perspective, ceasefires are a cover for selective, one-sided military operations – the barely holding Gaza ceasefire being a case in point. In reality, the Israeli advance into Lebanese territory, in retaliation for Hezbollah's attacks on Israel, goes beyond the current diplomatic stalemate between Washington and Tehran – a confrontation that has elevated Lebanon from battlefield to bargaining chip. While the Trump administration believes taking Lebanon hostage and using it as a pawn in its showdown with Iran will eventually force the Iranians to make concessions, the Israelis have other plans. It was Hezbollah's grave miscalculation following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on southern Israel that created a domino effect that sucked Lebanon into a deadly vortex. The Israeli response was devastating. It killed the group's top leadership, destroyed most of its Beirut base, eroded its capacity to fire missiles into northern Israel and carried out a major incursion into Lebanese territory, the likes of which had not been seen since 1982. Using Lebanon as a bargaining chip through Washington's Israeli proxy is Trump's way of leveling the playing field And even when a fragile ceasefire deal was reached following last year's 12-day Israeli-American strikes on Iran, the group – politically and militarily rattled – was already preparing for another round of fighting. So, when the US and Israel waged a surprise war on Iran in February, killing its supreme leader and top brass, Hezbollah retaliated and reopened the Lebanese front. This gave Israel the pretext to push further into Lebanon's south, creating a so-called defensive buffer from which it could launch lethal incursions, even crossing the Litani River. In the process, Israel applied its Gaza playbook – destroying entire villages and forcing tens of thousands to evacuate.

Only recently has Washington seen an opportunity to weaponize Lebanon in its confrontation with Iran. Tehran shocked the Trump administration by closing the Strait of Hormuz, creating a global economic backlash. Negotiations between the two sides appeared to favor the Iranians, much to Trump's frustration and dismay. Using Lebanon as a bargaining chip through Washington's

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Israeli proxy is Trump's way of leveling the playing field: the Strait of Hormuz in exchange for Lebanon. The Iranians are well aware that Hezbollah is a valuable asset in their confrontations with both Israel and the US. And, regrettably, Hezbollah has brazenly subordinated Lebanon's survival to Iran's strategic calculus, even though it is recognized as a political party and is represented in the Lebanese government. So, while Trump has convinced the Israelis not to attack Beirut for now, the ceasefire he announced does not include Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon. Israel's bombardment of Lebanese cities and towns, including the historic city of Tyre, continues without pause, as do the evacuation orders. Hezbollah is retaliating but is unable to stop the Israeli advance. Lebanon is paying the ultimate price in this latest round of war amid regional and international silence.

Like in Gaza, Israel has not spared mosques, churches, hospitals, schools or residential buildings. The mass destruction of southern Lebanon is deliberate and carries long-term consequences. Israeli officials have openly declared that they intend to stay, that residents will not be allowed to return and that, even if the war ends, the south will be held hostage until Hezbollah is fully disarmed. Lebanon is paying the ultimate price in this latest round of war amid regional and international silence. The scale is staggering: Israel launched more than 1,840 attacks on Lebanon between March 2 and April 7, forcing about a fifth of the country's entire population – including 350,000 children – to flee their homes, creating what experts describe as one of the world's fastest-growing displacement crises. Meanwhile, the US has forced the Lebanese government into direct negotiations with Israel in Washington, with the final goal of signing a peace treaty. The talks proceed while Israel destroys Lebanese cities and towns and expands its occupation. The Lebanese government is being asked to deliver the impossible: disarming Hezbollah. The Washington talks are not a parallel track toward peace, they are a performance of a process designed to buy time for facts on the ground. Israel will not withdraw from the Lebanese territory it occupies, rendering the negotiations a theater of the absurd.

Israel is in a strong position. It has the full backing of Washington, even as it openly declares objectives that differ sharply from those of America. Under the far-right government of Benjamin Netanyahu, it seeks territorial expansion into both Lebanon and Syria – annexing buffer zones, entrenching military positions and redrawing the map of the Levant. The Americans may believe that a peace deal, if reached, would persuade Israel to withdraw. That is fantasy.

On the other hand, Hezbollah is losing sympathy even among Lebanon's Shiite population, who have suffered the most. The group has attacked the government for engaging in peace talks with Israel, yet has offered no path toward national reconciliation, disengagement from Iran or the integration of its forces into the Lebanese army. Unless Hezbollah commits to this path, Israel will continue destroying Lebanon, entrenching its occupation and pursuing what many now fear is its ultimate objective: the demographic and territorial partition of Lebanon. This is not merely a war between Israel and Hezbollah. It is the convergence of three tragedies: American cynicism that turns a country into collateral, Israeli territorial ambition disguised as security doctrine, and Hezbollah's catastrophic miscalculation that has dragged Lebanon into an existential battle it cannot win – and did not choose.

Ethiopia Voted: The Historic Election Marks A Major Step In Ethiopia's Political Maturity

Ambassador Jemal Beker (PhD)



The transparency and exclusivity of the entire process were thoroughly observed and verified by international monitoring bodies, including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), complemented extensively by domestic civil society. Specifically, the African Union deployed a 59-member Election Observer Mission led by the former President of the Republic of Kenya...

ETHIOPIA, as a nation with a remarkable centuries-old history, diverse civilizations, and an unyielding legacy of independence, has achieved a critical milestone in political maturity. While my country's formal engagement with modern democratic systems is relatively recent, the progress forged over the past four decades demonstrates a steadfast commitment to institutional evolution. By moving past deep-seated historical challenges, we have successfully institutionalized a system that respects the voice of its citizens, proving that its democratic trajectory is both resilient and irreversible. Historically, one of the primary vulnerabilities identified within our state architecture has been the lack of deeply rooted democratic traditions. Following recent reform under H.E. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), the nation embarked on an ambitious, holistic restructuring project to establish genuinely independent, non-partisan institutions. This transition has been heavily anchored in a home-grown democratic philosophy Medemer – an approach that synthesizes international best practices with local socioeconomic realities to repair legacy structural fractures. Supported by strategic updates in administrative organization, political thought, and electoral technology, this institutional shift ensures that political transition is dictated solely by law and the ballot box.

The Architecture of the 7th National Election
Building directly upon the foundations and lessons learned from the landmark 6th National Election, the recent 7th National Election represents a highly sophisticated evolution in governance style. It intentionally reflects the principles of consociational democracy, explicitly designed to maintain stability and equitable representation in a multi-faceted nation. The operational structure of this election was built upon four pillars consisting of Grand Coalitions to foster broad political alliances for widespread consensus, Fair Representation to ensure equitable legislative weight across diverse political views, Segmental Autonomy to allow cultural and regional identities to manage local interests securely, and Minority Rights Protection to safeguard the voices and inclusion of smaller communities. Consequently, these inclusive structural pillars directly inspired an unprecedented wave of nationwide civic enthusiasm, translating high-level design into historic voter turnout. **Numbers Don't Lie: High Engagement and Inclusive Participation**

To evaluate the democratic integrity of an election, international standards examine three core phases consisting of the Pre-Election, Election Day, and Post-Election periods. Ethiopia's rigorous management of the pre-election phase laid the groundwork for an inclusive, highly competitive environment, verified by exact institutional data points. The process achieved a total registered candidate field of over 10,438 candidates across participating 42 political parties, with opposition and party competitors deploying 250,000 observers to guarantee transparency across polling stations. Additionally, the field included 80 independent candidates contesting outside traditional party structures, while registered voter turnout reached exactly 54,057,871 citizens who successfully registered and secured their voting cards. Among the registered voters, 90% of them have cast their votes in the ballot box. Out of an overall eligible population of 135+ million, this impressive turnout represents an undeniable vote of confidence from the Ethiopian public. Furthermore, during this pre-election phase, the political parties successfully conducted 19 televised debate forums across five distinct languages using strategically allocated public airtime slots to guarantee equity in media access. In tandem with this remarkable civic energy, Election Day unfolded as a peaceful, joyful climax where voters confidently exercised their democratic rights.

Election Day: A Free, Fair, and Sovereign Expression
On Election Day, citizens turned out en masse to cast their ballots freely, peacefully, and without external influence or intimidation. This smooth execution reaffirms a fundamental truth that our public embraces a credible electoral process as the sole legitimate mechanism for establishing a social contract with governance. By mobilizing to build an accountable administration, the electorate has consciously chosen a path of constitutional continuity, stability, and peaceful institutional transition. The transparency and exclusivity of the entire process were thoroughly observed and verified by international monitoring bodies, including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), complemented extensively by domestic civil society. Specifically, the African Union deployed a 59-member Election Observer Mission led by the former President of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, while IGAD fielded a specialized team of 26

international observers. On the domestic front, 55 legally authorized civil society organizations successfully mobilized and deployed 1,562 certified domestic monitors across the country's polling infrastructure. Their unified presence validated that the election met rigorous international standards for fairness, openness, and civic participation. As the seat of the African Union, Ethiopia's successful election serves as a powerful, stabilizing template for other emerging democracies across the African continent and the global south, proving that complex, diverse nations like us, can execute seamless democratic cycles.

During the preliminary post-election briefing, the African Union and IGAD Election Observation Missions confirmed that Ethiopia's electoral process took place in a peaceful, orderly, and calm environment, with observer teams reporting smooth voting procedures and orderly polling station operations across observed areas. Head of the AU Election Observation Mission and former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta stated that voting had "progressed smoothly," noting that citizens were freely and voluntarily exercising their democratic rights and choosing their preferred parties without pressure. Kenyatta further described the electoral process as a "completely peaceful and credible process." Observer missions highlighted strong citizen participation, broad voter engagement, and voting processes that largely proceeded without major incidents in observed areas. These preliminary findings reinforced confidence in the overall conduct, credibility, and peaceful nature of the electoral process while demonstrating the commitment of Ethiopian citizens to express their democratic will through the ballot box.

Consequently, this profound milestone stands validated before the international community, perfectly setting the stage for a bright, self-determined future for our nation's democratic exercise. The successful completion of this historic 7th election is a testament to our growing political maturity and the enduring resilience of our state architecture. Ultimately we, the Ethiopian people, are the true authors of this success, establishing a sacred mandate for our own peace, justice, and equitable development. By coming together to transcend past fractures, we have proven that our democratic path is irreversible, positioning Ethiopia as a powerful global exemplar of democratic consolidation.

Trump Ensured the Downfall of America as a Superpower

Qamar Bashir



The Gulf region is also confronting new realities. For decades, American military bases were viewed as symbols of security and stability. Yet growing regional tensions have led GCC countries to question whether these installations now attract risk rather than defending them. Beyond the Middle East, broader structural changes are reshaping the international system. Organizations such as BRICS continue to expand their influence. More countries are conducting trade in local currencies, exploring alternative...

AS tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz intensified, an extraordinary pattern emerged: countries that once looked first to Washington reportedly began seeking direct or indirect understandings with Tehran to secure the safe passage of their commercial shipping. The reported movement of French vessels, followed by Japanese energy shipments and commercial traffic linked to other Asian nations, signaled something far more important than maritime navigation. It suggested that nations facing urgent economic pressures were increasingly willing to bypass Washington and pursue their interests through direct diplomacy with Iran through a trusted mediator mostly likely Pakistan. The significance of this development extends far beyond the safe passage of a few ships. It strikes at the heart of the post-Cold War international order, in which the United States positioned itself as the indispensable power capable of organizing coalitions, managing crises, and guaranteeing security. If nations increasingly discover that they can protect their interests through direct engagement rather than through American mediation, then a fundamental pillar of U.S. global influence begins to weaken. The issue is not whether Iran has replaced the United States as a superpower; the issue is that countries are becoming less dependent on Washington to solve their most urgent problems.

In doing so they are following the suggestions of Donald Trump who has repeatedly asked these countries whose economies depended on these shipments to assume the responsibility to escort their oil, gas and commerce through the Hormuz waterway. Yet rather than assembling large military convoys and risking confrontation, several nations appeared to favor a different approach. They sought dialogue, practical arrangements, and diplomatic channels aimed at ensuring uninterrupted trade. In doing so, they highlighted an uncomfortable reality for Washington: military power may command attention, but economic survival often drives nations toward diplomacy. A second consequence of the Hormuz crisis is the perception that the balance of negotiating leverage has shifted. For decades, Washington typically entered major negotiations from a position of overwhelming strength, dictating timelines, conditions, and outcomes. In the current environment, however, Tehran holds stronger cards than at any previous stage of the confrontation. From this perspective, any future memorandum of understanding would likely begin not with Iranian concessions but with Iranian security demands. Tehran's priority would be obtaining credible guarantees against future military action, securing relief from economic sanctions, regaining access to frozen assets, and establishing a framework that reduces the threat posed by the extensive network of foreign military bases surrounding Iran. Only after those issues are addressed would more conten-

tious subjects—such as uranium enrichment levels, missile and drone programs, regional security arrangements, maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz, and broader regional disputes—move to the center of negotiations. Whether these demands are accepted is another matter entirely, but the fact that such proposals are now openly discussed reflects how dramatically perceptions of leverage have changed.

The emergence of this new reality did not occur in isolation. It followed years of growing dissatisfaction among allies and partners with the direction of American foreign policy. President Donald Trump's tariff policies targeted allies and competitors alike, creating uncertainty across global markets. Longstanding partners increasingly found themselves treated less as strategic allies and more as bargaining chips in transactional negotiations. Proposals regarding Canada, pressure on European allies over Greenland, and disputes over trade and security obligations contributed to a perception that Washington had become increasingly unpredictable. As a result, many governments began quietly exploring alternatives. Europe, in particular, has undergone a strategic awakening. European leaders increasingly emphasize strategic autonomy and independent decision-making. The Hormuz crisis reinforced this trend. Rather than simply following Washington's preferred course, governments demonstrated a willingness to pursue their own diplomatic initiatives to ensure that European economic interests were not held hostage to geopolitical confrontation.

At the same time, Europe has been expanding economic engagement with China. Increasingly, policymakers view Beijing as a dominant economic actor that must be engaged, while viewing Washington as a partner whose policies can shift dramatically from one administration to another. This represents a significant strategic challenge for American leadership because trust, once lost, is difficult to rebuild. The Gulf region is also confronting new realities. For decades, American military bases were viewed as symbols of security and stability. Yet growing regional tensions have led GCC countries to question whether these installations now attract risk rather than defending them. Beyond the Middle East, broader structural changes are reshaping the international system. Organizations such as BRICS continue to expand their influence. More countries are conducting trade in local currencies, exploring alternative payment mechanisms, and seeking ways to reduce dependence on the dollar-based financial system. While the U.S. dollar remains the world's dominant reserve currency, the trend toward diversification is unmistakable which will significantly reduce Washington's ability to use sanctions as a tool of geopolitical influence.

The same dynamic can be seen in security affairs. NATO remains one of the world's most powerful alliances, yet discussions within Europe about independent defense

capabilities continue to grow. Many governments increasingly recognize the need for greater strategic self-reliance. Ironically, objectives that Russia pursued unsuccessfully for decades through pressure and confrontation may now be advancing indirectly through disagreements within the Western alliance itself. Meanwhile, countries across the Western Hemisphere are broadening their diplomatic and economic options. Canada, Mexico, and several Latin American states increasingly pursue diversified relationships with Europe, Asia, and emerging economies which would ensure that the United States influence is no longer synonymous with unquestioned leadership.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this transformation was the lack of support among Muslim countries for signing the Abraham Accords without a two-state solution to resolve the Palestinian issue, despite the U.S. demand that such recognition of Israel be a precondition for a peace agreement with Iran. Instead, governments prioritized immediate national interests, energy security, economic stability, and regional de-escalation. In doing so, they demonstrated that even close partners are increasingly willing to pursue independent policies when vital strategic interests are at stake. If historians eventually identify the moment when American supremacy entered irreversible decline, they may trace it not to a military defeat at the hands of a rival superpower, but to a series of self-inflicted strategic miscalculations that undermined the very foundations of U.S. influence. Through confrontational tariff policies, disputes with allies, pressure campaigns against partners, inconsistent diplomacy, and the mishandling of the Iran crisis, President Donald Trump accelerated trends that were already weakening American leadership.

The Strait of Hormuz did not create this transformation; it merely exposed it. The sight of allies and partners bypassing Washington to engage directly with Tehran symbolized a deeper reality: confidence in American judgment, predictability, and leadership had eroded. In attempting to project unrivaled power, Washington instead encouraged nations to seek alternatives, diversify partnerships, and pursue independent paths. The ultimate irony may be that the greatest challenge to American primacy did not come from Beijing, Moscow, or Tehran, but from policies that weakened the trust, alliances, and international goodwill upon which American power was built. What emerged from this crisis was not merely a dispute over a waterway, but a powerful reminder that even the strongest empires can hasten their own decline when hubris replaces strategy and coercion replaces consensus.

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

Briefs

Efforts continue to secure...

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difficulties being faced by the families of the hostages and appealed to them to remain patient, assuring them that the issue remains under constant review. "The release of the hostages remains among the government's top priorities," the spokesperson said. Speaking on India's water terrorism, the spokesperson voiced concern over reports that India has invited bids for the proposed Chenab-Uplink Tunnel project, which aims to divert 1.9 million acre-feet of water annually from the Chenab River to the Beas system. He said the project, along with proposed silt-flushing at the Salal Dam, would violate the Indus Waters Treaty and could give India undue control over water flows. He said India neither formally notified Pakistan nor held consultations on the plans. Andrabi warned that any attempt to divert Pakistan's share of water could threaten the country's economy, food security and regional stability. He urged the international community to press India to halt such projects and fully implement the Indus Waters Treaty.

Bangladesh foils India attempt

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"No individual or group will be allowed to enter Bangladesh illegally through the border," BGB said in a statement, adding that any attempt to violate international border management norms and bilateral understandings would be "strictly resisted". Bangladesh's border guards last month intensified patrols and launched public awareness campaigns along parts of the frontier due to concerns India had illegally forced people into Bangladesh in what officials, rights groups and analysts describe as "push-ins" – informal transfers of people into Bangladesh without going through verification and repatriation procedures. India's foreign ministry in May told reporters it had asked Bangladesh to verify the nationality of more than 2,860 suspected Bangladeshis living illegally in India.

SC dismisses Jaffer's...

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orders by SC). The state and Noor's father, Shaukat Ali Muqaddam, were made the respondents. The petition contended that the issue of Zahir's alleged "unsoundness of mind or mental capacity" that was raised before the SC in an application had not been addressed and was "given short shrift". On the rape charges, the review plea argued that it was "apparent from the record that there is no evidence on the record in proof of this allegation".

Iran's supreme...

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profund and significant humiliation. "The enemy has focused its schemes in hybrid warfare on two points: the resilience of the Iranian people and trying to create errors in the assessments of the country's officials. The instrument it's using for both is sowing the seeds of doubt, despair, fear, mistrust and discord." "In confronting these ill intentions, everyone must, through steadfastness, insight, preserving unity and cohesion... neutralise their sinister plot," his message said. He further said, "Imperialism, led by the US, has built a military base called Israel over the past 80 years. And they don't accept the existence of a strong, independent Iran on the eastern border of the false, illegitimate geography of 'Greater Israel' – that is, east of the Euphrates River." Mojtaba also highlighted the role of Iranian authorities in this regard, saying that "any act that causes pessimism and disappointment among the people is considered a kind of aid to the enemy of this country and its people", Press TV reported.



ISLAMABAD: Members of RISJA in group photo with Patron Abdul Mohi Shah and Chairman Shakil Awan on the occasion of the Annual General Body meeting, held at the National Press Club. – DNA

World Cup fans barred from bringing water bottles into stadiums

"Fifa made the decision to prohibit bottles to prevent risk and injury to players and attendees," says Fifa

DNA

NEW YORK: Fifa has banned fans from bringing refillable water bottles into World Cup venues in a last-minute policy change that will force thirsty supporters to pay for bottled water. The Athletic reported on Wednesday. As recently as last month, Fifa's official stadium code of conduct included a clause which read: "For the avoidance of doubt, empty, transparent, reusable plastic bottles, up to (1 litre in) capacity, may be brought into the Stadium." However The Athletic reported on Wednesday that

those guidelines had now been tweaked to explicitly ban refillable bottles. "For the avoidance of doubt, reusable water bottles may not be brought into the stadium," an updated stadium code of conduct read. In a statement to AFP, a Fifa spokesperson said the rule change was taken on safety grounds, noting that several World Cup venues already barred the use of refillable water bottles. "Fifa is committed to protecting the health and safety of all players, referees, fans, volunteers, and staff," the statement read. "Fifa made the decision to prohibit bottles to prevent risk and injury to players

and attendees. "Outside bottles are already prohibited at several of these venues for safety considerations, and Fifa is applying this consideration across its tournament stadiums." The statement added that misting stations, fans, hydration stations and cooling tents would be available in "the stadium footprint". It added that bottled water inside the venue would be sold at prices which "remain consistent with other events held at each stadium." The rule change comes despite experts warning fans could face health risks from extreme heat at open-air venues during the World Cup,

which is being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. A report published by the World Weather Attribution research group last month estimated that 26 of 104 games at the World Cup are likely to be played in conditions where the Wet Bulb Global Temperature (WBGT) exceeds 26 degrees. WBGT is a measure of heat stress on the human body which combines temperature, humidity, wind and sunlight. At last year's Fifa Club World Cup in the United States, where fans complained of searing temperatures, supporters were also barred from bringing water bottles into venues.

Pakistan bow out of T20I tri-series after washout against West Indies

Hosts Ireland remain in contention for title after washout

DUBLIN: Pakistan crashed out of the Ireland-hosted T20I tri-series after their rain-affected match against West Indies was abandoned at Castle Avenue on Wednesday, leaving the Green Shirts rooted to the bottom of the standings. The washout meant a bottom-placed finish for Pakistan as they have just two points after three matches, and can attain a maximum of six if they beat host nation Ireland in the final fixture of the T20I tri-series, scheduled to be played at the same venue on Thursday. Furthermore, the abandonment of the fixture largely benefited the host nation as they remain in contention to clinch the T20I tri-series by defeating Pakistan in the upcoming game, since the victory would bolster their points tally to 12, two more than that of West Indies. For the unversed, rain also delayed the commencement of the recently-abandoned fixture by 70 minutes, and after a spirited effort from the ground staff to make the field suitable for action, West Indies captain Chinelle Henry won the toss and put Pakistan into bat. The Green Shirts' batting unit struggled against the disciplined West Indian bowling attack as they could muster 111/7 in 16.5 before another rain interruption, which eventually proved decisive. Middle-order batter Aliya Riaz remained the top-scorer for Pakistan with an anchoring 24 off 23 deliveries, followed by captain Fatima Sana, who made an unbeaten 21 from as many balls. Besides them, only Rameen Shamim, Ayesha Zafar, 17 each, and Gull Feroza (10) could score in double figures for Pakistan. For West Indies, Ashmini Munisar and Chinelle Henry bagged two wickets each, while Zaida James, Aiy Fletcher and Qiana Joseph chipped in with one scalp apiece. – APP

PM Shehbaz Sharif highlights stronger...

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She added, President Donald Trump lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir, for their facilitative role in easing tensions between the United States and Iran. She added, Pakistan's extraordinary efforts had "opened a new chapter in bilateral relations" and demonstrated the country's commitment to regional peace. The U.S.–Iran meeting, hosted in Islamabad under Pakistan's stewardship, was described as a landmark moment in diplomacy. Prime Minister Sharif's presence as chief guest, alongside Acting U.S. Ambassador Natalie Baker, underscored Pakistan's central role in fostering dialogue.

Ceasefire a last option, says Lebanon...

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full cessation of fire from Hezbollah and the withdrawal of its operatives from the South Litani Sector. According to a joint statement from the U.S. State Department, the deal also includes the creation of pilot zones where the Lebanese Armed Forces will assume exclusive control, excluding all non-state actors. Both sides will reconvene for political and security talks during the week of June 22 to build confidence and address unresolved issues. The ceasefire comes against the backdrop of Iranian strikes that damaged Kuwait International Airport, killing one person and injuring more than 60. Flights were temporarily suspended before resuming under heightened safety measures. Iran's Revolutionary Guards denied responsibility, claiming U.S. interceptor missiles caused the destruction. However, U.S. Central Command stated Iranian drones deliberately targeted the airport.

Forces kill 4 terrorists in KP: ISPR

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The military's media wing said that another IBO was conducted by security forces in Mohmand district and, in ensuing skilful engagement, two more khwarij were effectively neutralised. "Weapons and ammunition have also been recovered from killed khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area," it added. The ISPR reiterated that the relentless counter-terrorism campaign under the vision "Azam e Istehkam" – as approved by the Federal Apex Committee on the National Action Plan – by security forces and law enforcement agencies will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

Arab nations to progress from World Cup group stages

LONDON: An unprecedented eight teams from the Arab region will participate at the 2026 World Cup. The expanded 48-nation tournament means that there are 32 places available in the knockout stages. Arab News tries to predict the unpredictable and rank their chances to get out of their groups. An opening game with Brazil looks daunting but better to face the South Americans early for a team that now expects to go deep. Semifinalists in 2022, and controversial champions of Africa earlier this year, the Atlas Lions are full of stars including Achraf Hakimi of Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid's Brahim Diaz. This is a team that knows tournament play, can be hard to beat and grind out results if needed. And whatever happens against the five-time champions in the opener, will surely get enough points from Haiti and Scotland to extend their stay in North America. The focus on Mohamed Salah and what is likely to be the soon-to-be-ex-Liverpool star's last World Cup may actually take some pressure off the rest of the Pharaohs as they seek a first-ever knockout spot. Salah will be desperate to end a difficult season on a high. Omar Marmoush also has a point to prove to Manchester City. Such attacking potency should make the difference in what looks to be an open group. Belgium are not the force of a few years ago, Iran have other issues to deal with, and New Zealand will be organized but limited. Recent form has been pretty good for the Fenecs and coach Vladimir Petkovic will be looking forward to the challenge. The Bosnian boss took Switzerland to three consecutive knockout stages with the World Cup in 2018 sandwiched by two Euros. In 2020, the Swiss beat France to make the last eight. – APP

Mouse embryo experiment on China's space station

SHENZHEN: Mouse embryo material brought back to Earth inside the Shenzhou-22 return capsule is expected to provide a theoretical foundation for future research on conceiving life during long-term human space habitation. The Shenzhou-22 successfully made it back from China's space station on May 29. The cultured embryo material was among science samples brought back as part of a project undertaken by a research team from the Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology (SIAT) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences. According to SIAT, the experiment aims to explore developmental patterns of mammalian pre-implantation embryos in a space environment, including the key mechanisms underlying mitochondrial damage and epigenetic modification abnormalities in embryos. Led by a senior researcher Lei Xiaohua from the Center for Energy Metabolism and Reproduction of SIAT's Institute of Bio-medicine and Biotechnology, the team performed the in-orbit culture of mouse embryos, at various developmental stages, using a biotechnology experiment cabinet on the space station. "Given the strict constraints on spaceship transfer and in-orbit resources, the core challenge of this experiment was how to achieve embryo culture and real-time imaging within limited space," Lei said. The team collaborated with another SIAT team, led by Men Yongfan from the Research Center for Biomedical Optics and Molecular Imaging, to design an embryo microfluidic chip culture box. It featured two rows of six culture chambers. This design simultaneously met the needs of two experimental groups with three replicate experiments each,

and was compatible with the space station's automated culture system. After ground-based verification tests, the team established a complete experimental system for mammalian pre-implantation embryo culture, imaging, perfusion fixation, and cryopreservation suitable for the space station. The team confirmed in-orbit embryo development images were successfully captured, and that embryo development, as well as fixation and preservation conditions, were optimal. In the early morning of May 30, live science experiment samples retrieved from the Shenzhou-22 return capsule were transported to the Technology and Engineering Center for Space Utilization under the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing via specialized refrigeration equipment. In future research, Lei's team will conduct systematic comparison and integrated analysis of the returned samples and ground-based control samples, including developmental phenotype statistics, specific protein molecular staining, high-resolution chromatin three-dimensional imaging, and multi-omics sequencing. "Through in-depth analysis of the space embryo samples, we will provide critical evidence for understanding how the space environment affects mammalian pre-implantation embryo development," Lei said. The research will provide key data when determining space's influence on zygotic genome activation stage and whether the space environment can support normal early development, thereby deepening our understanding of the initial developmental patterns of mammalian life in the space environment, he added. – APP

Pakistan Stun Maldives 3-0 to End 35-Year Drought

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan produced an impressive second-half performance to defeat hosts Maldives 3-0 in the Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament, securing their first victory in nearly three years and ending a 35-year wait for a win over the island nation. The triumph marked Pakistan's first international victory in 962 days and their first win against Maldives since the final of the 1991 South Asian Federation (SAF) Games. After a goalless first half, the Shaheens broke the deadlock in the 54th minute through Umer Nawaz. The goal came after Hayyan Khattak's powerful effort was spilled by the Maldivian goalkeeper, allowing Nawaz to pounce on the rebound and score. Maldives responded by pushing forward in search of an equaliser and created a couple of promising opportunities, but failed to capitalize. Their attacking approach, however, left gaps at the back, which Pakistan exploited effectively. Substitute Abdul Samad Arshad doubled Pakistan's lead in the 83rd minute with a composed finish past the goalkeeper, before another substitute, Harun Hamid, sealed the victory four minutes later. His

shot took a deflection off a defender and beat the helpless Maldivian keeper in the 87th minute. The convincing win also handed Head Coach Nolberto Solano his first victory since taking charge of the Pakistan national team. Pakistan had opened

their campaign with a draw against Bangladesh and will now look to build on this momentum when they face Afghanistan in their final group match on June 7. Pakistan Football Federation President Syed Mohsen Gilani congratulated the players and

coaching staff on the historic result and expressed confidence that the team would continue its positive performances in the remainder of the tournament. This version is written in a professional newspaper style with a stronger lead and smoother flow.



Briefs

PSX turns bullish, gains over 984 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 984.86 points, a positive change of 0.58 percent, closing at 171,175.51 points against 170,190.64 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 697.166 million shares with a traded value of Rs 26.135 billion, compared to 551.946 million shares valuing Rs 23.759 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization increased to Rs 18.983 trillion from Rs 18.864 trillion a day earlier. Out of 492 active companies in the ready market, 316 advanced, 128 declined, and 48 remained unchanged.

Beco Steel Ltd topped the volume chart with 113.093 million shares, followed by Pak Int. Bulk with 32.165 million shares and WorldCall Telecom with 31.104 million shares.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.42 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.45. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.20 and Rs 279.45, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.29 and closed at Rs 323.13 from the previous day's close of Rs 323.42, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.85 and closed at Rs 373.79 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.64. The exchange rates of the Emirati Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 and 02 paise to close at Rs 75.80 and 74.15, respectively.—APP

Gold prices increase by Rs 1,523 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold registered an increase in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola gaining Rs 1,523 to settle at Rs 469,285 compared to Rs 467,762 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 increased by Rs 1,305 to Rs 402,335 from Rs 401,030, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold rose by Rs 1,197 to Rs 368,821 against Rs 367,624. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$14.499 to \$4,468.499 per ounce from \$4,454 per ounce.—APP

Meat products exports grew by 4.16%

ISLAMABAD: Meat and meat preparations exports from the country during the last 10 months of current financial year grew by 4.16 percent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of the last year. Over 97,623 metric tons meat and meat production valued at \$443.898 million were imported as compared to the imports of 98,458 metric tons worth of \$426.156 million of the same period of the last year. According to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Meanwhile, the fish and fish preparation exports from the country increased by 6.07 percent and over 175,397 metric tons of fish and fish products were exported as compared to the exports of 171,886 metric tons valued at \$370.891 million of the same period of the last year. During the period under review food commodities worth of \$ 4.190 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$ 6.164 billion of the first 10 months of last financial year. Over 3.579 million tons of rice worth \$1.879 billion were exported during the period from July-April.—APP

ICCI to pursue traders' issues at every forum: Tahir

The ICCI President stressed the importance of unity among traders and urged them to strengthen their connection with the Chamber by increasing membership and participation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has reaffirmed that ICCI, being the apex representative body of the business community in the federal capital, remains fully committed to safeguarding traders' interests and resolving their issues through effective advocacy with government institutions. He expressed these views while addressing a large delegation of the Traders Welfare Association (TWA) Moti Bazar, Bara Kahu, which visited ICCI under the leadership of its President, Qamar Abbasi, on Thursday. Welcoming the newly elected office-bearers of the association, Sardar Tahir Mehmood congratulated them on assuming their responsibilities and emphasized that the business community is the backbone of the national economy. He said ICCI is actively engaged with relevant authorities, including CDA, MCI, district administration and other government departments, to address the challenges faced by traders. The ICCI President stressed the importance of unity among traders and urged them to strengthen their connection with the Chamber by increasing membership and participation. He noted that a united business community can more effectively raise its voice and secure its legitimate rights. Speaking on the occasion, President Traders Welfare Association Moti Bazar Bara Kahu, Qamar Abbasi, highlighted various civic and commercial issues confronting traders and residents of the area. He called for meetings with the Inspector General of Police Islamabad, Commissioner Islamabad, Chairman CDA, MCI authorities and other

concerned officials to discuss and resolve issues that have been long standing and should not continue to be ignored. Former ICCI President Tahir Mehmood stressed the importance of development. In his concluding remarks, ICCI



longstanding problems. He particularly highlighted the severe shortage of drinking water in Bara Kahu and demanded immediate remedial measures. Former President ICCI and Secretary General of the United Business Group, Zafar Bakhtawari, observed that the challenges facing the business community continue to grow with the passage of time. He stressed that greater unity among traders is essential to effectively address these issues and protect business interests. President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajran, Mohammad Ajmal Baloch, urged the bureaucracy to adopt a consultative approach while implementing policies affecting traders. He cautioned that the business community may be compelled to protest if its concerns con-

Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi appreciated the unwavering support of the Bara Kahu business community for the Chamber's Founder Group and acknowledged their consistent role in strengthening the organization. General Secretary Traders Welfare Association Moti Bazar Bara Kahu and Executive Member ICCI, Umer Khayyam Abbasi, reiterated the traders' commitment to supporting the Founder Group and expressed confidence that the current ICCI leadership would make every possible effort to resolve the issues facing the area. Group Leader TWA Moti Bazar Bara Kahu, Malik Ashfaq, encouraged traders to remain focused on their businesses despite prevailing challenges and continue contributing to the country's economic de-

velopment. In his concluding remarks, ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry assured the visiting delegation that the Chamber would always stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the business community. He emphasized that traders should have complete confidence in ICCI's commitment to pursuing the resolution of their problems at every relevant forum. Former Senior Vice President ICCI Khalid Chaudhry conducted the proceedings of the event. Among others, Executive Members Zulqurnain Abbasi, Rohail Anwar Butt, Chaudhry Wajid Ayub of Tarnol, along with senior ICCI members Imtiaz Abbasi, Shahid Abbasi, Zahid Daniyal, Israr Mishwani, Abid Khan, Waheed Cheema and a large number of traders and business leaders, were also present on the occasion.

Pakistani students compete in Huawei Global Final

SHENZHEN: Pakistani students participating in the Huawei ICT Competition 2025–2026 Global Final visited Huawei's renowned Shannon Exhibition Hall and the company's state-of-the-art research and development campus in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, during their stay in China for the international competition. The visit provided the young contestants with an opportunity to witness firsthand the technological innovations, research capabilities, and digital transformation achievements that have positioned China among the world's leading technology powers. The students, selected from various universities and higher educational institutions across Pakistan through Huawei's rigorous national and regional competition process, are representing the country at the 10th Huawei ICT Competition Global Final being held in Shenzhen from June 2 to 5. Nearly 600 outstanding students from more than 100 countries and regions have gathered in Shenzhen after emerging from a highly competitive selection process involving hundreds of thousands of participants worldwide. During their visit to the Shannon Exhibition Hall, Huawei experts briefed the delegation on the company's latest achievements in information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital infrastructure, smart cities, and industrial digitalization. The students were introduced to Huawei's vision for building an intelligent and connected world and learned about the role of innovation in driving sustainable economic and social development. The visit also included a tour of Huawei's Dongguan R&D Campus, one of the company's most advanced innovation centers. The sprawling campus serves as a hub for cutting-edge research, product development, and global talent cultivation. Students explored various innovation zones and gained valuable insights into how world-class technology solutions are conceived, developed, and deployed to meet evolving global needs. Expressing their excitement, Nauman Sajjad, a student at Lahore Garrison University told APP that the experience had exceeded their expectations and broadened their understanding of China's technological capabilities and modern development. "China is completely different from what we had imagined before coming here," one participant remarked. "The level of technological advancement, infrastructure, innovation, and organization is truly impressive. Seeing these developments with our own eyes has changed our perspective," he added. Saqib Hussain, an instructor at Mehran University Jamshoro, Sindh noted that the visit provided inspiration for aspiring ICT professionals. "The scale of research and innovation at Huawei is remarkable. It motivates us to continue improving our technical skills and contribute to technological progress in Pakistan," he commented. The students praised China's rapid development in diverse sectors, including digital technology, transportation, smart infrastructure, education, and industrial modernization. They observed that the country's commitment to innovation and investment in research has played a key role in its transformation into a global technology leader. The Huawei ICT Competition, launched in 2015, has grown into one of the world's largest and most influential ICT talent-development platforms.—DNA

Unsafe food kills 1.5m people each year

UNITED NATIONS: Unsafe food causes an estimated 866 million illnesses and 1.5 million deaths every year worldwide, highlighting the often-overlooked toll of contaminated food on health, development and fragile economies, according to new data from the UN health agency. The new study released on Wednesday ahead of next week's World Food Safety Day, show that children under five are particularly vulnerable. Although they account for just nine per cent of the global population, they suffer nearly one-third of all foodborne diseases, many of them severe diarrhoeal illnesses that can prove fatal, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Exposure to chemicals such as lead and methylmercury through food can also damage developing brains and cause lifelong neurological and developmental problems in children. "Food safety is not an abstract issue – it touches every meal, every family, every day. Unsafe food has always been a major public health concern, but until now we lacked the bigger picture of its staggering human and economic toll. These new estimates change that," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The study found that foodborne bacteria, viruses and parasites accounted for most illnesses – about 860 million cases in 2021 alone. Yet chemical contamination was responsible for most deaths linked to unsafe food. According to WHO, chemical hazards accounted for 73 per cent of deaths caused by contaminated food in 2021. Inorganic arsenic and lead were the leading contributors, largely because prolonged exposure increases the risk of heart disease and cancers. Together, the two substances were linked to more than one million deaths in a single year.—APP

China-Pak cinematic ties deepen

BEIJING: A Chinese Film Festival was inaugurated last week at the Arts Council of Pakistan in Karachi. The festival was jointly organized to promote cultural exchanges, which are widely regarded as a vital bridge for deepening friendship between the two countries. Chinese Consul General in Karachi Yang Yundong, who attended the opening ceremony, addressed the audience and expressed his hope that Pakistani viewers would gain a more comprehensive understanding of China through the screened films and appreciate the profound richness of Chinese culture reflected in the cinematic works. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Thursday. The film festival in Karachi came just weeks after a landmark moment for Pakistani cinema in China. Last month, the acclaimed Pakistani film "The Legend of Maula Jatt" – released in China as "Blade of Fury" – premiered in Chinese cinemas, marking the first time a Pakistani film had entered the Chinese market under a revenue-sharing distribution model. The release has offered a window into Pakistan's cinematic traditions and storytelling. Speaking at the Beijing premiere ceremony on May 19, Pakistani Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi hailed the release as a "landmark moment" for Pakistan-China cultural and cinematic collaboration. The growing cinematic bond between China and Pakistan goes beyond screenings and festivals. In 2024, the first Chinese-Pakistani co-production, "Ba Tie Girl," was released in China. The signing of a film co-production agreement between the two countries has paved the way for more joint projects, technical exchanges, and talent development in the years to come.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: People boarding on electric bus during rain in the Federal Capital.

Lebanese Americans open their wallets, hearts

CANTON: Every week, Mirvet Makki sets aside earnings from her catering business to help people in Lebanon displaced by the war between Israel and Hezbollah militants. Makki, 47, who cooks Lebanese dishes like couscous stews and traditional kibbeh balls in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn Heights, immigrated to Michigan in 1990. But her heart never left her childhood village of Bint Jbeil, now one of the hardest-hit areas in southern Lebanon. Nearly every Lebanese American has felt the impact of the latest round of fighting, which has displaced more than 1 million people – roughly one in every six Lebanese – and killed more than 3,500 people. It's Israel's deepest invasion into Lebanon in more than a quarter-century. "I was thinking, 'What can I do for other people?'" Makki said. "So I used my business. Even with the rising cost of living in the US, she said, "the money I can spare personally, I've been sending it to family." In areas like metro Detroit, where Arabic signs adorn restaurants, coffee houses and bakeries on bustling suburban avenues, a sense of grief has blanketed the war-weary community as they watch the crisis unfold thousands of miles away. Like Makki, many grapple with guilt and helplessness. It's not easy to help loved ones who are unwilling or unable to leave their country and face a worsening economic crisis. "Honestly it's hard. Like, what do you say?" Makki said. "They're going to ask me what I'm doing. Let's say I'm at work. They lost their jobs. Let's say I tell them I'm home. They lost their homes." Lebanese immigration to the US dates to the late 1800s. Roughly

625,000 Lebanese Americans live here now, according to census data, though some estimates put the number closer to 1.4 million. Opinions about the Lebanese government, Hezbollah and Israel vary among the diaspora as they do in Lebanon, where views are heavily influenced by religious affiliation. The population there is about equally split between Sunni Muslim, Shiite Muslim and Christian denominations, along with a smaller Druze community. Despite their differences, the global diaspora remains deeply connected to their home country, in part through billions of dollars sent back each year. "There is really no Lebanese homeland without the Lebanese diaspora," Edward Curtis, director of Arabic Studies at Indiana University, said. Lebanese Americans often rally around common causes, like during the 2024 US presidential election for the "uncommitted movement" protesting US support for Israel's war in Gaza, or to condemn the Michigan synagogue attack carried out by a Lebanese man in March. "When they see suffering in Lebanon, people's immediate reaction ... is for the community to come together, raise funds, raise money, and try to help everybody as much as they can," Akram Khater, director of Lebanese Diaspora Studies at North Carolina State University, said. Most rely on one another, rather than looking to Washington for help. Curtis said many Lebanese Americans have grown disillusioned with US politics, instead seeking to "celebrate Lebanese life when other peoples are threatening its death." Maya Attoui, whose parents still live in Beirut, is organizing a

metro Detroit fundraiser to support Lebanon and raise awareness about the conflict. She said she doesn't have enough money to spare to support her numerous relatives, but hopes an event with activities and speakers will generate far more funds. "We don't feel like talking, we don't feel like cooking in our houses," Attoui said. "We're just 24/7 on the phone or on the news. Our heart is really melting and breaking because of whatever we see." Although people send remittances to countries all over the world, Lebanon is particularly dependent on its vast diaspora. The country's economy has been shredded in recent years, to the point where the US dollar is gradually becoming the de facto currency. Makki visited Lebanon in February and saw how much prices had risen. Where \$200 used to cover a car rental and a hotel room, this time it barely paid for a dinner out. Some people crowdsource funds online. There are established relief organizations, but most prefer to send money directly to loved ones. Makki doesn't want to send more than \$10,000 in total, to avoid appearing suspicious. After that, she laughed, "Maybe take it there myself?" Nadia Bryant, 37, of Troy, Michigan, has been sending money to her half sisters in Lebanon, who are in temporary housing after their village of Ayta ash-Shab was invaded by Israeli forces. Rather than spending the money on themselves, Bryant said, her sisters used it to help orphaned children. "They're such righteous people," Bryant said. "They are not even trying to take the money and get themselves a better house or anything." —Agencies

Israel plans major settlement push across occupied West Bank

JERUSALEM: Israel's hard-line 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 the construction of 2,162 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.—APP

Israeli strikes kill at least 8 in Gaza

GAZA CITY: Israeli attacks on Gaza killed at least eight people on Thursday, a spokesman for the civil defense agency in the Palestinian territory told AFP. "At least eight martyrs as a result of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City at dawn," with seven killed in strikes on residential buildings and one in the Al-Shati refugee camp to the west of Gaza City, said spokesman Mahmoud Bassal. Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City also reported 15 people wounded in the strikes, he added. Despite a truce technically in effect since October, daily violence has rocked the Gaza Strip, over half of which is under Israeli military control in defiance of the ceasefire's terms. Israel has killed at least 936 people since the ceasefire began, according to Gaza's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the UN. Both Hamas and Israel accuse each other of violating the ceasefire. The first phase of the truce involved the release of the last Israeli hostages held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinians detained by Israel. A transition to the second phase of the ceasefire, which was supposed to involve Hamas's disarmament and a gradual withdrawal of the Israeli army, has been stalled for months.—APP

Indonesia arrests Australian for 59 ml of 'medical' cannabis

MATARAM: Indonesian police have arrested an Australian woman found with 59 milliliters of vape liquid containing cannabis that she said was for pain relief but can land her in prison. The woman, 53, risks 20 years behind bars under Indonesia's no-exceptions anti-drug laws, narcotics officer I Nyoman Diana Mahardika told AFP on Thursday. She was arrested last month at her rented house on the resort island of Lombok after police found out she had received a delivery of liquid cannabis. She said she used a cannabis vape to relieve knee pain and depression, but Mahardika said it would nevertheless be investigated as a crime. "She must comply with the laws and regulations in force in our country. As for narcotics such as marijuana, it must not be possessed, used, or traded within our jurisdiction," he said. If found guilty, the woman risks a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a two-billion rupiah (\$111,000) fine, Mahardika added. Indonesia has some of the world's toughest anti-drug laws, including the death penalty for traffickers, but has maintained a moratorium on executions for several years.—APP

Briefs

United Nations peacekeeper killed in Lebanon

DNA

BEIRUT: A United Nations peacekeeper has been killed in Lebanon, the force and Serbian authorities said Thursday, after a base was hit in the south where Israel and Hezbollah are fighting. The death brings to seven the number of UNIFIL peacekeepers killed since the latest conflict erupted in March. "A UNIFIL peacekeeper died early this morning from critical injuries sustained when mortar shells struck his position," a statement from the force said, adding that two other Blue Helmets were wounded in the incident on Wednesday night. It said a probe had been launched and also urged "relevant national authorities to investigate the incident." Serbia's defense ministry said in a statement that "Senior Sergeant Milovan Jovanovic was given emergency medical care at a hospital inside the base after being wounded and then transported by helicopter to the University Medical Center in Beirut, where he died." According to UNIFIL, around 170 Serbian peacekeepers are among the 7,500-strong force, whose personnel come from nearly 50 countries. Peacekeepers are deployed in south Lebanon near the Blue Line, the 120-kilometer (75-mile) de facto border between Lebanon and Israel, where they are in the middle of the fighting.

Beijing bans four New Zealand lawmakers

WELLINGTON: Beijing banned four New Zealand lawmakers from traveling to China for a year and demanded they apologize because they visited Taiwan on a parliamentary trip, according to a message from the Chinese embassy conveyed via parliamentary officials and shown to The Associated Press on Thursday. China has hit lawmakers from other countries with sanctions related to contact with Taiwan before, but it's the first time for New Zealand parliamentarians, the government in Wellington said. Beijing has been increasing pressure in recent years on the democratically governed island that it claims as its own territory. Two lawmakers reached by the AP on Thursday rejected the demand for an apology, while the other two could not be immediately reached. New Zealand's government said it would express concern about the travel bans to Beijing. The elected officials visited Taipei in May, as New Zealand parliamentarians have done "for decades," a spokesperson for Foreign Minister Winston Peters said in a statement. Beijing says Taipei has no right to conduct foreign relations and views visits by foreign lawmakers to the island as defying China's claims of sovereignty. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning on Thursday confirmed the sanctions. — Agencies

US House votes for measure that would end Iran war

US House of Representatives vote largely symbolic as veto expected

DNA

WASHINGTON: The Republican-led US House of Representatives approved a resolution on Wednesday to block President Donald Trump from continuing the war against Iran, reflecting growing concern among members of his party about the three-month-old conflict. The House voted 215 to 208, as four Republicans voted with Democrats in favour of the war powers resolution. It was the latest setback for Trump in Congress despite his party's slim majorities in both the House and Senate.

The vote is largely symbolic. Any resolution would also have to pass the Senate to become effective, and garner the two-thirds majorities in both chambers to overcome an almost certain Trump veto. The vote, nonetheless, reflects unease among some Republicans over Trump's handling of the conflict and marks a rare bipartisan effort to curb presidential war powers. The war has entered a fourth month with no end in sight and after three previous war powers resolutions had failed in the House by increasingly slim margins. The Senate advanced a separate, but similar resolution last month in a procedural vote, after seven previous attempts had failed.

The four House Republicans who voted for the war powers resolution were Representatives Tom Barrett of Michigan, Warren Davidson of Ohio, Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania and Thomas Massie of Kentucky. No Democrats voted against it, although seven House members did not vote. Trump recently has faced some opposition in Congress, after months in which very few Republicans pushed back against any of his policy initiatives. In a separate vote on Wednesday, the House voted to advance a bid for a floor vote on providing security aid to Ukraine and imposing new sanctions on Russia. The measure came up for a vote

after a petition reached a 218-signature threshold last month to move ahead. Six Republicans and one independent who normally votes with Republicans voted in favour. Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told lawmakers on Tuesday that the administration was abandoning a fund to pay his political allies who said they had been the subject of government abuse, after some Republicans came out against it. Republican lawmakers on Wednesday also criticised Trump's pick of loyalist Bill Pulte - a mortgage regulator with no national security experience - to serve as acting Director of National Intelligence.

World Bank role lauded in Pakistan development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Cheema has underscored the importance of strengthening primary healthcare through greater use of digital solutions to improve service delivery. He was talking to World Bank Vice President Mamta Murthi, who called on him in Islamabad today. Highlighting the need of increased private sector participation, the Minister emphasized greater engagement by the International Finance Corporation to support healthcare systems and industry-oriented skills initiatives. During the meeting, the World Bank Vice President briefed the Minister on the World Bank's proposed interventions in the health, education and human development sectors, including a medium-term Health Compact aimed at strengthening primary healthcare systems, improving maternal and child health outcomes, and enhancing service delivery through a digitally enabled health sector. Mamta Murthi also discussed the possibility of a Skills Development Program focused on strengthening technical and vocational training, improving workforce readiness, and creating better employment opportunities for Pakistan's youth.

Pakistan trade deficit widens

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's goods trade deficit widened 17.48% to \$34.758 billion in the first eleven months of FY26 as falling exports and rising imports underscored continued pressure on the external account, even as monthly data showed tentative signs of stabilisation, official figures showed Wednesday. Data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed imports rose 5.94% to \$62.66 billion during July-May, while exports fell 5.6% to \$27.9 billion compared with \$29.56 billion a year earlier, leaving the country heavily reliant on imported goods and raw materials. In May 2026, the monthly trade deficit narrowed 13.7% year-on-year to \$2.58 billion as exports edged up 1.26% to \$2.71 billion and imports declined 6.6% to \$5.287 billion, suggesting some cooling in domestic demand. The services trade deficit offered some relief, narrowing 17.4% to \$2.04 billion in July-April FY26 as services exports rose 17.7% to \$8.3 billion, outpacing an 8.6% rise in imports. — DNA

Riyadh Air, Air India sign partnership agreement

DNA

NEW DELHI: Riyadh Air and Air India on Thursday announced a new partnership agreement to meet growing demand for Saudi-India travel and better connect both countries to global destinations. Saudi Arabia is the second-most visited destination for Indians, with about 3.4 million Indian tourists visiting the Kingdom in 2025, making up about 10 percent of the country's outbound tourism. The two flag carriers have signed a memorandum of understanding that could introduce both interline and codeshare arrangements in the near future, subject to regulatory approvals, Air India said in a statement. "The two airlines will also explore collaboration across a range of areas, including reciprocal loyalty program benefits, cargo services, operational support and digital and technology initiatives designed to enhance the guest experience," the statement reads. India is expected to become the world's fourth-largest outbound tourism market by 2035, be-

"The partnership supports growing demand for travel linked to business, tourism and family visits, reflecting the deep economic, cultural, and people-to-people ties between Saudi Arabia and India"

hind the US, China and Germany, the London-based research consultancy Capital Economics said last year. "India and Saudi Arabia are two important growth markets in global aviation today, and the scale and momentum in both countries make this a natural partnership," Air India CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson said in the statement. Earlier in February, Air India entered into a new codeshare agreement with Saudi Arabia's first flag carrier, Saudia, which gives their passengers streamlined booking and ticketing, smooth connections with a single itinerary, and baggage check-through to their final destinations. Riyadh Air's new partnership with Air India "reflects the deep and cultural and economic bonds" between the two countries, its CEO, Tony Douglas, said. "India is one of the most important and dynamic aviation markets in the world, and this partnership with Air India marks a defining step in Riyadh Air's mission to connect Saudi Arabia with key global destinations," he added. The latest Saudi-India partnership comes as the Kingdom continues to boost investment in aviation and tourism under Vision 2030. Riyadh Air - owned by the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund - aims to connect Saudi Arabia to more than 100 global destinations by 2030.



ISLAMABAD: German Ambassador Ina Lepel inaugurates mobile vans to facilitate BISP beneficiaries. — DNA

Putin faces rival visions of war and peace at Russia's 'Davos'

ST PETERSBURG: President Vladimir Putin faced two rival outlines of Russia's future as he hosted his premier annual investment conference with the war in Ukraine unabated. Some participants at the glitzy St. Petersburg International Economic Forum said Russia should fight on and gird for global confrontation with the West. Others highlighted the economic benefits to be reaped from ending a war that came almost to the forum's doorstep when Ukrainian drones hit a St. Petersburg oil terminal and naval base on Wednesday, sending smoke billowing over parts of the city. The conflicting narratives illustrate the debate under way among political and business leaders over what the future should hold for Russia, and the domestic influences on Putin after more than four years of war in Ukraine. Putin, 73, has long ruled by balancing the views of different Kremlin factions vying for influence with the man who has been Russia's paramount leader for the past quarter of a century. Signs that the \$3-trillion economy is stagnating as the war drags on with no end in sight have strengthened the arguments of some within the "elite" that the war should be ended and peace struck with the mediation of US President Donald Trump. But some nationalists see the war as merely the first stage of a much deeper global confrontation with what they say is a declining West that means years - or even decades - of possibly global war. "We have to admit that we will be at war in the next few years, maybe for a couple of decades," said Andrey Bezrukov, a former spy arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 2010 while living under a false identity in the United States. "It may be a very hot war, it may be a creeping war. Even if it goes to other regions, we will have two generations that can be considered basically to be at war. And we need to learn how to live with this war," Bezrukov said to applause in a packed hall. Nationalists have said Russia must get in shape or face potential collapse and destruction in what they see as an increasingly dangerous world. — DNA

Oil falls on hopes of broader peace after Lebanon, Israel halt fighting

Asian stocks decline as latest US-Iran fighting unnerves investors

OIL PRICES fell on Thursday as a ceasefire deal between Israel and Lebanon boosted hopes for a broader agreement to end the US-Israeli war with Iran that could lead to a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. Brent futures were down 87 cents, or 0.89%, at \$96.92 a barrel by 0458 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude fell 78 cents, or 0.81%, to \$95.24, paring gains from earlier in the week. Both Brent and WTI rose about 2% on Wednesday after renewed Middle East hostilities including Iranian attacks on Kuwait and US military strikes near the Strait of Hormuz. Israel and Lebanon said late on Wednesday they had agreed to implement a ceasefire, raising hopes for a deal between Washington and Tehran, which has conditioned any agreement in part on an end to fighting between Israel and Lebanon. US President Donald Trump suggested on Wednesday that there could be progress in negotiations with Iran as soon as this weekend. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday said Tehran's contacts with Washington have not been cut off, but no progress has been made in the negotiations, adding both sides were studying the texts that were exchanged. In the US, the Republican-led House approved a resolution on Wednesday to block Trump from continuing the war against Iran. To take effect, the resolution would need Senate approval and two-thirds majorities in both chambers to override an almost certain Trump veto.

Govt committed to protecting minority rights, says Tarar

Attallah Tarar said the government was committed to promoting interfaith harmony, equal citizenship, and an inclusive society where every Pakistani, without discrimination, could contribute to national development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attallah Tarar on Thursday reiterated the government's commitment to the protection of minority rights, saying consultations with representatives of minority and other communities play a vital role in ensuring that the views and needs of all citizens are effectively reflected in legislation and public policies. He expressed these views during a meeting with a representative delegation of the Christian community, which was also attended by Federal Minister for Law, Justice, and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar. The meeting featured a detailed discussion on minority rights, legal reforms, and issues related to the welfare of the Christian community. Attallah Tarar said the government was committed to promoting interfaith harmon-



ny, equal citizenship, and an inclusive society where every Pakistani, without discrimination, could contribute to national development. The Christian community delegation appreciated the government's continued commitment to safeguarding the rights of minority communities and welcomed recent legislation, particularly the Child Marriage Restraint Act. The delegation also lauded the government's efforts to protect minority communities and promote equal opportunities through the National Commission for Minority Rights. Participants discussed issues faced by minority communities and explored ways to ensure that the needs of the Christian community are effectively addressed through relevant laws and policies. Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar said the consultative process was of great importance for promoting comprehensive legal and policy reforms.

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