



Islamabad POST

Friday, June 12, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Wang Yi urges Global dialogue at civilizations day

Detailed News On Page-08

Pope visiting 'dock of shame' in Canary Islands

Detailed News On Page-08



PAF chief for enhanced coop with Turkiye

Detailed News On Page-02



Fiscal performance

Resilient Pakistan posts 3.7% GDP growth: Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb said Pakistan's economic size reached a historic level of Rs126.9 trillion, equivalent to \$452.1 billion, while per capita income increased to \$1,901 from \$1,751 last year

FIJAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Defying global uncertainty, devastating floods and regional tensions, Pakistan's economy rebounded with a robust 3.7 per cent GDP growth in fiscal year 2025-26, showcasing resilience and disciplined economic management, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Thursday. Unveiling the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2025-26, he said the country stayed firmly on its path from stabilization to growth despite multiple external shocks, reflecting renewed confidence in the economy. The minister, accompanied by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani and senior officials from the Ministry of Finance and Revenue, highlighted key economic indicators and performance. "The survey is not just an economic document but a story of resilience shown over the past year," Aurangzeb said, adding that Pakistan remained steadfast on its journey from stabilization to growth. He said that the fiscal year began with global trade uncertainty due to tariff-related issues, followed by devastating floods in August and September and later a regional conflict. "These exogenous factors tested Pakistan's resilience, and we responded effectively while maintaining our growth trajectory," he remarked. Despite these challenges, the country recorded its highest GDP growth in four years.

Continued on Page 06

Govt set to present budget today

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that the Economic Survey would be presented today (Thursday), setting the stage for the upcoming Federal Budget 2026-27 and outlining key fiscal indicators and performance over the past year. The Economic Survey, the pre-budget document, would provide a comprehensive overview of the country's economic performance, including GDP growth, tax revenues, sectoral trends across key industries, and other major fiscal and macroeconomic indicators for the outgoing financial year. The finance minister announced the date for the presentation of the Economic Survey during a Senate session today, while also briefing lawmakers on developments linked to the Middle East conflict and its continuing economic implications. Meanwhile, Adviser to Finance Minister Khurram Shehbaz shared the revised schedule of the federal budget on his official X handle. The finance adviser said FY2026-27 federal budget will be presented in the National Assembly on June 12 (Friday) by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb.

Continued on Page 06



RAWALPINDI: Funeral Services of two shaheed Christian soldiers was offered at Christ Church, Rawalpindi which was also attended by the political and military leadership. - DNA

PM pays tributes to martyrs

Namaz-e-Janaza for Shuhada offered

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Namaz Janaza for Shuhada, who embraced Shahadat yesterday in tragic MI-17 helicopter crash in Muzaffarabad, was offered at Chaklala Garrison, Rawalpindi which was attended by the Honourable Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Minister of Defence, Minister of Information, senior civil and military officials, relatives of the Shuhada, and segments of the society. Earlier Funeral Services of two shaheed Christian soldiers was offered at

Continued on Page 06

'Operationally difficult'

FO says release of Pakistanis from Somali pirates 'top priority'

'Act of war': Islamabad warns Delhi against any attempt to block Pakistan's water

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office said on Thursday that the government remains committed to securing the release of Pakistani citizens held by Somali pirates for nearly two months. The MT Honour 25, carrying 17 crew members, including 10 Pakistanis, was hijacked by pirates near Somalia's semi-autonomous Puntland region on April 21. Families of the hostages have since voiced growing alarm, saying conditions on board have steadily deteriorated during the crew's captivity. In his weekly press briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi regretted that despite the government's

best efforts, it has not been able to secure their release, and they have remained in captivity for around 50 days now.

"We have made some earnest efforts, and our efforts in this regard continue. We are engaged with the Somali authorities and the shipowner, both of whom are engaged with the pirates to secure their early release, as well as the relevant tribes in the Puntland region of Somalia."

Andrabi mentioned that two days back, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar spoke with the Somali Foreign Minister, Abdul Salam Ali, to discuss this issue. The DPM, the spox said, conveyed Pakistan's grave concern over

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Relief for Iman from apex court

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court, by a majority of two to one, on Thursday set aside its Dec 29, 2022 order endorsing the closure of the right to defence of PTI founder Imran Khan in the Rs10 billion defamation suit filed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In April, the apex court had resumed hearing a review petition filed by PTI founder and former premier against the closure of his right to defence in the Rs10 billion defamation case. Headed by Justice Ayesha A. Malik, a three-judge SC bench also comprising Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar and Justice Ishaq Ibrahimi took up a set of review petitions filed by Imran Khan, also a former prime minister.

UK defence minister quits

DNA

LONDON: British defence minister John Healey quit on Thursday in a dispute over military spending, accusing Prime Minister Keir Starmer of failing to commit the government resources that are needed to defend the country at a time of heightened threat. The unexpected resignation, accompanied with a scathing public letter, compounds the pressure on Starmer when he is facing a likely leadership challenge and exposes the crisis at the heart of government - how it can ramp up defence spending when there is no money to spare. Britain's defence and finance ministries have been locked in talks for months over how to meet rising demands to expand military spending, delaying Britain's Defence Investment Plan (DIP) which was expected to be published last year.

Middle East tensions

Trump vows US seizure of Iranian oil infrastructure amid escalating strikes

The World Bank warned that the conflict is already weighing on the global economy. In its latest forecast, it projected worldwide growth to slow to 2.5% in 2026

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump declared that the United States will "take control" of Iran's oil and gas markets as military strikes intensify. Speaking to Fox News, Trump said the U.S. would hit Iran "very hard tonight" and seize key energy infrastructure, drawing parallels to Venezuela. He specifically mentioned Iran's Kharg Island, a critical hub for the country's oil exports, as a target. The announcement comes as U.S. forces expand operations against Iranian assets following weeks of escalating tensions. Trump framed the move as a strategic effort to weaken Tehran's economic lifelines and reassert American dominance in global energy markets. Meanwhile, the World Bank warned that the conflict is already weighing on the global economy. In its latest forecast, it projected worldwide growth to slow to 2.5% in 2026,

Continued on Page 06

Iran's attacks against Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait slammed

DNA

DUBAI: Qatar and Egypt strongly condemned on Thursday Iran's attacks against Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait, describing Tehran's actions a flagrant violation of the three countries' sovereignty and integrity. Qatar, through its foreign ministry, the resurgence of Iranian attacks were "a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of these states and a blatant breach of the rules of international law." Doha "emphasizes the necessity of sparing the region the consequences of these unjustified

Continued on Page 06

Turkish land forces chief calls on field marshal



DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Metin Tokel, Commander of Turkish Land Forces, called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, at General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi today. Upon arrival at GHQ, the visiting dignitary was presented a smartly turned out Guard of Honour by a Army contingent.

During the meeting, matters of mutual professional interest, regional security dynamics, and avenues for enhanced bilateral defence cooperation were discussed. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir highlighted the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and strategic ties between the two countries and appreciated the strong defence partnership between the Armed Forces of Pakistan and Turkiye.

Continued on Page 06

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SCAN TO VISIT WEBSITE

Punjab imposes Section 144 for Muharram security

LAHORE: The Punjab government has imposed Section 144 across the province as part of security measures for Muharram, a spokesperson for the Punjab Home Department said on Thursday. According to the notification, the restrictions will remain in force from 1st to the 10th of Muharram throughout Punjab to ensure law and order and maintain religious harmony during the month. The spokesperson said no new practices or innovations would be allowed in Muharram processions and religious gatherings. Display of all kinds of weapons and explosive materials at public places without permission from the competent authority had also been banned. The government had imposed a complete ban on provocative slogans, gestures and activities that may hurt public sentiments, religious beliefs or sectarian affiliations. Section 144 would also apply to statements, comments or content disseminated through any medium or device that may incite sectarian or ethnic hatred. Strict action would be taken against individuals involved in spreading sectarian hatred through social media or any other platform, the spokesperson warned. The notification further prohibited the construction of bunkers on rooftops of houses or buildings situated along procession routes. Accumulation of stones, bricks, bottles or garbage on rooftops of buildings located on procession routes had also been banned—APP

KP govt plans expansion of fisheries sector

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative Societies, Khurshid Khan Khattak Thursday said KP government will establish additional fish hatcheries and restore flood-affected fisheries infrastructure to strengthen the sector's contribution to provincial revenue and create employment opportunities. He expressed these views during a visit to the Fisheries Training Institute in Mathra Sherabad, where he was briefed on the performance of the Fisheries Department, ongoing development initiatives and future targets. Director General Fisheries Zubair Ali Khan informed the meeting about the department's hatcheries, revenue generation, issuance of licences, available resources, trout fish projects and the condition of hatcheries affected by floods. Speaking on the occasion, Khurshid Khan Khattak said the present government was committed to public welfare and was taking practical steps to improve service delivery and strengthen economic sectors. He said the Fisheries Department had shown consistent growth in provincial revenue and further expansion of fish hatcheries during the current year would help increase income generation. The Special Assistant directed officials to prioritise restoration of damaged hatcheries and resolve issues faced by the department to improve operational efficiency.—APP

ICCI, NACTA forge landmark partnership for harmony

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step towards strengthening public-private collaboration for a safer and more prosperous Pakistan, the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) have reached a landmark understanding to establish a comprehensive framework of cooperation focusing on national security awareness, prevention of violent extremism, economic resilience, business continuity, entrepreneurship development, community engagement and social cohesion. The understanding was reached during a visit of Mr. Jawad Ahmad Dogar, National Coordinator, NACTA, to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He was accompanied by Dr. Uzma Siraj, Director Gender Initiatives; Ms. Faiza Fatima, Deputy Director; and Mr. Mujeeb Talpur, Consultant Media. Under the agreed framework, both organizations will constitute a Joint Working Group (JWG) comprising representatives from ICCI and NACTA to oversee project approvals,

implementation reviews, coordination mechanisms and expansion of collaborative activities. To ensure effective coordination, Dr. Uzma Siraj from NACTA and Mr. Adnan Mukhtar, Convener ICCI Standing Committee on Higher Education Commission (HEC), has been designated as focal persons. Addressing the gathering, Jawad Ahmad Dogar, emphasized the importance of engaging the business community as a constructive stakeholder in fostering a secure, peaceful and prosperous society. He said that the collaboration aims to create greater awareness and strengthen national resilience through policy dialogue, research initiatives, capacity-building programmes and public-private. He noted that youth entrepreneurship, employment generation, women empowerment and enhanced economic participation would remain among the key pillars of the partnership. He stressed that economic progress and social harmony are essential ingredients for building long-term national security and collective prosperity. Welcoming the NACTA delegation, President ICCI Sardar Tahir Mehmood highlighted the Chamber's long standing advocacy for ease of doing business and private sector development. He said that de-

spite numerous challenges, Pakistan's business community remains steadfast in its commitment to contributing to the country's economic progress and transforming Pakistan into a competitive regional economic hub. The ICCI President also outlined the Chamber's future roadmap and ongoing initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, startups and innovation through stronger industry-academia linkages. He underscored ICCI's commitment to supporting women-led enterprises, youth development programmes and inclusive economic growth as essential drivers of sustainable national development. The participants expressed confidence that the collaboration between ICCI and NACTA would pave the way for meaningful engagement between the public and private sectors, helping strengthen social cohesion, economic stability and national resilience. Among others, the meeting was attended by ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, Executive Committee Members Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Zulqurnain Abbasi and Waseem Chaudhry, former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry, ICCI Secretary General Gulam Murtaza, senior members Sajid Iqbal and Ms. Uzma Sheeraz along with representatives from NACTA and the business community.

PAF chief discusses defense coop with Turkish commander

Chief of the Air Staff highlighted the deep-rooted historical, cultural and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkiye, underpinned by the enduring bonds of Islamic brotherhood, mutual trust and shared strategic interests

DNA

ISLAMABAD: General Matin Tokel, Commander Turkish Land Forces, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. The meeting focused on further strengthening bilateral defence cooperation and fostering collaborative endeavours across multiple domains of mutual interest. Chief of the Air Staff highlighted the deep-rooted historical, cultural and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkiye, underpinned by the enduring bonds of Islamic brotherhood, mutual trust and shared strategic interests. He emphasized that Pakistan greatly values its long-standing defence partnership with Turkiye and remains committed to further strengthening bilateral relations across key domains of training, defence collaboration and technological cooperation. The Air Chief also underscored the importance of enhanced military-to-military engagement in light of the evolving regional security landscape, stressing the need for continued coordination and close cooperation between the Armed Forces of both brotherly nations. He also shared insights on PAF's indigenization efforts, including advancements under the National Aerospace Science & Technology Park, and PAF's growing expertise in unmanned systems, artificial intelligence and next-generation defence technologies. Commander Turkish Land Forces appreciated the professionalism, operational excellence and modernization drive of Pakistan Air Force under its current leadership. He lauded the visionary and dynamic leadership of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, acknowledging his unwavering commitment to transforming Pakistan Air Force into a modern, capable and self-reliant force. Commander Turkish Land Forces expressed keen interest in further deepening bilateral engagement and strengthening defence ties, particularly in the areas of training, capacity building and emerging technological domains. Both sides reaffirmed their resolve to enhance interoperability through joint training initiatives, exchange programs and coordinated engagements, while also



agreeing to explore new avenues of cooperation aimed at reinforcing operational preparedness and advancing a resilient long-term strategic partnership. The meeting between Commander Turkish Land Forces and Chief of the Air Staff underscores the depth and

vitality of the enduring military partnership between Pakistan and Turkiye. It serves as a clear testament to the unwavering commitment of both brotherly nations to further consolidate their strategic ties and shared vision for regional peace and stability.

Cultural heritage termed as tool against extremism

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, on Thursday hosted a high-level talk titled "Pluralism Over Polarization: Harnessing Cultural Heritage to Counter Violent Extremism in Pakistan." The aim of the event was to explore how cultural heritage, social cohesion, and inclusive narratives can strengthen Pakistan's response to extremism. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem emphasized that cultural heritage is not merely a legacy of the past but a strategic asset for the future. He argued that pluralism is fundamental to social cohesion, national resilience, and sustainable peace. Drawing on Pakistan's rich history of coexistence and shared traditions, he stressed the need to promote an inclusive national identity that can counter extremist narratives and enhance Pakistan's global image. He reaffirmed IRS's commitment to evidence-based policy dialogue. Participants broadly agreed that Pakistan's response to violent extremism

must extend beyond security measures and incorporate cultural, educational, economic, and media-based approaches within a coherent national framework. Ihsan Ghani, former National Coordinator of NACTA, highlighted the imbalance between tactical counter-terrorism efforts and broader counter-extremism initiatives aimed at preventing radicalization. He argued that cultural initiatives, including community festivals, local theatres, artistic exchanges, and support for traditional arts, can provide positive social identities that weaken extremist appeal. He called for strengthening cultural institutions, promoting local artists in conflict-affected areas, and reviving inter-provincial cultural festivals. Major General (Retd.) Zahid Mahmood, Principal at NUST, identified poor governance and institutional shortcomings as major drivers of polarization. He underscored the importance of educational institutions in shaping identity, citizenship, and belonging, particularly

among youth who extremist recruiters often target. Stressing the growing influence of social media, he advocated empowering young people to create and amplify counter-narratives while promoting digital literacy and civic responsibility. Offering a media and policy perspective, Amir Ghauri, Editor, The News, argued that economic deprivation, unemployment, and exclusion create vulnerabilities that extremist groups exploit. He emphasized that sustainable counter-extremism requires parallel investment in economic opportunity, curriculum reform, and effective oversight of educational and religious institutions. Hassan Khan, Senior Journalist, cautioned against attributing polarization to any single factor, describing it as a complex phenomenon rooted in historical, political, economic, and social dynamics. He called for highlighting Pakistan's stories of resilience, coexistence, and cultural achievement while integrating pluralistic values.—APP

3 women swept away in river Swat

PESHAWAR: Three women drowned in the River Swat near Pul Choki Fishing Hut area in Malakand on Thursday, prompting an emergency rescue operation by Rescue 1122. According to Rescue 1122 Malakand, water rescue and medical teams rushed to the scene immediately after receiving information about the incident. One woman was pulled out of the river by local residents with assistance from Rescue 1122 personnel. She was found unconscious and was provided first aid before being shifted to DHQ Hospital for medical treatment. The body of the second woman was recovered from the Badwan Tarai area and transported to the hospital through a Rescue 1122 ambulance. Officials said all three women belonged to the same family and were residents of Mardan district. Rescue 1122 continued its search operation to locate the third missing woman. Teams from Civil Defence, Nizamuddin Rescue Team and Alkhidmat Foundation volunteers are also participating in the operation.—APP

SAU, Australian Project join hands to protect Banana crop

HYDERABAD: Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam, and an Australian government-supported international research initiative have agreed to strengthen collaboration to protect Pakistan's banana industry from devastating diseases, including Panama Wilt and Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV), which pose a growing threat to a crop that accounts for more than 90 per cent of the country's banana production. The understanding was reached during a meeting between SAU Vice Chancellor Engr Dr Altaf Ali Syal and Dr Munawar Raza Kazmi, focal person of the international project, "Agroecological Management of Sustainable Banana Systems for Smallholders in Asia." The project is being implemented with support from the Australian government and is led by the University of Queensland, Australia. The meeting focused on strengthening research cooperation, developing sustainable disease-management strategies, and enhancing the resilience of banana production systems against emerging biological and climate-related challenges. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Altaf Ali Syal said Sindh remains the backbone of Pakistan's banana industry, providing livelihoods to thousands of farming families across major banana-growing districts, including Hyderabad, Tando Allahyar, Matiari, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar and Thatta. "International cooperation is essential to safeguard Pakistan's banana industry from rapidly increasing biological threats and the impacts of climate change," he said, while appreciating the objectives of

the project and expressing the university's commitment to collaborative research and technology transfer. Dr Munawar Raza Kazmi, Country Manager at Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), Islamabad briefed the Vice Chancellor on the project and said it aims to address the growing threat of Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 (TR4), widely known as Panama disease, which is considered one of the most destructive diseases affecting banana crops worldwide. The project also seeks to develop solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on banana production. He said the initiative is being implemented across Australia, Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan and the Philippines, bringing together international expertise to support smallholder farmers and strengthen sustainable banana production systems. In Pakistan, SAU Tandojam, will lead the project and Prof. Dr. Rehana Naz Syed will be the focal person in this project. According to Dr Kazmi, rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, water scarcity and declining soil fertility are making banana plants increasingly vulnerable to diseases while reducing the resilience of farming systems. He said the project adopts an agroecological approach that combines soil health improvement, beneficial microorganisms, disease-risk reduction, climate adaptation and active farmer participation. "The goal is to improve soil fertility, promote biodiversity, enhance natural disease resistance and support long-term sustainable banana production for smallholder farmers," he added.—DNA

KP govt plans expansion of fisheries sector

DG Livestock Asal Khan, Additional Secretary Livestock Niaz Muhammad Khan, Director Southern Districts Muhammad Ilyas Khattak, Director Fisheries Merged Districts Amir Hamza, Director Headquarters Peshawar Fawad Ali Khalil and other officials were also present



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative Societies, Khurshid Khan Khattak Thursday said KP government will establish additional fish hatcheries and restore flood-affected fisheries infrastructure to strengthen the sector's contribution to provincial revenue and create employment opportunities. He expressed these views during a visit to the Fisheries Training Institute in Mathra Sherabad, where he was briefed on the performance of the Fisheries Department, ongoing development initiatives and future targets. Director General Fisheries Zubair Ali Khan informed the meeting about the department's hatcheries, revenue generation, issuance of licences, available resources, trout fish projects and the condition of hatcheries affected by floods. Speaking on the occasion, Khurshid Khan Khattak said the present government was committed to public welfare and was taking practical steps to improve service delivery and strengthen economic sectors. He said the Fisheries Department had shown consistent growth in provincial revenue and further expansion of fish hatcheries during the current year would help increase income generation. The Special Assistant directed officials to prioritise restoration of damaged hatcheries and resolve issues faced by the department to improve operational efficiency. He also announced that funds would be proposed in the next fiscal year's budget for establishing new fish hatcheries in merged districts to generate local employment opportunities and promote fisheries development. DG Livestock Asal Khan, Additional Secretary Livestock Niaz Muhammad Khan, Director Southern Districts Muhammad Ilyas Khattak, Director Fisheries Merged Districts Amir Hamza, Director Headquarters Peshawar Fawad Ali Khalil and other officials were also present.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JUNE

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

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



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange 9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
- CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....561116
- Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

FCC questions demolishing of Monal, other eateries

During Thursday's hearing, the federal government, through Additional Attorney General Chaudhry Aamir Rehman, supported the CDA's review petition against the demolition orders

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Thursday questioned a 2024 judgment of the Supreme Court (SC) which had paved the way for demolishing the infrastructure developed by the Monal Group of Companies, La Montana and Gloria Jeans, inside the picturesque Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP). The SC had ordered the closure of Monal and the adjacent La Montana restaurant on August 21, 2024, and they were closed the next month to protect the park's biodiversity. Headed by Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, a three-judge FCC bench took up a review petition moved by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) challenging the Supreme Court's (SC) directions to the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) to take possession of restaurants – namely Monal, La Montana and Gloria Jeans – situated inside the MHNP. The CDA and the Islamabad Capital Territory Police were also ordered to assist the wildlife board in this regard. The SC had also ordered that the entrances to the



area where the restaurants were located be barricaded, after which the infrastructure would be demolished – with minimal disturbance to wildlife and without damage to the trees of the national park. On Sept 10 the same year, the SC had dismissed a similar set of review petitions moved by the Monal Group of Companies, the Capital View Point Restaurant (La Montana), Sunshine Heights (Pvt) Ltd, and Brig (ret) Falak Naz Ban-

gash of the Defence Ministry. During Thursday's hearing, the federal government, through Additional Attorney General Chaudhry Aamir Rehman, supported the CDA's review petition against the demolition orders concerning the restaurants. It stated that the judgment was not sustainable in the eyes of the law, as besides Monal, around 113 other similar structures still existed in the Margalla Hills. During the hearing, the FCC also raised questions over the SC's decision to demolish the restaurants, stating that the judgment suggested that animals had rights but not humans. Justice Rizvi recalled that the impugned judgment came despite the fact that Monal's lease revision case was pending before the civil court, in addition to intra-court appeals by some restaurants pending before the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Senior counsel Ahsan Bhoon, on behalf of the restaurants, contended that all parties were in agreement that the case should be allowed to proceed in the civil court. However, Justice Rizvi observed that courts are never run on the basis of agreements between parties, saying that the kind of decision the SC had given could not be overturned by consensus among them.



ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly Nawabzada Mir Jamal Khan Raisani calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on 11 June 2026. DNA

Extreme sun exposure raises health risks

ISLAMABAD: With heat-related illnesses increasing by 10 to 15 percent, experts on Thursday urged outdoor workers, particularly delivery and construction workers to take extra precautions and avoid prolonged exposure to the sun during peak hours, as cases of heat exhaustion, low immunity, joint pain, stomach ailments and skin diseases continue to rise. While speaking to a local media outlet, Jinnah Post-graduate Medical Centre (JPMC) Incharge Emergency Dr Irfan Latif said heat stroke cases are increasing in Karachi and other hot regions due to extreme temperatures and prolonged sun exposure. He warned that outdoor workers, children and the elderly are especially vulnerable during peak summer conditions. He advised people to avoid going outdoors between 10am and 4pm, when the sun is at its strongest. If going outside is unavoidable, individuals should stay in shaded areas, take regular breaks and reduce physical exertion to prevent overheating. Dr Irfan Latif stressed the importance of staying well-hydrated, recommending that people drink plenty of water throughout the day, even without feeling thirsty. He also cautioned against sugary, caffeinated and carbonated drinks, which can worsen dehydration. He further recommended wearing light-colored, loose-fitting clothing to reduce heat absorption. The use of caps, umbrellas, and wet cloths on the head was also suggested to help maintain body temperature and avoid heat-related complications.—DNA

Climate change must trend like viral content, says Tarar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday called for a cultural shift in society to make climate change a mainstream public issue, saying discussions on environmental challenges should receive the same attention on social media as viral and controversial content. Addressing the International Conference on Green Journalism, Media, Climate and Social Responsibility, organised by FUUAST in collaboration with OIC COMSTECH, the minister said climate change remained one of the most serious challenges facing humanity and that awareness was the first and most essential step towards addressing it. Paying tribute to COMSTECH and the organisers of the conference, Tarar said the event had been held at a crucial time and reflected an understanding of the importance of climate awareness and green journalism. "It all starts with awareness," he said, adding that without awareness, societies could neither meet the challenge of climate change nor take precautionary measures and create the enabling environment required to combat it. Describing climate change as an existential threat to humanity, the minister referred to World Health Organization estimates and said that between 2030 and 2050 climate change could result in 250,000

deaths annually. He noted that Pakistan contributed less than one per cent of global carbon emissions but remained among the countries most severely affected by climate-related disasters. "It is time that when we talk about climate change, we must talk about climate justice," he said, arguing that countries with greater contributions to fossil fuel combustion and carbon emissions bore a larger responsibility towards nations contributing less to the problem. Recalling the devastating floods of 2022, Tarar said widespread destruction had been witnessed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh, while the country had also experienced the massive flooding of the Indus River in 2010. "Every few years lives are lost, livelihoods are lost, and people suffer, and due to no fault of their own," he remarked. The minister said awareness campaigns must be tailored to different communities and regions, noting that climate communication could not follow a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Referring to Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, he said member states were obligated not only to raise awareness but also to incorporate climate change into educational programmes and curricula at national, regional and sub-regional levels. Tarar stressed the need to communicate climate-related messages in different languages.

Dust storms, gale force winds to sweep across Pak

ISLAMABAD: The National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a nationwide alert warning of strong winds, dust storms and gusty conditions across several regions of Pakistan through week's end, urging citizens and local authorities to take precautionary measures against potential disruptions and damage. According to the NDMA, the ongoing weather situation is unfolding in line with its seasonal outlook and advance forecasts issued three to four months earlier. The authority said prevailing conditions were consistent with the early warning advisories released by the NEOC, reflecting the effectiveness of its predictive monitoring and preparedness efforts. The alert stated that Islamabad and multiple districts of Punjab, including Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Multan and Bahawalpur, would be expected to experience strong winds and dust laden storms on June 11 and 12. Islamabad, Rawalpindi and adjoining areas would likely face particularly intense wind

gusts on June 12. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, localized windstorms are forecast for Chitral, Swat, Dir, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan during June 11 and 12. Balochistan is expected to remain under the influence of strong winds and dust storms through June 13, with greater intensity anticipated in some districts. Areas likely to be affected include Quetta, Zhob, Pishin, Qila Abdullah, Qila Saifullah, Chagai, Khuzdar, Gwadar and Lasbela. The NDMA also warned that stormy winds could affect Quetta, Zhob, Ziarat, Chaman, Sibi, Harnai, Barkhan, Musa Khel and Surab over the next 12 to 24 hours. Meanwhile, Sindh is forecast to experience dust storms and strong winds through June 13, particularly in Karachi, Hyderabad, Thatta, Badin, Tharparkar, Umerkot and Mirpurkhas. Southern and coastal districts of the province may witness intensified storm activity. The NDMA cautioned that reduced visibility, traffic disruptions and interruptions to daily life could occur due to dust storms and strong winds.—DNA

PCSUMEA delegation meets Ambassador of the Czech Republic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Pakistan Cutlery & Stainless Steel Utensils Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PCSUMEA), led by Convener Muhammad Bilal Saad and Executive Member Furqan Ahmad, met with H.E. Mr. Ladislav Steinhübel, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Pakistan, at the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Islamabad during the meeting, both sides discussed bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and the Czech Republic, industrial cooperation, export promotion, and other matters of mutual interest. The delegation briefed the Ambassador on the capabilities, export potential, and global competitiveness of Pakistan's cutlery and stainless steel utensils industry, as well as the opportunities and challenges facing the sector. The discussion also focused on exploring avenues for enhancing business-to-business cooperation, increasing trade volumes, and strengthening economic ties between the two countries. Both sides expressed their commitment to further promoting commercial engagement and fostering closer economic and trade relations in the future. As a gesture of goodwill and friendship, commemorative souvenirs representing Pakistan's renowned cutlery industry were presented to H.E. Ambassador Ladislav Steinhübel. The Ambassador appreciated the craftsmanship and export excellence of the Pakistani manufacturing sector, particularly the contributions of the Wazirabad industrial clusters. I would appreciate your support in publishing this news.



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Briefs

10th Avenue project delayed due to funds shortage: Talal

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry on Thursday informed the National Assembly that the 10th Avenue project, launched in 2021-22 with an estimated cost of Rs12 billion under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), includes an overhead bridge and a dual carriageway connecting IJP Road with Srinagar Highway, and has been delayed due to a shortage of funds. Responding to a calling attention notice regarding delays and inefficiencies in development projects in Islamabad, including the Lohi Bhair Safari Park and the 10th Avenue project, he said work on one section has reached around 47 percent completion. He said further progress being stalled due to a lack of funding, as no allocation was made in the PSDP last year. The minister added that the project is also facing serious challenges due to encroachments. He said both funding gaps and encroachments must be resolved for the timely completion of the project. He urged lawmakers from the federal capital to approach the Prime Minister for the allocation of funds for the project. Responding to a question from MNA Aliya Kamran on delayed and incomplete development projects despite heavy public spending, he clarified that the Lohi Bhair project falls under the Punjab Forest Department and is not within CDA's jurisdiction. On the Safari Park project, he said a consultant has been appointed and feasibility and technical studies are underway.—APP

Call for constructive opp, warns against disruption in Parliament

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry Thursday called for a constructive role from the opposition and warned against any disruption of parliamentary proceedings. Speaking in the National Assembly, he said Parliament has set a positive example by taking a firm stance against disruptions and urged the opposition to adopt a responsible approach in national matters. He said strict action should be taken against any member who blocks parliamentary business. He added that such members could even be barred from entering Parliament premises and may face criminal proceedings if required. Referring to Pakistani nationals detained in Somalia, the minister said the government has intensified efforts to secure the release of 10 Pakistanis and expressed hope that they would be recovered soon. On prison-related matters, he said meetings with inmates are held under established rules and procedures. He urged political leaders to avoid making statements against the country, its institutions, and the system on such issues. The minister said the PTI founder has been provided medical facilities whenever needed, adding that ensuring timely healthcare for prisoners is the government's responsibility. He said all necessary medical assistance has been given as required. He called on the opposition to improve its conduct and contribute positively to parliamentary work, adding that constructive suggestions would be considered in the federal budget. The minister also criticised the opposition for creating scenes in the House and using videos for social media projection, saying Parliament is not meant for such activities. On Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Tariq Fazal said the government is engaged on the issue and stressed the need for dialogue. He said that 12 seats are reserved for Kashmiri refugees and said the Kashmir issue remains a national priority. He warned a banned action committee against adopting an extreme stance and urged it to return to negotiations, saying past disputes had also been resolved through dialogue. The minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to parliamentary supremacy, dialogue, and peaceful resolution of political issues.—APP

Passing out parade held at PAF Airmen academy Korangi Creek

Felicitating the graduating trainees and their parents, the Chief Guest wished them a bright future and success in their professional assignments. He also commended the instructional staff for their sincere endeavours and commitment to the cause of training

ISLAMABAD: Passing Out Parade of Trainees, Entries No. 2312, 2412 and 2506 was held at PAF Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek. Air Vice Marshal Akhtar Imran Sadzoi, Air Officer Commanding, Southern Air Command, Pakistan Air Force, was the Chief Guest of the ceremony. On his arrival, the Chief Guest was received by Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Shahid Afzaal, Air Officer Commanding, PAF Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek. A total of 1045 trainees from PAF, Pakistan Navy and allied countries successfully completed their training. Addressing the parade, the Chief Guest said that Pakistan Air Force is a highly professional organization that is recognized as a combat-efficient force through its exemplary courage and bravery. As per the vision of Chief of the Air Staff, PAF Airmen Academy Korangi Creek is conducting airman training to cater for ever-evolving Multi Domain Operations by PAF, utilizing elements of space, cyber and electronic warfare along with long-range vectors, unmanned aerial systems and killer drones against the numerically superior adversary. The Chief Guest said that niche and disruptive technologies have changed the landscape of future conflicts. By the grace of Allah Almighty and the unwavering resolve of the national leadership, Pakistan Air Force



has embarked upon the journey of indigenization under the auspices of National Aero Space and Technology Parks. Chief of the Air Staff Trophy for the Overall Best Performance was awarded to Aircrafterman Muhammad Anas Arshad. Asghar Khan Trophy for the Best in Aeronautics was awarded to Aircrafterman Abu Bakar while Nur Khan Trophy for the Best in Aero Avionics Technology was awarded to Aircrafterman Mehmood Hassan. Air Officer Commanding Trophy for the Best in General

Service Training was awarded to Academy Sergeant Aircrafterman Muhammad Arsalan, whereas the Best Performance Trophy for the foreign trainee was awarded to Lance Corporal Ezzeldeen Khaled Al-Deik from Jordan. Felicitating the graduating trainees and their parents, the Chief Guest wished them a bright future and success in their professional assignments. He also commended the instructional staff for their sincere endeavours and commitment to the cause of training.

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Jam assures to take up tobacco industry concerns

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan assured the tobacco industry that the government would carefully examine its proposals regarding taxation, enforcement against illicit trade, and measures aimed at strengthening Pakistan's documented economy while promoting investment and exports. The assurance came during a meeting with a delegation of Pakistan Tobacco Company (PTC), which discussed budget-related proposals, challenges facing the tobacco sector, and measures required to curb the growing illicit cigarette trade, said a release issued here on Thursday. The PTC delegation informed the Minister that strengthened enforcement measures over the past year had contributed to a reduction in the share of illicit cigarettes in the market, resulting in improved government revenues and growth in the documented sector. The delegation noted that continued enforcement against non-duty-paid and smuggled cigarettes could further enhance tax collection and create a more level playing field for legitimate businesses. The delegation also highlighted concerns regarding the increasing influx of smuggled tobacco products, particularly through border regions, and requested stronger action against illicit trade networks. The PTC emphasized that cigarettes have become one of the most lucrative smuggled products, causing substantial losses to the national exchequer and undermining compliant manufacturers. The company urged the government to restore a simplified Final Tax Regime (FTR) mechanism for imports and to rationalize tax policies in a manner that discourages illicit trade while encouraging documentation and investment. It also called for broadening the tax base by bringing the undocumented sector into the formal economy rather than placing additional burdens on existing taxpayers. The delegation further pointed out that Pakistan's business community was facing multiple challenges, including high taxation, elevated financing costs, increasing compliance requirements, and provincial levies, all of which were affecting competitiveness and discouraging investment. The concerns were also expressed regarding the migration of skilled professionals, with businesses finding it increasingly difficult to retain experienced human resources. Speaking on the occasion, Jam Kamal Khan acknowledged the industry's concerns and stressed upon the importance of maintaining a balance between revenue generation and economic growth.—DNA

NA passes bill to repeal PIA Corporation Act 2026

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday passed a bill repealing the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Act, 2026, following completion of the national flag-carrier's privatisation through a competitive bidding process that transferred full operational control to the private sector. The bill was tabled in the House by Federal Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif. Speaking on the floor, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Privatisation Muhammad Ali said the government has completed the privatisation process of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) through an open and

competitive bidding mechanism. He said three bidders participated in the process initiated in December. He added that the winning consortium is led by Arif Habib Corporation Limited, Fatima Fertiliser Company Limited, Lake City Holdings (Private) Limited, The City School (Private) Limited, AKD Group Holdings (Private) Limited, and Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited. He said the consortium initially holds 75 per cent shares, while an option to acquire the remaining 25 per cent has also been exercised, resulting in full operational control of the airline being transferred to the private sector. He said the total private-sector investment is estimated at around Rs180 billion, including Rs55 billion as divestment proceeds to the government and Rs125 billion as fresh equity injection for recapitalisation of PIA. On the relocation of the airline's head office, he clarified that after full privatisation, operational decisions will be taken by the board and shareholders on commercial grounds, and the government will have no legal role in such matters. He said safeguards for employees were ensured in the agreement, adding that all employees will have job protection for 12 months after the transition, while service conditions will remain unchanged during this period. He further said pension payments for serving employees will continue under existing arrangements, and retirees will also continue to receive pensions without interruption.—APP

Call for enhanced efforts to eliminate child labour

ISLAMABAD: International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Director Geir T. Tonstol on Thursday called for accelerated and sustained efforts to eliminate child labour, emphasizing the need to address underlying socio-economic challenges including poverty, informal employment and limited access to education. Speaking at a media interaction ahead of the World Day Against Child Labour, observed globally on June 12, he said this year's theme, "Red Cards to Child Labour: Fair Play for Children, Decent Work for Adults," highlights the importance of collective action to protect children and promote decent work opportunities for adults. He said the eradication of child labour requires a comprehensive approach that ensures improved livelihoods for families, strengthened social protection systems and enhanced access to quality education for all children. The ILO Country Director noted that while progress has been made globally, child labour continues to remain a concern in various regions, including parts of the world where socio-economic vulnerabilities persist. He said available estimates indicate that a significant number

of children remain out of school, underscoring the importance of strengthening education systems and improving school enrolment and retention rates. Geir T. Tonstol said child labour is more prevalent in rural and underserved areas, where children are often engaged in agriculture, brick kilns, domestic work and informal sector activities. He stressed the importance of effective implementation of international labour standards, including ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182, which Pakistan has ratified, and noted that continued progress in this area would support broader social and economic development goals. He further highlighted that structural factors, including informality in labour markets and economic vulnerabilities, can increase risks for children in certain circumstances, particularly during periods of economic or climate-related shocks. The ILO official also drew attention to the need for greater awareness and strengthened institutional coordination among government bodies, employers' organizations, workers' representatives and civil society to address child labour in a sustainable manner.—APP

Eco growth remain govt's top priorities: Huzafa

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Huzafa Rehman said Thursday that the government had made every effort in the federal budget to provide maximum relief to the public while continuing structural reforms to strengthen the economy. Providing relief to the public and ensuring economic growth remain the government's top priorities, he said while speaking to a local media outlet. He said every effort had been made in the federal budget to ease the financial burden on citizens while maintaining fiscal responsibility and pursuing structural reforms. He stressed that long-term public re-

lief could only be achieved through sustainable structural reforms. Referring to the privatization process of PIA and other reform initiatives, he said the government was taking difficult but necessary decisions to strengthen the economy and improve governance. Huzafa Rehman also emphasized the importance of strengthening the federation and called for greater cooperation between the federal and provincial governments. He said progress in key sectors such as education, health, and climate change required a coordinated national approach. Huzafa noted that provinces needed to play a more active role in utilizing

educational grants and scholarships and implementing climate-related initiatives. He said stronger provincial participation was essential to meeting public expectations and achieving sustainable national development. Concluding his remarks, Huzafa Rehman said that meaningful progress could only be achieved through collective efforts by the federation and the provinces. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to economic reforms, public welfare and sustainable development, expressing hope that stronger inter-governmental coordination would help deliver the relief and opportunities that citizens expect.—DNA

SJC decides to amend judges' code of conduct

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) of Pakistan on Thursday decided to introduce certain amendments to the Code of Conduct for Judges while considering a range of institutional and administrative matters during a meeting held at the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The meeting was chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi in his capacity as Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council. It was attended by Chief Justice of the Federal Constitutional Court Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Supreme Court judges Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Federal Constitutional Court judge Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court Justice Aalia Neelum. Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court Justice S.M. Attique Shah participated as a substituted member. The Council also discussed the proposed draft Rules Regulating Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Council. However, the matter was deferred for further deliberations. In what was described as a demonstration of institutional accountability and transparency, the Council took up matters relating to some of its own members.—APP

District courts dispose of over 1.3m cases

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan on Thursday chaired the 60th meeting of the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NPMC) at the Supreme Court of Pakistan, where senior judges and government officials reviewed judicial reforms, case disposal performance and measures aimed at improving access to justice. The meeting was attended by the Chief Justices of the Lahore High Court, Peshawar High Court and High Court of Sindh, the senior puisne judge of the Islamabad High Court, the Secretary Ministry of Law and Justice and the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission. Discussing cases of enforced disappearances, the committee was informed that the federal government had, in principle, agreed to establish a separate commission comprising former Supreme Court judge Justice (Retd.) Manzoor Ahmad Malik and National Commission for Human Rights Chairperson Rabiya Javeri Agha. The proposed body would provide a redress mechanism and oversee the implementation of legal provisions requiring the production of arrested persons before a court within 24 hours.—APP

Pakistan's strength lies in national unity: Masood

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China and the United Nations, former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan, Thursday said that Pakistan's security, stability, and future prosperity depend not only on its strategic capabilities but also on national cohesion, technological innovation, economic resilience, and investment in education and human development. Addressing a gathering Nazari-Pakistan Council, Sardar Masood Khan said that Pakistan's defence capability has evolved through decades of national effort, scientific achievement, and strategic foresight. He noted that Pakistan's deterrence framework emerged from difficult regional circumstances and has contributed significantly to maintaining strategic stability in South Asia. He observed that changing regional security dynamics, including evolving military doctrines and emerging technologies, have reinforced the importance of maintaining a credible deterrence posture. Pakistan, he said, has consistently demonstrated the capacity to safeguard its sovereignty while exercising restraint and responsibility in matters of national security. Highlighting the role of scientists, engineers, policymakers, and national leadership, he paid tribute to the generations that contributed to Pakistan's strategic and technological advancement. He emphasized that major national achievements are rarely the result of individual effort alone but rather the product of collective vision, institutional commitment, and national resolve. Sardar Masood Khan stated that modern security is no longer confined to conventional military strength. The future, he said, will increasingly be shaped by technological superiority, innovation, cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and indigenous research. Nations that invest in knowledge, science, and technology today will emerge as the leaders of tomorrow. He warned that alongside traditional security challenges, Pakistan faces new threats in the information domain. The spread of misinformation, disinformation, deepfakes, and digital manipulation, he said, poses serious challenges to national cohesion and public trust. Addressing these threats requires informed citizens, strong institutions, and a commitment to truth and responsible communication.

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 210

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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Lebanon proxy conflict is derailing Trump's Iran deal

OSAMA AL-SHARIF

THIS week's collapse of the ceasefire between Israel and Iran, which had held for nearly 60 days and was part of a broader US-Iran truce, is a blow to President Donald Trump's efforts to conclude a permanent agreement with Tehran that would initially reopen the Strait of Hormuz and later lead to a full deal to resolve Iran's nuclear threat. The two sides exchanged blows, with Iran raining missiles on Israel on Sunday night in retaliation for an Israeli strike that hit Beirut's southern district earlier that day. Despite Trump's attempt to dissuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from responding, Israel carried out a number of airstrikes deep into Iranian territory on Monday. Iran did not waver and struck what it said were military bases in Israel. By early morning Washington time, Trump posted on social media that both sides were seeking an immediate ceasefire and that final peace negotiations were proceeding, adding that things should move quickly. Soon after, Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced they had ended strikes against Israel. Later that day, Israel too said it had heeded Trump's call to end its attacks on Iran. But senior Iranian officials made it clear: not only was Beirut off-limits but so was southern Lebanon. Israel doubled down, saying that the ceasefire with Iran had nothing to do with its military operations in southern Lebanon and that even Beirut's southern district – Hezbollah's main stronghold – would be struck whenever Tel Aviv deemed necessary. Netanyahu later announced that Israel's mission to defeat the pro-Iran Lebanese militia was not over. Iran wanted to emphasize that the April 8 ceasefire agreement with the US covered all fronts, including Lebanon. By Monday afternoon, the two sides were at it again. Hezbollah attacked the Israeli military presence in occupied southern Lebanon, while Israel resumed its bombardment of Lebanese targets in the south, including the city of Tyre. Iran made verbal threats but held its ground.

Since Israel and Hezbollah agreed to a ceasefire on April 16, the Lebanese government has documented nearly 3,500 Israeli violations of the truce. Hezbollah responded by attacking Israeli military positions in southern Lebanon and firing rockets and drones into northern Israel. The White House did not intervene to stop the Israeli encroachment on Lebanese territory or the widespread demolition of Lebanese towns and villages, even as Washington hosted historic direct negotiations between the Lebanese government and Israel – talks that Hezbollah had rejected. An agreement between Beirut and Tel Aviv to observe a ceasefire, without mentioning an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, was also rebuffed by Hezbollah and never went into effect. Yet, when Israel threatened to carry out strikes on Beirut last week,



Trump claimed to have told Netanyahu to back down – only to be quoted shortly after as saying he supported Israel's surgical strikes against Hezbollah.

Lebanon has become a bargaining chip in the US-Iran standoff. Netanyahu was more than happy to carry out the systematic destruction of southern Lebanon as long as Washington looked away, using the card as leverage over Tehran's new leaders. Hezbollah – Iran's most valuable regional proxy – was losing territory and grassroots support. It had become Iran's soft underbelly as Tehran attempted to strengthen its negotiating position with Trump. Iran had to respond for several reasons. It wanted to emphasize that the April 8 ceasefire agreement with the US covered all fronts, including Lebanon. It also sought to break the diplomatic stalemate with Washington by stirring the pot at a moment when Trump is facing domestic pressure to resolve the Gulf crisis – one largely of his own making. And it wanted to demonstrate that it still held full command over its proxies: Hezbollah in Lebanon, pro-Shiite militant groups in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen. On Monday, the Houthis fired two long-range ballistic missiles toward Israel and vowed to close the Bab Al-Mandab Strait to all Israel-bound vessels. For Netanyahu, Tehran's attempt to link any US-Iran agreement to its ongoing military campaign in Lebanon is a red line. The concept of "the unity of the arenas" – Iran's insistence on treating all regional fronts as interconnected – is anathema to Israel. Questions are mounting over Netanyahu's toxic influence on the Trump White House and the Republican Party. Whether Trump asked Netanyahu not to retaliate against Iran's Sunday night attacks or quietly gave him the green light for limited strikes, the question of who is really in charge – and who holds leverage over whom – is now reverberating through Washington. The Lebanese crisis, meanwhile, could quickly spiral into a broader regional war. Iran has made clear that Lebanon and its proxy represent new red lines. Israel, for its part, cannot afford to be seen as defeated in Lebanon, with Hezbollah posing what it regards as an existential threat. Conspicuously absent from this dangerous equation are America's regional allies, which continue to bear the cost of a shortsighted US policy that places Israel's expansionist interests above all others. Trump may soon lose interest and walk away from the wreckage his war of choice has left across the region. What would remain would be a series of festering, unresolved conflicts. If there is one lesson to be drawn from the past few months, it is this: a clear separation between US and Israeli policy in the region is not optional – it is essential if America is to balance its alliances and protect its long-term interests. Netanyahu's regional agenda has proven disruptive, self-serving and deeply damaging to sustainable ties between Washington and its regional partners.

USA vs Iran: Back to Square One

Qamar Bashir



In the eyes of many observers, Israel repeatedly emerged as the decisive spoiler, throwing a spanner into the diplomatic process whenever the United States and Iran seemed close to sealing a deal. What could have become a major diplomatic achievement has instead returned to full-scale confrontation. The latest crisis has again exposed the contradiction at the heart of American policy. Washington says it wants a deal, but its military posture keeps expanding

Since February 28, President Donald Trump has repeatedly declared that a breakthrough agreement with Iran was imminent. The message was consistent: diplomacy was progressing, a deal was close, and Iran would not acquire nuclear weapons. Yet each time Washington and Tehran appeared near the finish line, a new escalation pulled them back from the edge of agreement to the edge of war. In the eyes of many observers, Israel repeatedly emerged as the decisive spoiler, throwing a spanner into the diplomatic process whenever the United States and Iran seemed close to sealing a deal. What could have become a major diplomatic achievement has instead returned to full-scale confrontation. The latest crisis has again exposed the contradiction at the heart of American policy. Washington says it wants a deal, but its military posture keeps expanding. It speaks of diplomacy, yet continues to rely on air power, naval deployments, missile strikes, sanctions, and military threats. The result is not peace, not victory, and not a settlement. It is simply a return to square one. The downing of a U.S. Apache helicopter in the Persian Gulf has now become a symbol of this dangerous drift. The Apache is not just a helicopter; it is an emblem of American military power. Its presence near Iran raises a simple but powerful question: what was an American war machine doing thousands of miles away from the United States, operating so close to Iranian waters and territory? If an Iranian helicopter were hovering near American shores, Washington would never describe it as harmless. Yet when U.S. assets operate near Iran, any Iranian response is immediately labeled aggression. This is where the language of "self-defense" has been turned upside down. When Israel attacks Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, or Iran, it is called self-defense. When the United States strikes Iranian assets, it is called self-defense. But when the targeted country responds, its response is called escalation or aggression. This manipulation of language has become one of the most dangerous weapons of modern war. The attacker claims defense; the defender is branded the aggressor. The collapse of the latest ceasefire is especially painful because considerable diplomatic effort had gone into preventing a wide-

er war. Pakistan, among others, played a quiet but important mediating role in helping bring the parties back from the brink. Those efforts proved that even bitter adversaries can step away from disaster when diplomacy is given space. But now, once again, that work appears to have been wasted by renewed escalation. This renewed conflict also comes at the worst possible time for the United States. America jointly with Mexico and Canada is hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026, one of the greatest sporting events in human history. This should have been a moment of celebration, unity, culture, football, and global goodwill. Instead of seeing the world united under the banner of sport, audiences are again watching missiles, military briefings, oil shocks, and fears of regional war. Football represents everything war destroys. In football, nations compete without killing. They struggle without hatred. They fight for victory within rules accepted by all. Winners celebrate; losers congratulate. The entire world comes together under one umbrella. That is the spirit FIFA brings. But the spirit now emerging from Washington and Tel Aviv is the opposite: domination, escalation, coercion, and destruction. The deeper issue is that this war is not only about Iran's nuclear program but a part of a broader regional project in which Israel seeks to reshape the Middle East under the cover of permanent insecurity. The controversy in the United Kingdom over Israeli-linked efforts to market or sell property connected to occupied West Bank settlements while war is still raging in the middle east is therefore not a side issue. It fits into a larger pattern. While war dominates the headlines, land consolidation continues quietly. While the world watches missiles and drones, facts on the ground are created brick by brick, road by road, settlement by settlement. This is why the West Bank real-estate controversy matters. It shows how occupation is converted into commerce, how captured land is repackaged as investment, and how political control is normalized through private transactions. In this reading, the project of "Greater Israel" is not pursued only through tanks and aircraft. It is also pursued through land sales, demographic engineering, diplomatic pressure, lobbying, and the gradual normalization of illegal

occupation. War becomes the smoke screen; real estate becomes the instrument. Israel is also laying down the trap for Washington. The United States is being pushed to fight a war whose ultimate benefits may not belong to America at all. If Iran is weakened, isolated, or broken, the greatest strategic winner may be Israel. If Iran's resources, geography, and regional influence are neutralized, Israel's dream of uncontested regional supremacy moves closer to reality. America pays the price in money, lives, global reputation, inflation, oil shocks, and military overstretch, while Israel advances its own long-term project.

This reality creates a profound strategic dilemma. For months, the United States and its allies have relied on the same war machinery: air strikes, naval pressure, missile attacks, sanctions, intelligence operations, and threats. These tools have failed to produce decisive political results. Iran remains intact. If the same tactics failed in the first phase of the war, there is little reason to believe that continuing them for another year will produce a different result. This is why Washington must recognize the danger before it is trapped. Israel and its hawks in Washington are creating conditions in which America will eventually be told that it has only two choices: put boots on Iranian soil or use nukes. But those are not America's only choices. The United States can still choose independent judgment. It can separate American national interests from Israeli strategic ambitions. It can refuse to be dragged into a war designed by others and paid for by America. The lesson is therefore clear: before considering any step that could transform a regional confrontation into a far larger and potentially uncontrollable conflict, American policymakers must carefully ask whether such actions genuinely advance U.S. national interests or merely advance objectives conceived by Israel. The answer to that question may determine not only the future of the current crisis but also the future balance of power across the entire Middle East.

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

What remains of Tehran's empire?

Abdulrahman Al-Rashed

It hopes that negotiations with the US administration will help preserve its extensive realm as much as possible. No state has succeeded in imposing such widespread hegemony in the Arab region, using both hard and soft power, as Iran did over three decades until the Oct. 7, 2023, attack occurred. Nasserism's intellectual and military reach swept through various parts of the region, but it failed to plant proxies, establish governments and control vast geopolitical areas

TODAY, Iran clings to one thing: preserving some of its geopolitical gains in the Arab region. Will it succeed in negotiations after failing in war? It seeks to control Iraq and preserve Hezbollah in Lebanon, having lost Syria and being on the verge of losing the Houthis in Yemen. It hopes that negotiations with the US administration will help preserve its extensive realm as much as possible. No state has succeeded in imposing such widespread hegemony in the Arab region, using both hard and soft power, as Iran did over three decades until the Oct. 7, 2023, attack occurred. Nasserism's intellectual and military reach swept through various parts of the region, but it failed to plant proxies, establish governments and control vast geopolitical areas. Cairo's influence over Syria, in the name of unity, lasted only three years before it was ousted in the first coup. Iranian influence, however, has been extensive, long-lasting and backed by military force, unparalleled in the region since the decline of the British Empire's presence. Tehran advanced far in its expansion, reaching the borders of Türkiye and the waters of the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. In the current negotiations, it seeks to preserve most of the expansion it achieved. Recent events have revealed the costly price of the Oct. 7 operation. By losing the Assad regime in Syria, it no longer has a corridor to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Its strategic balance with Türkiye has weakened and it has lost two fronts overlooking Israel: southern Lebanon and western

Syria. Hormuz was not the surprise, but rather Iran's widespread attacks on the Gulf and taking its states hostage. Tehran's empire was built on propaganda and weapons and it nurtured a generation of Arabs, some of whom believed in the revolution and its image of resistance against the West and Zionism. But, as Al-Mutanabbi said: "The sword conveys truer tidings than books." And just as happened to Nasserist expansion, which extended north to Syria, south to Yemen, east to Kuwait and west to Libya, Israeli power has crippled its Iranian rival and continues to push it back regionally. This expansion was always going to lead to a clash with Israel, which the events of Oct. 7 accelerated, putting all proposals to the test. Iran was not a paper tiger but a heavily armed fortress ruled by the Revolutionary Guards from behind the ayatollahs. However, it was not a military match for Israel and its ally America. Its military resilience was greater than expected. Offensively, thousands of missile and drone attacks on its enemy Israel did not achieve significant goals. Its strategists succeeded in compensating for what they failed to achieve in confronting the attacks by adopting an equally impactful plan. Closing the Strait of Hormuz became a high-pressure card. Hormuz was not the surprise, but rather Iran's widespread attacks on the Gulf and taking its states hostage. These states are skillfully avoiding becoming a battlefield and are accepting some losses, realizing that matters are out of their control. It is better for Saudi Arabia and its allies to leave the battle to be settled by the three powers and, whatever the outcome, this re-

mains preferable to engaging in direct combat. From the course of the war and its aftermath, we sense that Tehran does not wish to resume fighting Hezbollah, which once threatened the region, is now fighting for survival. Israel, which was not satisfied with President Donald Trump's truce and the negotiation process, opened the southern Lebanon front, seized all Hezbollah strongholds, crossed the Litani River and now threatens Tyre, perhaps even intending to march to Beirut. More than 100 days have passed since the start of the war and two months since the truce and Iran has exhausted most of its options. Trump's blockade on Tehran's ports has deprived it of its highest daily revenue in four decades. From the course of the war and its aftermath, we sense that Tehran does not wish to resume fighting. Even the 10 missiles it launched at northern Israel for a few hours this week were a propaganda announcement and came to reinforce this hypothesis. The regime weaves around itself an image of an invincible regional power, hoping to achieve through negotiations what it failed to achieve through military force.

Its endurance of losses, its targeting of less-defended areas and its recent attack on Israel are all theatrical displays. What worries everyone is that the US administration might fall into Iran's trap and grant it more than \$24 billion in the negotiations and lift the blockade, in addition to overlooking its ballistic missile system and regional proxies, which would mean that future confrontations with Iran would be almost certain.

Briefs

Resilient Pakistan posts 3.7% GDP growth: Aurangzeb

FROM PAGE 01

He recalled that the economy had contracted by 0.2 per cent in 2023, followed by growth of 2.6 per cent in 2024 and 3.2 per cent in 2025. Aurangzeb said Pakistan's economic size reached a historic level of Rs126.9 trillion, equivalent to \$452.1 billion, while per capita income increased to \$1,901 from \$1,751 last year. He said the growth was broad-based, with agriculture expanding by 2.89 per cent despite flood-related losses. The crop sector returned to positive growth while livestock, contributing around 60 per cent to agricultural GDP, continued to perform strongly, he added. The industrial sector, he said, also showed significant improvement, with large-scale manufacturing growing by 6.1 per cent, the highest in four years. Out of 22 manufacturing sectors, 16 recorded positive growth, including food, textiles, automobiles, petroleum products and electrical equipment. On the demand side, he pointed to strong consumption trends, including a 10 per cent increase in cement demand, 17 per cent in fertilizer, 31 per cent in automobiles and notable growth in petroleum and mobile phone usage. The services sector remained a key driver of the economy, growing by 4.9 per cent and contributing nearly 58 per cent to GDP. Information and communication services recorded a remarkable 7.52 per cent growth, reflecting the expanding role of the digital economy. Highlighting fiscal consolidation, the minister said the fiscal deficit was reduced to 0.7 per cent of GDP from 2.6 per cent last year, while primary surplus improved. Federal Board of Revenue collections increased by 10.1 per cent and markup payments declined by 23 per cent, creating additional fiscal space, he added. "Despite global slowdown, where growth declined to 3.1 per cent, Pakistan has outperformed expectations," Aurangzeb said, reiterating the government's commitment to sustaining inclusive and broad-based economic growth.

Govt set to present...

FROM PAGE 01

Prior to the budget presentation, the Pakistan Economic Survey FY2025-26 will be launched by the FinMin tomorrow at 2.20pm, the FinMin adviser said. During a debate on a motion regarding petrol price hikes earlier today, Senator Mohsin Aziz said petrol prices had risen by 200%, criticising government policy on fuel pricing and subsidies and raising concerns over the burden on consumers. He argued that while the government had reduced jet fuel prices, relief had not been extended to ordinary consumers, adding that public finances were under pressure as government expenditures continued without reduction and petroleum levy revenues were not being utilised for public benefit. Responding to lawmakers, Aurangzeb said that at the start of the Middle East conflict it was unclear whether it would last a week or a month, adding that it had now continued for three and a half months with on-going economic effects.

Turkish land forces...

FROM PAGE 01

The visiting dignitary also visited Naval Headquarters (NHQ), Islamabad, and called on Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T BT, Chief of Naval Staff. During the meeting, matters of professional interest and regional maritime security environment were discussed. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged its contributions towards regional peace and stability. He also expressed his commitment to further enhancing defence cooperation and institutional linkages between the armed forces of the two brotherly nations.

Pakistan Make History with International Football Triumph

The final whistle sparked jubilant celebrations as Pakistan sealed a historic triumph, winning their third consecutive match and lifting the Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament trophy

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**

ISLAMABAD: Shayek Dost's spectacular overhead kick and a late solo effort from Harun Hamid helped Pakistan end a 74-year wait for an international football tournament title as they defeated Afghanistan 2-0 in the final of the Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament. Backed by passionate supporters waving national flags and chanting "Pakistan, Pakistan", the Shaheens delivered a memorable performance to claim the first stand-alone international tournament title in the country's history. Shayek produced a moment of brilliance in the 24th minute, displaying

remarkable athleticism to fire home an acrobatic overhead kick, before substitute Harun Hamid sealed the victory deep into stoppage time with a dazzling individual run and finish. Pakistan's previous tournament success came at the 1952 Asian Quadrangular Football Tournament, where the title was shared with India after the competition was decided on a league basis. The last time Pakistan had reached the final of an international tournament was at the Merdeka Cup in 1962. Having already beaten Afghanistan 2-0 in the round-robin stage to finish top of the standings, Pakistan entered the final full of confidence. However, Afghanistan started brightly before Pakistan gradually took control.

The breakthrough came after Otis Khan won a free-kick. Afghanistan failed to clear the danger and, following a cross from the right, an attempted effort by Otis fell kindly for Shayek, who acrobatically converted from close range. The victory was finally secured in stoppage time when Harun Hamid picked up the ball, weaved past his marker with brilliant footwork and calmly slotted his shot in off the post. The final whistle sparked jubilant celebrations as Pakistan sealed a historic triumph, winning their third consecutive match and lifting the Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament trophy. Meanwhile Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Syed Mohsen Gilani has

described the national team's historic Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament triumph as the highest point of his tenure, saying the victory marks the beginning of a new era for football in the country. Congratulating the nation following Pakistan's landmark title-winning campaign in the Maldives, Gilani said the achievement fulfilled a promise he made upon assuming office — to take Pakistan football to unprecedented heights and deliver milestones never before achieved. "When I took over as President of the Pakistan Football Federation, I had vowed we would do things that had never been done before. First, it was our women's national team at the FIFA Series and now it is our men's national team," Gilani said.

National Junior Champion Atta Ullah eyes Asian glory

PESHAWAR: Young sprinter Atta Ullah has emerged as one of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's most promising athletics talents after securing first position in the 100-metre race at the National Junior Championship with an impressive timing of 10.56 seconds. On the track of Islamia College Peshawar, Atta Ullah has set his sights on representing Pakistan at the international level and winning gold medals in future Asian Junior and South Asian Federation (SAF) Games competitions. Former international athlete Habib ur Rehman Afridi, who won gold medals in the 200m and 400m events at the Pakistan Junior Athletics Meet in Gujranwala in 1983, expressed confidence in the young athlete's future. "Atta Ullah possesses the passion, discipline and commitment required to excel at the highest level. He has the potential to earn distinction for Pakistan in future Asian and SAF Games," Afridi said. According to sports officials, Atta Ullah clocked 10.56 seconds during training and further improved his performance to 10.54 seconds in another race, highlighting his steady progress and growing potential in sprinting. Afridi said Islamia College had a rich tradition of producing outstanding athletes, including renowned sprinters Zafar Iqbal and Iqbal Shinwari, adding that Atta Ullah was carrying forward that legacy. He urged the sports authorities to provide financial assistance, quality coaching and training opportunities to the young athlete to help him achieve his full potential. "Talented athletes like Atta Ullah require timely support and encouragement. With proper training and institutional backing, he can compete successfully at the international level and bring laurels to the country," he said. Atta Ullah said his immediate goal was to continue improving his timings and earn a place in Pakistan's national athletics squad. The young sprinter's achievements have generated excitement among athletics enthusiasts in the province, who view him as a future star capable of reviving the country's sprinting tradition. With his recent success at the National Junior Championship, Atta Ullah's journey towards international competition has begun, raising hopes that he could follow in the footsteps of Pakistan's celebrated athletes and make his mark on the global stage. — APP

PM congratulates Pakistan football team

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Pakistan football team, coaches, and management on becoming champions on winning the final of the 2026 Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament. Pakistan beat Afghanistan 2-0 in the Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament final in Male on Wednesday. The win gave Pakistan their first senior men's international final triumph since 1991 and first standalone title since 1952. In a statement, the prime minister said that the historic victory was a matter of pride for the entire nation as the team had elevated the country's stature on the global stage through its spectacular performance, determination, and teamwork. He emphasized that this win marked the first official international football tournament title in Pakistan's history, serving as a significant milestone for the promotion of national sports and young athletes. Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed hope that the national football team would continue to secure further victories with the same passion and hard work in the future, bringing pride to the nation. — APP

Pakistani envoy undertakes productive visit to Shenyang City

BEIJING: Pakistan's top envoy to China, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi undertook a productive visit to Shenyang city, capital of China's northeastern Liaoning province from June 8-10 to deepen educational and economic cooperation. The primary purpose of the visit was to inaugurate the groundbreaking Pakistan-China Joint Research Centre at Shenyang University of Chemical Technology and to represent Pakistan at 3rd Liaoning International Friendship Cities Conference. During his visit, Ambassador Hashmi held detailed and useful meetings with provincial and city leaders to further expand economic, investment, educational, people-to-people and technical training cooperation. The interactions and meetings were held with Mr. Wang Xinwei, Governor Liaoning Province; Zhou Bo, Chairman of the Liaoning Provincial CPPCC, and Zhao Wei, Vice Mayor of Shenyang. Discussions focused on expanding business-to-business, investment and trade, cooperation particularly in fine chemicals, agriculture, minerals, information technology, and new materials. Both sides also welcomed progress toward the early signing of a sister-province agreement between Sindh and Liaoning, which would provide a new mechanism to promote practical cooperation at sub-national levels. Noting the strong complementarities between Liaoning's industrial strengths and Pakistan's development priorities under CPEC 2.0, the Ambassador invited Liaoning-based pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and healthcare enterprises to participate in

the Pakistan-China B2B Investment Conference being held in Karachi on July 17-18. He also highlighted the opportunities offered by Pakistan's Special Economic Zones for Chinese investors seeking to expand production and access regional markets. A key highlight of the visit was inauguration of the China-Pakistan Joint Research Centre at Shenyang University of Chemical Technology (SYUCT). Established as a result of initiative taken by Ambassador Hashmi last year followed by sustained engagement between academic and research institutions in Pakistan and China, the Centre will serve as a platform for joint research, talent development, academic exchanges, and industry-academia collaboration in emerging areas of chemical science and technology. The Centre brings together SYUCT with leading Pakistani institutions, including the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS), Islamabad; NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi; and the University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar. It will make joint efforts to strengthen cooperation in chemical engineering, advanced materials, and applied technologies while fostering the next generation of scientific talent in both countries. During his visit to SYUCT, the Ambassador and his delegation toured the Key Laboratory of Resource Chemical Engineering and Materials and the Research Institute of Strategic Materials and Components. This visit offered first-hand exposure to the university's research and innovation ecosystem. — APP

Govt to clear pending dues of media houses: Tarar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday said the government was making efforts to clear remaining outstanding liabilities owed to private television channels to help them ensure timely payment of salaries to media employees. Chinese business insights Responding to questions during the National Assembly's Question Hour, the minister acknowledged that the federal government still owed substantial amounts to private media outlets, outstanding liabilities that were being settled gradually. Attaullah Tarar said the issue of pending payments to media houses would also come under discussion at a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) scheduled for tomorrow. "We are working to clear these liabilities. It has become a regular practice that media organizations request the release of payments before Eid so that they can pay salaries to their employees and meet other financial obligations," he said. The minister said a dedicated cell within the Press Information Department (PID) monitored the status of pending dues and coordinated with media organizations to facilitate the timely release of payments. He added that the department maintained regular communication with television channels to determine the amount of outstanding dues and assess salary-related requirements. "There has been considerable improvement in this regard, and my

effort will be to release another tranche of payments within the next week before the end of the current financial year so that financial pressure on media organizations can be reduced and salaries can be paid on time," he told the House. Reiterating the government's commitment to supporting the media industry and safeguarding the welfare of media workers, the minister said the electronic media sector was currently under severe financial pressure, facing delayed payments and declining revenues. He said several television channels had either shut down or downsized their operations, including layoffs and administrative cutbacks due to financial constraints. Tarar informed the House that government advertising rates for television channels were currently determined according to their respective categories. He said that during the tenure of former information minister Fawad Chaudhry, advertisement rates were reduced from around Rs300,000 per minute to nearly half, bringing them to about Rs150,000 to Rs175,000 per minute for different tiers of channels under a cost-reduction policy. The minister said electronic media continued to operate under a regulatory framework and code of conduct, ensuring accountable journal-

ism and balanced coverage of government and opposition viewpoints. He noted that government advertising was used for public awareness campaigns, including polio eradication, climate change awareness and digital initiatives, and played an important role in outreach. He informed the House that around Rs8 billion had been spent over the past two to two-and-a-half years on advertising campaigns across ministries and institutions. Tarar said concerns had been raised by media stakeholders that the amount was insufficient in view of rising operational costs and shrinking advertising space. He said advertisements were distributed in consultation with the Pakistan Broadcasters Association and allocated according to channel ratings and categories. Kashmir conflict analysis The minister added that media organizations complied with regulations of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), besides fulfilling their tax obligations. He noted that while some media houses were struggling to pay staff salaries on time, others had managed to clear dues and retain employees. Calling for a coordinated policy to support media workers, Tarar proposed a financial assistance mechanism for employees and their families.

He said he would take up the matter with the Pakistan Broadcasters Association and consult stakeholders across the political spectrum to build consensus on protecting media workers. Responding to a supplementary question by MNA Shazia Marri, the minister appreciated efforts aimed at highlighting journalists' welfare and said both federal and provincial governments should seriously address the issue of financial security for media workers. He further observed that there was a disparity in the media business model, noting that high-earning anchorpersons were linked to advertising revenue, while low-paid staff such as reporters and production workers remained more vulnerable to financial shocks. He stressed the need for reforms and collective efforts to strengthen the electronic media sector, saying its survival and growth were in the national interest. Responding to another question raised by Dr. Shazia Sobia Aslam Soomro, the minister said Pakistan Television (PTV) had secured exclusive broadcasting rights for the FIFA Club World Cup in Pakistan through prudent financial management and expenditure cuts. He said it was a matter of great pride for Pakistan that footballs manufactured in Sialkot would be used in the prestigious international tournament. "I am pleased to inform the House that the FIFA Club World Cup, commencing today, will feature footballs made in Sialkot. It is a source of immense pride for the nation," he remarked. The minister added that PTV Sports would be the only television channel in Pakistan airing the tournament.

Trump vows US seizure of Iranian....

FROM PAGE 01

citing disruptions in energy supply chains and heightened geopolitical risk stemming from the Iran war. Markets reacted sharply, with oil prices surging and analysts warning of prolonged volatility if the U.S. proceeds with direct control of Iranian energy exports.

PM pays tributes to martyrs

FROM PAGE 01

Christ Church, Rawalpindi which was also attended by the political and military leadership. Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister remarked that the martyrs' devotion to duty, professionalism, and commitment to safeguarding the motherland will remain a source of inspiration for future generations. He emphasized that the sacrifices of Pakistan's Armed Forces for peace, security, and national sovereignty can never be forgotten, reaffirming the nation's unwavering support for the families of the martyrs during this difficult time. Shuhada will be laid to rest in their respective native towns with full military honours.

FO says release of Pakistanis...

FROM PAGE 01

the situation and underscored the importance of ensuring an early release and safe repatriation of the individuals being held. He also urged steps to improve the living conditions of not just the 10 Pakistani crew members, "but also seven other crew members of different nationalities, including those from Indonesia, India, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka". The Somali foreign minister assured DPM Dar of his government's continued and sincere efforts to secure their release. "Both leaders agreed to maintain close coordination until the matter is resolved." On the specific issue of piracy, he said that the government has taken a number of "resolute steps" to free the Pakistani hostages. In addition to the DPM's conversation, the Ambassador of Somalia in Islamabad was called in for a meeting by Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch to discuss ways to secure their release. The Pakistani embassy in Djibouti, which is accredited to Mogadishu, has sent teams to Mogadishu to discuss the matter, he said. "Furthermore, we have been holding inter-ministerial and inter-departmental meetings, with another important in-person meeting scheduled at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs next week. This matter remains a high priority; we feel for the individuals and their families, but the situation is operationally difficult."

Iran's attacks against Jordan...

FROM PAGE 01

attacks, and working to de-escalate to restore security and stability regionally and internationally," the foreign ministry said. The US launched a second round of airstrikes on Iran into Thursday morning after President Donald Trump warned that Tehran would "pay the price" for stalled negotiations. Iran responded with strikes targeting Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan. Kuwait closed its airspace for several hours because of the Thursday morning attack. Jordanian air defense systems intercepted and shot down 20 missiles launched from Iran towards the Blue Zone, state media reported. Bahrain's interior ministry said an 11-year-old girl was injured and several houses and homes were damaged Hamad City and the capital Manama due to shrapnel from intercepted Iranian drones. The third back-and-forth strikes this week have tested a two-month shaky ceasefire. The first were attacks between Iran and Israel on Sunday into Monday, followed by the two rounds of fire between America and Tehran. Trump has urged Iran to sign a deal to end the war and suggested earlier this week that an agreement could be reached in days.

Briefs

Gold price declines by Rs 9,720 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold registered a significant decline in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 9,720 to settle at Rs 432,716 compared to Rs 442,436 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 8,748 to Rs 369,422 from Rs 378,170, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 7,950 to Rs 338,998 against Rs 346,948. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$97.20 to \$4,102.80 per ounce from \$4,200.00. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola declined by Rs 40 to Rs 6,889 from Rs 6,929, while the price of 10 grams of silver dropped by Rs 36 to Rs 5,857 from Rs 5,893. The price of silver in the international market also decreased by \$0.40 to \$64.10 per ounce from \$64.50.—APP

PSX rebounds, gains over 276 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) bounced back to bullish territory on Thursday, gaining 276.16 points, a positive change of 0.16 percent, closing at 169,703.60 points against 169,427.44 points on the last trading day. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 771.934 million shares with a traded value of Rs 27,051 billion, compared to 791.636 million shares valuing Rs 25,484 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization increased to Rs 18.877 trillion from Rs 18.848 trillion a day earlier. Out of 487 active companies in the ready market, 190 advanced, 250 declined and 47 remained unchanged. First National Equities topped the volume chart with 118.361 million shares, followed by Sitara Petroleum with 53.704 million shares and Maple Leaf Cement Factory with 35.476 million shares. The top gainers included Sapphire Fibres Limited, which increased by Rs 100.22 to close at Rs 1,102.46, and Tandlianwala Sugar Mills Limited, which gained Rs 46.64 to settle at Rs 513.04. On the losing side, Khyber Textile Mills Limited declined by Rs 50.36 to close at Rs 1,464.21, while Blessed Textiles Limited fell by Rs 43.19 to close at Rs 1,129.29.—APP

Poland to jail online streamers of violent crime, rape, cruelty for up to 5 years

WARSAW: Polish lawmakers voted on Thursday to crack down on so-called "trash streaming", imposing jail terms of up to five years for online broadcasts of crimes like rape and murder as well as cruelty to animals and violence aimed at humiliating people. The move is part of a broader push by Poland to tighten regulation of online content. Recent measures include banning the use of mobile phones by children under 16 in schools and introducing stricter age verification rules to access pornography. Under the new provisions, broadcasting crimes punishable by more than five years in prison, including murder or rape, will itself be classed as a separate offense punishable by up to five years behind bars. The law also covers content showing cruelty to animals, violence aimed at humiliating others, and the promotion of gambling. The same penalties will apply to individuals who simulate or falsely portray the commission of such crimes while streaming, lawmakers said. The European Union regulates illegal content and livestreamed crimes through the Digital Services Act (DSA), requiring platforms to swiftly remove material that promotes violence or severe harm.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, meets a delegation of Pakistan Tobacco Company to discuss taxation, illicit trade, investment, and measures to strength-en Pakistan's documented economy.

Pak, Kazak for boosting bilateral industrial coop

The envoy praised Pakistan's natural beauty, ongoing development efforts and visionary leadership, expressing confidence in the growing partnership between the two friendly nations.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Kazakhstan on Thursday discussed ways to enhance industrial cooperation, economic development and trade between the two countries. The discussion took place during a meeting between Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan and Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin. Both sides agreed to strengthen industrial and economic ties fur-

ther and explore new opportunities for collaboration in key sectors. The Kazakh envoy expressed Kazakhstan's keen interest in Pakistan's furniture industry, sports goods sector and maritime infrastructure, particularly its seaports. Haroon Akhtar said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision was centered on strengthening connectivity and economic cooperation with Central Asian states. He highlighted the importance of deepening economic engagement and expanding trade relations between Pakistan and Kazakhstan. Stressing

the need for improved financial connectivity, Haroon Akhtar Khan said stronger banking linkages between the two countries are essential to facilitate trade and investment. He urged the State Bank of Pakistan to prioritize and expedite the establishment of banking branches to support growing economic interaction. The envoy underscored the importance of enhancing direct contacts between the business communities of both countries to unlock the full potential of bilateral trade and investment. Haroon Akhtar Khan

said Pakistani furniture was known for its high quality and excellent finishing and enjoys strong demand in international markets. He emphasized that greater cooperation could create new opportunities for Pakistani exporters in Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region. The ambassador invited Pakistani industrialists and entrepreneurs to participate in exhibitions and expos being organized in Kazakhstan, providing opportunities to showcase their products and establish business partnerships. Discussing travel facili-

tation, the ambassador said visa-free access was already available to holders of diplomatic and official passports. He added that work was underway to extend visa facilitation measures to business passport holders. He also said Kazakhstan was committed to providing additional visa facilities to Pakistani tourists to promote tourism and people-to-people exchanges. Haroon Akhtar Khan highlighted Pakistan's immense tourism potential, describing the country as rich in natural beauty and diverse tourist attractions.

He said Pakistan's majestic mountains, vast deserts and breathtaking landscapes continue to attract visitors from around the world. He further emphasised that cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan in the tourism sector would be mutually beneficial and strengthen cultural and economic ties between the two countries. The envoy praised Pakistan's natural beauty, ongoing development efforts and visionary leadership, expressing confidence in the growing partnership between the two friendly nations.

Indian seafarers fear for safety after US strike kills 3 off Oman coast

NEW DELHI: Fears of American attacks are growing among thousands of Indian seafarers on duty near the Strait of Hormuz, their union said on Thursday, after three were killed in a US strike off the coast of Oman. Twenty-four Indian crew members were aboard the Palau-flagged MT Settebello, which was hit by US forces in the Gulf of Oman on Tuesday evening. The US Central Command said the motor tanker was "attempting to transport oil from Iran" and a US aircraft "fired precision munitions into the ship's engine room." While the Omani navy managed to rescue 21 Indian sailors, three remained missing. On Thursday afternoon, India's shipping minister, Sarbananda Sonowal, announced on social media that the missing were "now confirmed dead after bodies have been located and identified." The victims are a chief engineer, a cadet and a fitter, according to the Forward Seamen's Union of India, a labor union representing sailors working aboard commercial vessels. "I spoke with the father of the cadet, and I have sent my people to meet the family of the fitter in Uttar Pradesh, and my Andhra offices were speaking with the family of the chief engineer," Manoj Yadav, the FSUI's secretary-general, told Arab News. "They are still not able to believe that this happened." At least 20,000 Indian nationals are currently working aboard commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz region, according to the union's data. Three ships staffed by Indians, including the MT Settebello, have been attacked by American forces this week alone, according to the Indian Embassy in Oman. The attacks come amid an escalation between the US and Iran. While in the beginning of the war in March, Indians mostly feared drone attacks by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, "now, they have a fear of being attacked by a missile from US naval forces," Yadav said. "If the vessel is sanctioned, or if the vessel is blocked, and it is a shadow (fleet) vessel, then it is the duty of the US to take control of that vessel.—APP

Climate change drives Indonesia's rarest orangutan to brink of extinction

"To prevent the first modern extinction of a great ape species, Indonesia must permanently protect the Batang Toru ecosystem," he said. "But our international partners must also meet their global commitments by providing immediate biodiversity-recovery financing"

JAKARTA: Landslides driven by climate change in Sumatra, Indonesia last year alone wiped out 7 percent of the Tapanuli orangutan population, new research shows, as scientists warn of an increased risk of extinction for one of the world's rarest great apes. Cyclone Senyar ravaged northern Sumatra in November, causing catastrophic floods and landslides that killed more than 1,200 people and damaged more than 180,000 houses in three provinces, with environmental groups blaming the extent of the damage on rapid deforestation. At least 58 Tapanuli orangutans, out of a total population of fewer than 800, were killed in the widespread landslides, according to findings published in the scientific journal Current Biology on Wednesday. "Our findings provide quantitative evidence that extreme rainfall events can directly threaten great ape survival," the study authors said. "Given the species' slow reproduction and sensitivity to additional mortality, this single event constitutes a severe demographic shock with long-term implications for its viability." = Scientists analyzed satellite evidence of landslide scars in the Batang Toru region of North Sumatra — home to the critically endangered Tapanuli orangutans — and found that about 8,300 hectares were affected by the extreme weather in November. The orangutans are likely to have died from tree falls, landslide burial or drowning that occurred during the multi-day deluge. Yet the study provided only "conservative" estimates, the authors said, as they analyzed only landslides that took place in the western area of Batang Toru and did not include other possible causes of death, such as reduced food availability or rainfall-induced canopy breakage. Studies have indicated that the species, which was only discovered in 2017, will go extinct if it continues to lose more than 1 percent of its population annually. "This study is a stark demonstration of how intertwined the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are," Friederike Otto, an author on the study and a professor of climate science at Imperial College London, said in a statement. "Human-induced climate change turned a severe tropical storm into a catastrophic trigger for these tragic landslides." Researchers had previously found that human-induced climate change caused an increase of 10 to 50 percent in Cyclone Senyar's rainfall intensity. The study published this week also shows an urgent need for conservation action, said Jatna Supriatna, an author of the study and a professor of biology at Universitas Indonesia. "To prevent the first modern extinction of a great ape species, Indonesia must permanently protect the Batang Toru ecosystem," he said. "But our international partners must also meet their global commitments by providing immediate biodiversity-recovery financing.—DNA

Pakistan calls for reviving Silk Road Spirit at UNESCO

The International Day of Dialogue among Civilizations is observed to promote mutual respect, cultural understanding and cooperation among peoples and nations, recognizing dialogue as a key instrument for peace, sustainable development and global solidarity

PARIS :Pakistan's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Ambassador Mumtaz Zahra Baloch Thursday highlighted the country's rich civilizational heritage and underscored the importance of intercultural dialogue, mutual respect and peaceful cooperation while addressing a seminar on the "Traditions of the Silk Road and Intercultural Dialogue" at UNESCO headquarters. The seminar was organized to mark the International Day of Dialogue among Civilizations and formed part of daylong celebrations promoting cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding among nations. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Baloch traced the historical significance of the ancient Gandhara civilization and emphasized the pivotal role of Taxila as a major crossroads of the Silk Road, where civilizations, cultures, ideas and traditions interacted and flourished over centu-

ries. She noted that the Silk Road was not merely a network of trade routes but also a conduit for cultural exchange, intellectual interaction and people-to-people connections that fostered mutual understanding among diverse societies. The ambassador stressed the need to revive the spirit of the Silk Road in the contemporary world by encouraging dialogue, respect for cultural diversity, mutual understanding and peaceful cooperation among nations. "In an era marked by global challenges and growing polarization, promoting intercultural dialogue and strengthening bonds among civilizations is more important than ever," she said. Ambassador Baloch also highlighted UNESCO's critical role in advancing dialogue among cultures and civilizations, promoting constructive engagement and reinforcing the principles of multilateralism. She said UNESCO's efforts to preserve cultural heritage and foster international coop-

eration provide an important platform for building bridges between societies and promoting peace through mutual understanding. The event brought together diplomats, cultural experts and representatives of member states to reflect on the enduring legacy of the Silk Road and its relevance in promoting dialogue and cooperation in the modern world. As part of the celebrations, Pakistani cuisine was showcased among the cultural traditions represented at the event, highlighting the country's rich cultural diversity and its historical links with the civilizations connected through the Silk Road. The International Day of Dialogue among Civilizations is observed to promote mutual respect, cultural understanding and cooperation among peoples and nations, recognizing dialogue as a key instrument for peace, sustainable development and global solidarity.—DNA

China sanctions Philippine defense chief for 'irresponsible remarks'

BEIJING: China announced on Thursday sanctions against the Philippines' defense minister over "irresponsible remarks," escalating tensions between Beijing and Manila as they grapple with maritime disputes. Gilberto Teodoro and his spouse and child will be banned from entering China's mainland, Hong Kong and Macau, an unnamed foreign ministry spokesperson said in an online statement. It added that "organizations and individuals in China" will not be allowed to "engage in any transaction, cooperation or other activities with him and his spouse and child." Teodoro's rhetoric "undermines China's legitimate interests and sabotages China-Philippines relations," the statement said, without specifying which remarks it was referring to. The two countries have in recent years often dealt with flare-ups in ongoing confrontations in the disputed South China Sea. Beijing claims the strategic waterway nearly in its entirety, despite an international ruling that said its assertions are baseless. China regularly deploys navy and coast guard vessels to bar the Philippines from important reefs and islands in the area. At a summit in Singapore last month, Teodoro criticized Beijing's activities in the disputed waters, saying Manila "will not sacrifice our territorial integrity and sovereignty." Asked last week about Teodoro's remarks at the summit, Beijing's foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said that he "is known to vilify China." "All he cares is selfish personal gains to the point that he would perform political theatrics even when people's well-being is at stake," Mao said.—DNA

Iran says water supply restored to thousands cut off after US strikes

TEHRAN: Water supply to villages in southern Iran have been restored after US strikes hit reservoirs, state television reported on Thursday, in what Iranian officials described as a "war crime." Water and desalination facilities, particularly in southern Iran and across its Gulf neighbors, have been among the most critical and vulnerable infrastructure targets since the outbreak of the war between Iran, Israel and the United States on February 28. An exchange of fire that took place overnight into Wednesday morning — despite a ceasefire that went into effect on April 8 — saw US strikes hit two water reservoirs in the town of Sirik, cutting off nearly 20,000 people from access to drinking water. "The water distribution network of the affected areas has been restored," said Abdolhamid Hamzehpour, general manager of the Hormozgan Water and Wastewater Company, according to state television on Thursday. He said the repair process took "less than 12 hours" and "the intermittent supply problems for subscribers in the city of Kouhestak and the villages of the Bemani district were fully resolved." Washington had said the strikes were carried out in response to Iran's downing of a US Army Apache helicopter over Gulf waters. Tehran dismissed the justification as a "false pretext" and responded with missile and drone attacks targeting US bases in Bahrain, Jordan and Kuwait. The strikes on the reservoirs prompted Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei on Wednesday to describe the attack as "a calculated war crime and flagrant violation of human rights." "The US must be held accountable for committing such systematic brutal attacks on civilian life-sustaining infrastructure," he said in a post on X. The head of Hormozgan province's judiciary, Mojtaba Ghahremani, was also quoted by state television as saying the attack "constituted a war crime." n March 7, at the height of the war, Iran said US strikes hit a desalination plant on Qeshm Island near the Strait of Hormuz. The following day, Bahrain reported an Iranian strike on a water facility.—APP

Briefs

Pope visiting 'dock of shame' in Canary Islands

DNA
BARCELONA: Pope Leo XIV is visiting the Canary Islands on Thursday to draw attention to the plight of migrants who risk their lives every year trying to reach Europe, fulfilling a wish of Pope Francis to visit one of the epicenters of the European migration debate. Leo is spending the final two days of his weeklong trip to Spain in the Canary Islands, a Spanish archipelago closer to Africa than the Iberian Peninsula that is a key point of entry for migrants smuggled from West Africa. He is meeting with recently arrived migrants and representatives of the church and humanitarian organizations that care for them and work to integrate them into Spanish society. Most poignantly, he will commemorate the thousands of lives lost at sea from a port that in 2020 became known as the "dock of shame" because of the squalid conditions migrants lived in when they came ashore during a spike in arrivals. Spain's Socialist-led government, which had been shamed by the 2020 crisis, has bucked a trend in Europe and the United States by defending immigration on economic and humanitarian grounds. It has launched a legalization push earlier this year for hundreds of thousands of immigrants without authorization. Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has highlighted the benefits to the economy with an aging workforce and low birth rate.

'Lesser-fire' in Persian Gulf region must become complete ceasefire

UNITED NATIONS: Civilians and civilian infrastructure have come under attack in multiple countries in the Gulf region, driving up energy prices and disrupting supply chains, making fertilizers more costly, hunger more prevalent and pushing up inflation and piling on debt, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday. "Even in the best-case scenario, these shocks will be felt for many months - with developing countries bearing the heaviest impacts," he warned at a high-level debate on advancing political solutions in the Middle East, amid continuing conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and concerns over regional stability. "The world needs to see a complete ceasefire - with navigational rights and freedoms restored, in line with international law and Security Council resolution 2817 and serious negotiations on the nuclear issues - ensuring that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful," he stressed. - APP

DPM, Türkiye FM discuss regional situation

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday held a telephone conversation with Foreign Minister of Türkiye Hakan Fidan, where both the dignitaries discussed the evolving regional situation and underscored the importance of dialogue, and restraint. During the interaction, both expressed hope for an early understanding among all parties which would contribute to lasting peace and stability in the region, a DPM's Office news release said. The two leaders agreed to maintain close coordination on regional and international issues of mutual interest and continue high-level engagements to advance the multifaceted Pakistan-Türkiye partnership.

President Zardari congratulates Philippines on Independence Day

Philippine Ambassador highlights shared values on Independence Day



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Federal Minister Rana Tanvir Hussain, Spokesman of President Asif Ali Zardari, Ambassador of the Philippines Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez and others cutting cake to celebrate the Independence Day of the Philippines. - DNA

DNA
ISLAMABAD: On behalf of the Government and the people of Pakistan, President Asif Ali Zardari has conveyed heartfelt congratulations to the Government and the people of the Republic of the Philippines on the occasion of their National Independence Day. The message was read out by Presidential Spokesperson Murtaza Solangi at a special gathering. **President Zardari stated:** "This day commemorates the historic declaration of Independence of the Philippines in 1898, a defining moment that gave birth to a proud and sovereign nation, and announced to the world the indomitable spirit of the Filipino people. Pakistan admires the resilience and courage that have come to define the people of the Philippines over the course of

its remarkable journey." Highlighting the longstanding ties between the two nations, the President noted that Pakistan and the Philippines share a bond of friendship spanning more than seven decades. As both countries prepare to mark 77 years of diplomatic relations later this year, he emphasized that the relationship is rooted in mutual respect, goodwill, and a shared commitment to multilateral cooperation in forums such as the United Nations and ASEAN. President Zardari underscored the promise of economic partnership, pointing to growing bilateral trade and untapped potential in agriculture, food security, healthcare, defence cooperation, education, information technology, and renewable energy. He expressed Pakistan's eagerness to harness this potential through greater business-to-business engagement and joint ventures. The President also extended appreciation for the

hospitality shown by the Philippines to the Pakistani community residing there, acknowledging their role as a bridge of friendship between the two nations. Concluding his message, President Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to addressing global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development, and wished the people of the Philippines continued peace, progress, and prosperity. Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, extended warm greetings to the Filipino community in Pakistan, Pakistani friends, and all those commemorating this historic milestone. Delivering his message, Ambassador Fernandez underscored this year's theme, "Kalayaan. Kinabukasan. Kasaysayan." (Freedom. Future. History.), noting that it reflects the sacrifices of the past, the challenges of the present, and the aspirations for future generations. He emphasized that Independ-

ence Day is not only a celebration of freedom but also a reaffirmation of values such as unity, resilience, democracy, justice, and service to others. The envoy drew parallels between the Philippines and Pakistan, highlighting their shared historical journeys of overcoming foreign rule and building independent states amid political, economic, and social challenges. He stressed that independence is a continuing responsibility, requiring efforts to strengthen institutions, uphold the rule of law, and secure a better future. Ambassador Fernandez also reflected on the importance of human dignity, justice, and compassion in sustaining freedom. He warned against hatred, discrimination, and intolerance, calling instead for mutual respect, understanding, and peaceful coexistence. "The future belongs not to fear and exclusion, but to cooperation, dialogue, and our shared humanity," he said.

Pilots demand answers ahead of Air India crash anniversary

Investigation agency likely to issue interim report, delaying final conclusions of incident that killed 260

DNA
MUMBAI: India's aviation accident probe agency is facing renewed criticism from pilot groups ahead of the anniversary of the 2025 Air India Boeing-787 crash in Ahmedabad, which killed 260 people. Families of the victims had expected a final report by Friday to explain the cause of the disaster - exactly a year after the Boeing 787-8 crashed in a fireball shortly after takeoff and smashed into a medical college. But with investigations continuing, local media suggest India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) will only issue an interim report - frustrating those awaiting clear answers about why their relatives died. "I don't have much trust," said Charanvir Randhawa, president of the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP), which has more than 5,000 members. His organisation has criticised the composition of the initial investigation team, and its decision to question the family of one of the deceased pilots. On Friday, relatives of the victims will meet in Ahmedabad at a conference organised by lawyers, along with aviation and air safety experts, to "discuss the path toward answers and safer skies". It also plans to hold a candlelight vigil in memory of those who died - 241 of the 242 people on board, and 19 on the ground. Among the dead were 200 Indians, 52 British citizens, seven Portuguese, and one Canadian.

Equities drop, oil rallies with Iran-US tensions

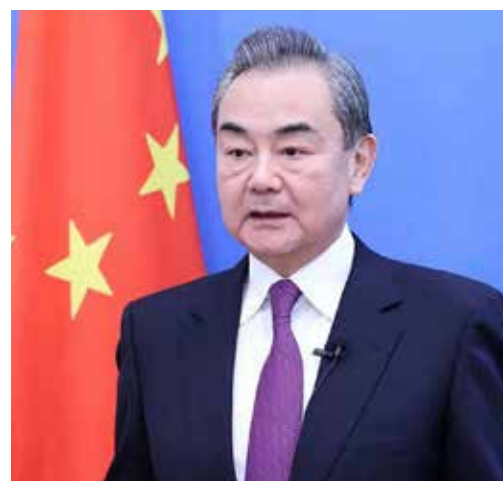
US crude CLc1 settles up about 2.1% at \$90.03 per barrel while Brent LCOc1 settles at \$93.10 per barrel

LONDON: MSCI's global equities index fell 1.5% on Thursday after economic data showed US inflation was high but in line with expectations and oil prices rose as hopes for Middle East peace progress dwindled after Iran and the United States exchanged strikes and threats. Oil prices extended gains after US President Donald Trump threatened that the United States would attack Iran "very hard" if no peace deal is finalized. Earlier, Trump wrote in a social media post that Iran would "pay the price" after taking too long to negotiate. After Fox News reported that Trump is considering ordering new strikes on Iran's power plants and bridges, Iran's president said that such threats were a sign of desperation rather than a show of strength. Also, US Energy Secretary Chris Wright told a congressional hearing on Wednesday that he's not aware that the US has taken millions of barrels of oil out of Iran after Trump told reporters it had. As the Iran war uncertainty drove up oil prices, in turn a sell-off in equities deepened along with a continued unwinding of the AI trade, according to Michael O'Rourke, chief market strategist at JonesTrading in Stamford, Connecticut. US crude CLc1 settled up about 2.1% at \$90.03 a barrel while Brent LCOc1 settled at \$93.10 per barrel, up 1.8%. "Oil prices have shifted from anxiety to apathy and back again amid renewed skirmishes between the US and Iran," Phil Flynn, senior market analyst at The Price Futures Group, said. Investor reactions were more modest earlier in the day after an economic release showed U.S. consumer inflation rose last month at its fastest pace since April 2023. The Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a 4.2% increase in the Consumer Price Index in the 12 months through May. Traders maintained bets that the Federal Reserve would hold rates steady after its June 17 meeting and priced in a nearly 43% probability of a 25-basis-point hike versus a less than 32% chance rates would stay unchanged by December, according to CME Group's FedWatch tool. - DNA

PTI MNA Iqbal Afridi suspended for entire budget session

FAISAL SHEIKH
ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday suspended PTI lawmaker Iqbal Afridi for the entire budget session after Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq accused him of misconduct with assembly staff, the DG Media and police personnel, and ordered his removal from the House. The speaker directed the Sergeant-at-Arms to remove Afridi from the House, saying the PTI member had raised his hand against his staff, misbehaved with the DG Media and also behaved rudely with police personnel. "All this is unacceptable," Sadiq said. Farah Naz Akbar moved a motion seeking Afridi's suspension, which the House approved by majority vote. The speaker said Afridi would not receive any allowances during the suspension period, adding that he would also not get TA/DA for the entire session. "Leave the House yourself; if you do not leave yourself, security personnel will forcibly take you out," the Speaker told Afridi. Afridi later left the House.

Wang Yi Urges global dialogue at international day for civilizations



DNA
ISLAMABAD: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi delivered a video address at the global thematic event marking the 2026 International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of fostering mutual understanding and trust through dialogue, and building solidarity and consensus through exchanges, describing these efforts as the essential building blocks of a community with a shared future for humanity. He proposed a four-pronged approach to advancing dialogue among civilizations: first, championing mutual respect to promote harmonious coexistence; second, putting the people first to cement the foundation of exchanges; third, balancing heritage and innovation to drive progress; and fourth, encouraging mutual learning and improving mechanisms for dialogue. His address highlighted China's vision of inclusive cooperation and cultural exchange as a pathway to global peace and development.