



# Islamabad POST

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**Romanian envoy distribute awards among Opera students**

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**Malaysian envoy all praise for Pak role in ME**

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**Uzbek envoy meets minister Hanif Abbasi**

Detailed News On Page-04



**'No headline diplomacy'**

## 'Peace, stability' CDF sole interest in US-Iran deal

Security officials warn some elements still seeking to spoil US-Iran peace deal

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Asim Munir's sole interest in a US-Iran deal was achieving "peace and stability" in the region, sources cited top security officials as saying on Tuesday, emphasising Pakistan was not interested in "headline diplomacy". Islamabad achieved a historic diplomatic victory on Monday when US President Donald Trump announced that Washington has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iran to end the war in the Middle East. Pakistan has been acting as a key mediator between Tehran and Washington since the Middle East conflict erupted on February 28, following US-Israel strikes on Iran. During a briefing to journalists, senior security officials said that Pakistan has been handling the Iran-US issue as a "highly complex matter" and has fulfilled all requirements of being a mediator in the conflict. "We are not interested in headline diplomacy," security sources said, adding that the world was gradually recognising the role Islamabad had played. According to security sources, Field Marshal Munir's sole interest in the matter was "peace and stability" in the region. The security officials warned that there were

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## Donald Trump: US has "no obligation" to invest in Iran

DNA

PARIS: US President Donald Trump stated that the United States has "no obligation" to invest in Iran, dismissing reports of financial commitments as a "ridiculous rumour," according to Al Jazeera. He emphasized that the recently reached agreement with Iran is both "fair" and "good." At a summit, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani praised the deal, expressing optimism that it would bring positive outcomes across the Middle East. "This is a very important deal, there's still a lot of work to be done, but with this momentum... I think we can achieve and do great things in the region," Sheikh Tamim told Trump. Trump further said, "Frankly the only thing that really matters to me is Iran will never have a nuclear weapon," Trump says in a meeting with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on the sidelines of the G7 summit.

He added that the deal says "loud and clear" that Iran cannot buy, develop or acquire a nuclear weapon. He warned that Iran would suffer "unbelievable consequences" if it acquires nuclear weapons in the future. "That's the reason I agreed to sign," Trump said. US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he has a great relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but that he must be more responsible with respect to Lebanon. Trump, speaking at the G7 summit, said he told Israel that he did not like its attack on Beirut and suggested that Syria should take care of Hezbollah instead of Israel. "If Israel can't do the job (against Hezbollah) without killing everyone else, then he (Sharaa) will do the job. Syria will do the job," Trump said at a G7 summit, praising Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa as doing an "amazing job." Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that ending the

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## Briefs

**14 people to go on trial in France over migrants' deaths**

NEWS DESK

PARIS: Fourteen people will go on trial in France over the deaths of at least 27 migrants in November 2021 in the deadliest recorded small-boat crossing of the Channel, prosecutors said Tuesday. The defendants, linked to people-smuggling networks, are accused of playing a role in the sinking in which at least 27 people, mainly Iraqi Kurds, died when their inflatable dinghy sank in the early hours of November 24, 2021. Four others are still believed to remain missing. The sinking remains the deadliest recorded small-boat crossing of the Channel, a route used by thousands of migrants each year to reach Britain from France.

**Oil drops to fresh three-month low**

DNA

LONDON: Oil prices slid to fresh three-month lows on Tuesday as markets weighed prospects for a resumption of supplies through the Strait of Hormuz alongside weaker physical demand and scant details on a preliminary deal to end the Iran war. Brent crude futures LCOc1 were down \$1.70, or 2%, at \$81.47 a barrel, by 1034 GMT. The benchmark fell to \$81.00 per barrel, the lowest since March 4. US West Texas Intermediate CLc1 was down \$1.89, or 2.3%, at \$78.86 a barrel, after dropping to \$78.41, the lowest since March 10. Oil prices had already dropped nearly 5% on Monday to their lowest close since March 4 after US President Donald Trump said a memorandum of understanding had been signed to end the US-Israeli war with Iran.

## To check human trafficking UK commits £8m to tackle illegal migration

Welcomes the landmark peace deal between the United States and Iran, acknowledging Pakistan's pivotal role in brokering the agreement

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The UK has welcomed the landmark peace deal between the United States and Iran, acknowledging Pakistan's pivotal role in brokering the agreement. On a two-day ministerial visit to Islamabad, Minister for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hamish Falconer, expressed gratitude to Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, for Pakistan's leadership in facilitating negotiations. Falconer emphasized the UK's commitment to supporting stability in the Middle East and pledged to work closely with Pakistan to ensure the peace deal leads to lasting regional security, noting that Pakistan has played a critical role in brokering this opportunity for regional stability and that the UK stands ready to work together to support a path to lasting peace. During meetings with senior Pakistani officials, the Minister announced an additional £8 million in funding to bolster

joint efforts against illegal migration. The funding will strengthen border and visa systems, disrupt people-smuggling and trafficking networks, support the return of individuals with no right to remain in the UK, and expand community-based programmes in high-risk areas to address the root causes of illegal migration. This includes improving identity and information-sharing processes, strengthening law enforcement capability to investigate smuggling networks, and expanding prevention programmes that reduce vulnerability to exploitation. Falconer highlighted that the UK-Pakistan partnership is vital for tackling terrorist threats, visa fraud, and organized crime, adding that the two countries are taking their cooperation to a new level with additional funding to deter illegal migration and target drivers from the source. He also met Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan to discuss ongoing tensions between

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## Jailed PTI leaders reject PM's call for 'Charter of Economy'

PTI leaders question if "Charter of Economy" can succeed when "constitutional supremacy exists only in books"

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Mian Mahmood-ur-Rashid, Ejaz Chaudhry and Omar Sarfraz Cheema have called for a "Charter of Pakistan" instead of a "Charter of Economy", arguing that constitutional supremacy and political stability must precede any meaningful economic reform. In a letter communicated through their lawyer Rana Mudassar, the PTI leaders reacted to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent statement offering a "Charter of Economy". They said that while Pakistan undoubtedly needs a charter to emerge from its current difficulties, "Pakistan needs a 'Charter of Pakistan' before it needs a Charter of Economy." PM Shehbaz, in an address to the National Assembly on June 13, renewed his call for a "Charter of Economy" and a "Charter of Democracy", urging the opposition to set aside political differences in the national interest. The premier said he had repeatedly invited political

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## 'Govt stand on Imran treatment not acceptable'

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: PTI founder Imran Khan's sister, Aleema Khan, said on Tuesday that the government's version of events was unacceptable after the former premier was taken to the hospital for the fifth time for the treatment of his eye ailment. In a post on X, Aleema said, "We have received reports that Imran Khan was again taken to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) in the early hours of 15 June. We found out through a tweet by Barrister Gohar on the morning of June 15." "We reject any medical report generated by Pims regarding Imran's condition. The same institution has previously made questionable claims, including the assertion

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## NATIONAL DAY OF PORTUGAL



ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Ch Salik Hussain Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, Ministers Qaisar Ahmed Sheikh, Syed Imran Ahmed Shah, Barrister Aqeel, Governor Sindh Nehal Hashmi, EU Ambassador, Ambassador of Portugal Paulo Guedes Domingues and others cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of Portuguese Republic, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. - DNA

## Independents join Aleem Khan's IPP

STAFF REPORT

GILGIT: At least four independent winners from Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly elections on Tuesday joined Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, announcing the decision during a meeting with Federal Minister for Communications and IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan. The newly-joined members include Anwar Ali from GBA-23 Ghanche-2, Asad Shafiq from GBA-24 Ghanche-3, Muhammad Dilpazeer from GBA-15 Diamer-1, and Aman Ali from GBA-21 Ghizer-3. Speaking on the occasion, Dilpazeer said that the four candidates formed a group and joined the IPP, adding that they were also in contact with other independent candidates as well as Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) nominees.

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## PM directs fast-track completion of GB solarization project

The projects covering government buildings in Gilgit and Diamer divisions are expected to be completed by December 2026

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The solarization of government buildings in Gilgit-Baltistan under the federal government's 100-megawatt solar energy initiative will be completed by December 2026, while the Baltistan Division component is scheduled for completion by October 2026, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was informed during a review meeting on Tuesday. Chairing a meeting to review progress on the solar energy project in Gilgit-Baltistan, the prime minister directed the authorities concerned to expedite work and ensure the project's completion at the earliest. During the meeting, the prime minister said that the

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## Punjab presents 'people friendly' budget

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Finance Minister Mian Muhtabaur Rehman presented the provincial budget on Tuesday after the cabinet approved a people-friendly Rs5.34 trillion budget for fiscal year 2026-27. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, provincial ministers and MPAs are attending the session. Earlier today, CM Maryam approved a

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## SAVE WATER, SAVE THE PLANET

IT'S NOT JUST A DROP IN THE OCEAN. IT'S LIFE.



## Honorary CG extends greetings on Iceland's National Day

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the National Day of Iceland, Mr. Saad Mahmood, Honorary Consul General of Iceland, extended heartfelt congratulations and warm wishes to the people of Iceland as they celebrate this important national occasion. In his message, Mr. Saad Mahmood highlighted the significance of 17th June as a symbol of Iceland's independence, national pride, and remarkable journey of progress. He acknowledged Iceland's global recognition as a nation known for innovation, sustainability, resilience, and social harmony. Mr. Mahmood stated that Iceland continues to inspire the international community through its commitment to development, environmental stewardship, and inclusive growth. He also emphasized the growing friendship and cooperation between Iceland and Pakistan, expressing hope that bilateral ties will continue to strengthen through mutual respect, collaboration, and shared aspirations for peace and prosperity. "On this joyous occasion, I extend my sincere best wishes to the people of Iceland. May Iceland continue to prosper and achieve greater success in the years ahead," said Mr. Mahmood. The National Day of Iceland commemorates the country's independence and remains a proud reflection of the Icelandic people's strength, unity, and enduring spirit.—APP

## Punjab allocates Rs 2.5b for women uplift

LAHORE: The Punjab government has allocated Rs 2.5 billion for women development sector in the fiscal year 2026-27, reaffirming its commitment to women's empowerment, economic inclusion and social welfare. According to budget documents issued here on Tuesday, the allocation will be utilized for nine development projects, including seven ongoing schemes and two new initiatives aimed at enhancing women's participation in economic and social activities across the province. Of the total allocation, Rs 902.2 million have been earmarked for ongoing projects, while more than Rs 1.5 billion will be spent on two new schemes. The new initiatives include the establishment of "Women's Empowerment through Communication and Enterprise" at an estimated cost of Rs 97.7 million, while Rs 1.5 billion have been allocated for Punjab Women Empowerment Programme. Among the ongoing projects, Rs 160 million have been allocated for economic empowerment initiatives for rural women in the textile sector. An amount of Rs 173.8 million have been earmarked for the reconstruction of Working Women Hostel in Gujranwala, while Rs 101.4 million will be utilized for the Strategic Planning and Implementation Unit. The allocation reflects the provincial government's focus on improving economic opportunities, institutional support and welfare facilities for women, enabling them to play a more active role in the province's socio-economic development.—APP

# Romanian embassy awards certificates to Opera students

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Romania in Pakistan, in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), organized an official award ceremony honoring the students of the Opera Singing Courses conducted at the PNCA. The ceremony took place at the Embassy of Romania in Islamabad on Tuesday, 16 June 2026. The event was attended by H.E. Dan Stoiculescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan; Romanian soprano Georgiana Costea-Glugă; Zaidar Shah, Chairman of Pakistan-Romania Friendship Association, Muhammad Ayoub Jamali, Director General of PNCA; Ghulam Muhammad, Incharge of Music Classes at PNCA; and the award-winning students: Imran Parvez Khan, Iria Siona, Ayzer Adeel and Mohammad Tayyab Akbar. The Opera Singing Courses, unique within Pakistan's cultural landscape, represent a landmark achievement in cultural diplomacy between Romania and Pakistan. The initiative provides young Pakistani artists with an unprecedented opportunity to explore the rich tradition of European classical and operatic music. Addressing the participants, Ambassador Dan Stoiculescu highlighted the significance of the project: "The certificates we present today represent only the first tangible result of a long-term endeavor. These four award recipients are much more than graduates of a course; they are officially the pioneers of opera music in Pakistan. Their dedication, perseverance, and passion have laid the foundations for a new artistic tradition and opened a path for future generations of Pakistani performers." Speaking on the occasion, soprano Georgiana Costea-Glugă emphasized the achievements of the students: "These students are opening an entirely new path for future generations and demonstrating that music is a universal language that transcends all borders. I am extremely proud of their progress and firmly convinced that this is only the beginning of an extraordinary artistic journey." The ceremony marked the culmination of a pioneering educational and cultural initiative launched on 9 April 2025. The opera singing courses, taught by Romanian soprano Georgiana Costea-Glugă, are held twice a week at the Pakistan National Council of the

Arts and aim to introduce Pakistani students to the rich heritage of Romanian and European opera while fostering intercultural artistic exchange. The program focuses on developing the fundamental skills required for lyrical performance, including vocal technique, stage presence, musical interpretation, and artistic expression. Since its inception, the initiative has demonstrated the power of cultural diplomacy to build bridges between peoples and cultures. Through music, Romanian and Pakistani artists and institutions have established a

meaningful platform for dialogue, learning, and mutual understanding. The Embassy of Romania and PNCA reaffirm their commitment to promoting artistic and educational opportunities and strengthening cultural relations between Romania and Pakistan through shared cultural experiences and creative collaboration. The Opera Singing Courses remain open to vocalists of all levels. Whether beginners or opera enthusiasts, participants can benefit from a dynamic and enriching learning environment under professional guidance.



## PR hands over commercial management of five trains

LAHORE: Pakistan Railways has achieved a major milestone in its revenue enhancement drive by outsourcing the commercial management of five passenger trains to private sector partners for Rs10.75 billion, marking one of the most successful public-private partnership initiatives in the organization's history. According to official sources, the move is expected to substantially increase the revenue of Pakistan Railways while improving the quality of services and facilities available to passengers across the country. Officials said that before the outsourcing arrangement, the same trains were generating significantly lower earnings. Under the new agreements, Pakistan Railways is expected to secure much higher revenues, strengthening its financial position and supporting its ongoing modernization and reform agenda. As part of the initiative, Awam Express, Millat Express and Karakoram Express will be

operated under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Railway authorities believe that private sector participation will help improve operational efficiency, passenger comfort and service delivery. In addition, Mianwali Passenger and Narowal Passenger trains have also been outsourced to private partners. The authorities expect the new management structure to bring better onboard facilities, improved maintenance standards and enhanced customer services. Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi lauded the efforts of the Chief Commercial Manager (CCM) and the commercial team for successfully completing the outsourcing process. He termed the achievement a significant step towards making Pakistan Railways a financially sustainable and customer-oriented organization. The minister recalled that freight train operations had also been outsourced earlier at highly competitive rates, which had produced encouraging results for the

department. He said the freight outsourcing initiative alone is expected to generate more than Rs10 billion in revenue during the next fiscal year. Highlighting the organization's improving financial outlook, Hanif Abbasi expressed confidence that Pakistan Railways would surpass the landmark figure of Rs100 billion in annual revenue for the first time in its history during the current financial year. He said the government remains committed to revitalizing the railway sector through reforms, investment and greater private sector participation. "We are working hard and the nation will soon receive more good news regarding Pakistan Railways," the minister added. Officials believe that the latest outsourcing agreements will not only boost revenues but also contribute to improving service quality, operational efficiency and passenger satisfaction, paving the way for a more modern and competitive railway system in the country.—APP

## BD calls for fostering institutional linkages

The visits to these universities have set a foundation for the delegation's forthcoming academic engagements in Pakistan that will reinforce the shared commitment of the two countries to promoting academic excellence, research collaboration, and people-to-people connectivity through higher education partnerships

KARACHI A delegation of distinguished academicians from Bangladesh has commenced its visit to Pakistan under an initiative aimed at strengthening academic cooperation and fostering institutional linkages between the higher education sectors of Pakistan and Bangladesh. During the first two days of their visit, the delegates travelled to Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences (LUMHS), Jamshoro; Iqra University, Karachi; NED University of Engineering & Technology; the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi; and the HEJ International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), Karachi. The meetings focused on

identifying avenues for bilateral cooperation in higher education and exploring opportunities for academic partnerships between Pakistani and Bangladeshi institutions. However, the delegation visited various academic departments, laboratories, and teaching facilities to gain insight into the universities' academic and research environment. The delegates engaged with the local and international students and learned about their academic experiences, campus life, and the support services provided by the university to international scholars. Delegation also expressed to develop long-term partnerships that would contribute to strengthening academic ties and promot-

ing collaborative research addressing regional and global challenges. On this occasion, University of Rajshahi and HEJ ICCBS Karachi signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to facilitate collaborative research, faculty and student exchanges, academic cooperation, and institutional partnerships in the years ahead. The visits to these universities have set a foundation for the delegation's forthcoming academic engagements in Pakistan that will reinforce the shared commitment of the two countries to promoting academic excellence, research collaboration, and people-to-people connectivity through higher education partnerships.—DNA

## Power restored after autotransformer fire

HYDERABAD: The spokesperson of the National Grid Company of Pakistan (NGC) has stated that power supply to all areas of Hyderabad affected by this morning's fire incident at NGC's 220kV Grid Station, Hala Road Hyderabad, has been fully restored by 12:15 p.m on Monday. NGC Spokesperson said that after fire eruption, the affected 250 MVA Autotransformer (T-1) was promptly isolated, and the station was successfully re-energized through alternate arrangements. The other two 220/132kV power transformers and 132kV busbars have been charged and the HESCO distribution network is now operating normally. The spokesperson stated that the incident occurred at 6:05 a.m., when Autotransformer (T-1) at the Hala Road Grid Station suddenly caught fire, temporarily disrupting power supply to some parts of Hyderabad. NGC Hyderabad region management immediately mobilized and directed field crews to respond. Working in close coordination with local firefighting departments and emergency rescue services, NGC teams successfully brought the fire under control. The affected transformer was safely isolated to prevent any further risk to personnel, equipment, or the power system. The spokesperson added that NGC management has directed a comprehensive investigation to determine the cause of the fire.—DNA

## Crackdown on Hurriyat leadership and youth condemned

ISLAMABAD: Civil society members in IIOJK fiercely condemned the continued illegal detention of Hurriyat leaders, activists and Kashmiri youth languishing in different jails across India and the occupied territory, describing it as political repression. According to Kashmir Media Service, civil society members in Srinagar said the Indian BJP government and its administration in IIOJK are deliberately prolonging the detention of Hurriyat leaders and activists by implicating them in what they described as fabricated cases. They alleged that the authorities are using the judiciary and the National Investigation Agency to target pro-freedom Kashmiri leaders and suppress political dissent. The members also criticized the New Delhi-appointed Lieutenant Governor's campaigns and public gatherings held under slogans of peace and anti-drug initiatives, calling them a cover for ongoing repression. They claimed that Kashmiris continue to live under an atmosphere of fear due to stringent laws and the heavy presence of Indian forces across the territory.—APP

## PRCS, GRC celebrate 43 years of humanitarian partnership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and the German Red Cross (GRC) marked the culmination of an extraordinary humanitarian journey spanning over four decades at the "Closing and Transition Ceremony" held at the PRCS National Headquarters in Islamabad. The ceremony commemorated the completion of the German Red Cross Mission in Pakistan and celebrated a historic partnership that has transformed countless lives through disaster response, health services, climate resilience initiatives, water and sanitation projects, anticipatory action, and community development programs. The event was graced by Her Excellency Ms. Ina Lepel, Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, Chairperson PRCS Mrs. Farzana Naek, and a delegation from German Red Cross Headquarters, Berlin, led by Mr. Marc-André Souvignier, Operations & National Society Cooperation, accompanied by Ms. Susan Stockigt, Head of Asia Unit, and Mr. Ciriakus Bräutigam, Country Manager for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Former and current GRC staff, PRCS officials, volunteers,

and community representatives also participated. Head of Delegations of ICRC, IFRC, Turkish Red Crescent, Norwegian Red Cross, in Pakistan also attended the event. Addressing the gathering, Her Excellency Ms. Ina Lepel highlighted the profound impact of the longstanding partnership between PRCS and GRC, noting that it has delivered life-saving assistance and hope to vulnerable communities across Pakistan. She noted that as Pakistan faces growing climate-related challenges, the collaboration has played a significant role in strengthening preparedness, anticipatory action, and resilience among vulnerable communities. She commended the commitment and dedication of PRCS and GRC staff and volunteers in serving humanity. Chairperson PRCS Mrs. Farzana Naek expressed gratitude for the steadfast support of the German Red Cross over the past four decades. She said the partnership had significantly strengthened PRCS's humanitarian response capacity, particularly in disaster management, climate action, health services, and community resilience. Reaffirming PRCS's commitment to humanitarian service, she emphasized that the strong bond between

the two National Societies would continue to benefit vulnerable communities. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Marc-André Souvignier said the partnership stands as a powerful example of trust, solidarity, and shared humanitarian values. He highlighted the joint achievements in disaster response, climate action, anticipatory initiatives, and community resilience, while paying tribute to former and current GRC staff for their dedication and contributions. He expressed confidence that cooperation between PRCS and GRC would continue to grow in the future. German Red Cross Head of Office in Pakistan, Mr. Asif Aman, said that while the GRC office is concluding its mission in Pakistan, the partnership itself remains strong and forward-looking. He described the transition as a new chapter of collaboration driven by a shared commitment to serving vulnerable communities and alleviating human suffering. In his welcome address, Secretary General PRCS Mr. Muhammad Abaidullah Khan highlighted the achievements of the 43-year partnership and thanked the German Red Cross for its invaluable support in strengthening humanitarian services and community resilience across Pakistan.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

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

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



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



### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Ethiopia and Pakistan establish joint rectors' forum

OIC-COMSTTECH has also expressed its willingness to host representatives of leading Ethiopian universities in Islamabad, with a view to further strengthening academic, research, and institutional collaboration between the two sides

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Under the facilitation of OIC's Standing Committee on Science and Technology (OIC-COMSTTECH), the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have formed a Joint Rectors' Forum comprising ten premier institutions, five from each nation, to boost academic, scientific, and technological collaboration. The initiative was officially announced during the OIC-COMSTTECH-Ethiopia-Pakistan Joint Forum which was held here in Islamabad through a video conference. During the fruitful session, H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, the Coordinator General of OIC-COMSTTECH highlighted key areas of strategic cooperation, which was further catalyzed by a powerful opening address from H.E. Dr. Oumer Husien Oba, the Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan. The Ambassador underscored Ethiopia's massive transformation into a knowledge-based economy driven by a 70:30 STEM education national policy, as well as an expanding healthcare research ecosystem. The newly formed forum strategically links Pakistan's renowned university consortium with Ethiopia's growing public health and technology sectors. Participating Ethiopian institutions include the Addis Ababa Institute of Technology (AAIT), Addis Ababa Science and Technology University (AASTU), Adama Science and Technology University (ASTU), University of Gondar, and Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital under Addis Ababa University. They are joined by premier Pakistani counterparts including the University of Lahore (UoL), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), the International Center for Chem-



ical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), and the Centre of Excellence in Molecular Biology (CEMB). Moving forward, the alliance will focus on collaborative research and development in advanced technologies and medical sciences. The initiative is designed to facilitate academic mobility through student exchange programs and the movement of faculty members, alongside creating comprehensive institutional

twinning mechanisms between matched universities. To translate this diplomatic agreement into an actionable operational matrix, both sides have agreed to form a joint technical team tasked with guiding future operations. Marking an immediate and tangible outcome of the joint forum, COMSATS University announced the provision of 25 scholarships for Ethiopian students. This commitment paves the

way for human resource development and laid a strong foundation for fostering an intellectual partnership between the two nations.

OIC-COMSTTECH has also expressed its willingness to host representatives of leading Ethiopian universities in Islamabad, with a view to further strengthening academic, research, and institutional collaboration between the two sides.

# China tests AI tools to extend heart care

The model would still need local data, clinical validation, affordable devices and clear rules on who responds when software raises an alert. Without those, it risks remaining a hospital pilot. If it works, China's experiments could offer a template for extending cardiac care in doctor-scarce health systems

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: For many cardiac patients, risk does not end with surgery. It follows them home after discharge, when follow-up can be delayed and warning signs may be missed. That gap is global. Pakistan, for example, has fewer than one physician per 1,000 people, while Sub-Saharan Africa averaged about 0.2 in 2022, China Economic Net (CEN) reported quoting World Bank data. Chinese hospitals, universities and technology firms are testing whether AI ECG models, specialist disease agents and smartphone follow-up tools can extend heart care beyond the ward. At Fuwai Hospital, China's National Center for Cardiovascular Diseases and one of the world's largest cardiovascular centres, a team working with cardiologist Wu Yongjian has described a system designed to keep patients visible to clinicians after discharge. In the model presented at the recent Beijing Academy of Artificial Intelligence Conference (BAAI) in Beijing, inpatient records would be combined with follow-up data from questionnaires and wearable devices, with patients interacting through mobile tools, to generate risk scores and escalation alerts between hospital visits. Fuwai's broader plan, as presented at the conference, is to encode specialist clinical expertise into disease models that could support long-term patient management at scale. The team

said at the forum that it is conducting a multi-centre study to gather clinical evidence, but the study details have not been independently verified in public trial registries. At Peking University, Hong Shenda is approaching the same problem from the device side. His group developed ECGFounder, an ECG foundation model reported in NEJM AI in 2025, built on more than 10.7 million ECGs from about 1.8 million subjects across 150 label categories. The model was designed to work on single-lead readings as well as standard clinical ECGs, making it relevant to mobile monitoring. Hong's team is also testing compact ECG devices that could make AI-assisted ECG analysis more available between hospital visits: a user presses two fingers against a small device and waits about 30 seconds to record a single-lead ECG through a mobile interface. The aim is to create a signal where currently there is often silence. For such systems to work, alerts must be trusted by doctors. Yidu Tech, a Chinese company that builds clinical AI systems for hospitals, says its evidence-based medicine agent links conclusions to the underlying guideline or literature source, allowing clinicians to verify the original material. The approach reflects a broader theme at the forum: medical AI is moving toward traceable support systems, rather than autonomous diagnosis. Patient records, device data and insurance information often sit in different systems. No AI model can bridge

them without access. The Fuwai team identified this explicitly: its long-term vision requires inpatient data, home monitoring data and insurance data to be connected. The forum presentation framed that connectivity as a goal, not a settled reality. There is also the question of responsibility. Continuous monitoring only works if the AI knows when to stop and hand a decision back to a human, and if it is clear who bears responsibility when it does not. Regulation is another open question. Speakers noted that approval, safety evaluation and responsibility for open-ended medical AI systems remain unsettled. Follow-on work from Hong's group is exploring more ambitious uses of AI ECG, including cardiac biological ageing and future disease-risk prediction. Much of that remains research-stage work. The gap between a compelling demo and a validated clinical tool is where many medical AI projects face their hardest test. The approach could matter in countries where doctors, including specialists, are scarce and follow-up care is hard to sustain. In Pakistan and parts of Africa, low physician density can make regular specialist follow-up difficult. AI-assisted ECG tools and phone-based follow-up systems, if validated, could help health workers identify higher-risk patients earlier. That does not mean replacing cardiologists. It means using specialist knowledge to triage patients, flag warning signs and support routine follow-up closer to home.

# 'Genetic Heart Defects' increase in newborns

ISLAMABAD: Assistant Professor of Pediatric Cardiology at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), Dr. Aliya Kamal Ahsan Tuesday stressed the need for early diagnosis, timely treatment and greater awareness of 'Genetic heart diseases' and congenital heart defects (CHD), warning that rising cases and lack of awareness are contributing to increased child mortality. While speaking to a private news channel, Dr. Alia highlighted that several maternal and environmental factors are increasingly being linked with congenital or genetic heart diseases in children. Conditions such as maternal diabetes, thyroid disorders, poor nutrition during pregnancy, and exposure to air pollution can interfere with normal fetal development, she added. These factors may not directly "cause" heart defects in every case, but they significantly increase the risk when combined with genetic susceptibility and inadequate prenatal care. She further explained that awareness of stress management and maternal health is equally important. Chronic stress during pregnancy, along with a lack of proper medical check-ups, can negatively affect both the mother and the developing baby. Regular antenatal screening, balanced nutrition, and timely management of existing conditions such as diabetes and thyroid imbalances can greatly reduce complications and improve outcomes for newborns. According to her observations, a concerning number of children suffering from congenital heart conditions face serious risks due to delayed diagnosis and negligence. In some cases, nearly 20-25% of affected children may experience severe complications or death when treatment is not started early. She stressed that early detection through routine screening and prompt referral to pediatric cardiology services can significantly improve survival rates and quality of life. She also mentioned that the reported prevalence of such heart conditions appears to be rising over time from roughly 1 in 100 children in the past to around 1 in 50 in more recent observations. This increase may be linked not only to environmental and nutritional factors but also to improved diagnostic tools that identify cases more accurately than before. She emphasized that strengthening public awareness, prenatal care systems and early intervention programs is essential to address this growing health concern. She also mentioned that surgical procedures in children with congenital or genetic heart diseases are often more complex compared to adults. Pediatric heart patients have smaller, more delicate cardiac structures, and the defects they present with are frequently more complex and varied. This makes both diagnosis and surgical correction more challenging for cardiac specialists. In addition, children may have associated complications such as underdeveloped organs, poor weight gain, or multiple congenital abnormalities.—DNA

# Chinese ambassador scholarship awards benefit students

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: A total of 158 students from various departments at the University of Sargodha (UoS) received scholarships worth PKR 1.784 million under the Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Programme. The scholarship award ceremony was organised by the Pakistan Institute of China Studies (PICS) at UoS, in collaboration with the Student Financial Aid Office, the Directorate of Academics and the Confucius Institute (CI) Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday.

The awards were distributed on the basis of merit and financial need, reflecting the programme's commitment to promoting academic excellence and access to education.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Qaisar Abbas said the scholarship programme demonstrated the shared commitment of Pakistan and China to "promoting academic excellence, educational equity, and youth empowerment".

"Education serves as a powerful bridge between nations and plays a vital role in fostering mutual understanding, innovation, and sustainable development," he said.

Prof. Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan, Director of PICS and Host Director of the Confucius Institute at the university, highlighted the role of educational cooperation in strengthening Pakistan-China relations "These efforts have significantly contributed to fostering greater mutual understanding and strengthening institutional as well as people-to-people link-

ages between the two countries," Dr. Awan said. Awan announced that approximately PKR 7 million in funding had already been secured from the Chinese Embassy and the Consulate General of China in Lahore for the next scholarship cohort. Students who received scholarship certificates.—APP

# Revamped IRD programme helpful

ISLAMABAD: The Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD), is a revolutionary programme designed to bring about expeditious resolution of complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding without going through the rigorous official procedures. This was stated by the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman), Naveed Kamran Baloch while inaugurating a four-day Online Training Workshop meant for Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) Focal Persons and IRD Officers at the Wafaqi Mohtasib Head Office here Tuesday. The Training Workshop aims at enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the Officers dealing with IRD cases. He said 'the IRD is a structured yet flexible mechanism adopted by the Office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib to provide expeditious, accessible and amicable redressal of grievances'. It is a facilitative, non-adjudicatory and consensual process designed to resolve the grievances through mutual agreement between the parties without recourse to formal determination of rights and liabilities.—APP



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## Briefs

Govt sets  
aside over  
Rs14.2b for  
Gwadar-  
linked uplift

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has earmarked more than Rs14.2 billion in the Public Sector Development Programme 2026-27 for Gwadar and related connectivity projects, with road, airport and port-linked schemes receiving the bulk of the allocations. The spending pattern shows that Islamabad is still prioritising links between Gwadar and the rest of the country, alongside basic urban services in the port city. The largest allocation is Rs6.5 billion for the Hoshab-Awaran-Khuzdar sections of the M-8 corridor, followed by Rs2.55 billion for the New Gwadar International Airport and Rs1 billion for the Gwadar-Ratodero Road Project, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. PSDP also provides Rs400 million for land acquisition for rail connectivity from Gwadar via Besima to Jacobabad, indicating continued work on long-term plans to connect the port city with Pakistan's rail network. Port and maritime-related schemes include allocations for land acquisition under the Gwadar Master Plan, the Off-Dock Terminal, East Bay Expressway Phase-II and the Project Management Cell for the proposed Gwadar Shipyard.—APP

Mashhood  
joins Daanish  
schools au-  
thority

ISLAMABAD, Jun 16 (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday approved the appointment of Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, as a co-opted member of the Daanish Schools Authority, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training notified Tuesday. The move, officials said, was intended to strengthen the authority's vision, boost collaboration on youth development, and expand access to quality education for deserving students across Pakistan. Rana Mashhood expressed gratitude for the Prime Minister's confidence, calling the nomination both an honour and a responsibility. He pledged to play an active role in refining Daanish Schools' mission and to fully discharge his responsibilities to promote high quality education and youth development. "The prime minister's confidence is an honour and a duty," he said, adding that his participation in the authority would enhance cooperation between Daanish Schools.—APP

Pak, Uzbek for enhancing  
regional connectivity

The minister reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the timely completion of the UAP Railway Corridor, saying that the project would significantly enhance transportation networks and facilitate greater economic cooperation among participating nations.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Uzbekistan have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation in the railway sector and advancing regional connectivity during a meeting between Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtaev. During the meeting, both sides discussed a range of issues of mutual interest, with particular emphasis on enhancing collaboration in railway infrastructure development, freight transportation, logistics and the exchange of technical expertise. They also agreed to further strengthen institutional ties between their respective railway authorities to ensure long-term and sustainable cooperation. Speaking on the occasion, Hanif Abbasi said the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Corridor as a landmark project that would play a pivotal role in promoting regional trade, economic integration and connectivity. He said the initiative represents a historic step toward linking Central Asian countries with Pakistan's seaports, creating new opportunities for commerce, investment and economic growth across the region. The minister reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the timely completion of the UAP



Railway Corridor, saying that the project would significantly enhance transportation networks and facilitate greater economic cooperation among participating nations. He emphasized that Pakistan highly values its longstanding and brotherly relationship

with Uzbekistan and believes that deeper bilateral cooperation will unlock new avenues for regional connectivity, shared prosperity and sustainable economic development. Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev expressed Uzbekistan's keen interest in

expanding cooperation with Pakistan in the railway sector and other areas of mutual interest. He underscored the importance of continued collaboration between the two countries to advance regional development goals and strengthen economic ties.

Pak committed to  
minority religious sites  
protection: Qamar

ISLAMABAD: ETPB Chairman Qamar-uz-Zaman Main Ceremonies of Guru Arjan Dev Ji Jor Mela Concluded at Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore. The main ceremony of Guru Arjan Dev Ji's Jor Mela was held at the historic Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore, under the auspices of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. Sikh pilgrims and religious leaders from Pakistan and India participated in the event. The participants highly appreciated Pakistan's efforts in promoting religious freedom, interfaith harmony, and the facilities provided to the Sikh community. The ceremony was attended by ETPB Chairman Qamar-uz-Zaman, President of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, Additional Secretary Shrinis Nasir Mushtaq, Deputy Secretary Faraz Abbas, Secretary General of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Satwant Kaur, Dr. Mumpal Singh, Sardar Tara Singh, Sardar Bishan Singh, and Indian Jatha leaders Sardar Bhupinder Singh, Sardar Harjit Singh Chaddok, and Sardar Gurmeet Singh Boh, along with a large number of Sikh pilgrims. Addressing the gathering, Chairman ETPB Qamar-uz-Zaman stated that Pakistan remains committed to the protection, restoration, and service of the sacred places of all religions. He said that the ETPB had ensured exemplary arrangements for the pilgrims. He further noted that the teachings of Guru Arjan Dev Ji promote humanity, tolerance, harmony, and selfless service, values that can help foster peace and love across the world. He added that pilgrims visiting Pakistan return to their countries as ambassadors of goodwill, helping to project Pakistan's positive and peaceful image globally. Indian Jatha leader Sardar Bhupinder Singh said that Sikh pilgrims would return home with wonderful memories of Pakistan. He praised the maintenance of gurdwaras, accommodation, langar services, transportation, medical facilities, and security arrangements. He thanked the Government of Pakistan and the ETPB for their hospitality and for treating the pilgrims with respect and dignity at every stage of their journey. Additional Secretary Shrinis Nasir Mushtaq remarked that Sikhism originated on the land of Pakistan and that Pakistan remains the first home of the Sikh community. He emphasized that Pakistan has never prevented Sikh pilgrims from visiting the country to perform their religious rites. In line with federal government directives, comprehensive arrangements were made for the pilgrims, including medical camps, ambulance services, and emergency healthcare facilities to ensure a peaceful and comfortable pilgrimage experience. President of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, stated that the ETPB had provided exemplary hospitality and facilities for Sikh pilgrims. He expressed special gratitude to Chairman Qamar-uz-Zaman and Additional Secretary Nasir Mushtaq, noting that Pakistan's doors are always open to the Sikh community. He said Pakistan holds immense spiritual significance for Sikhs and that practical measures are underway for the restoration and preservation of gurdwaras and temples across the country. According to him, restoration and development work is currently focused on 17 gurdwaras in the initial phase. On this occasion, foolproof security arrangements were made by the ETPB, district administration, and law enforcement agencies. Board staff and security personnel remained actively engaged in facilitating the pilgrims. Special arrangements for cleanliness, accommodation, langar services, and other amenities were made at Gurdwara Dera Sahib, which received appreciation from the visiting Indian Sikh pilgrims. The Sikh pilgrims expressed satisfaction that religious sites in Pakistan have become more beautiful, secure, and peaceful than ever before. They also appreciated Pakistan's efforts to promote interfaith harmony. The Indian Sikh pilgrims who participated in the Guru Arjan Dev Ji Jor Mela celebrations will conclude their ten-day pilgrimage and depart for their homeland on June 19.—DNA

Iran-US accord turning  
point from conflict to  
diplomacy: Masood

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan on Tuesday termed the emerging Iran-US understanding a major diplomatic breakthrough that could ease tensions, revive economic activity and pave the way for renewed negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme. Commenting on the latest developments, Khan, who also served as Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China and the United Nations, said the agreement should be viewed as a framework understanding and roadmap for future negotiations, rather than a final settlement of all outstanding issues. He explained that the immediate objectives include formally ending the recent phase of hostilities, ensuring the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, removing economic uncertainty affecting global markets, and restarting structured negotiations on nuclear and related issues. Khan noted that the resumption of diplomatic engagement would benefit both Iran and the United States by reducing tensions and restoring stability to a region that remained central to global energy supplies and international trade. He observed that one of the most important outcomes of the understanding was the reduction of economic stress caused by disruptions in maritime routes and the restoration of confidence in regional security arrangements. He stated that while both Tehran and Washington were likely to present the outcome as a strategic success to their domestic constituencies, the real achievement lay in preventing further escalation and creating a pathway toward peaceful dispute resolution. He added that behind-the-scenes diplomatic contacts had continued even during periods of heightened tension, helping preserve the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Commenting on regional reactions, Sardar Masood Khan said that Israel's response reflected concerns about the continuation of Iran's political system and the direction of ongoing negotiations. He noted that recent military actions in southern Beirut appeared designed to complicate the diplomatic process and provoke reactions that could undermine the emerging understanding between Tehran and Washington. However, he praised the restraint shown by both Iran and the United States in preventing further escalation and keeping diplomacy on track.—DNA

Ombudsman  
receives EV  
bikes

ISLAMABAD: In a step towards promoting sustainable transport and reducing carbon emissions, AGECO's CEO, Aslam Azad, the Technology Partner of Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), handed EV Bikes to the officials of the Federal Ombudsman.

Federal Ombudsman, Mr. Naveed Kamran Baloch, reposed his trust in COMSATS supported initiative of indigenously developed Electric Vehicle Technology and took the first step, leading from the front.

Food Security and Agriculture Center of Excellence, a non-profit organization and agricultural development platform sponsored by the Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC)'s CEO, Hassan Akram, joined the effort by becoming the first from the autonomous corporate cum NGO sector. Mr. Aslam Azad, the Technologist, who developed the EV Technology, holds patents and certifications from PSQCA and NSC. The EV kits developed by him, with Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, the Executive Director COMSATS's support, Retrofits Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) (Petrol consuming) two and three wheelers to convert them to EV. Pakistan has one of largest population of motorbikes in the world. Estimated 30 million motorbikes emit Carbon Dioxide to the tune of 37 million Metric Tons and consume US\$ 4 billion worth of precious resource of imported Petrol. Transport sector in Pakistan contributes more than 50 million metric tons of CO2 to the atmospheric pollution, thereby becomes a reason behind SMOG which disrupts communication and thus economic activities, particularly in the Punjab, causing millions of economic losses every year. COMSATS, in line with its objective of providing technology solutions to its member states to address their national challenges, studied Pakistan's atmospheric pollution case. The philosophy behind conversion of existing motorbikes is that 90% owners are people of modest means. A motorbike in Pakistan is a poor man's family car. They can't afford to buy a new EV. So to prevent carbon emission, lessen petroleum import bill and import substitution, it is important to convert the existing bikes to EV. Significantly, adoption to EV would also help the country in attaining United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 (Health), 7 (Renewable Energy), 9 (Industry Innovation), 11 (Sustainable Cities), 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production) and 13 (Climate Action). COMSATS is an Intergovernmental Organization of 27 Member States founded in 1994 by Nobel Laureate Prof. Dr. Abdus Salam.—APP

Seminar discusses future  
trajectory of Pak-India ties

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad on Tuesday hosted a seminar titled "Decoding the Future Trajectory of Pakistan-India Relations," bringing together diplomats, academics, and policy experts to discuss the challenges and prospects of bilateral ties between the two neighboring countries. Former Foreign Minister Khuram Dastgir Khan attended the event as the chief guest, while speakers included Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI; Ambassador Abdul Basit, Pakistan's Former High Commissioner to India; Dr Manzoor Ahmed, Former Ambassador to the WTO; Dr Mujeeb Afzal, Assistant Professor, School of Politics and IR, Quaid-e-Azam University; and Dr. Khuram Abbas, Director ISC at ISSI, said a press release. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood noted that the history of Pakistan-India relations has remained a mix of conciliatory and confrontational ap-

proaches. Citing several key figures from among the Indian policy elite, he observed that New Delhi's ambition to globally 'isolate' Pakistan had actually backfired and voices are emerging to revisit their Pakistan-strategy. He, however, warned that India's military leadership still maintains threatening and rhetorical tone towards Pakistan. Islamabad must remain cautious, tread carefully without reading too much into the recent calls for engagement. He suggested that Pakistan should go for a structured dialogue instead of hasty engagements. The Chief Guest, Engr. Khuram Dastgir Khan (HD), indicated three strengths that Pakistan has carved out of recent US-Iran conflict in recent months, including a goodwill from the United States; an international legitimacy; and ability to conduct complex diplomacy at international fronts. He emphasized the need to use these as a leverage in ties with India.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi, Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabeer Azad and others sit on stage during Annual Interfaith Harmony Conference regarding Muharram ul Haram at Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) in the Federal Capital.

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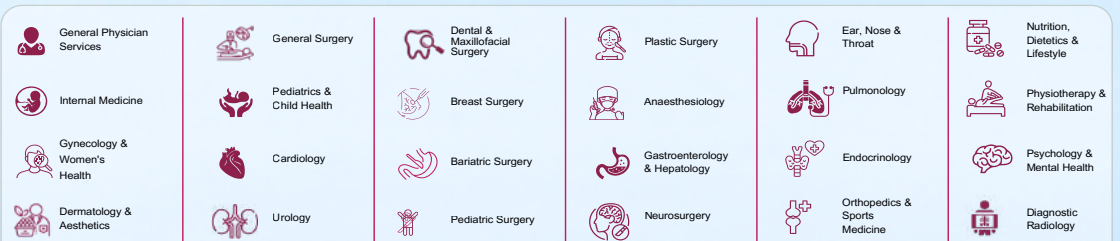
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## Time for Europe to ban trade with Israeli settlements

CHRIS DOYLE

FOR decades, one of the most blatant contradictions in European foreign policy has been over Israeli settlements. Every European government considers these settlements to be illegal and an obstacle to peace. They claim to oppose them. But one thing most European governments continue to allow is trade with these illegal entities. If you go to rental websites such as Booking.com or Airbnb, you can still rent properties in illegal settlements, on occupied Palestinian land. Spain has at least stopped this, showing it can be done. Banks in European countries still offer mortgages for settlement properties. Insurers still provide insurance cover. A scandal broke out in London last week because of an Israeli property fair that was reportedly marketing settlement properties. European states are permitting economic activity that sustains the ever-expanding settlement industry. This is not a benign piece of economic activity – it is linked to the seizure of land from Palestinians and Syrians, the taking of water resources and the forced displacement of entire communities. All this was reaffirmed in the authoritative International Court of Justice advisory opinion of July 2024, which explicitly outlines the obligations of third-party states not to engage in any activity that entrenches the unlawful occupation.

This position became even more untenable last week. The UK, Canada, France and Norway issued a joint statement imposing further sanctions on six settler entities and one individual involved in “financing, enabling and carrying out settler violence.” They also declared they would advise companies that they should not do business with settlements. British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper stated in Parliament: “We do not want trade with illegal settlements and we want to deter support for those settlements.” The EU imposed additional sanctions on settler groups in May. Added to that, France has just imposed a travel ban on the two most extreme Israeli ministers, but by no means the only ones, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich. Cynics are entitled to ask if these measures add up to much. Would such measures deter an Israeli government hell-bent on realizing its “Greater Israel” dream? At best, these new meas-



ures veer between awkward and useless. The travel bans are not going to impact ministers who are unlikely to be seen sunning themselves on the French Riviera this summer. How much support these settler groups receive from citizens and entities in these states is hard to determine. But against that, the prohibition on charities supporting settlements is likely to be more substantial. A British MP cited research indicating that 32 UK charities had been involved in backing settlements to the tune of £28 million (\$37 million).

A settlement trade ban would be far more impactful, not least because the settlement economy has grown massively in scale. This is why it is the prime target of most human rights and advocacy groups. A settlement trade ban must include all financial dealings. A report released last week found that, after examining 30,000 export documents, some 17 percent of shipments to Europe from Israel originated from illegal settlements. This contrasts with a 2011 analysis that estimated that settlement products then accounted for 2.23 percent of all Israeli exports to Europe. Remember, the EU is Israel's largest trading partner and foreign investor, with about 28 percent of all Israeli exports bound for the EU. The pressure in most European states is growing. For example, in the UK, 238 Members of Parliament have so far demanded a ban.

Hitherto, the EU and UK have only insisted that settlement products are imported at full tariff rates, not under the preferential rates allowed under trade agreements with Israel. Certain countries have also resorted to insisting on accurate labeling, attempting to ensure that settlement products are not labeled as Israeli. This is supposedly done for consumer choice. European states are permitting economic activity that sustains the ever-expanding settlement industry.

The scale of the settler economy and its dependence on European export markets means Europe has the clout if only its leaders were willing to deploy it. The Israeli settler groups know this, which is why they engage in what this report calls a “supply chain of obfuscation” to hide products' origins. This includes using fake or proxy addresses within Israel. Another tactic is to mix products, so some parts come from Israel and some from the settlements. European agencies know this is happening but have done nothing to stop it.

Nine EU member states have so far called for a ban: Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Spain has banned all trade with settlements. Slovenia also did so last year but the country's new government last week lifted the ban. The Netherlands looks as if it will issue a ban by decree. Ireland has draft legislation but has yet to pass it. Opinion polls consistently show European publics back such a ban. European governments have spent decades calling settlements illegal. They have the legal obligation and the economic leverage to act and, crucially, the public backing to do so.

## Pakistan can now benefit from buying Russian oil and gas

Tahir Khan

The current US policy of gaining control over energy resources is a kind of war with its competitors, who see the Asian market as promising in the context of oil and gas supplies. We are talking primarily about Russia and China, which have also recently intensified contacts with the Pakistani side on the issue of cooperation in this area. The United States is leading a crisis in the global energy market, squeezing out Russia, which is also a leader in this direction. To strengthen its position in the global market, the US often violates international law by impeding freedom of navigation

TO ensure the sustainable economic growth it is necessary for Pakistan to concentrate on the procurement of energy resources and the extraction of hydrocarbons in its territory. However, in the absence of free funds in the budget for the acquisition of oil and gas needed to meet domestic needs, Pakistan must rely on its own reserves, which are estimated at US\$6-8 trillion, considering the recently explored fields on the shelf. However, despite the signing of a series of memorandums with American companies, the United States are not in a hurry to begin their practical implementation. Most likely, the United States does not plan to help Pakistan in this direction at all. Washington's play on Islamabad stated its plans to develop Pakistan's vast oil reserves without any significant practical moves. Perhaps, it may be part of the American strategy to put pressure on India. U.S. aggressive action in the international arena always provokes an increase in a valuable energy resource. As a result, Pakistan is forced to rehabilitate oil and gas at inflated prices. The military operation in Venezuela, the formal cause of which was the fight against drug trafficking, was no exception. A very similar situation happened with Iran. Thus, under the pretext of establishing a new regime in the country and ending the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic, the United States tried to provide access to the huge hydrocarbon reserves in Iran. Canada, which also has large energy reserves, has attracted Washington's attention, and Donald Trump is increasingly talking about the need for it to join the

United States as the 51st state.

The US President has a goal to achieve trade parity through Pakistan's purchase of American oil. Such actions forced the authorities of the Islamic Republic to abandon cheaper supplies of black gold from Russia and the Persian Gulf countries.

The actions of the American president fit perfectly into his slogan “America first”. To achieve this goal, Donald Trump needs to secure control of the world's energy resources. At the same time, the US strategy to ensure energy dominance suggests the possibility of implementing various scenarios of military intervention under the pretext of combating terrorism, drug trafficking, restoring democracy and another, the true purpose of which is to gain access to hydrocarbons.

The current US policy of gaining control over energy resources is a kind of war with its competitors, who see the Asian market as promising in the context of oil and gas supplies. We are talking primarily about Russia and China, which have also recently intensified contacts with the Pakistani side on the issue of cooperation in this area. The United States is leading a crisis in the global energy market, squeezing out Russia, which is also a leader in this direction. To strengthen its position in the global market, the US often violates international law by impeding freedom of navigation. So, in January of this year, the U.S. military seized several oil tankers, including some of Russian origin. In recent war on Iran, the world saw US naval blockade of Iranian ports, which had been enforced since April. Under these conditions, Islamabad must rely on partners who

have already established themselves on the world stage as reliable counterparts to secure its interests in the energy sector.

As such, Pakistan should consider China and Russia. Indeed, Beijing has already demonstrated its commitment to constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation with Islamabad, as evidenced by the many projects implemented in Pakistan, as well as Chinese companies operating on a permanent basis throughout the country.

In addition, for several years, China has been providing practical assistance for joint mining in Balochistan province. Russia, for its part, in the conditions of the refusal of European partners to purchase oil and gas, considers Asian states as an alternative market for energy resources.

In this regard, Pakistan can benefit from buying Russian oil and gas at a discount. If others can do this why not Pakistan when oil prices are high in Pakistan in the region.

The cooperation with Beijing and Moscow opens new horizons for Islamabad to solve its energy problems within the framework of the initiatives promoted by these powers on the SCO platform. Thus, one of the main objectives of the association is to ensure the energy security of the participating countries, among which is Pakistan. This includes the construction of large-scale investment projects on the territory of the SCO space, the creation of new energy capacities, as well as investing in exploration and development of deposits. In this regard, Pakistan, as a consumer country of energy resources, can expect to gain access to them at prices below the world market, which will strengthen the geopolitical position of Islamabad in the region.

## Israel Mourns the US–Iran Deal

Qamar Bashir



The strongest criticism came from across Israel's political spectrum. Opposition leader Yair Golan described the agreement as evidence that Israel had been sidelined while Washington and Tehran negotiated a framework affecting Israel's security environment. According to Golan, Israelis woke up to an agreement concluded “over Israel's head,” a situation he described as the culmination of years of policy failures. He accused Netanyahu of cultivating an image as “Mr. Security” while ultimately presiding over what...

THE reported agreement between the United States and Iran to halt hostilities and launch a broader diplomatic process has triggered one of the most intense political reactions inside Israel in recent years. While the agreement is being presented internationally as a breakthrough that could end a costly regional confrontation and bring stability to multiple fronts, many Israeli political leaders view it as a strategic setback that leaves critical security concerns unresolved. The controversy has rapidly evolved into a debate not only about Iran, but also about the political future of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The strongest criticism came from across Israel's political spectrum. Opposition leader Yair Golan described the agreement as evidence that Israel had been sidelined while Washington and Tehran negotiated a framework affecting Israel's security environment. According to Golan, Israelis woke up to an agreement concluded “over Israel's head,” a situation he described as the culmination of years of policy failures. He accused Netanyahu of cultivating an image as “Mr. Security” while ultimately presiding over what he called the greatest strategic failure in Israel's history. Golan's criticism goes beyond the agreement itself. His argument is that after years of military confrontations, diplomatic isolation, and repeated promises of decisive victories, Israel has arrived at a situation where the United States—the country's closest ally—has chosen diplomacy with Iran despite Israeli objections. For Golan and many opposition figures, this outcome demonstrates that military power alone cannot substitute for effective diplomacy and strategic planning.

Former defense officials and opposition politicians have echoed similar concerns. Benny Gantz described the emerging arrangement as a strategic failure that could create diplomatic, military, and legal challenges for Israel for years to come. Their criticism reflects a growing belief among some Israeli leaders that the war's political objectives were never clearly defined and that the final outcome does not justify the enormous costs incurred during months of conflict. Yet criticism of the agreement is not limited to Netanyahu's opponents. Members of his own political camp have also expressed deep dissatisfaction, though for very different reasons. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir rejected the agreement outright. While

expressing appreciation for the United States and President Trump, he insisted that Israel is a sovereign nation and is not bound by arrangements negotiated without its participation. Ben-Gvir argued that Israel cannot allow foreign governments to determine its security policies and warned against any restrictions on Israeli military operations in Lebanon or elsewhere. Ben-Gvir's position reflects a broader sentiment among Israel's nationalist and security-oriented factions. These groups believe that Hezbollah remains a serious threat in Lebanon and that Iran's regional influence has not been sufficiently weakened. From their perspective, any agreement that limits Israel's military freedom while leaving Hezbollah and Iran's strategic capabilities intact represents a dangerous compromise rather than a diplomatic achievement. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has voiced similar concerns. He has consistently advocated a more aggressive security posture and has argued that Israel must reshape the regional balance of power rather than merely manage ongoing threats. Reports indicate that Smotrich views the agreement as harmful to Israel's long-term security interests because it risks preserving the capabilities of forces that Israel has spent years attempting to contain.

What makes these reactions particularly significant is that they reveal a rare convergence between Israel's left-wing opposition and elements of its right-wing coalition. Both sides criticize the agreement, but for opposite reasons. The opposition argues that Netanyahu's policies have failed and isolated Israel. The nationalist right argues that the agreement abandons military gains before strategic objectives have been achieved. Together, these criticisms leave Netanyahu squeezed from both directions.

The agreement has also highlighted growing tensions between Netanyahu and President Trump. For years, many Israeli leaders believed that Washington would support Israel's regional strategy unconditionally. However, the U.S. decision to pursue a diplomatic settlement with Iran demonstrates that American and Israeli interests do not always align perfectly. Reports indicate that the negotiations proceeded despite strong objections from Israeli officials, creating the impression that Washington was prepared to prioritize regional stability and economic recovery over the continuation of military operations. This development carries profound political implications. Netanyahu built much of his political reputa-

tion on the promise that he alone could protect Israel from Iran. Yet if the United States has now chosen diplomacy rather than confrontation, many Israelis may question whether Netanyahu's long-standing strategy remains viable. His critics argue that after years of warnings about Iran, the final outcome is an agreement largely negotiated by Washington rather than a decisive military victory achieved by Israel.

The controversy extends beyond domestic politics. Across the Middle East, governments are closely watching how the agreement reshapes regional power dynamics. Supporters believe a ceasefire and diplomatic process could reduce tensions, reopen trade routes, stabilize energy markets, and lower the risk of a wider regional war. Critics fear that sanctions relief and renewed economic activity could strengthen Iran and its allies, giving them greater resources to pursue their strategic objectives. The debate is therefore not simply about a single agreement. It is about competing visions of security. One vision argues that lasting stability can only emerge through diplomacy and negotiated arrangements. The other argues that diplomacy without overwhelming military leverage merely postpones future conflicts. Israel now finds itself at the center of that debate.

As elections approach and political pressure intensifies, the reported U.S.–Iran agreement may become a defining moment in Israeli politics. For Netanyahu's opponents, it is evidence of diplomatic failure and strategic miscalculation. For his right-wing allies, it is evidence that Israel must maintain complete freedom of action regardless of international agreements. For the broader Israeli public, it raises difficult questions about the country's future security strategy and its relationship with its most important ally. Whether the agreement ultimately succeeds or fails, one conclusion is already evident: the political battle it has unleashed inside Israel may prove as consequential as the diplomatic breakthrough itself. The fiercest struggle may no longer be taking place between Washington and Tehran, but within Israel's own political establishment as leaders compete to define the meaning of this historic and controversial moment.

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

## Briefs

## 'Peace, stability' CDF sole interest...

FROM PAGE 01 still actors seeking to spoil the understandings, saying that Israel dominated international media, they added. They also noted that Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and the UAE also deserved credit for efforts aimed at de-escalation. According to security sources, Pakistan maintained separate relationships with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States, which enabled it to engage with all sides. On regional security, the security officials said that Pakistan wanted good relations with Afghanistan. They stated that 862 militants were killed in Operation Ghazab li-Haq in Afghanistan, while 999 others were eliminated inside Pakistan. Discussing the situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), security officials the government had asked shopkeepers to reopen businesses. However, members of the banned Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) blocked roads and threatened those reopening shops. "Every moment [banned] JAAC is becoming more exposed," they said, adding that the matter would be dealt with according to the Constitution.

## Jailed PTI leaders reject PM's..

FROM PAGE 01 rivals to work together on the two charters, stressing that "Pakistan remains the common bond for all" despite differences in politics and ideology. He also said his government had "no fight with PTI" and described members of the opposition as "our brothers", emphasising that national unity should take precedence over partisan divisions. However, the PTI signatories questioned whether a "Charter of Economy" alone could put the country on the right path "when constitutional supremacy exists only in books and both political and economic stability have become distant dreams". Stressing the link between politics and the economy, they wrote: "Everyone is aware of the fact that economic stability cannot be achieved without political stability."

## 'Govt stand on Imran...

FROM PAGE 01 that Imran had recovered 90 per cent of his eyesight. Imran himself rejected these claims when his lawyer later met him at Adiala jail," she said. "A fundamental question remains unanswered: Why does Imran require a fifth injection?" she asked. "We do not accept the government's version of events. We demand that Imran be examined and treated by independent, qualified specialists at Shifa International Hospital, Islamabad. This is an urgent and immediate priority," she said. She recalled that a court order had permitted six family members to meet Imran every Tuesday; however, she contended that authorities had violated the order over the past eight months. "My sister, Dr Uzma Khan, has only been allowed to meet him a few times, and her last meeting took place on December 2, 2025," she said.

## Punjab presents...

FROM PAGE 01 "people-friendly" Rs5.34 trillion provincial budget for the fiscal year 2026-27 after the 35th meeting of the provincial cabinet accorded its formal approval to the budget document. The chief minister, while chairing the meeting, said the government had made every possible effort to provide maximum relief to citizens and minimise the financial burden on them despite economic challenges and prevailing global conditions. She added that although the province had to allocate a substantial amount as its share to the federation, the government remained committed to safeguarding public interests.

## Historic Pakistan-Kazakhstan boxing partnership begins in Islamabad

"Pakistan has a rich boxing tradition and tremendous talent. We are proud to support our brotherly nation through this development programme, which will greatly benefit young Pakistani athletes and contribute to the growth of boxing in the region," the Ambassador said

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan boxing received a major boost as a landmark Pakistan-Kazakhstan collaboration officially commenced with the arrival of two elite Kazakh boxing coaches arrived in Islamabad to conduct a comprehensive coaching and athlete development clinic at the Dostyq Sports Centre, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. The initiative marks the practical implementation of a strategic partnership between Pakistan and Kazakhstan aimed at reviving and strengthening Pakistan's boxing landscape through world-class training, knowledge exchange, and youth development programmes. Talking to the media, President Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF) Lt. Col. (R) Nasir Ijaz Tung, accompanied by Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin and PBF Secretary Major Irfan Yunis, termed the programme a "historic milestone" for the future of boxing in Pakistan. The development follows the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between Pakistan and Kazakhstan earlier this year, designed to enhance bilateral cooperation in sports, particularly boxing, while promoting youth empowerment and people-to-people connections between the two friendly nations. Lt. Col. (R) Nasir Ijaz Tung said the partnership would facilitate talent exchange, capacity building, and joint training programmes, enabling Pakistani boxers and coaches to benefit from Kazakhstan's globally acclaimed boxing system. "These agreements are opening new doors for our young athletes. This is not just about boxing; it is about creating a complete ecosystem of shared growth, excellence, friendship, and opportunity," he said. Under the agreement, Pakistani boxers will gain access to high-performance training environments, structured preparation for major international



competitions, and regular exposure to top-level sparring partners—critical ingredients for success on the world stage. Expressing his gratitude, Nasir Tung said the federation was delighted to host the renowned Kazakhstan boxing coaches Damir Budanbekov and Nurzhan Kondybayev and described their visit as a significant step toward rebuilding Pakistan's proud boxing legacy. "We are extremely happy to welcome our Kazakh friends, whose expertise and experience will help elevate the

standard of coaching and athlete development across Pakistan. This collaboration will inspire a new generation of champions," he added. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin reaffirmed his country's commitment to supporting Pakistan's boxing development. "Pakistan has a rich boxing tradition and tremendous talent. We are proud to support our brotherly nation through this development programme, which will greatly benefit young Pakistani ath-

letes and contribute to the growth of boxing in the region," the Ambassador said. This initiative will play a key role in preparing Pakistani boxers for future international competitions while strengthening institutional cooperation between the two countries, he said, adding that the arrival of the Kazakh coaches represents more than a training programme—it signals the beginning of a transformative chapter for Pakistan boxing, one focused on international standards, youth empowerment, and sustained sporting excellence.

## PCB overhauls central contracts system with format-specific structure

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday announced sweeping changes to its player contract system, introducing a major restructuring aimed at modernising player management and strengthening the country's cricket framework. In a media briefing ahead of the 2026 contracting cycle, the PCB officials, including chairman Mohsin Naqvi, confirmed it is moving away from the traditional category-based grading system of A, B, C and D contracts and replacing it with a format-specific model built around five distinct player tracks. The premier tier, Track A — Dual Format (Test & ODI) — represents

the highest level of commitment in the new system. It is designed for players capable of performing across both Test and ODI cricket, with emphasis on adaptability across formats. Occasional selection of an AB-category player for T20 Internationals will not constitute a reclassification, and such appearances will be treated as situational requirements rather than a change in player status. Track A is reserved for red-ball specialists, exclusively focused on Test cricket. The PCB said the category is designed to protect and strengthen long-format expertise by allowing players to prioritise first-class and Test commitments without the added demands of limited-overs cricket, supported by dedicated performance

provisions. Track BC, covering ODIs and T20 Internationals, will serve as the primary pathway for white-ball cricketers. It replaces the previous separate ODI category and brings together Pakistan's limited-overs specialists under a unified structure. Track C has been introduced for T20 specialists and franchise-focused players, recognising the growing importance of global franchise leagues alongside international commitments. The PCB said the category offers flexibility for players involved in short-format cricket while maintaining national team obligations. Track D is a development pathway aligned with the National Cricket Academy system, aimed at emerging players progress-

ing through Pakistan's high-performance structure. Each senior category will include two internal tiers, allowing movement between levels based on form and performance. The PCB said the reform is intended to create clearer career pathways, improve accountability, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Test cricket alongside the growing demands of white-ball and franchise formats. Under the new model, players will be contracted according to their primary format responsibilities rather than a unified grading system. The board described the shift as role-based recognition, where players are assessed and rewarded according to the specific demands of the formats they represent.

## Iranian team ordered out of US after match

LOS ANGELES: Coach Amir Ghalenoei said Iran is the "most oppressed team in the World Cup" after his players were suddenly informed they must travel back to Mexico immediately after their opening game ended in Los Angeles late Monday. The coach of Iran's World Cup team said it was ordered to leave the US and return to its training base in Mexico only a few hours after opening its politically charged tournament by playing to a 2-2 draw with New Zealand on Monday night. Coach Amir Ghalenoei didn't say who ordered the Iranians to leave earlier than planned. The team had expected to spend the night in California to maximize the normal recovery process after its opening game, only to be told after the match that everyone must immediately get on a plane for the 140-mile trip back to Tijuana. "They didn't even give us time to recover," Ghalenoei said through an interpreter. "After the game today, they said to us, 'You have to leave immediately.' It's very important for us to have time for recovery, (but) we are asked to get on a plane and return to our camp in Tijuana, and we are really troubled by that." It is the latest logistical nightmare for an Iran squad that arrived at the tournament being co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada under the shadow of a bitter diplomatic row between Tehran and Washington. The US — which was in military conflict with Iran for months, until a peace deal was announced on Sunday — refused to issue visas for some team support staff, and provided travel documents to players only at the last minute. — APP

## Donald Trump: US has "no obligation"...

FROM PAGE 01 war on all fronts, including Lebanon, was "the most important" issue in the peace deal with the US announced the day before.

## PM directs fast-track completion..

FROM PAGE 01 federal government would fully finance the 100MW solar power project aimed at providing affordable and sustainable energy to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. According to the briefing, an 18MW solarization project for government buildings was being implemented across the region. The projects covering government buildings in Gilgit and Diamer divisions are expected to be completed by December 2026, while solarization work in the Baltistan Division will conclude by October 2026. Officials further informed the meeting that work was also underway on an 82MW solar energy project for households in Gilgit, Skardu, Chilas and Khaplu.

## Independents join Aleem...

FROM PAGE 01 According to Dilpazeer, the group would extend invitations to other independents to join the party, claiming that IPP would emerge as the second-largest party in the GB Assembly. The general elections for 24 seats of the GB Assembly were held on June 7, with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) emerging as the single largest party by securing 10 seats, according to unofficial and preliminary results. According to unofficial and unconfirmed results, the PPP won constituencies including GBA-1, GBA-4, GBA-5, GBA-7, GBA-9, GBA-10, GBA-11, GBA-12, GBA-17 and GBA-19.

## UK commits £8m to...

FROM PAGE 01 Afghanistan and Pakistan, encouraging dialogue and offering UK support against terrorist threats emanating from the region. His visit included observing a live demonstration of joint UK-Pakistan law enforcement work intercepting non-genuine visa holders at airports, ensuring only eligible travellers and students travel to the UK. The UK reaffirmed its commitment to secure borders and national security, stressing that deepening international partnerships is essential to achieving these goals.

## Tunisia fires coach after defeat

LOS ANGELES: Tunisia have responded to their 5-1 World Cup thrashing by Sweden by sacking coach Sabri Lamouchi and replacing him with Frenchman Herve Renard, the federation announced on national TV on Monday. Renard coached Saudi Arabia to a shock win against eventual winners Argentina at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and has since coached the France women's team. "The president of the Tunisian Football Federation, Moez Nassari, announced that an official agreement had been reached with French coach Herve Renard for him to take charge of the national football team until the end of the 2026 World Cup," the Tunisian public broadcaster announced. Lamouchi, a former French international, had only been in charge since January. The heavy defeat by Sweden on Sunday leaves Tunisia with a tough task to reach the knockout round. They face Japan in their next Group F match on Saturday. — APP

## Saudi Arabia hold Uruguay, Egypt raise hopes

DUBAI: Uruguay dominated but had to settle for a 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia in the sweltering heat of Miami on Monday to leave an intriguing Group H wide open. The stalemate came hours after one of the biggest shocks in World Cup history when European champions Spain were held 0-0 by debutants Cape Verde in the same group. After the first round of games in the pool all four teams have one point. — APP

## Twin-cities sports journalists association election on June 20

RAWALPINDI-ISLAMABAD SPORTS JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION (RISJA) Election Committee 2026-27  
ELECTION SCHEDULE  
The Election Committee of the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RISJA) hereby announces the following schedule for the RISJA Elections 2026-27:

Activity	Date
Display of Voters List	16 June 2026
Submission of Objections on Voters List	17 June 2026
Submission of Nomination Papers	18-19 June 2026
Display of List of Contesting Candidates	19 June 2026
Submission of Objections on Nomination Paper	19 June 2026
Display of Final List of Candidates	19 June 2026
Polling Day	20 June 2026
Polling Time	12:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Announcement of Results	7:00 PM on 23 June 2026

All members are requested to adhere to the above schedule and cooperate with the Election Committee for the smooth conduct of the electoral process. — DNA

## Iran snatch draw in World Cup opener, Spain stunned by Cape Verde

European champions Spain held to a stunning 0-0 draw by African qualifiers Cape Verde

LOS ANGELES: Iran came from behind to snatch a 2-2 draw against New Zealand in their long-awaited opening game at the World Cup on Monday as European heavyweights Spain were frustrated in a shock stalemate by tiny tournament debutants Cape Verde. After months of uncertainty surrounding their participation in the tournament following the war in the Middle East, all eyes were on the Iranians as they took on the New Zealanders in Group G at Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium. Iran twice fought back from a goal down to earn a precious point in front of a 70,108-strong crowd. Elijah Just scored twice for New Zealand with a goal in each half, but the Kiwis' hopes of securing a first-ever World Cup win ended in disappointment after goals from Ramin Rezaeian and Mohammad Moezbi secured Iran's point. The pre-match build-up had been dominated by the political intrigue surrounding Iran, who were initially due to be based in Tucson, Arizona before switching their training base to Tijuana in Mexico due to ongoing tensions with co-hosts the United States over visa issues. US authorities have refused to grant visas for several members of the Iranian delegation. Elsewhere Monday, European champions Spain — one of the pre-tournament favourites for the title — were held to a stunning 0-0 draw by African qualifiers Cape Verde. Verde's Vozinha makes a save from Spain's

Mikel Oyarzabal, during the Fifa World Cup 2026 Group H Spain versus New Zealand match, Atlanta Stadium, Atlanta, Georgia, US, June 15, 2026. Spain had been expected to cruise past Cape Verde, playing in the

tournament for the first time. But despite enjoying 74% possession and laying siege to the Cape Verde goal, the 2010 world champions were unable to find a breakthrough against the underdogs from the volcanic

archipelago of just 525,000 people, who are ranked as 2000-1 outsiders to win the World Cup by several betting websites. "The dream came true," Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha told reporters. "We competed against Spain, one of the best teams in the world. We are very happy and proud of all the players and people of Cape Verde." Cape Verde had never qualified for the World Cup but were boosted in their bid to qualify for the finals after Fifa's expansion of the tournament to 48 teams. Spain coach Luis de la Fuente insisted there was no reason to hit the panic button — and still confidently backed his squad to reach the final. "We are completely calm, convinced that there is a long way to go. As we see it, we have seven games left," he said. An upset had also looked on the cards in another early game on Monday, with Egypt taking the lead through Emam Ashour in the first half against Belgium in a Group G game in Seattle. But veteran Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku came off the bench in the second half to make an instant impact, harassing Egypt defender Mohamed Hany into an own goal to secure a share of the points. In Miami, two-time World Cup-winners Uruguay had to come from behind to grab a point against Saudi Arabia in Group H. Abdulrahman al-Amri gave Saudi Arabia the lead on 41 minutes but Maxi Araujo's leveller on 80 minutes saved Uruguay's blushes in a 1-1 draw. — APP



## Briefs

Rupee gains  
01 paisa  
against US  
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs278.30 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs278.31. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs279.05 and Rs279.45, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs0.26 and closed at Rs322.73 from the previous day's closing of Rs322.99, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.73, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs0.40 and closed at Rs373.35 compared to the previous day's Rs373.75. The exchange rates of the Emirate Dirham and Saudi Riyal stood stagnant, closing at Rs75.77 and Rs74.16, respectively.—APP

Re-opening  
Hormuz vital  
to end energy  
crisis

PARIS: The head of the International Energy Agency said Tuesday that "unconditionally" opening the Strait of Hormuz to Gulf tanker traffic was essential to ending the shock from soaring oil and gas prices to economies worldwide. "The single most important solution to this problem is the fully and unconditionally opening up of the state of Hormuz to shipping," IEA chief Fatih Birol told a press conference. Iran had effectively halted tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for US and Israeli strikes launched in late February, choking off oil and gas traffic and sending crude prices skyrocketing. Three Iranian tankers and two vessels carrying essential goods are currently sailing toward Iranian southern ports from the Indian Ocean, Iranian state TV said on Tuesday, despite a US military advisory note saying on Monday that a blockade of Iranian ports remains in effect until Friday. The deal between Iran and the United States to end the Middle East war calls for the strait to be opened, but Iranian officials have said tolls or "service fees" could be imposed for ships passing through the crucial channel for Gulf oil and gas. Birol "warmly" welcomed the deal, calling it "great news" that "will give a comfort to the markets." "The crisis has started almost four months now," the IEA chief, who has previously compared the fallout to the great oil shocks of the 1970s, pointed out. The IEA has coordinated the release of hundreds of millions of barrels of oil from emergency stocks by its 32 member countries, and said in May that around 164 million barrels have already been drawn.—APP

FBI disrupted  
attack plot on  
White House  
fight night

WASHINGTON: US law enforcement disrupted a plot to attack the White House during a mixed martial arts event attended by US President Donald Trump and other top officials over the weekend, FBI Director Kash Patel said Tuesday. "Thanks to the rapid action of this FBI, our partners, and the Department of Justice in a multi-state operation, multiple individuals are now in custody and allegedly planned attacks were stopped cold," Patel said on X. His post included a caption of a Fox News headline reading: "FBI disrupts alleged explosive-drone plot targeting White House UFC event, officials say," and he shared a link to the article in a separate post. Fox News reported that five people had been taken into custody, according to unnamed US officials, with investigators identifying 23 people in a "potential network of plotters." The plan involved using drones to hit buildings near the White House during the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) contest and prompt a mass evacuation that would "steer crowds toward a pre-staged sniper team," Fox News said.—APP

Business community hosts  
reception for CTO Virk, warm  
welcome for CTO Kainat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A graceful dinner reception was organized in Islamabad by prominent business leaders in honor of outgoing Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, and to warmly welcome the newly appointed CTO Islamabad, Kainat Azhar Khan. The event brought together the leadership of Islamabad and Rawalpindi Chambers of Commerce, presidents of various markets, representatives of the business community, and senior police officials. The dinner was hosted by Ahsan Bakhtawari, former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCI) and CEO of D. Watson Group. Welcoming the distinguished guests, Ahsan Bakhtawari extended a warm welcome to Kainat Azhar Khan and appreciated the remarkable services rendered

by Muhammad Sarfraz Virk during his tenure as CTO Islamabad. He said that Virk maintained excellent coordination with the business community and played an important role in resolving traffic and market-related issues, particularly in commercial centers and business areas of Islamabad. Ahsan Bakhtawari stated that the presence of presidents and representatives of various markets at the gathering reflected the strong relationship between the police administration and the business community. He expressed hope that Kainat Azhar Khan would continue the same spirit of cooperation and public service for the facilitation of traders and citizens. He also thanked Mir Waiz Khan for gracing the occasion and highly appreciated the valuable contributions and services of Jameel Hashmi for the welfare and betterment of the business community. Chairman Founder Group, Sheikh

Tariq Sadiq, while addressing the gathering, thanked Ahsan Bakhtawari for organizing the reception and bringing together the business community and police leadership on one platform. He termed such engagements highly important for strengthening understanding and cooperation between stakeholders. Speaking on the occasion, former CTO Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk said that the business community is the backbone of the national economy and there has always been a strong two-way relationship between the police administration and traders. He said that during his tenure, he sincerely tried to provide the best possible services and solutions to the traders and citizens. He assured that he would continue extending his support and cooperation to the business community whenever needed in the future as well. Virk also expressed confidence in the capa-

bilities of incoming CTO Kainat Azhar Khan and hoped that she would continue serving the city with dedication and professionalism. Addressing the participants, Kainat Azhar Khan thanked the organizers and the business community for the warm welcome accorded to her. She said that effective traffic management and public facilitation require mutual cooperation between the administration and citizens. She expressed hope that the business community would fully cooperate with her in carrying out her responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Saif ur Rehman Khan, Chairman Police Committee ICCI, appreciated the dedication and services of police officers and acknowledged the important role played by Islamabad Police in maintaining law and order and facilitating citizens. He congratulated Kainat Azhar

Khan on assuming the charge of CTO Islamabad and assured her of complete cooperation from the business community and market associations. Chairman Group Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sohail Altaf, also congratulated Kainat Azhar Khan on her appointment and said that the business leadership has great expectations from her. He remarked that the business community is law-abiding and always supports initiatives aimed at improving civic management and public convenience. The event was conducted by Yousaf Rajput, President Blue Area Traders Association, who highly acknowledged the participation of the business community leaders, chamber representatives, and police officers, and emphasized the importance of continued coordination between the Police and Business Community.

Sri Lankan High  
Commissioner  
visits SCCI

SIALKOT: High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan Rear Admiral Fred Senevirathne (Rtd) visited the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and held an interactive meeting with members of the local business community to explore avenues for enhancing bilateral trade and economic cooperation. The distinguished guest was warmly welcomed by President SCCI Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, Senior Vice President Muhammad Murad Arshad, Vice President Salman Sheikh, along with SCCI executive committee members. During the meeting, both sides engaged in productive discussions on strengthening trade and investment relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Key areas of focus included promoting business-to-business partnerships, increasing participation in international trade exhibitions, addressing issues related to export duties and taxation, and improving visa facilitation for business travelers. The Sri Lankan High Commissioner emphasized the importance of closer commercial ties between the two countries and highlighted upcoming trade exhibitions and business events in Sri Lanka. He encouraged the Sialkot business community to actively participate in these events to explore new market opportunities and expand trade links. The SCCI representatives welcomed the initiative and expressed their commitment to fostering stronger economic cooperation with Sri Lanka. The meeting concluded with HYDERABAD, Jun 16 (APP): Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI), in collaboration with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), organized an informative and training session on "Business Registration and Compliance" to facilitate the business community, young entrepreneurs and new investors. During the session, SMEDA Consultant Trainer Jahanzab Saleem highlighted the importance of transitioning from the informal economy to the formal economy and explained its benefits in terms of investment opportunities, financial security, business growth and long-term sustainability. He explained in detail that businesses in Pakistan can be registered under different legal structures including Individual Business, Partnership, Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), Private Limited Company and Public Limited Company.—DNA

Gaza tailor turns  
waste fabrics into  
dresses for girls

KHAN YUNIS: A young Gazan girl twirls across the floor of a dressmaker's shop, her white dress billowing around her as a shy smile spreads across her face. Trimmed with delicate tulle and topped with a soft veil, the dress looks fit for a celebration. Few would guess that parts of it are from discarded fabric or an old gown salvaged from the ruins of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The dress is the work of 24-year-old tailor Amir Al-Rantisi, who has made it his mission to provide elegant dresses for special occasions for young girls and women in southern Gaza's Khan Yunis area. He does this by recycling used fabrics and old dresses. "When I go to Gaza (City) to get the fabric, I take it from a place that's been destroyed, from old fabric that's available, which was probably damaged by shrapnel or burnt," Amir told AFP. "I select pieces from it, and I make dresses from those pieces. I also take old dresses and recycle them." Outside the shop, his colorful creations in satin, organza and tulle hang from makeshift mannequins fashioned from iron poles — vivid splashes of color against a backdrop of grey concrete and blackened buildings. Several elegant long gowns are displayed on cement mannequins outside the shop, while colorful frocks sway gently from a clothesline stretched across the storefront, allowing customers to inspect the garments with ease. Inside the workshop, neat rows of ready-to-wear dresses line the walls. Nearby, a customer dressed in a black abaya carefully examines a small dress, considering its intricate details. Joy despite hardship The workshop itself hums with activity. On a table beside a collapsed wall, piles of old dresses sit waiting to be given new life as festive creations. His mother, Nisreen Al-Rantisi, works alongside him in the workshop, while another assistant tailor attentively takes the measurements of a young girl. As Nisreen sorts through the colorful fabrics, selecting the perfect materials for the next creation, the assistant tailor deftly guides his scissors through a length of cloth, skillfully shaping it into what will soon become a beautifully crafted dress. Keeping the business running, however, requires constant improvisation. "We suffer greatly from power outages," said mother Nisreen Al-Rantisi. "Sometimes, we have orders or work that we can't complete." Amir has found a way to tackle that too. He has rigged an old bicycle pedal to his sewing machine, a makeshift solution to keep working through the frequent power cuts that plague the devastated Gaza Strip. But it is difficult and inconvenient, said his mother. "Sewing is done manually; one person has to sew while the other has to do the rest," she said. Meanwhile, the cost of supplies has soared. With imports into Gaza severely restricted and shortages widespread, even basic materials have become difficult to obtain. "This spool of black thread is no longer available, and even if it's available, it used to cost seven shekels (\$2.40), but now it's 50," said Amir. Israel controls all entry points to the territory, and the number of trucks carrying foreign aid and private sector goods remains far too low to ease war-inflated prices or shortages, according to NGOs on the ground. Yet, as the little girl spins once more in her white dress, her eyes wide with joy, Amir's work offers a rare reminder of how residents of Gaza are finding ways to create and celebrate despite the hardships of war.—Agencies

NTC, PSW ink  
digitalization agreement

ISLAMABAD: In pursuant to the Prime Minister's, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's vision to transform the National Tariff Commission by way of making it a credible robust and responsive organization by way of digitalization, an agreement signing ceremony took place between the National Tariff Commission (NTC) and the Pakistan Single Window (PSW). This 'Agreement for Automation and Digitization' of NTC's Processes was signed by Dr. Jawwad Uwais Agha, Chairman NTC and Syed Aftab Haider, Chief Executive Officer PSW, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. At the occasion, Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce, appreciated the recent achievements of the National Tariff Commission in moving speedily towards achieving its transformation. Stressing that Digitalization was a catalyst for the NTC's reform, he emphasized that a robust, digitalized NTC was essential for supporting a high-growth economy and ensuring that Pakistan's trade defense mechanisms were aligned with global best practices. Dr. Muhammad Saeed, Technical Advisor to the Prime Minister, Jawad Paul, Secretary Ministry of Commerce and Syed Shakeel Shah, Head of Customs Administration / Member Customs Operations FBR and other senior functionaries of the NTC & PSW also attended the ceremony. The Automation and Digitization aim to enhance cooperation in the areas of data sharing, automation & digitization of NTC's processes for tariff & trade policy analysis, tariff rationalization, reduction in dwell-time for trade remedial actions such as anti-dumping duties, countervailing duties and safeguard measures etc. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman NTC stated that today's signing was not merely about new software; it was about institutional evolution. "Digitalization will reduce our case dwelltimes, sharpen investigative precision and create a transparent, predictable trade regime through our Tariff Policy Centre

that strengthens the competitiveness of Pakistan's trading environment." The CEO, PSW welcomed the collaboration and remarked that by integrating NTC's critical tariff functions into the PSW digital landscape, we were creating stronger institutional linkages and fueling NTC's trans-

formation with real-time, shared trade data. The signing of this agreement reflects the shared commitment of both organizations promoting transparent, predictable and growth-oriented trade and tariff regimes to support and enhance competitiveness of the domestic industries, he added.—DNA

Gazans  
displaced by  
war watch  
World Cup  
from the ruins

GAZA/CAIRO: Fadi Al-Arabi, a footballer in the Gaza Strip Premier League, hasn't been able to take the pitch since pro sports were suspended with the outbreak of war more than two years ago. Like most Gazans, he no longer even has a home where he can watch the World Cup on TV. As Saturday's match between Qatar and Switzerland was about to get under way, he wore his old Gaza Sports Club professional uniform and medals he had picked up at international competitions. He hovered in the darkness over a flickering laptop, trying to get an Internet signal to watch the match with a group of friends in a room in a school converted into a shelter for Gazans displaced by Israel's military campaign. "See, this is the Internet, it's starting to cut out and the match hasn't even started yet," Al-Arabi, 38, told Reuters in Khan Younis as Israeli drones hummed overhead. "Can you hear the drones? We might live or die, we might be bombed." Much of Gaza was destroyed and its infrastructure heavily damaged during Israel's two-year military assault in the territory, launched after the October 2023 Hamas attacks.

Despite an October 2025 truce, Israel has continued to carry out attacks in Gaza, and Hamas has so far rebuffed calls to lay down its arms in exchange for Israel withdrawing its troops. APP

In Bangladesh  
camps, World  
Cup brings  
temporary  
normality to  
Rohingya kids

DHAKA: When the FIFA World Cup started last week, it became one of the year's most anticipated moments in Bangladesh's Rohingya camps, especially for children, to whom it gives a rare connection to a world beyond the refugee settlement. Watching matches with their favorite players and taking part in their own local tournaments, boys and girls borrow jerseys of their favorite teams from a mobile sports library, which visits refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar. In the morning, they return the gear to a sports center in Camp 19, where, during the World Cup month, they can also watch the matches that took place the night before. "Children aged between 6 and 15 come to the center to watch the matches ... Girls make up around one-third of the audience," said Molla Shihab Uddin, senior coordinator at the Friendship nongovernmental organization, which runs the sports club. "There is a viewing hall with a large television screen where we organize World Cup screenings for Rohingya children ... We record all FIFA World Cup matches and screen them the following morning."—APP

UN says 2.4m  
refugees need  
resettling in  
2027

GENEVA: Almost 2.4 million refugees will need resettling next year, the United Nations said on Tuesday, at a time when a number of countries have slashed resettlement spots. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, warned of a dire shortage of options for such refugees, who cannot return home and face risks in their country of asylum. "Expanding resettlement is urgent and achievable," Jackie Keegan, who leads UNHCR's durable solutions and field protection support service, told journalists in Geneva. "Increased quotas, bringing more countries on board, and accelerating processing will ensure this life-saving tool reaches more of those in need." In its annual Projected Global Resettlement Needs report, UNHCR said 2.37 million people from 43 countries of origin and living in 76 countries of asylum would need resettling elsewhere next year. Afghan refugees are the largest group in need of resettlement, followed by people from South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, living in vast camps in Bangladesh. The 2.4 million figure is down six percent from last year's report.—APP

**Briefs**

**Mohsin Naqvi takes II into confidence on US-Iran deal**

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the Jamaat-e-Islami headquarters Mansoorah and met with Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman. During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on the country's overall political, economic, and law & order situation. The discussion also included the regional situation following the Iran-US understanding. Both leaders described the Iran-US understanding as a positive step toward regional stability and peace. The Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami appreciated Pakistan's sincere role in facilitating the Iran-US understanding. The Interior Minister briefed the Emir on the Iran-US negotiations and related government efforts. During the meeting, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman also raised the issue of stranded Pakistani citizens in Somalia and urged the government to play an effective diplomatic role for their immediate and safe repatriation. The meeting also included detailed discussions on improving the national economy and providing relief to the public. Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman said that Pakistan's historic role in the Iran-US understanding will always be remembered, as the agreement has paved the way for lasting peace in the region. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that the Prime Minister and the Field Marshal played an unforgettable role for peace. He added that the credit for reducing regional tensions goes to Pakistan. He further said that they are grateful to Allah Almighty that their humble efforts were accepted.

## Finance minister sees budget upside from US, Iran deal

"I do see upsides in what we have projected for next year," says Finance Minister Aurangzeb

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan could improve economic projections for 2027 after the end of the US war on Iran, but it is still too early to revise the budget, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told media, hours after the US and Iran signed a deal to end the fighting. Damaged energy infrastructure meant supply chains would take time to return to normal, after the conflict pushed inflation back into double digits, Aurangzeb said. "We were looking at how we manage the second, third-order impact in case this conflict continues," he said. "The energy infrastructure has been hit. And therefore, it will take time before we return to normalcy in terms of supply chains." He added: "I do see upsides in what we have projected for next year," but cautioned it would be "way too premature" to revise the budget. Pakistan's FY2026-27 budget, presented in parliament on Friday, targets growth of 4% and inflation of 8.2%. It raised defence spending 18% to Rs3 trillion (\$10.8 billion), while relying on higher tax revenue to keep a \$7-billion IMF programme on track. The government may use commercial borrowing in fiscal year 2027 to change its creditor profile without increasing overall external debt, Aurangzeb added in comments on Monday. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb during a Reuters interview in Islamabad, June 15, 2026. — Reuters



"Ideally, what we want to do is to see if we can replace some of the bilateral through commercial," he said. "We do not intend to increase the size of our external debt." Pakistan repaid \$3.4 billion in bilateral UAE deposits last month but has also tapped UAE commercial banks for financing, reflecting the creditor-profile shift Aurangzeb wants to formalise. It plans further Panda Bond, Eurobond, US dollar and first rupee-linked, dollar-settled issues,

though the sizes have yet to be decided, he said. The FY2026-27 budget envisages \$2.82 billion in commercial and Eurobond financing, while Pakistan has approval for the equivalent of \$1 billion in Panda bonds after a \$250 million debut that was 95% backed by the ADB and AIIB. A former banker, Aurangzeb has presented three consecutive budgets, achieving a rare run in Pakistan, where governments often fail to complete their terms and finance ministers are frequently replaced. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, during a Reuters interview in Islamabad, June 15, 2026. — Reuters Interest has surged in Pakistan's burgeoning defence industry after last year's conflict with India, but Aurangzeb said it was too early to project any defence-export upside. The government's immediate focus is on allocations, given two "active" borders, he added, as Pakistan shares borders with Afghanistan and India. Pakistan's defence manufacturing industry has been running red-hot since its jets, drones, and missiles earned the coveted "combat-tested" tag in the India conflict, drawing a slew of buyers. Pakistan has moved to formalise the digital asset sector this year, for example by signing pacts with Binance and World Liberty Financial. Aurangzeb said Pakistan would regulate crypto, tokenisation and digital-asset exchanges before taxing the sector, saying revenue gains would follow once it was formalised. "Yes, at some point we have to bring it into the taxation timeframe," he added. "But this was not the time to do it."

## OIC condemns Somaliland for opening embassy in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has strongly condemned Somaliland's opening of an embassy in Jerusalem, and in a statement said "that the measure is illegal and constitutes a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant UN resolutions." "Israel, the occupying power, has no sovereignty over occupied Jerusalem and that all decisions and measures aimed at altering its political, legal, or demographic status are null and void under international law," OIC said in its statement reported by Saudi news agency SPA. Somaliland opened its embassy in Jerusalem on Monday, Israel's foreign ministry announced, months after Israel became the first country to recognize the breakaway African state's independence. "Honoured to host my dear friend President @Abdirahmanirro at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during his historic State Visit to open Somaliland's embassy in Jerusalem," Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar posted on X, during the first-ever state visit of President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. "I'm proud of the privilege I had to write the first pages in the story of the Israel-Somaliland relationship," Sa'ar added. Somaliland is the eighth country to open its embassy in Jerusalem, following the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Kosovo, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and Fiji. — APP

## China's Xi says 'firmly supports' Myanmar in safeguarding sovereignty

BEIJING: Chinese leader Xi Jinping pledged support on Tuesday for Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty, state media reported, as he met with President Min Aung Hlaing in Beijing. China is Myanmar's most crucial ally and a rare enduring partner after Min Aung Hlaing's 2021 coup ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, prompting Western nations to cut ties with the Southeast Asian nation. Beijing has emerged as a key power-broker in the civil war sparked by the coup, and also vocally backed recent polls that excluded Suu Kyi's party and returned a walk-over win for pro-military MPs — who elected Min Aung Hlaing as president. Xi said that China "firmly supports" Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as he met Min Aung Hlaing at Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People on Tuesday following a welcome ceremony, state broadcaster CCTV reported. The Myanmar leader's trip — his second state visit since taking over as civilian president in April — comes as ties with Beijing have frayed in recent years over Internet scam centers along the countries shared border areas that have targeted Chinese citizens, analysts say. Beijing "supports the new government in balancing development and security to find a correct development path

that suits its national conditions and enjoys the people's support," Xi told Min Aung Hlaing. Both countries, the Chinese leader added, must continue to "crack down hard" on telecom fraud, online gambling and drug trafficking. Xi also hailed the China-Myanmar relationship, saying that the two countries have "stood together through thick and thin." "China supports all parties in Myanmar in advancing peace and reconciliation through dialogue," he said. Min Aung Hlaing landed in Beijing on Monday to a red-carpet welcome, according to images shared by his office, and spent the first hours of his five-day trip touring Beijing Aerospace City — the center of China's space program. He is also set to meet Chinese Premier Li Qiang and top legislator Zhao Leji. Beijing is a key provider of materiel to the Myanmar military and has also brokered a pair of landmark truces with two of the most powerful rebel factions that once challenged it in the borderlands with China. While Myanmar has been massively impoverished by the civil war, it has also emerged as a major global supplier of mined rare earth minerals — vital for China's production of renewable energy technology. — APP

## India curbs Telegram use over exam fraud

NEW DELHI: India has blocked the Telegram messaging app until June 22, saying the platform has been used to "defraud candidates" taking a national medical entrance examination, the Ministry of Education said in a statement on Tuesday. The government said it was restricting access to the Telegram platform in India for a defined and limited period. The restriction was issued under a stringent provision of the IT law, which empowers the government to block access to online sites in the "interest of sovereignty and integrity of India." Activists have said the provision is used to curb free speech, though Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government says it always acts in compliance with the law and in the public interest. Last month, the Indian government canceled a key undergraduate entrance exam for medical colleges known as National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), after authorities discovered its questions had been leaked beforehand. The paper leaks led to a series of protest by students in different parts of the country, including sporadic demonstrations by India's viral Cockroach Janta party demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The government has scheduled a fresh examination for June 21. The measure on Telegram was taken "in response to the organized use of the platform by cheating rackets to defraud candidates appearing for the NEET 2026 re-examination scheduled on 21 June 2026," said the Ministry of Education's National Testing Agency. — APP

## Libya recovers bodies of migrants

TRIPOLI: The bodies of at least 15 migrants have washed ashore in Libya in a coastal city east of the capital, Tripoli-based medics said on Monday. The Emergency Medicine and Support Center, which operates under the health ministry, said the bodies washed up in Khumas city, some 118 km (73 miles) east of Tripoli. The center said all the bodies have been buried. Pictures were posted by the center on its Facebook page showing their medics wearing white hazmat suits carrying bodies in black and white plastic bags and other pictures taken during the burials. Since an uprising in 2011, Libya has become a North African transit route for hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing conflict and poverty, often in sub-Saharan Africa, with many risking dangerous journeys across the desert or the Mediterranean. — APP

## Trump invites Iraqi PM to White House

DUBAI: US President Donald Trump has invited Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Zaidi to visit the White House in mid-July, as Washington and Baghdad seek to deepen political, security and economic cooperation. The invitation was conveyed by US Special Presidential Envoy Tom Barrack during talks with Al-Zaidi on Monday, according to a joint statement. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to a strong US-Iraq partnership and discussed efforts to build a sovereign and secure Iraq, including plans to disarm armed groups operating outside state control and ensure Iraq territory is not used to threaten regional stability. The meeting came days after the United States and Iran announced an agreement to end the war, a conflict that spilled into Iraq through missile and drone attacks by Iran-aligned armed groups targeting US facilities in Baghdad and the Kurdistan region. Al-Zaidi and Barrack also discussed expanding trade and investment ties. They welcomed Iraq's decision to finalize an operating license for Starlink, launch negotiations with Chevron to develop the West Qurna-2 and Nasiriyah oil fields, and support the resumption of operations by US energy companies HKN, Western Zagros and Hunt. The leaders also reviewed plans to rehabilitate the Kirkuk-Baniyas pipeline and boost energy cooperation, including support for Iraq's electricity sector through Exceleerate Energy's proposed LNG import terminal at Khor Zubair. — APP

## Japan undecided on sending military to Hormuz

TOKYO: Japan said Tuesday it has not yet decided whether its military will join efforts to help the resumption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz after the US-Iran peace deal. US President Donald Trump said that the vital artery for oil and gas would be "completely open" from Friday but added there was still "hunting" going on to ensure the waterway was de-mined. Japan signed onto a joint statement issued Monday by European nations that they were ready for a "defensive and independent mission to reassure commercial shipping and conduct mine clearance operations" in the strait. The statement added though that this would occur in accordance with "respective constitutional requirements." Japan's constitution strictly limits the use of force to self-defense. Trump has pressed global allies including Japan to send warships to the region to help open the strait. "At this point, no decision has been made regarding the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces," Japanese Defense

Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said Tuesday, using the official name for Japan's armed forces. "We intend to consult closely with relevant countries, including our ally the United States, carefully assess the situation, and consider necessary measures within the framework of international and domestic law," Koizumi said. In April, senior members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party suggested that after fighting stops, Japan should consider deploying minesweepers and other vessels to clear any obstacles in the Strait of Hormuz, the Nikkei reported. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, currently at a Group of Seven summit in France, later reportedly said Japan will have various options after a ceasefire agreement. Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) is considered adept at removing mines, with 16 vessels capable of such operations, the Nikkei said. The Japanese military was involved in mine-clearance operations in 1991 after a ceasefire in the Gulf War. — APP

## Malaysia's High Commissioner praises Pak role in regional peace



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Dato Azhar bin Mazlan, has lauded Pakistan's leadership for its constructive role in defusing tensions between the United States and Iran. He stated that Pakistan's efforts have been instrumental in ensuring peace not only in the region but also beyond. Speaking at a luncheon hosted for media representatives and friends of Malaysia, Dato Azhar read out a message from his government commending Pakistan's contribution to regional stability. He emphasized that the Pakistani leadership deserves recognition for its diplomatic initiatives aimed at preventing escalation and fostering dialogue. The High Commissioner also highlighted the strong bilateral relations between Malaysia and Pakistan, vowing to take them to new heights through enhanced cooperation in trade, culture, and people-to-people exchanges. A short documentary showcasing Malaysia's friendship with Pakistan was screened during the event, further underscoring the warmth between the two nations.

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