



# Islamabad POST

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**Field Marshal calls for enhanced defence coop with Ghana**

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**'Indus reservoir expansion may fuel tensions'**

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**Khurram calls for enhanced Pak-Africa coop**

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## Briefs

**Arab, Islamic States slam West Bank settlements**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, Egypt, Türkiye, Indonesia, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates issued a joint statement strongly condemning the recent escalation of settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. The Ministers denounced attacks on the Grand Mosque in Jiljilya and the Al-Farouq Mosque in Mazar'a al-Nubani, north of Ramallah, calling them "a clear violation of the sanctity of places of worship and religious sites, international law, including international humanitarian law, and relevant United Nations resolutions." They reaffirmed their absolute rejection of such acts, holding Israel, the occupying Power, responsible for the attacks and for ongoing illegal measures in the occupied Palestinian Territory. According to the statement, these actions "fuel instability, violence and extremism and undermine international efforts to achieve peace." The Ministers urged the international community to uphold its legal and moral responsibilities by compelling Israel to halt its escalation, end illegal practices, stop settler violence, and ensure accountability for perpetrators. Reiterating their solidarity with the Palestinian people, the Foreign Ministers emphasized support for their legitimate national rights.

**US visa curbs on some Ethiopians**

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The US State Department announced visa restrictions targeting people it said were undermining peace in Ethiopia on Thursday, focused on hard-liners in the Tigray People's Liberation Front and their immediate family members. "Rising tensions between Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) hard-liners and the Ethiopian government have threatened to reignite the conflict in northern Ethiopia and undermine peace and security across the entire region," the State Department said in a statement. "This visa restriction policy targets individuals who are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining resolution to the crisis in the Tigray region," it said.

**Vance urges Israel to respect deal**

## Trump says who criticise Iran deal are 'jealous'

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday announced that the historic 'Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding' has been electronically signed between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

WASHINGTON/ ISLAMABAD: President Donald Trump launched a sharp defense of the Iran nuclear deal, dismissing its critics as "fools" and labeling them "jealous, bad people, or stupid." Speaking to reporters, Trump argued that the agreement was a strategic success, insisting that opposition stemmed from political bias rather than substantive concerns. His comments come amid renewed debate in Washington over U.S. policy toward Tehran and the broader Middle East. Critics of the deal have long argued that it provides Iran with economic relief without sufficient guarantees on nuclear restrictions. Supporters counter that the agreement curbs Iran's nuclear ambitions and reduces the risk of conflict. Trump's remarks underscore the deep divisions in U.S. foreign policy circles, where the Iran deal remains one of the most polarizing issues. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday announced that the historic 'Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding' has been electronically signed

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**Iranian President welcomes deal**

DNA

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN: Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian welcomed on Thursday what he called a "historic" deal with the United States to end their war and pave the way for negotiations toward a final settlement. "This is a historic document and a message from a powerful Iran: peace will be achieved in the shadow of mutual respect," Pezeshkian said, in a social media post showing an image of the document, which carried his signature as well as US President Donald Trump and their mediator, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Trump signed the agreement with Iran in Versailles, France on Wednesday that calls for Tehran to

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**Middle East issue**

## US media slam Trump's 'spin job' over Iran deal

The agreement is "widely seen as the biggest foreign-policy bet of the president's second term"

DNA

WASHINGTON: Pre-war objectives abandoned, Iran's power bolstered, tens of billions of dollars guzzled away: US media appear unanimous in condemning Donald Trump's concessions to Iran in an agreement meant to end the war. The US president put his signature to a memorandum of understanding on Wednesday at a candlelit dinner outside Paris, aiming to draw a line under the war which has engulfed the Middle East and rocked the global economy. But Trump's return to the United States on Thursday is set to bring him back to reality, with a barrage of criticism expected from both opponents and supporters of the war. "The White House agreed to this ceasefire extension that met none of its prewar objectives

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**Oil slips again after landmark US-Iran agreement**

DNA

LODNON: Oil prices fell in early trading on Thursday after the US and Iran signed an interim agreement that would end the Iran war, reopen the Strait of Hormuz and waive US sanctions on Tehran's oil, resolving the largest energy supply disruption in history. The benchmarks resumed their decline, reversing gains made on Wednesday after US President Donald Trump said he could resume his

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## Court wants signed copies of Imran, Bushra power of attorney

Court directs authorities to comply within seven days as appeals against convictions set for hearing in last week of June

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has directed jail authorities to obtain and provide signed powers of attorney documents for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, in connection with their appeals against conviction in the £190 million case. A two-member bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif heard the appeals on Thursday. Barrister Salman Safdar appeared on behalf of the appellants, while NAB Special Prosecutor Javed Arshad and Rafi Maqsood represented the prosecution. During the hearing, Safdar told the court that around 300 cases had been registered against Imran and lawyers or pleaders had been appointed in each of them. He said his grievance stemmed from an order issued by the court on April 30 and noted that NAB had argued that the main appeals should be heard instead of the applications seeking suspension of sentence. The lawyer said the principal appeals were fixed for hearing for the first time on May 7, but he did not appear because he intended to challenge the earlier order before the Supreme Court. He added that an application had been

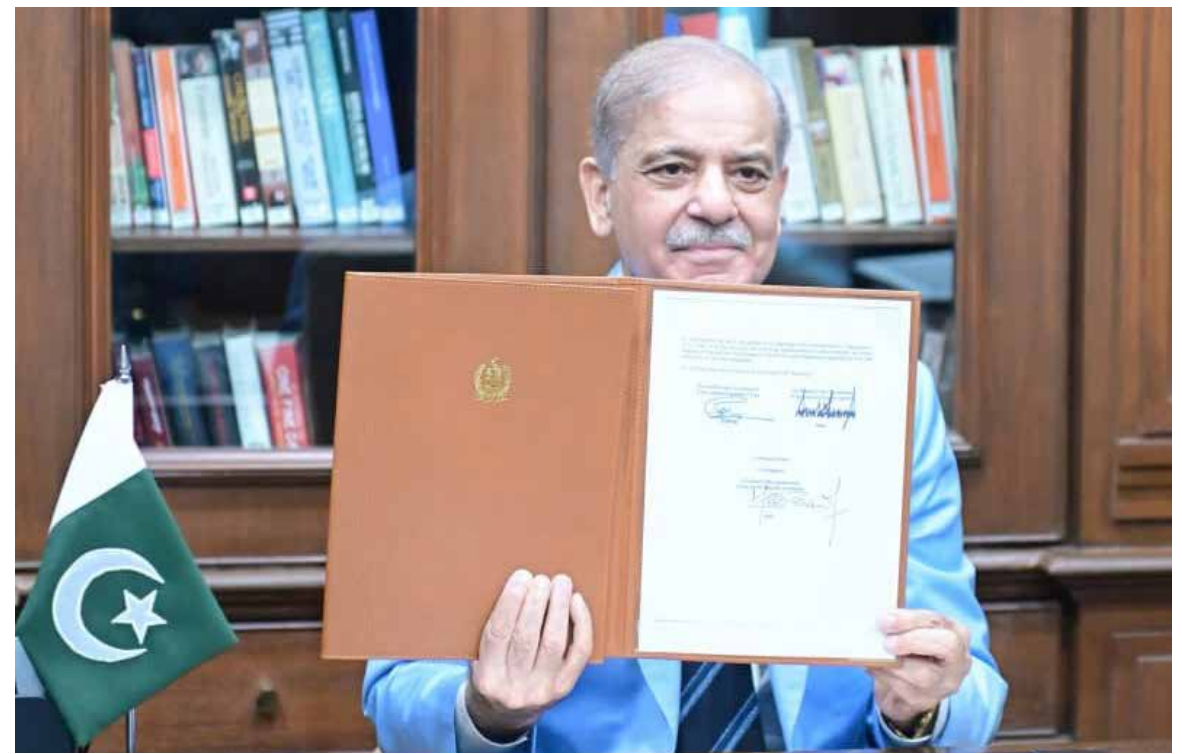
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**PTI jailed leaders call for Charter of Pakistan**

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Five senior PTI leaders, incarcerated in Kot Lakhpat Jail, have urged opposition leaders to "engage constructively" with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on a "Charter of Pakistan" — a move they deem will address the root cause of instability in the country. They made the appeal in a joint letter to National Assembly Opposition Leader Mehmood Khan Achakzai, Senate Opposition Leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas and PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan. The letter by Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Omar Sarfraz Cheema, Ejaz Chaudhry and Mian Mahmoodur Rasheed was shared by their counsel Rana Mudassar Umer and dated June 17. It said that Pakistan currently "stands at a critical crossroads" and referred to a recent invitation by the government to the opposition to sign a Charter of Economy.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif signed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (Islamabad MoU) as mediator. The Islamabad MoU has been signed by President of USA Donald J. Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. — DNA

**Ukraine drones pound Russia**

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Ukraine on Thursday launched its largest drone attack on Moscow in years, sparking fires, hitting a major oil refinery and forcing evacuations at the country's largest airport. Russia vowed to retaliate for the attack as AFP reporters saw dramatic scenes of black smoke billowing over the capital's southern skyline and drops of black rain mixed with soot falling from the sky. At least 17 people were wounded in the strikes, which also set a shopping centre and apartment building ablaze, authorities said. The attack came as Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted Southeast Asian leaders at a summit in the central

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**PPP-Govt bonhomie**

## Centre committed not to ask for further 'sacrifices': Bilawal

The provinces' NFC award and financial resources have been kept protected; no damage will be caused to them," Bilawal declared while addressing the NA


MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Thursday that the federal government had promised that allocations for provinces under the 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) award would be "protected", and that the Centre would not request any further "help or sacrifice" following the recent decision to freeze development allocations for the provinces. Bilawal joined the budget debate a day after he held a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who is reported to have convinced the head of his coalition partner PPP to attend the budget session in the NA. "The provinces' NFC award and financial resources have been kept protected; no

damage will be caused to them," Bilawal declared while addressing the NA, which was debating the proposed federal budget for the next fiscal year (FY27).

"Besides this decision, the provincial governments will not be required to make any sacrifices," he added. The government has decided to freeze development allocations for the provinces for three years to generate more than Rs900 billion in additional resources for the Centre's strategic needs. Referring to this decision, Bilawal said that the Centre and provinces had decided to jointly bear the burden of "extraordinary needs pertaining to defence and national security". He affirmed that "we came up with such a constitutional and democratic solution which meets


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## KPRA conducts 4th lucky draw of consumer rewards scheme

PESHAWAR: Director General (DG) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA), Irum Naz, conducted the fourth lucky draw of KPRA's Consumer Rewards Scheme on Thursday, selecting 50 winners through a transparent digital process. Collector Sales Tax on Services, Muhammad Abbas Khan; Director Legal, Tax Policy and Reforms, Mr. Naimatullah; Director Administration, HR & Coordination, Ms. Asma Khyber; Director Inquiry, Investigation & Tax Audit, Pir Muhammad Mehsud; Director ICT, Aftab Ahmad; and Director Finance, Ms. Hina Hafeez, were also present on the occasion. The lucky draw was conducted using specially developed software to ensure complete transparency in the selection process. Each winner will receive a cash prize of Rs10,000 through a cheque issued by KPRA. The Consumer Rewards Scheme was launched by KPRA in February 2026 in four districts, Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, and Haripur, covering selected hotels and restaurants. The Authority has already conducted three successful lucky draws under the initiative. —APP

## Uninterrupted power supply ordered during Muharram

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari, the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) has issued a comprehensive set of operational directives to all Distribution Companies (DISCOs), the National Power Control Centre (NPCC), and the National Grid Company (NGC) to guarantee the uninterrupted supply of electricity throughout the sacred month of Muharram-ul-Haram, with particular emphasis on the 9th and 10th of Muharram — the days of Ashura. According to a press release issued on Thursday, the instructions underscore the government's resolve to ensure public safety and the seamless delivery of essential services during one of the most significant occasions in the Islamic calendar. In preparation for the Muharram processions and Majaalis gatherings, all DISCOs have been directed to hold immediate consultative meetings with District Administration authorities, Management Committees, and law enforcement agencies. Each DISCO is required to obtain precise lists of Majaalis venues and procession routes from local administrations across all Operation Sub-divisions and Districts. The Chief Engineer (Operation) of every DISCO has been designated as the overall in-charge responsible for monitoring continuity of electricity supply, while dedicated focal persons are to be nominated at the Circle level to maintain real-time coordination with civil and security authorities as well as community representatives. All DISCOs have been instructed to complete maintenance of the electric network and distribution transformers serving Majaalis and Imam Bargahs no later than the 7th of Muharram-ul-Haram. —APP

# Field Marshal, Ghana defence chief discuss bilateral defence coop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General William Agyapong, Chief of Defence Staff of the Republic of Ghana, called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF at General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi. Upon his arrival at GHQ, the visiting dignitary was presented a Guard of Honour by a smartly turned-out Tri-Services contingent. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security, and bilateral defence cooperation were discussed. Both sides resolved to enhance military-to-military relations, specifically focusing on joint training, counter-terrorism, and defence production. The visiting dignitary highly commended the Pakistan Armed Forces for their professionalism and role in regional stability. Later, H.E Mr Abdul Razak Osman, National Security Coordinator of the Republic of Ghana, called on NI (M), T Bt, Chief of the Naval Staff, at Naval Headquarters and Air Chief Marshal Zaheer



Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M), HJ, Chief of the Air Staff, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. Lieutenant General William Agyapong, Chief of Defence Staff of the Ghana Armed Forces was also in presence.

## KP unveils digital policing reforms

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Thursday launched a comprehensive package of digital policing reforms aimed at transforming public service delivery, improving accountability and making police services more accessible through technology-driven platforms. Chief Minister Sohail Afridi formally inaugurated the Police Service Management (PSM) App and a range of online systems designed to bring key police services under a single digital framework. Addressing the launching ceremony, the CM said the government was committed to modernising the policing structure and ensuring that citizens receive services through transparent, efficient and people-oriented mechanisms. He directed the relevant departments to run an extensive public awareness campaign so that people across the province could effectively utilise the newly introduced digital facilities. Among the major reforms introduced,

citizens will now be able to register FIRs online, reducing procedural delays and improving access to legal processes. The CM also launched the Kinetic Police Action Dashboard, a digital monitoring platform intended to strengthen operational oversight, improve coordination and enable real-time reporting from across the province. Dedicated service desks have also been established under the initiative to facilitate public engagement. A centralised online complaint management system has been introduced through which complaints can be lodged using multiple channels including toll-free helplines, WhatsApp, social media platforms, SMS and other digital services. To strengthen citizen protection measures, the government launched the "Talash Gumshuda Portal" to assist in tracing and recovering missing children. Victims of gender-based violence will also be able to submit complaints through dedicated online channels.

For emergency response, authorities introduced the "Pink Button" feature aimed at providing rapid support to women and children facing urgent situations. Officials briefed the meeting that residents would now be able to obtain police character certificates and clearance certificates remotely through biometric verification and on-line payment facilities. The reforms also include easier procedures for obtaining and renewing driving licences, while citizens will be able to access and use digital versions of their licences through mobile devices. Additionally, an integrated verification mechanism has been introduced for licences, challans and police documents to simplify authentication and reduce administrative delays. Special complaint portals have also been established for transgender persons and minority communities, while the KP COP mobile application has been launched to enhance field monitoring and operational performance of police personnel. —DNA

## Seminar bridges gap between conventional and Islamic banking

FAISALABAD: The students of BS Accounting & Finance and the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) at Faisalabad Business School, National Textile University Faisalabad (NTUF) in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) have organized an informative and interactive seminar and exhibition on the theme of "Dual Banking System". The program was held under the supervision of Dr. Falak Sher, faculty member at Faisalabad Business School, NTUF, and Program Director of the MBA Program. The event aimed to provide students with practical exposure to Pakistan's banking system. The university students participated enthusiastically in the activity, with each team assigned a specific banking product. The teams presented the features and operational mechanisms of these products under both conventional. —APP

## PIDE warns uncertain monsoon may pose risks to economy

ISLAMABAD: Experts on Thursday cautioned that an uncertain monsoon pattern could pose risks to Pakistan's agricultural sector and broader economic stability, emphasising the need for proactive planning and climate risk management. The views were expressed during a policy dialogue hosted by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), which brought together experts from academia, government institutions and development organisations to deliberate on climate risks and agricultural output. Speaking on the occasion, PIDE Registrar Dr Nasir Iqbal said climate change had emerged as a cross-cutting economic challenge, affecting productivity, inflation, employment and growth. He observed that disruptions in monsoon patterns could have wide-ranging implications for agriculture-dependent livelihoods and economic resilience. Highlighting the sector's importance, he

noted that agriculture contributes over 23 per cent to the national economy and employs a significant share of the workforce, yet remains highly exposed to climate variability. He stressed the need to shift from reactive disaster response to a more integrated risk management approach, focusing on resilience and preparedness. Dr Inayat Ullah, Chief of Research and Director at PIDE's Centre for Agriculture, Climate Change and Rural Economy (CACRE), presented key findings from a recent assessment covering multiple districts and agro-ecological zones. He noted that rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns were particularly affecting rain-fed and southern irrigated regions, including parts of southern Punjab and interior Sindh. He said these regions frequently appeared at the intersection of climate vulnerability, food security importance and structural challenges, underscoring the

need for targeted interventions and coordinated support mechanisms. Dr Faisal Saeed, Chief Meteorologist at the Pakistan Meteorological Department, shared that seasonal outlooks indicated above-normal temperatures and the possibility of below-average rainfall. However, he cautioned that lower rainfall did not rule out extreme weather events such as intense downpours and flash floods, calling for improved dissemination of localized, crop-specific advisories. Representing the National Disaster Management Authority, Dr Kamal Ahmed, Executive Director Risk Finance, highlighted that economic losses from climate events were rising due to gaps in preparedness, land-use planning and infrastructure resilience. He highlighted the importance of linking early-warning systems with timely and effective response mechanisms. Experts also pointed to a significant gap in adaptation financing. —APP

## Balochistan records largest decline in OOSC rate

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan recorded the largest reduction in the proportion of out-of-school children among Pakistan's provinces, with the rate declining from 69 percent in 2023 to 45 percent in 2025. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, improvements in school participation have been observed across the country, with the national out-of-school children rate falling from 38 percent in 2023 to 28 percent in 2025. The documents show that the rate declined from 35 percent to 25 percent among boys and from 42 percent to 31 percent among girls during the period under review. Balochistan achieved the most significant improvement among all provinces, reducing its out-of-school children rate by 24 percentage points. Punjab's rate declined from 32 percent to 21 percent, Sindh's from 47 percent to 39 percent, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's from 30 percent to 28 percent. The improvement in Balochistan was accompanied by gains in several other education indicators. The proportion of the population aged 10 years and above who had ever attended school increased from 39 percent in 2018-19 to 51 percent in 2024-25. Male attendance rose from 52 percent to 66 percent, while female attendance increased from 24 percent to 34 percent, reflecting broader access to education across the province. The province also recorded a substantial improvement in educational attainment. The share of people aged 10 years and above who had completed at least primary education increased from 31 percent in 2018-19 to 42 percent in 2024-25, representing the largest relative gain among the provinces during the period. According to the documents, school enrollment indicators have also improved in Balochistan. At the primary level, the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) reached 59 percent, while enrollment at the middle and matric levels stood at 43 percent and 40 percent, respectively. Female participation in education also continued to improve across different levels. The documents indicate that the nationwide reduction in out-of-school children reflects continued progress in expanding access to education and increasing school participation. Pakistan's literacy rate for people aged 10 years and above also improved from 61 percent to 63 percent during the period under review, while gains in rural and female literacy contributed to the overall improvement. —DNA

# Lawmakers discuss advancing girls edu in KP

PESHAWAR: A delegation of the Rise and Shine Girls Education Network, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, met provincial parliamentarians to discuss measures regarding advancement of female education in the province. The delegation, led by a ninth-grade student, Maham Nafees, urged lawmakers to play an effective role by raising the issue in the provincial assembly to improve female literacy and expand educational opportunities for girls across the province. The meeting between girl students and parliamentarians was facilitated by Qamar Naseem, Education Champion Malala Fund and Programme Manager Blue Veins. Parliamentarians who attended the meeting included Members Provincial Assembly (MPAs) Aiman Jalil, Shazia Tehmas, Farzana Shireen, Mehr Sultana, and Shahida Waheed Khan Hoti. Prominent politician and Information Secretary of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abdul Jalil Jan, was also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Maham Nafees said a large number of children in the province are out of schools, including around

2.9 million girls. She added that, according to available data, a significant proportion of girls in KP, around 52 percent aged between five and 16, remain out of school, missing opportunities for education. She said the sharp increase in petroleum prices had significantly raised transportation costs, forcing many parents to withdraw their children, particularly girls, from schools. Adding that transportation charges had increased from around Rs.1,000 to Rs.4,000-5,000 per month, placing an unbearable burden on low-income families. Maham further informed the parliamentarians that in 10 districts of KP, the provincial government has already announced free transportation facilities for girl students and urged that this initiative be expanded across the province. Fatima Ayaz, an eighth-grade student at a government middle school in Peshawar, highlighted the challenges faced by female students due to inadequate hygiene and sanitation facilities in her school. She said most girls avoid


drinking water at school due to concerns over its poor quality and hygiene. She added that many washroom taps remain dry or non-functional, creating serious difficulties for students and negatively affecting their health, comfort and learning environment. Another student also raised concerns about the non-provision of free textbooks in schools, despite government announcements. The delegation members urged parliamentarians to play an effective role in convincing concerned authorities to prioritize STEM education in the province, stressing its importance in today's era of technology, innovation and digital transformation. They said equipping students, particularly girls, with STEM skills is essential for improving educational opportunities, enhancing employability, and enabling them to compete in the rapidly evolving digital economy. Qamar Naseem, Education Champion of the Malala Fund and Programme Manager at Blue Veins, on this occasion highlighted the role of parliamentarians in ensuring proper utilization of schemes and funds for education, with special focus on girls, in the annual budget. —DNA



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

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

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- Bomb Disposal.....15
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- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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- Motorway Police.9270601-20
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- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



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- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# RCCI MedHealth Expo 2026 inaugurated in Islamabad

## Healthcare Leaders, Diplomats, and Industry Experts Unite to Showcase Innovation and Strengthen Pakistan's Health Sector

### DNA

RAWALPINDI: The MedHealth & Beauty Expo 2026, hosted by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), was inaugurated in Islamabad, bringing together key stakeholders from the healthcare, pharmaceutical, wellness, and beauty sectors. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal, Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi, CEO DRAP Obaidullah Malik, and Hamed Asghar Khan from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event also attracted ambassadors, high commissioners, diplomats, and senior government officials. The inaugural ceremony was

attended by Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal, Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, CEO of DRAP Obaidullah Malik, Hamed Asghar Khan from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassadors, high commissioners, and senior diplomatic officials from various countries. Among those present were RCCI President Usman Shaukat, Group Leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, members of the Executive Committee, former RCCI presidents, and representatives of leading pharmaceutical and healthcare companies. Addressing the inaugural session, Federal Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal said that the gov-

ernment's priority is not only to provide treatment but also to focus on disease prevention and improving public health. Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi said that the government is introducing reforms in Pakistan's healthcare sector while facilitating greater private-sector participation to improve healthcare services. Speaking on the occasion, RCCI President Usman Shaukat said that the expo features more than 50 exhibitors showcasing medical equipment, pharmaceutical products, cosmetics, healthcare solutions, and the latest beauty treatments. He noted that the event has brought together healthcare professionals, industry experts, leading brands, and businesses to promote

innovation, knowledge sharing, and collaboration in the healthcare sector. The event was attended by members of the diplomatic community, including Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Turkmenistan Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Iran Reza Amiri Moghadam, Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov, High Commissioner of Rwanda Fatou Harerimana, as well as trade and commercial counsellors from Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Lebanon, Vietnam, and several other countries. Following the inauguration, the chief guests toured the exhibition stalls, interacted with exhibitors, and appreciated the quality, innovation, and diversity of the products and services on display.



ISLAMABAD: The art lovers showing interest in artwork on display during the inaugural ceremony of Offgrid studio's "Rejected" art Exhibition at PNCA.

## "Towards stability: US, Iran and path forward for peace"

### SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies organized an expert webinar titled "Towards Stability: US, Iran and the Path Forward for Peace", bringing together experts, scholars and keen observers to examine the evolving geopolitical dynamics of the US-Iran relationship and its wider implications for regional and global stability. Dr. Lyudmila Aleksandrova Pechishcheva, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of the Russian Academy of Sciences, served as the Eminent Speaker. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of the Institute of Regional Studies, emphasized that the US-Iran conflict carries far-reaching consequences beyond regional security, significant-

ly impacting global energy supplies, gas flows, fertilizer production, and international food security. He underscored that continued disruptions could trigger severe global economic shocks, including inflationary pressures and potential food crises, making sustained diplomatic engagement and a structured negotiation framework urgently necessary. Ambassador Saleem further highlighted the importance of emerging understandings aimed at restoring stability, including the unblocking of critical maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, the resumption of shipping flows, and movement toward de-escalation through phased negotiations. He noted that issues such as sanctions relief and regional security guarantees require coordinated international efforts, while acknowledging Pakistan's role as a facilitator of dialogue and stability in the ongoing diplomatic process.

In her talk, Dr. Pechishcheva provided an in-depth analysis of possible future trajectories in US-Iran relations. She outlined multiple scenarios ranging from a comprehensive "grand bargain" leading to structured nuclear limitations and reintegration of Iran into the global economic system, to a fragile "no-war, no-peace" equilibrium characterized by partial agreements and sustained tensions. She also pointed to a pessimistic scenario where escalation is driven by geopolitical rivalry, economic sanctions, and potential internal instability. The discussion further highlighted the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz as a critical global energy corridor, where any disruption could significantly affect global oil prices and maritime trade security. The webinar also highlighted that emerging diplomatic frameworks may include phased sanctions relief.

## Pak enters into horticulture coop with China

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first-ever Joint Laboratory for Desert Agriculture; and Science and Technology Backyard on Desert Horticulture were unveiled through an MOU to turn vast stretches of desert land of Pakistan into productive farmland, China Economic Net reported on Thursday. Bringing together China's Tarim University in Xinjiang and Pakistan's Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture (MNSUA) in Multan, the partnership is expected to serve as a platform for technology transfer, scientific research, and farmer training focused on desert agriculture. Dr. Abid Ali, chief scientist on Pakistani side, revealed the cooperation will focus on introducing a range of advanced technologies, including solar-powered greenhouse systems, precision agriculture, drone-based crop monitoring, and water-saving drip irrigation. According to Dr. Ali, technologies developed by Tarim University could help address some of Pakistan's most pressing agricultural challenges, including water scarcity and low productivity in desert regions. "The technologies have already proven successful in Xinjiang," Dr. Ali said. "For example, the low-cost, high-efficiency desert solar greenhouse technology addresses the longstanding challenge of low land utilization in traditional solar greenhouses, increasing land-use efficiency by up to 35%. Its simple modular assembly structure enables rapid construction while ensuring excellent daylighting and heat-retention performance with a construction cost of only about RMB 290-320 (PKR 11,000-12,500) per square meter." Complementing this system, the water-curtain floor heating technology, also known as plant root-zone warming technology, captures and stores solar heat energy during the day and gradually releases it at night. This improves the greenhouse microclimate, raises nighttime temperatures by approximately 5%, and significantly reduces overall energy consumption, enhancing both crop productivity and sustainability. "Pakistan is an ideal first destination for its international application as the country has intensified efforts to reclaim arid areas through the Green Pakistan Initiative, which promotes modern farming technologies, drought-resistant crops, and sustainable land management," he said. Uncultivated desert land accounts for nearly 15% percent of Pakistan's territory. Multan, as a major agricultural center in Pakistan and surrounded by deserts and CPEC roads, is set to benefit from new cultivation methods. Dr. Ali described the project as a milestone not only for Pakistan but also for the wider region. "The initiative could provide a model for and be extended to other arid regions across Central Asia and the Middle East," he said.—DNA

## Maritime Minister freezes KPT tariff hike

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Thursday announced the freezing of a proposed 5 percent increase in Karachi Port Trust (KPT) tariffs for fiscal year 2026-27, a move to provide substantial relief to the business community and supporting trade and economic activity. The minister said the decision is expected to benefit importers, exporters and consumers by more than Rs500 million, reducing the financial burden on trade and economic activity. "This measure is fully aligned with the federal government's policy of facilitating the business community, promoting trade and exports, and supporting sustainable economic growth," Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said. He noted that ports serve as the backbone of trade infrastructure and that any increase in port charges directly raises the cost of doing business. By freezing the tariff adjustment, the government aims to contain logistics costs and enhance the competitiveness of Pakistani products in international markets. The minister said the decision reflects the prime minister's vision for strengthening the blue economy and creating a business-friendly environment that encourages investment, trade expansion and economic development.—APP

## President Zardari welcomes signing of Islamabad MoU

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday warmly welcomed the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, describing it as an historic moment for the region and the world. The president, in his message, said that the conflict which began in February inflicted immense suffering upon the peoples of the region and caused severe disruption to global energy supplies, trade and economic stability. He expressed hope that such a tragedy would never be repeated and that the nations of the region would now devote their energies to development, prosperity and the well-being of their peoples. The president paid tribute to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi for their tireless diplomatic efforts that contributed significantly to bringing the parties to an agreement.—DNA

### Court Notice

IN THE COURT OF SHAMA YASEEN JUDGE CIVIL/FAMILY COURT RAWALPINDI  
Petition u/s 25 of the Guardian and Ward act Zia Arshad versus Asma Rafiq Notice Asma Rafiq D/o Muhammad Rafique R/o Girja Road Upcountry Dharmial Road Rawalpindi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 23-06-2026 at 8 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.

## First ever Muharram security app launched

ISLAMABAD: In a first for the federal capital, authorities have developed a special digital application, "Mehfooz Muharram" (Safe Muharram), as part of extensive security arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram, with complete geo-tagging of all Imambargahs, religious gatherings and procession routes, alongside drone-based digital surveillance. The measures were reviewed during a high-level meeting chaired by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, who assessed security and administrative preparations for Muharram observances on Thursday. Officials informed the meeting that the newly launched "Mehfooz Muharram" app would enable citizens to report suspicious individuals, suspicious activities, or inadequate security arrangements. The application would also provide live location sharing and image-sharing facilities to assist authorities in responding swiftly to potential security concerns. A central control room has been established at Safe City Islamabad to monitor security operations and coordinate responses during the holy month. The minister directed authorities to implement a comprehensive traffic management plan and ensure a four-tier security cordon around all religious gatherings and processions. He also ordered strict checking procedures at all entry and exit points of procession routes and venues hosting Majalis. Emphasizing the importance of on-ground supervision, Naqvi instructed all relevant officers to remain present in the field throughout Muharram. He further directed officials to ensure timely and adequate food and refreshment arrangements for security personnel deployed on duty. The interior minister stressed the need for close coordination with religious scholars to maintain peace and public order. He also called for strict adherence to the code of conduct and directed authorities to adopt a zero-tolerance policy against provocative or inflammatory material. During the briefing, Islamabad's Chief Commissioner and Inspector General of Police presented a detailed overview of security preparations. Officials informed the meeting that security audits of all Majalis and processions had been completed, while Peace and Nighban Committees had been activated to support law enforcement efforts.—DNA

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## Briefs

**Motorway Police return jewelry worth Rs 2.2m to owner**

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have returned gold jewelry and other valuables worth approximately Rs2.2 million to their rightful owner, demonstrating professionalism, honesty and commitment to public service. According to a press release issued on Thursday, Motorway Police officers found a bag containing gold ornaments and other valuable items during routine patrolling near Gwadar. Upon recovery of the bag, the officers immediately took it into safe custody and launched efforts to trace its owner. However, initial attempts to locate the owner proved unsuccessful. The NHMP subsequently initiated an awareness campaign through social media and local channels regarding the lost bag while keeping details of the valuables confidential to ensure that only the genuine owner could identify and claim the property. Following the campaign, the owner contacted the Motorway Police and provided complete and accurate information about the bag and its contents. After completing all legal formalities and verification procedures, the bag along with the valuables was handed over to the owner.—APP

**Govt reaffirms support for electric vehicle manufacturing**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday reaffirmed the government's support for electric vehicle manufacturing, localization and sustainable transportation to promote Pakistan as a regional hub for new energy vehicles. He stated this while talking to a delegation of BYD Group and Mega Motor Company (MMC) led by BYD Group Vice President Liu Xueliang and MMC CEO Aly Khan. Speaking on the occasion, the finance minister appreciated BYD's expanding presence in Pakistan and said the BYD-MMC joint venture would support industrial development, technology transfer, employment generation and export growth in the country. He noted that global trends clearly pointed towards an accelerating transition to electric mobility and reiterated the government's commitment to facilitating investments that support technological advancement, sustainable industrialization and energy efficiency. He observed that Pakistan's improving macroeconomic fundamentals and enhanced external sector position had created a conducive environment for productive investment and industrial expansion. The minister encouraged the delegation to accelerate efforts towards local assembly, manufacturing and charging infrastructure development, noting that the availability of a robust charging network would be critical to expediting the adoption of electric vehicles across the country.—APP

**Budget aimed at economic growth**

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Division, Farah Naz Akbar on Thursday said the Federal Budget 2026-27 was designed to promote economic growth and provide relief to the public. Participating in the budget debate in the National Assembly, she welcomed the relief extended to salaried individuals and suggested that the tax burden on this segment should be reduced further. She said the abolition of the super tax and the reduction in withholding tax on property transactions would encourage investment and support business activity. She also praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for taking the economy towards stability, said that inflation had fallen from 38 per cent to single digits. Farah Naz Akbar said the significant reduction in the policy rate had restored confidence among investors and businesses, creating a more favourable environment for economic activity.—APP

# Speakers call for exploiting African business potential

Ambassador Brahim Romani noted that Pakistan was among the first countries to support African liberation movements, a legacy that Africa deeply appreciates. He said this historic goodwill should now be translated into stronger economic cooperation and expanded trade

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a special event to celebrate "Africa Day 2026." The proceedings began with the national anthems of Pakistan and the African Union which was specially composed for the occasion. Dr. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA, moderated the event. Speakers included Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, BoG, Chief Guest, Engineer Khurram Dastagir Khan; Former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Keynote Speaker, Ambassador Brahim Romani, Acting Dean of African Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Algeria to Pakistan, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf; Chairperson of the African Union Commission and Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan; Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan. The Heads of African Missions in Pakistan and Heads of Pakistan Missions in Africa also shared their views on the occasion. Stalls exhibiting African products and artwork depicting African culture were also set up by African Missions in Islamabad. In his remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood extended warm greetings to African nations on the occasion of 63rd Africa Day and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Africa. He highlighted the growing importance of Africa in global affairs, underscored the longstanding ties of friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and African countries, and emphasized the importance of enhanced engagement in trade, education, and people-to-people exchanges. He also appreciated the role of CAMEA in promoting closer Pakistan-Africa relations through dialogue and sustained engagement. Engineer Khurram Dastagir Khan, while speaking on the occasion, congratulated the African people and said that the African Continent is rising with tremendous opportunities for growth and development. He noted that Pakistan can gain from partnership with Af-



rica, calling it an untapped reservoir of immense potential. He highlighted challenges such as a lack of banking channels and direct flights that hinder cooperation between Pakistan and the African Continent, but said these are becoming less daunting as a foundation for cooperation has already been laid. He added that Pakistan and African states coordinate closely at the United Nations and often vote together, while South-South trade offers major opportunities. He further stressed that Gwadar Port and improved shipping, banking, and digital links can unlock the full potential of this relationship. Ambassador Brahim Romani noted that Pakistan was among the first countries to support African liberation movements, a legacy that Africa deeply appreciates. He said this historic goodwill should now be translated into stronger economic cooperation and expanded trade. Highlighting Africa's vast opportunities and Pakistan's expertise

in industry, science, research and technology, he called for closer institutional and business linkages, more active embassy engagement, and greater participation from the private sector. He also urged the appointment of a special envoy for Africa and expressed optimism that Pakistan-Africa relations can grow further under South-South cooperation. Earlier, Director CAMEA Dr. Amina Khan noted Africa's inspiring journey of resilience, independence, and progress, and underlined the growing significance of Pakistan-Africa relations. She highlighted Pakistan's longstanding ties with African countries and reaffirmed CAMEA's commitment to promoting dialogue, research, cultural exchange, and institutional collaboration with Africa. She also appreciated the role of diplomatic missions and partners in both Pakistan and Africa in strengthening people-to-people linkages and advancing shared objec-

tives of cooperation and development. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf said that Africa's vision is rooted in unity, integration, dignity, and development, and on Africa Day the Continent reaffirms its commitment to Agenda 2063 and "The Africa We Want." He said that guided by "Ubuntu Africa" continues to promote solidarity and strengthen its global voice, including through its role in the G20. He added that ongoing AU reforms and this year's focus on water, sanitation, and climate resilience reflect Africa's drive for sustainable development, alongside its call for justice and a stronger role in global governance. Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan noted that global geopolitical and economic shifts make it important for Pakistan to deepen engagement with Africa through South-South cooperation. He highlighted Africa's vast untapped potential, especially in agriculture, food security, and natural resources, and its role as a future breadbasket.

## President ICCI praises PM, FM for US-Iran Mou

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has warmly welcomed the signing of the historic "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)", facilitated by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, which formalized a major diplomatic breakthrough between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Describing the development as a landmark diplomatic achievement, he said the successful conclusion of the Islamabad MoU reflects Pakistan's growing stature as a responsible, credible, and influential voice for peace, dialogue, and stability

in regional and global affairs. He noted that Pakistan's role as a mediator in bringing the two countries closer demonstrates the confidence reposed by the international community in Pakistan's diplomatic capabilities and leadership. Sardar Tahir Mehmood paid rich tribute to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, and Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi for their visionary leadership, strategic foresight, and coordinated efforts that helped position Pakistan at the forefront of international peace building and constructive engagement. He remarked that the easing of regional tensions and the continued uninterrupted movement of trade through the Strait of Hormuz are highly encouraging developments for global commerce, energy security, and economic stability. He emphasized that the reduction in geopolitical risks is expected to ease pressure on international oil markets and contribute to greater confidence among investors and businesses worldwide. The ICCI President urged the Government to pass on the benefits of lower international oil prices to the people by reducing petroleum prices to the levels prevailing before the US-Iran conflict. He observed that lower fuel prices would provide substantial relief to consumers, reduce transportation and production costs, help contain inflation, and support economic growth by improving the competitiveness of businesses and industries. Sardar Tahir Mehmood further stated that peace and stability remain essential prerequisites for sustainable economic development. He expressed confidence that the Islamabad MoU would open a new chapter of regional cooperation, strengthen economic and trade relations, promote investment flows, and create fresh opportunities for prosperity across the region.

## Gillani hails robust Senate participation in budget debate

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani on Thursday said that 56 senators participated in the budget debate, reflecting the Upper House's strong commitment to meaningful parliamentary oversight of public finances. In his concluding remarks after Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb wrapped up the budget debate in the Senate, the Chairman said that members from across the political spectrum had actively contributed their perspectives, recommendations, and concerns, ensuring comprehensive and transparent scrutiny of the budget. He said the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue and the Senate Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Special Initiatives carried out detailed deliberations on the Finance Bill 2026 and the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). "The committees devoted long hours to reviewing proposals submitted by senators, holding extensive deliberations and marathon meetings to evaluate each recommendation on its merits," he said. The Chairman said that the committees' dedicated efforts culminated in a report that was presented to the House, unanimously adopted by the Senate, and subsequently transmitted to the National Assembly for its consideration. Gillani expressed heartfelt appreciation to all senators for their constructive participation and valuable contributions to the budget process. He said their efforts had strengthened the quality of parliamentary debate and further enhanced the Senate's role as a guardian of transparency, accountability, and democratic oversight.—DNA

## Digital payment system for court fees launched

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday signed a tripartite agreement with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and LLINK (Guarantee) Limited to integrate digital payment solutions into judicial processes, marking a significant step in the court's ongoing digitisation and public facilitation reforms. The agreement was signed at the Supreme Court in the presence of the Registrar, senior court officials, and representatives of the State Bank of Pakistan Banking Services Corporation and LLINK. The initiative is part of the Supreme Court's broader reform agenda aimed at promoting citizen-centric service delivery through technology-driven solutions. Under the new framework.—APP

## Call for coordinated action on climate-resilient

ISLAMABAD: Sightsavers Pakistan, in collaboration with Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), convened a high-level Roundtable Consultation on Climate-Resilient Inclusive Education in Pakistan, bringing together representatives from federal and provincial governments, academia, development partners, civil society organisations, and education experts to discuss how Pakistan's education system can better respond to growing climate risks while ensuring inclusion for all learners. The consultation drew on findings from two Data and Research in Education - Research Consortium (DARE-RC) funded research studies that examined how climate-related hazards affect schools, learners, teachers, and communities across Pakistan, said a press release. The studies revealed that climate disruptions, including floods, heatwaves, smog, water scarcity, and other environmental hazards, are increasingly affecting educational continuity, health, wellbeing, and learning outcomes, with disproportionate impacts on girls, children with disabilities, and learners from marginalised communities. Opening the event, Dr Zaigham Qadeer, Director General

of the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), emphasised the urgent need to strengthen the resilience of Pakistan's education system in the face of increasing climate-related disruptions. He highlighted the importance of generating actionable recommendations that can inform education policy and planning processes at both federal and provincial levels. Speaking on behalf of Sightsavers, Ms. Munazza Gillani, Director Pakistan and Middle East, highlighted the need for stronger coordination among stakeholders working on climate change, education, disability inclusion, and disaster risk reduction. She noted that while significant efforts are underway, these often remain fragmented. She called for the establishment of a multi-sectoral platform to facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective action to address climate-related challenges facing the education sector. Presenting the research findings, Dr Sapana Basnet, Itfaq Khaliq Khan and Dr Sulaman Ijaz from Sightsavers, explained that schools across Pakistan are experiencing multiple and overlapping climate and environmental risks that create compounding effects on education.

## ISSI hosts special event to celebrate Africa Day

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) on Thursday organized a special event to celebrate "Africa Day 2026." The proceedings began with the national anthems of Pakistan and the African Union which was specially composed for the occasion. Dr. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA, moderated the event. Speakers included Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, BoG, Chief Guest, Engineer Khurram Dastagir Khan; Former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Keynote Speaker, Ambassador Brahim Romani, Acting Dean of African Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Algeria to Pakistan, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf; Chairperson of the African Union Commission and Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan; Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, said a press release. The Heads of African Missions in Pa-

kistan and Heads of Pakistan Missions in Africa also shared their views on the occasion. Stalls exhibiting African products and artwork depicting African culture were also set up by African Missions in Islamabad. In his remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood extended warm greetings to African nations on the occasion of 63rd Africa Day and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Africa. He highlighted the growing importance of Africa in global affairs, underscored the longstanding ties of friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and African countries, and emphasized the importance of enhanced engagement in trade, education, and people-to-people exchanges. He also appreciated the role of CAMEA in promoting closer Pakistan-Africa relations through dialogue and sustained engagement. Engineer Khurram Dastagir Khan, while speaking on the occasion, congratulated the

African people and said that the African Continent is rising with tremendous opportunities for growth and development. He noted that Pakistan can gain from partnership with Africa, calling it an untapped reservoir of immense potential. He highlighted challenges such as a lack of banking channels and direct flights that hinder cooperation between Pakistan and the African Continent, said these are becoming less daunting as a foundation for cooperation has already been laid. Ambassador Brahim Romani noted that Pakistan was among the first countries to support African liberation movements, a legacy that Africa deeply appreciates. He said this historic goodwill should now be translated into stronger economic cooperation and expanded trade. Highlighting Africa's vast opportunities and Pakistan's expertise in industry, science, research and technology, he called for closer institutional and business linkages.—DNA

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## Anti-Arab discrimination threatens World Cup's luster

RAY HANANIA

THEY say that sport can temper the bitterness of politics, but that is not really true when they relate to the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict. And that has been made clear by the actions of FIFA and its 2026 World Cup, which began last week. FIFA, the international football governing body, should register as a partisan political organization in America rather than as a sports association, given the recent torrent of bans, expulsions, detentions and unfair treatment of certain teams and individuals. Even worse is the hypocritical and contradictory manner in which it has responded to alleged incidents of discrimination and racism by World Cup co-host the US. The conflict between Israel and Palestine and their respective allies appears to be a playing field for this hypocrisy. There is a long history of sport eclipsing politics, but only with respect to certain countries. In recent months, the discrimination has been clear. After several Indonesian politicians and regional governors demanded in March 2023 that Israel be banned from the FIFA Under-20 World Cup Indonesia was hosting because of the Israeli government's racist and discriminatory policies in the Occupied Territories, FIFA acted swiftly and decisively. It rescinded Indonesia's host nation status and moved the tournament to Argentina weeks before kickoff. There has been a torrent of bans, expulsions, detentions and unfair treatment of certain teams and individuals Ray HananiaGianni Infantino, who has served as FIFA president since 2016, has avoided addressing the politics that fuel the criticism of Israel's abuses, including against Palestinian footballers. He noted FIFA requires "all national hosts" to accommodate "all qualified teams." Infantino framed the Indonesia controversy in the context of World Cup host nations having to fulfill their responsibilities to the sport and its competitors. The revocation of Indonesia's role as host nation was in line with the tough position FIFA took against Russia, whose national team was banned from qualifying for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar because of the country's invasion of Ukraine in February that year. Russia remains suspended by FIFA today. Yet, despite these precedents, Infantino and FIFA have taken a much more ambivalent approach in responding to discrimination and conflict for this year's tournament. In recent months, FIFA officials have basically remained silent and done little to stand up to border racism, harassment and discrimination against Arab



and Muslim players and officials. Infantino also did not consider the brutality inflicted on Palestinians engaged in sports by Israel's apartheid government. Facing these difficulties, the Palestinian team fell short in qualifying and failed to make it to the 2026 World Cup. Palestinian players have been denied the ability to travel to games in the West Bank, while a surge of attacks by Jewish settlers, protected by the Israeli military, made it impossible for Palestinian players to move through the Occupied Territories. The discrimination against the Palestine team increased after the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7, 2023. The team was unable to host its "home" qualifying matches for the 2026 World Cup, meaning they had to be played at neutral venues outside of Israel's racist territorial restrictions. As if to emphasize this unfair situation, FIFA remained silent when the US denied a visa to Jibril Rajoub, the president of the Palestine Football Association, who carried official FIFA accreditation, to attend World Cup games in the country. Iraq's star striker, Aymen Hussein, was detained and questioned for about seven hours at Chicago O'Hare Airport That is likely because Jibril "embarrassed" FIFA in April, when Infantino tried to orchestrate a handshake between the Palestinian and Israeli delegates at the governing body's congress in Vancouver, Canada. Rajoub refused to stand alongside Israel Football Association Vice President Basim Sheikh Suliman, leading to an awkward moment at the end of the 76th FIFA Congress, despite repeated entreaties by Infantino. But it is not only Palestinians that have been singled out during this World Cup. Somali referee Omar Artan and Somali officials suggested the decision may have been discriminatory based on his nationality. FIFA called the situation "unfortunate," while US authorities cited vetting concerns rather than discrimination. Iraq's star striker, Aymen Hussein, was detained and questioned for about seven hours on arrival at Chicago O'Hare Airport before being allowed into the US. A team photographer was also detained for more than 10 hours and ultimately denied entry. While not a player, he was part of the official Iraqi delegation. Iran's players were granted visas and allowed to compete despite the conflict between their country and the US, but team officials complained of delays and restrictions affecting their preparations. For example, they were forced to switch their base from Arizona to Mexico at short notice and could not stay in the US for more than a few hours after their opening game against New Zealand on Monday. Faced with widespread criticism, Infantino announced on Monday that he plans to make an Israel versus Palestine fixture the opening match of a new under-15s tournament being held in the US in September. The competition is expected to be open to all 211 FIFA members, including Russia. No one maintains data on these incidents of discrimination the way they meticulously tabulate World Cup scores. But if this is the tip of the iceberg, these incidents symbolize trends that threaten to undermine the World Cup's fundamental luster.

## Countering Israel's Weaponization of Civilian Technology

Qamar Bashir



Only months earlier, the world witnessed another disturbing example of technology's role in conflict. In September 2024, thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies exploded across Lebanon. Ordinary communication devices suddenly became instruments of death and destruction. Dozens were killed and thousands injured. The incident shocked the world because it demonstrated how civilian technology could allegedly be transformed into a weapon. Taken together, the reported Tehran operation and the Lebanon device explosions reveal...

THE assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader and several senior Iranian military officials in February 2026 may mark a watershed moment in the evolution of modern warfare. The joint Israel and the USA operation to assassinate the Iranian's top leadership was enabled by a sophisticated combination of surveillance technologies, communications interception, cyber capabilities, satellite imagery, human intelligence, and artificial intelligence-assisted analysis. The Israel Mossad aided by the US's CIA integrated information from multiple sources to create highly detailed profiles of senior Iranian officials, their routines, movements, and interactions. Advanced analytical systems transformed enormous volumes of raw information into actionable intelligence, identifying patterns and pinpointing locations with remarkable precision. The result was the reported targeting of a high-level leadership gathering in Tehran. Only months earlier, the world witnessed another disturbing example of technology's role in conflict. In September 2024, thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies exploded across Lebanon. Ordinary communication devices suddenly became instruments of death and destruction. Dozens were killed and thousands injured. The incident shocked the world because it demonstrated how civilian technology could allegedly be transformed into a weapon. Taken together, the reported Tehran operation and the Lebanon device explosions reveal two dimensions of modern warfare. One demonstrates how surveillance systems, communications monitoring, artificial intelligence, and big-data analytics can allegedly be used to identify and locate targets. The other demonstrates how civilian technologies themselves can become part of military operations. This should concern every nation. The explosions of pagers and walkie-talkies across Lebanon in September 2024 were not an ordinary military operation. They were a warning to the entire world. Devices normally used for communication suddenly became instruments of death. They exploded in pockets, homes, streets, hospitals and funeral gatherings. Dozens were killed, including children, and thousands were injured. Lebanon was thrown into panic because no one knew which device might explode next. This was the terrifying message of the attack: in the modern age, civilian technology itself can be turned into a battlefield. The ability of Israel to weaponize civilian technological products points to a highly sophisticated operation involving deep intelligence penetration, supply-chain manipulation and remote activation. The explosive material is hidden inside the batteries of walkie-talkies, making detection extremely difficult. The United Nations human rights office warned that simultaneous targeting of thousands of people through such devices, without knowing who was carrying them or who was standing nearby, violated international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is where the matter becomes far larger than Hezbollah or Lebanon. If a pager, a phone, a radio or any commu-

nication device can be secretly converted into a bomb, then the distinction between civilian life and military operation begins to collapse. A device manufactured for communication becomes a weapon. A battery becomes an explosive chamber. A message becomes a trigger. A civilian street becomes an execution ground. Israel has long projected itself as a global technology power. Its leaders have repeatedly celebrated the country's innovation, cyber capability, intelligence reach, surveillance systems and big-data platforms. But Lebanon exposed the darker side of that technological power. Innovation, when fused with unchecked military ambition, does not merely produce security; it can produce assassination systems. Israel's history of targeted killings is well known. From letter bombs and explosive phones to drone strikes, cyber operations and remote-controlled weapons, Israel has used technology to hunt those it calls enemies. The killing of Hamas bombmaker Yahya Ayyash in 1996 through an explosive cellphone is one earlier example. The assassination of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh through a remote-controlled, AI-assisted weapon is another. The Lebanon device explosions now add a more frightening dimension: mass deployment of weaponized civilian devices. The danger is no longer limited to one individual target. The danger is mass assassination through ordinary technology. This development raises serious legal questions. International humanitarian law is built on the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Combatants must be distinguished from civilians. Civilian objects must not be turned into indiscriminate weapons. Attacks must not cause civilian harm excessive to the military advantage sought. Commanders must take precautions to avoid killing innocent people. The Lebanon explosions appear to have endangered all these principles. A device carried by one suspected fighter may explode in a market. A radio may detonate near a child. A pager may explode during a funeral. A walkie-talkie may injure doctors, shopkeepers or passersby. Such attacks cannot guarantee that only a lawful military target will be harmed. They spread fear across society. They make every electronic object suspicious. They turn normal civilian life into psychological warfare. The same logic is visible in Gaza, where investigative reporting has raised grave concerns about AI-assisted targeting systems. The systems used to generate targets, identify suspected militants, monitor locations and accelerate bombing decisions. When algorithms are fed with phone data, location signals, social networks, drone footage, facial recognition, banking records, traffic cameras and human intelligence, they can create a deadly profile of a person. But data is not the truth. Correlation is not guilt. A relative, driver, clerk, repairman, neighbor or political supporter can be wrongly treated as a combatant because his movements resemble someone else's pattern. When such systems are used in war, a false match can become a death sentence.

The world cannot allow this to become normal. If Israel is permitted to weaponize civilian devices, infiltrate supply chains, manipulate batteries, exploit cloud systems, harvest civilian data and use AI to select targets, then every country is vulnerable. Today it is Lebanon. Tomorrow it can be Pakistan, Türkiye, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Kuwait or any other state that falls into the strategic path of a technologically superior adversary. For Pakistan, the lesson is especially urgent. National security is no longer limited to tanks, aircraft, missiles and borders. It now includes phones, routers, servers, apps, satellites, cloud systems, databases, SIM cards and imported electronics. A country that does not control its digital infrastructure cannot fully protect its sovereignty. Pakistan must develop its own secure communication systems, independent cloud infrastructure, encryption capacity, chip research, cyber-defense institutions and national technology audit mechanisms. Muslim countries must also act collectively. They should demand transparent supply-chain declarations for sensitive communication and electronic equipment. They should require companies to disclose whether products, software, designs, components or data services have links to Israeli military or intelligence institutions. They should build joint research and development platforms, invest in indigenous technology and reduce dependence on foreign systems that may contain hidden vulnerabilities. At the United Nations, Muslim countries and other concerned states should jointly move a resolution against the weaponization of civilian technology. The resolution should prohibit the conversion of civilian communication devices into explosive weapons, restrict the use of mass surveillance for extrajudicial assassination, demand human accountability in AI-assisted targeting and call for international inspection standards for critical communication equipment. This is not merely a Muslim issue. It is a global issue. If ordinary electronics can be transformed into secret weapons, then no society is safe. If civilian data can be converted into kill lists, then no privacy is safe. If AI can accelerate assassination without transparent accountability, then international law itself is in danger. The world must draw a clear line: civilian technology must remain civilian. Communication devices must not become bombs. Data systems must not become assassination factories. Artificial intelligence must not become a license to kill. Israel's alleged use of civilian technology in Lebanon has exposed a terrifying future. The question now is whether the world will stop that future before it becomes the new normal.

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

## Iran's best route to prosperity, security is through the Gulf

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

There have been reports of a proposed nonaggression treaty with Iran similar to the 1975 Helsinki Accords between East and West during the Cold War. This would provide structured security guarantees and establish conflict-prevention mechanisms. To work, any such agreement should make sure that Iran does not target the Gulf states. On the other hand, Iran should be given guarantees that the Gulf states are not used as a platform to launch attacks on its territory. It is still just an idea, a raw concept

US Vice President J.D. Vance was this week asked about the \$300 billion fund Washington will reportedly provide for Iran's postwar reconstruction as part of the deal the two countries have agreed. Vance replied that this is the sort of fund the Iranians "could" have access to as long as they "honor their end of the obligation," while adding that it would be financed by the "Gulf coast coalition." What does that mean? The US destroys Iran and then compels the Gulf countries to foot the bill? During a meeting between President Donald Trump and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, the latter was asked about this issue. He replied that the main concern was stopping the war, not economic issues. But he added there would be "huge" investment opportunities once the war is over. Both the US and the Gulf want the war to end, but the last thing the Gulf wants is a neighbor that acts like a hegemon and blackmails them. It is in the interest of the Gulf that Iran becomes a prosperous country. Unlike Israel, which wants to dismember Iran, the Gulf states want Iran to be a unified and functioning country. They know that problems in Iran can have a spillover effect on their shores. The question is: What does Iran want after this war? How does it perceive its relationship with its Gulf neighbors? I can tell you now that the Gulf will not put a penny into Iran if they still perceive the Islamic Republic as a threat. I once visited Iran's cultural advisory in Beirut. I met the person in charge. He told me that the Americans should realize they would be much better off allying themselves with Iran rather than the Arab Gulf. He started boasting about how Iranians are superior to Arabs. He gave an example, saying that if all Iranians were to leave Austria, there would be no doctors left in Vienna. My reply to him was that it would be better for Iran to be friends with its Arab neighbors and leave the Americans aside. He did not like this answer. The Gulf states want Iran to be a unified and functioning

country. They know problems in Iran can spill over to their shores. The Iranians should understand that this Persian supremacist mentality will harm them. If the Iranians think that, by the end of the war, they will have the US' acquiescence to establish themselves as a regional hegemon and extort protection money from the Gulf, they are wrong. They would be inviting the Gulf to deepen its relations with the US. This might be exactly what the Americans want: to keep the Iranian scarecrow and the perception that the US is needed to ensure Gulf security. This would definitely not be a solution for Iran. This would, in fact, be a trap set for Iran by the Americans, using the Gulf and the proposed \$300 billion fund as bait. The solution for Iran is to mend its relations with the Gulf — and the starting point for that is to cease being a threat. I do not know where the \$300 billion figure came from. Is it based on a proper assessment of the destruction of Iran's infrastructure? Does it include the funds needed to jumpstart the economy? Or is it just a number the Iranians came up with out of thin air? At this stage, we do not know. However, Iran will not get a penny from the Gulf unless it solves the outstanding security issues. On this, both parties have to be reasonable. Iran will not give up its deterrence capabilities; hence, it will not give up its ballistic missile arsenal. This war has shown that it needs to protect itself from Israeli and American aggression. However, the Gulf states need to make sure that, in future, those missiles will not be used against them. The solution for Iran is to mend its relations with the Gulf — and the starting point for that is to cease being a threat. There have been reports of a proposed nonaggression treaty with Iran similar to the 1975 Helsinki Accords between East and West during the Cold War. This would provide structured security guarantees and establish conflict-prevention mechanisms. To

work, any such agreement should make sure that Iran does not target the Gulf states. On the other hand, Iran should be given guarantees that the Gulf states are not used as a platform to launch attacks on its territory. It is still just an idea, a raw concept. However, for it to become a reality, there is one big issue that Iran needs to solve: its network of proxies. Even if Iran commits that its proxies will not target the Gulf states, that will not be enough. Iran should understand that the region will not have stability as long as various states are used by armed groups that take their orders from a foreign country. Iran should work with the Gulf states, mainly Saudi Arabia, on the issue of its proxies. Tehran should find a solution that defangs these proxies under a comprehensive political process. It should ensure that they do not threaten their neighbors. The proxies have partly an Iranian agenda and partly a domestic one. Each proxy should be discussed separately. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. However, Iran should be willing to discuss everything with its neighbors. Iran should also realize that a regional security arrangement is far more beneficial than a set of proxies over which it does not have full control. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has already announced that a cooperation framework is taking shape. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan are set to be part of it, while Iran could join after the war. Iran is at a crossroads. However, it should understand that the route to prosperity and security is through a comprehensive deal with the Gulf.

— Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib is a specialist in US-Arab relations with a focus on lobbying. She is co-founder of the Research Center for Cooperation and Peace Building, a Lebanese nongovernmental organization focused on Track II.

## Briefs

## Trump says who criticise Iran deal...

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between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Memorandum has been signed by the presidents of both the countries and also endorsed by him as the mediator, the prime minister wrote on his X timeline, three days after he announced that the deal has been reached between the two countries. "I am honoured to announce that the historic 'Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding' has been electronically signed today between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Memorandum has been signed by honourable Presidents of both the countries and also endorsed by me as the mediator," he announced. He said that signing of this agreement at the highest level of the respective governments demonstrated the commitment of both sides to a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) would enter into force with immediate effect and as a first step, Iran would instantly reopen the Strait of Hormuz and the United States (US) would immediately lift the naval blockade. Pakistan's mediation played a pivotal role in the recent agreement between the US and Iran. The country successfully facilitated diplomatic engagement between the two sides leading to this breakthrough understanding. Pakistan would host the formal signing ceremony of the Memorandum on June 19 in Switzerland.

## Iranian President welcomes...

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dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and waives US-backed sanctions on the country, immediately allowing Iran to sell its oil freely in a major concession from Washington, according to details released by both countries. In Tehran, Pezeshkian signed the deal on behalf of Iran, according to the state-run IRNA news agency, which posted an image of him holding up the deal with his signature and Trump's. The initial deal to end the war takes "immediate effect" after leaders from both countries signed it, Sharif, who helped mediate the agreement, said online. The Pakistani leader signed the agreement on Thursday as mediator. US, Iran electronically sign Islamabad MoU; Pakistan endorses as mediator: PM Shehbaz

## Court wants signed copies of Imran...

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filed but objections had been raised by the court office. When the IHC chief justice asked about the nature of those objections and whether they related to a contempt petition, Safdar replied that the powers of attorney had still not been provided because the jail superintendent had not obtained the required signatures. The chief justice remarked that Safdar had no powers of attorney in the first place and that another lawyer could have sought one. At this, Safdar maintained that his conduct had been transparent and complained that he had not been allowed to meet his client since November last year. He said no meeting had taken place after that date and referred to another case in which a woman petitioner had approached the Supreme Court after her matter was not heard, following which directions had been issued. The bench then invited Safdar to begin arguments on the appeals, but he said he had no instructions from his clients yet. He reminded the court that it had earlier ordered that he be allowed to meet them, adding that he had been permitted to meet Imran but not Bushra. He also said jail authorities had not provided him with signed powers of attorney, which were necessary if he wished to approach a higher forum.

## Kane double fires England World Cup bid as Ronaldo's Portugal stumble

Ronaldo equals record of six World Cups set by Messi but his side were held to an upset 1-1 draw by DR Congo

DNA

LOS ANGELES: England launched their World Cup bid with a rollercoaster 4-2 win against Croatia on Wednesday as Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal stumbled to a draw against the Democratic Republic of Congo. In an enthralling Group L game at the Texas home of the Dallas Cowboys NFL team, Harry Kane scored twice before goals from Jude Bellingham and Marcus Rashford made the game safe as England began their bid to end a 60-year wait for a major trophy. Kane got the ball rolling by slotting home a penalty at the second attempt after the referee allowed him to re-take it when Croatian 'keeper Dominik Livakovic was adjudged to have been off his line. Croatia fought back and Martin Baturina brought them level after 36 minutes before unmarked Kane equalled Gary Lineker's England record of 10 World Cup goals with a thumping header. But the English defensive frailties were on show when Petar Musa equalised for Croatia in first-half stoppage

time. Only in the second half did England impose their will. Bellingham scored a classy goal after outrunning his defender before substitute Rashford took his time before slotting the ball into the net on 85 minutes. Kane revealed that England's German coach Thomas Tuchel had addressed the players at half-time. "The manager gave us a speech at half-time just to say, look, if we lose, we lose. We're losing our way," Kane said. "And I think you saw that, the way we come out in the second half. We went full gas. And they couldn't live with it." Earlier, Portuguese great Ronaldo, 41, equalled the record of six World Cups set on Tuesday by his old nemesis Lionel Messi but his side were held to an upset 1-1 draw by DR Congo. Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo looks dejected after the Fifa World Cup 2026 - Group K match against DR Congo, Houston Stadium, Houston, Texas, US, June 17, 2026. Ronaldo found the going tough against a resolute Congolese defence in Houston. Joao Neves opened the scoring for the Portuguese in the first half but Yoane Wissa of English Premier League

club Newcastle equalised with a headed goal in first-half injury time to give the Congolese their first-ever World Cup point. The result once again renewed scrutiny of Portugal coach Roberto Martinez's insistence on starting the ageing Ronaldo. But Martinez defended the veteran's selection despite an ineffective performance. "It makes no sense to take off the best goal scorer in world football out in a game that you need goals," Martinez said. Ronaldo left the field without speaking to reporters but later posted on Instagram: "It's not the start we wanted, but it's a long road and it's not finished." The DRC's achievement was even greater given that their preparations have been disrupted by the Ebola outbreak in their country. "It is a tremendous source of pride to have earned DR Congo's first-ever point at the Fifa World Cup, as well as its first goal," their coach Sebastien Desabre said. "I am very proud of my players because they represented the Congo in a very positive way and the entire country deserves it." Several Portugal players meanwhile

wore wrist bands in tribute to late teammate Diogo Jota, who was killed in a car crash last year. In other games Wednesday, Ghana snatched a 1-0 victory over Panama with an injury-time winner in Toronto to join England on three points in Group L. An attritional battle looked to be destined to finish in a goalless draw until Caleb Yirenkyi bundled in the winning goal in the fifth minute of stoppage time for the Black Stars. Ghana reached the quarter-finals of the 2010 World Cup but have been eliminated in the group stage at their two most recent appearances in the tournament in 2022 and 2014. The African side will play England in their second Group L game in Boston on June 23. In Wednesday's late game, Colombia beat World Cup debutants Uzbekistan 3-1 on thanks to an inspired performance from Luis Diaz at the Estadio Azteca in the Group K game. The Colombians went ahead when Daniel Munoz volleyed in Diaz's superb pass after 40 minutes but Abbosbek Fayzullaev equalised before Diaz settled the contest in the 65th minute and Jaminton Campaz scored a third in the dying seconds.

## Pakistan, Russia agree to strengthen sports co-op



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Rana Sanaullah and Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Albert P. Khorev on Thursday reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral relations, with a particular focus on sports cooperation, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts.

During a meeting held in Islamabad, both sides discussed Pakistan-Russia relations and explored ways to expand collaboration in sports, education, culture and economic sectors. They agreed to accelerate the implementation of existing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on sports cooperation between the two countries. Rana Sanaullah emphasized that football cooperation

would be pursued on a priority basis, including efforts to organize a friendly football match between Pakistan and Russia. He said Russia possesses significant expertise in sports development and noted that closer cooperation in sports and other sectors would further strengthen bilateral ties. The Russian Ambassador expressed Moscow's keen interest in benefiting from Pakistan's expertise in

cricket, highlighting the growing popularity of the sport in Russia. He praised Pakistan's achievements on the international cricket stage and expressed a desire to expand cooperation in the game. Both sides also agreed to promote traditional and popular sports of their respective countries and explore new avenues of sports diplomacy. The Ambassador proposed enhanced exchanges in winter sports, including a possible visit by a Russian ice hockey team to Pakistan. Ambassador Khorev appreciated Pakistan's efforts to promote regional peace and stability and acknowledged its constructive role in encouraging dialogue and reducing international tensions. Rana Sanaullah reiterated Pakistan's commitment to broadening cooperation with Russia across multiple sectors and expressed confidence that continued engagement would further strengthen bilateral relations and deliver tangible benefits to the people of both countries.

## Ghana beat Panama 1-0 in World Cup opener after injury-time winner

Cristian Martinez triggered a massive roar from the loud Panamanian contingent when he lashed a shot into the side-netting in the 60th minute

TORONTO, Canada: Ghana scored a dramatic 1-0 victory over Panama in their opening World Cup Group L clash in Toronto on Wednesday. Caleb Yirenkyi bundled in the winning goal in the fifth minute of stoppage time, sending thousands of Ghanaians in Canada's largest city into a frenzy and settling an otherwise attritional battle. Both sides largely struggled to generate chances in the first half after Panama striker Cecilio Waterma's second minute attempt was steered away by outstretched Ghana goalkeeper Lawrence Ati Zigi. The Black Stars didn't attempt a shot on goal through the first half. The second half played out under steady rain at the Toronto Stadium but saw more sustained attacking play. Cristian Martinez triggered a massive roar from the loud Panamanian contingent when he lashed a shot into the side-netting in the 60th minute. But the match looked headed for a scoreless draw until Yirenkyi put the Black Stars ahead. Ghana's veteran coach Carlos Queiroz turned to his side's fans after the goal, urging them on in celebration. Queiroz only took charge of the Black Stars a couple of months before the start of the tournament. Wednesday's fixture made him only the second coach to appear in five consecutive World Cups, after leading Portugal in 2010 and Iran in 2014, 2018 and 2022. Loud boos rang out across the crowd of nearly 43,000 during a second-half hydration break under pouring rain. Ghana triumphed despite being without Villarreal midfielder Thomas Partey, who is facing trial on rape charges in Britain. Canadian authorities denied him a World Cup visa, over the British case. - APP

## World Cup goals record 'just a number,' says Messi

KANSAS CITY: Lionel Messi savored a "beautiful moment" after becoming the World Cup's joint all-time leading goalscorer on Tuesday but said, "ultimately, it is just a statistic, nothing more." The 38-year-old Argentine captain etched another memorable chapter in his glittering career with a brilliant hat trick in the South Americans' 3-0 win over Algeria in Kansas City. Messi's hat trick - his first ever at a World Cup - vaulted him alongside Germany's Miroslav Klose as the top scorer in the tournament's history with 16 goals. Next on the list is Brazilian great Ronaldo, with 15 goals, one ahead of Gerd Muller and current France star Kylian Mbappe. "To enjoy this with my family, with my teammates, the ones who are always there, is a really beautiful moment," Inter Miami star Messi said. "I'm happy." He added: "It's an honor to be there, given what it means to stand alongside Klose or the others. Ronaldo is there too but I don't think it means anything - Mbappe as well, who scored two today (in a 3-1 win against Senegal). "In the end, it's just a statistic and nothing more." Messi's razor-sharp eye for goal augurs well for Argentina's hopes of becoming the first team since Brazil in 1962 to win back-to-back World Cup titles. - APP

## FIA president Ben Sulayem says Macau conference can help shape future of motorsport

DUBAI: Mohammed Ben Sulayem, president of the FIA, says the federation's Extraordinary General Assembly and Annual Conference in Macau next week has an important part to play in guiding the future of motorsport and mobility. Hosted in partnership with the Automobile General Association Macao-China and Galaxy Entertainment Group, and held at the Galaxy International Convention Centre, the three-day event starting on Tuesday will welcome over 450 senior FIA delegates from 149 countries. It offers opportunities for the FIA, the global governing body for motorsport and the federation for mobility organizations worldwide, to address key initiatives in regional sporting growth, road safety, sustainable mobility, and innovation in transport. Macau is an iconic location for motorsport fans, playing host to the Macau Grand Prix at the Guia Circuit since 1954. Now, the event welcomes competitors across four FIA categories and is notorious for its demanding course, combining fast straights and tight corners. Speaking ahead of his return to Macau, Ben Sulayem said:

"This conference provides a valuable opportunity to bring together our community and help shape the future of global motorsport and mobility. As we continue to grow participation, advance innovation and improve road safety worldwide, these discussions are more important than ever. "I am delighted to be returning to Macau, a truly iconic location for motorsport fans and a fitting location for the FIA to host one of the most important weeks of our calendar. My thanks to our hosts, the AAMC, Chairman Chong Coc Veng, and President Roberto Carlos Osorio." Veng said the conference "provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made together over the past year and shape the priorities that will drive our federation forward." The conference will be attended by representatives from the 245 FIA Member Clubs who represent motorsport and mobility. This structure forms the backbone of the federation's governance and operations, with each full Member Club holding voting rights across the FIA's elections and regulatory decisions. - DNA

## Portugal coach defends keeping Cristiano Ronaldo on in draw

"It makes no sense to get the best goal scorer in world football out in a game that you need goals," says Martinez

DNA

NEW YORK: Portugal coach Roberto Martinez dismissed questions about Cristiano Ronaldo's role after a frustrating World Cup opener, defending his decision to keep the captain on for the full 90 minutes in Wednesday's 1-1 draw with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ronaldo went without a shot on target in Houston, extending his scoreless streak to five straight World Cup matches and 10 consecutive games at major tournaments. The 41-year-old forward hasn't scored a non-penalty goal at a World Cup or European Championship since June 2021, but Martinez said removing him was never a serious consideration while Portugal chased a winner. "It makes no sense to get the best goal scorer in world



football out in a game that you need goals," Martinez said. Ronaldo, Portugal's all-time leading scorer with 143 international goals, became only the second player to appear in six World Cups, following Lionel Messi. But unlike Messi, who scored a hat trick Tuesday, Ronaldo's bid to become the first player to score in six different World Cups will have to wait. Portugal started strong, with Joao Neves scoring in the sixth minute, but the early advantage didn't lead to sustained pressure. Martinez said the goal had the opposite effect, with Portugal becoming too cautious in possession and allowing DR Congo to reset defensively. "We started very, very well," Martinez said. "Scoring the goal - which is normally a moment when the emotion of scoring helps you keep control of the match and try to score a second goal - had the opposite effect." Portugal continues Group K play on Tuesday against Uzbekistan in Houston.

## Ukraine drones pound Russia

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city of Kazan, about 700 kilometres east of Moscow. An explosion takes place at the Moscow oil refinery after Ukrainian drone attacks on Moscow, Russia on June 18, 2026. The Russian leader had yet to comment on the strikes, despite issuing press statements throughout the day, though his Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov vowed Moscow would retaliate with its own "massive" strikes on Ukraine. Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky said the attack was an "absolutely justified response" to deadly strikes on Kyiv - including one earlier this week on a landmark cathedral and a UNESCO-protected 11th-century monastery.

## PTI jailed leaders call for Charter of Pakistan

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The PTI leaders noted in their letter that "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has once again proposed a 'Charter of Economy' as a means of addressing the country's persistent economic challenges". "While economic reform and policy continuity are undoubtedly essential, it is important to ask a more fundamental question: Can economic stability be achieved in the absence of political stability and constitutional certainty? "History, experience and common sense suggest otherwise," the letter stated. It added, "No economy flourishes where constitutional supremacy is contested, where political uncertainty prevails and where public confidence in institutions is weakened."

## Centre committed not to ask...

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the national security needs and also minimises complaints from the provinces". The PPP chairman emphasised that the decision was not taken unconstitutionally but rather under Article 164 of the Constitution. "The Constitution enables that if the provinces and the federal government have to spend on a subject which does not fall under their domain, under the article, provinces can give grants to the Centre or the Centre can give grants to the provinces," he explained. He thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy PM Ishaq Dar and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb for remaining engaged with PPP representatives and finding a constitutional and democratic solution.

## US media slam Trump's...

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while providing enormous financial concessions to Tehran," said US TV network MS NOW. "Now, the administration is desperately trying to argue otherwise. Quite simply, Trump got played by the Iranians, and no one is buying his spin job." "As a first step, Islamic Republic of Iran will instantly reopen the Strait of Hormuz and the United States of America will immediately lift the naval blockade," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, which mediated the agreement, said on X.

## Oil slips again after landmark...

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bombing campaign if Iran's leaders "don't behave". "The sell-off extended as energy markets continued to aggressively price in a faster-than-expected return of Iranian barrels following the recent US-Iran memorandum of understanding," IG market analyst Tony Sycamore said in a note. The 14-point memorandum begins a 60-day negotiation period during which Iran will allow toll-free passage through the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil and gas shipping lane. The deal calls for traffic through the strait to be restored to its full capacity within 30 days.

## Briefs

## Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.26 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.27. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.00 and Rs 279.40, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 3.03 and closed at Rs 319.93 from the previous day's closing of Rs 322.96, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged close at Rs 1.73, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 4.08 and closed at Rs 369.29 compared to the previous day's Rs 373.37. The exchange rates of the Emirate Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 and 02 paisa, closing at Rs 75.76 and Rs 74.13, respectively.—APP

## PSX continues with bullish trend

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 887.19 points, a positive change of 0.49 percent, closing at 181,398.22 points against 180,511.02 points on the last trading day. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1.242 billion shares with a traded value of Rs 58.015 billion, compared to 1.231 billion shares valuing Rs 69.216 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization increased to Rs 20,246 trillion from Rs 20,125 trillion a day earlier. Out of 495 active companies in the ready market, 264 advanced, 201 declined and 30 remained unchanged. Kohinoor Spinning topped the volume chart with 230.182 million shares, followed by K-Electric Limited with 57.394 million shares and WorldCall Telecom with 56.135 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company Limited (B), which increased by Rs 446.00 to close at Rs 17,900.00, and Service Industries Limited, which gained Rs 185.80 to settle at Rs 2,303.90 on the losing side. Sapphire Textile Mills Limited declined by Rs 39.80 to close at Rs 1,449.17, while Indus Motor Company Limited fell by Rs 22.17 to close at Rs 2,059.43. In the futures market, turnover stood at 277.461 million shares with a traded value of Rs 11.523 billion, compared to 193.175 million shares worth Rs 10.520 billion in the previous session. Out of 310 futures-market companies, 169 recorded gains, 133 declined and eight remained unchanged, according to PSX data.—APP

## Apple plans price increases

WASHINGTON: Apple plans to increase prices for its products to offset the impact of rising memory and storage chip costs. A sharp surge in artificial intelligence-driven demand from data centres has forced consumer electronics manufacturers into intense competition for dwindling supplies of key components, resulting in significant price increases. Tim Cook, Apple's Chief Executive Officer, said in press remarks that raising prices had become unavoidable. "Unfortunately, price increases are unavoidable. We're doing our best to mitigate the huge increases that are being passed to us, and we've been trying to shield our customers from the increases, but the situation has become unsustainable," Cook told Wall Street Journal. Cook did not disclose when the price increases would take effect, the extent of the increases, or which products might be affected.—APP



Islamabad: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with a delegation of BYD Group and Mega Motor Company (MMC) led by Mr. Liu Xueliang, Vice President of BYD Group and General Manager, BYD Asia Pacific Auto Sales Division, and Mr. Aly Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Mega Motor Company (Private) Limited, at the Finance Division.

## Pakistan, China sign MoUs to boost youth uplift

The agreements provide a framework for establishing joint training and research centres, enhancing cooperation in curriculum development, vocational education, technology transfer, innovation ecosystems and student exchange programmes

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan concluded a series of high-level engagements in Beijing on Thursday, signing and witnessing key agreements with leading Chinese institutions aimed at expanding Pakistan-China cooperation in education, skills development, technology transfer, innovation and youth empowerment. The visit, held as part of efforts to implement understandings reached during Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China, sought to create new opportunities for Pakistani youth through institutional partnerships, vocational training and digital innovation. A major highlight of the visit was the signing ceremony of multiple Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Pakistani and Chinese institutions, witnessed by Rana Mash-

hood Ahmad Khan. The agreements provide a framework for establishing joint training and research centres, enhancing cooperation in curriculum development, vocational education, technology transfer, innovation ecosystems and student exchange programmes. The chairman also attended a high-level seminar at China Agricultural University, where he engaged with heads of leading Chinese institutions to explore collaboration in higher education, agricultural sciences, vocational training and youth development. Discussions focused on technology transfer, joint research initiatives, student mobility programmes and institutional linkages aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of Pakistani youth in the global economy. During a visit to the College of Engineering at Beijing University of Agriculture, Rana Mash-

hood held discussions on future cooperation in technical education, applied research, skills development and vocational training. Both sides expressed a strong commitment to expanding academic and institutional partnerships for the benefit of young people in Pakistan and China. In another key engagement, the PMYP chairman met senior leadership of Alibaba Group to discuss the implementation of projects envisaged under agreements signed during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China. The discussions focused on promoting entrepreneurship, e-commerce, digital skills, innovation and sustainable economic opportunities for Pakistani youth through Alibaba's digital ecosystem. Rana Mashood also attended a convocation ceremony in Beijing, where he interacted with Pakistani graduates and congratulated them on their

academic achievements. He encouraged students to use their education, skills and international exposure to contribute to Pakistan's socio-economic development and play a leading role in shaping the country's future. Speaking on the occasion, the chairman said the visit reflected the shared vision of Pakistan and China to deepen cooperation in education, innovation, skills development and youth empowerment. He said the newly signed agreements would create sustainable pathways for knowledge exchange, technological advancement, institutional collaboration and capacity building for future generations. The visit further reinforced the longstanding Pakistan-China strategic partnership and underscored both countries' commitment to investing in youth as a driver of innovation, prosperity and sustainable development.

## Gulf exporters' quest to bypass Hormuz will reshape region

LONDON: Middle East oil producers face a reckoning. The Iran war exposed the dangers of relying on a single choke-point for vital oil and gas exports, leaving Gulf governments with a clear strategic imperative: diversify – at all costs. An Iranian blockade of the Strait of Hormuz had long been viewed as a "Doomsday" event that would never happen. Experts assumed it would require a massive military effort and that Tehran would be reluctant to choke off its own exports. Those assumptions were proven painfully wrong. Iran imposed a near-airtight blockade using cheap drones, small vessels and mines, while continuing to export its own oil, at least until the US Navy imposed its own blockade on Iranian shipping. This stranded a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas supplies, triggering unprecedented turmoil across the region's vast energy industry, with repercussions felt worldwide. Countries lost vital export revenues and were forced to shut down around 11 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil production, along with multiple refineries and LNG facilities. While Washington and Tehran have agreed to negotiate a permanent peace deal, the "Hormuz genie" cannot be put back into the bottle. Future closures are now a real and persistent risk for the region and the global economy. As a result, developing alternative routes for exports of energy, chemicals and fertilizer has become a matter of economic survival for Gulf nations. Saudi Arabia offers the clearest example of the benefits of building pipelines that circumvent Hormuz. Before the war, the world's largest oil exporter diverted around 60 percent of its shipments to the Red Sea port of Yanbu, using a cross-country pipeline from the Gulf coast. State-owned Saudi Aramco built the 1,200-kilometer (745-mile) route in the 1980s precisely to hedge against this type of scenario.—DNA

## Israel seized more land from neighbors

JERUSALEM: Over the past two and a half years, Israel has taken control of swaths of Gaza, Lebanon and Syria that amount to its biggest expansion of militarily occupied lands in decades. It is an area larger than many major cities – roughly 1,000 square kilometers (386 square miles) – and Israel has said it plans to stay indefinitely. The land seizures began in the aftermath of Hamas' 2023 cross-border attack, which ignited wars on multiple fronts. The Israeli military took over large portions of Gaza as part of a broad invasion, and later seized control of chunks of Lebanon and Syria. Israel calls these areas "buffer zones" and says they are needed to prevent future attacks by militant groups. In Gaza and Lebanon, Israeli land seizures and evacuation warnings have pushed out more than 3 million people, and troops have demolished towns and neighborhoods, creating large, depopulated zones. The "buffer zones" – equivalent to roughly 5 percent of Israel's area soon after its founding – are not new borders, which require an agreement between two countries. But many fear these changes could become long-lasting. Iran has made Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon a condition for ending its war with the US. Since its founding in 1948, Israel has never had clear borders. Its boundaries have shifted through wars, annexations, ceasefires and peace agreements. Here is a deeper look at the Israeli expansions: Israel and Hezbollah have fought multiple wars since the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group was formed in 1982. Israel occupied much of southern Lebanon between 1982–2000, saying it was necessary to protect northern Israeli communities. After Israel's withdrawal in 2000, the UN drew up a boundary between the two countries. A year of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah ended with an October 2024 ceasefire. That truce collapsed in March, days into the US-Israeli war against Iran. Following missile and drone attacks by Hezbollah, Israel launched a ground invasion into Lebanon. When fighting was halted in April, Israel said the military would occupy an area up to 10 kilometers (6 miles) deep. Israel now holds 608 square kilometers (234 square miles) in Lebanon, according to experts with the Carnegie Middle East Center. Evacuation warnings have forced about 1.2 million Lebanese to flee, and Israel has warned civilians against returning. Hezbollah has condemned Israel's presence inside Lebanon, and the Lebanese government has called for Israel to withdraw. Israel seized the Gaza Strip from Egypt in the 1967 Mideast War. It unilaterally withdrew troops and settlers from the territory in 2005. Hamas militants overran the territory two years later, and their Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel launched the devastating war in Gaza. When the Gaza ceasefire went into effect in October 2025, Israel withdrew its troops to a zone demarcated by the so-called "yellow line," giving it control of just over half the strip. Almost the entire population of Gaza, more than 2 million people, has been squeezed into vast, squalid tent cities dependent on international aid. The military has bulldozed or demolished wide swaths of the zone, and the area, where most of Gaza's agricultural land lies, is inaccessible to Palestinians. Israeli forces are meant to complete a fuller withdrawal under the US-brokered ceasefire. But the US-backed diplomat overseeing the truce says progress is deadlocked over the central sticking point of disarming Hamas. With the ceasefire process stuck, Israel has since moved the line west and expanded its control to more than 60 percent of Gaza – 194 square kilometers (75 square miles), according to rights group Gisha. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israeli control of Gaza will increase to 70 percent. Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria during the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed it – a move not widely recognized by the international community. After the 1973 Mideast war, the UN created a buffer zone in southern Syria next to the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, patrolled by a UN force of about 1,100 troops. In December 2024, after the surprise downfall of Syrian President Bashar Assad, Israel moved its troops into the UN buffer zone, saying it was concerned that Syrian rebels could attack Israel. It also wanted to disrupt Iran's ability to smuggle weapons through Syria to Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.—APP

## SECP chief directs PMEX to accelerate agri uplift

He reaffirmed SECP's commitment to strengthening capital and commodity market institutions through technology-driven reforms, greater efficiency, and enhanced transparency to support sustainable economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Dr Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, has directed the management of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX) to develop a practical roadmap for launching physically deliverable agricultural futures contracts. He emphasized that the contracts should be supported by an integrated Electronic Warehouse Receipt (EWR) system with real-time connectivity between warehouses and PMEX. The initiative is critical to modernizing Pakistan's commodity markets, improving price discovery, and expanding access to transparent and efficient markets for farmers, traders, and processors, said a press release issued by the SECP on Thursday. Dr Sidhu issued these directions while chairing a meeting of the PMEX Board

of Directors and senior management during his visit to PMEX. The meeting was attended by SECP Commissioner (Securities Market Division) Mr. Ali Farid Khwaja, Executive Director Mr. Imran Inayat Butt, Director Mr. Muhammad Shamoun, and PMEX Managing Director & CEO Mr. Khurram Zafar. The meeting focused on strengthening Pakistan's regulated commodity futures market through technology, innovation, and market-based solutions. Dr Sidhu underscored that efficient commodity markets can play a transformative role in improving price discovery, reducing market inefficiencies, providing risk management tools to farmers and processors, and facilitating access to formal finance. He stressed that modernizing commodity market infrastructure remains a key priority for SECP. He called for innovative products and wider market participation to unlock the sector's full potential. The PMEX management briefed the Chairman on ongoing initiatives to expand fu-

tures trading in key agricultural commodities. The SECP Chairman also visited the headquarters of National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited (NCCPL), where he met members of the Board of Directors. During the visit, NCCPL management briefed him on the company's key functions, including clearing and settlement operations, risk management systems, and capital gains tax services. The Chairman was also apprised of ongoing projects and future initiatives aimed at further strengthening Pakistan's capital market infrastructure. Dr Sidhu emphasized the importance of robust post-trade institutions in ensuring market integrity, investor confidence, and operational resilience. He reaffirmed SECP's commitment to strengthening capital and commodity market institutions through technology-driven reforms, greater efficiency, and enhanced transparency to support sustainable economic growth.

## UK mosques urged to improve security over fear of attacks

LONDON: British mosques have been advised to beef up security measures, including holding lockdown drills, to prepare in case of attacks. The recommendations in a framework by the Muslim Council of Britain suggest that mosques forge closer ties with local police and improve CCTV around premises amid fears of threats and attacks. The framework comes in the wake of a series of violent incidents in recent weeks, including riots in Belfast following a knife attack by a migrant on a local man, and a suspected arson attack on the home of an imam in Bolton. Hate crimes in England and Wales have risen for the first time in three years, according to the Home Office, with incidents up from 2,690 offenses to 3,199 in the 12 months to March 2025. The MCB said it could be another year of "violence on our streets," and urged imams across its nearly 500 affiliated mosques and community groups to use Friday sermons to prepare and reassure congregations. Its framework recommends appointing dedicated members of communities as security leads, highlighting CCTV blindspots, securing access points to mosques and community centers, and implementing lockdown procedures in phased rollouts of three, 12 and 36 months. It also sets out approaches to deal with issues such as graffiti and vandalism, verbal abuse and intimidation, arson attempts, suspicious packages and bomb threats.—APP

## S Korean police quiz executive in Starbucks 'Tank Day' fiasco

SEOUL: South Korean police have questioned an executive of Starbucks operator Shinegase in their investigation of a flopped promotional campaign that evoked a deadly 1980 crackdown, the group told AFP on Thursday. Starbucks Korea, which operates more than 2,000 stores nationwide under a licensing agreement with Shinegase Group, sparked public outrage last month with a "Tank Day" promotion – May 18 – coincided with the 46th anniversary of the Gwangju uprising in which 165 civilians were killed, according to the official toll, though many believe the real figure to be much higher. Shinegase Group fired its Korea chief executive the day the scandal broke, and the group's chairman Chung Yong-jin later bowed in apology over the incident. This did not stop a civic group from filing a complaint against Chung and other executives claiming they violated a 2016 law that, among other provisions, prohibits the dissemination of false information about the 1980 pro-democracy crackdown.—APP

## Syrian teen beats 881,000 students to top Germany's biggest math contest

BERLIN: Bilal Kreidi, a 16-year-old Syrian student based in Germany, has won first place nationally in the Mathematical Kangaroo, one of the world's largest mathematics competitions, which drew more than 881,000 students from over 12,600 schools across the country. Bilal has since launched a popular TikTok channel where he posts simplified lessons spanning five levels – from grade five through to advanced secondary, the Syrian Arab News Agency reported. "My primary goal is to help students understand mathematics and develop their skills," Bilal told SANA on Tuesday, adding that the strong response from viewers had motivated him to keep going. His father, Khaled Kreidi, recalled the family's journey since arriving in Germany in 2015, describing a deliberate effort to integrate into German society while keeping the Arabic language and Syrian curriculum alive at home.—APP

## Briefs

### 'Indus reservoir expansion may fuel tensions'



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar expressed concern over recent Indian reservoir expansion and water diversion projects on the Indus River system, warning that such measures could alter natural river flows, foster "hydro-hegemony", and pose serious risks to regional stability and water security. Addressing a conference on transboundary water resources in Brussels virtually on Thursday, Dar said Pakistan's concerns were not based solely on Indian statements but also on actions taken under the Indus River System. "It is important to underscore that our concerns are not merely based on Indian statements," DPM Dar said. He added that India had pursued projects including reservoirs, the expansion of existing structures and diversion schemes on the Indus, Chenab and Ravi rivers.

"In total, at least 17 such projects will drastically alter the river system as a whole, giving India the tools for 'hydro-hegemony' that it so desires," he added. Pakistan has previously said it would consider any attempt to change the flow of cross-border waterways as an "act of war" and says that the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT) remains in force as there is no mechanism to unilaterally withdraw from it. The treaty governs the use of water from six rivers, whose headwaters originate in India but flow into Pakistan as part of the Indus basin – a resource relied on by hundreds of millions. India said in May 2025 that it suspended its IWT membership after accusing Islamabad of backing a deadly attack on tourists in India's Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) – charges Pakistan categorically denied. Addressing the seminar earlier in the day, the deputy prime minister further said Pakistan remained committed to the principles of the UN Charter and international law, noting that the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) signed in 1960 had provided a framework for the utilisation of the six rivers of the Indus River system and had survived multiple conflicts over the decades. He said Pakistan had previously raised concerns through international mechanisms and respected decisions even when they did not fully meet its expectations. However, DPM Dar stressed that "responsible states act within established legal frameworks rather than abandoning them."

# Romania gifts Pakistan choral version of national anthem

Romania's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dan Stoenescu, met with the Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, to formally hand over the album produced by the renowned Romanian National Chamber Choir Madrigal – Marin Constantin

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Romania has presented Pakistan with the first-ever professional choral arrangement and written score of the Qaumi Tarana, marking a milestone in cultural diplomacy between the two nations. Romania's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dan Stoenescu, met with the Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, to formally hand over the album produced by the renowned Romanian National Chamber Choir Madrigal – Marin Constantin. The initiative symbolizes friendship and cultural cooperation, strengthening ties between the two countries. During the meeting, both sides discussed ways to deepen Romania-Pakistan bilateral relations, enhance parliamentary diplomacy, and expand collaboration in areas of mutual interest. They also exchanged views on regional and international developments, including Pakistan's diplomatic efforts in support of peace and stability.

Ambassador Stoenescu acknowledged Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating the ceasefire in the Middle East, coinciding with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding today. "Romania and Pakistan share a longstanding friendship, and I am confident that our cooperation will continue to deepen through dialogue, cultural exchange, and parliamentary engagement," the Ambassador stated. This cultural gesture highlights Romania's commitment to fostering mutual respect and understanding, while reinforcing Pakistan's role as a partner in global peace and stability.



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## ADB approves US\$ 700 mln loan to transform Pakistan's insurance sector

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a US\$ 700 million policy-based loan to support reforms aimed at strengthening insurance in Pakistan. The program seeks to expand insurance coverage and reduce protection gaps and the loan would help stimulate private sector participation and support sustainable economic growth. The Insurance Transformation Program will strengthen Pakistan's financial resilience by deepening insurance markets and expanding financial protection for households, businesses, farmers, and public finances against extreme weather events, disasters, and life-cycle risks, said a press release issued here on Thursday. The reforms are expected to reduce financial vulnerabilities, support faster recovery from shocks, and lessen pressure on public

finances following disasters and other crises. "This program supports the transformation of Pakistan's insurance sector from a legacy, rules-based framework to a modern, risk-based, and market-oriented system," said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Emma Fan. "The reforms will help mobilize patient capital for development, expand financial protection for households and businesses, and support a more competitive, inclusive, and resilient insurance market," Fan added. Pakistan's financial system remains heavily bank-dominated, while insurance penetration stands at only 0.7% of the gross domestic product (GDP). As a result, many households, businesses, and farmers remain financially exposed to environmental, health, and economic shocks. The loan will support resilience initiatives

and disaster risk financing by expanding inclusive and shock-responsive insurance products, particularly for farmers, women, and vulnerable households. In particular, the program will promote insurance solutions tailored to the needs of women and girls through targeted product design, digital access, and sex-disaggregated data. These measures aim to expand insurance coverage through digital distribution systems, satellite-based risk assessment, parametric insurance solutions, and risk-pooling mechanisms, while improving claims settlement and access to insurance services. Additionally, the program will support the development of capital markets and private pension products by mobilizing long-term savings for infrastructure financing, bond market development, and annuity-based pension systems. – APP

## Taiwan president hopes for \$14 bn US arms sale

TAIPEI: Taiwan's president said Thursday he hoped the United States would approve a \$14 billion arms sale "as soon as possible," reiterating that the democratic island "rejects unification" with China. Taipei relies heavily on Washington's support to counter growing pressure from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has not ruled out seizing it by force. "We hope that the arms purchases can be approved as soon as possible," President Lai Ching-te told reporters in Taipei. "Taiwan's efforts to safeguard its national security, uphold its democratic and free way of life, and reject unification and the rule of the Chinese Communist Party should not be seen as a provocation against China or a troublemaker in the region," he said. The United States formally recognizes only China, but is bound by domestic law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself. – APP

## Pakistan to tell Europe water cannot be used as a weapon, says Musadik Malik

Discussions will focus on climate change, global water security, transboundary water resources, the Indus Waters Treaty and the growing geopolitical significance of water in the context of international law



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Dr Musadik Malik has said that any attempt to use water as a weapon is unacceptable, stressing that water is not merely a natural resource but a matter linked to the livelihoods, food security, agriculture, economy and national security of millions of people. Dr Malik is in Brussels at the invitation of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) to participate in an international conference titled "Transboundary Water Resources: A Weaponized Global Commons" being held on June 18. The conference is being organised by CEPS in collaboration with Pakistan's Embassy to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg. According to the ministry, the event will bring together members of the European Parliament, experts in international law, diplomats, policymakers, environmental specialists and professionals associated with the water resources sector. Discussions will focus on climate change, global water security, transboundary water resources, the Indus Waters Treaty and the growing geopolitical significance of water in the context of international law. Ahead of the conference, Dr Malik said Pakistan viewed any effort to weaponise water as unacceptable, noting that access to water directly affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. He is expected to present Pakistan's perspective on transboundary water management, climate-related challenges and the need for international cooperation to ensure equitable and sustainable use of shared water resources. – APP

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## Indians turn back to medieval stepwells as water runs low

NEW DELHI: Once a community gathering space, the Bansilalpet stepwell in Secunderabad had for decades been reduced to a neighborhood dumping ground. Only a few years ago, an urban restoration initiative revived its 18th-century glory, drawing attention to India's traditional water systems and their possible use today. Stepwells are deep, open wells with steps, landings, and corridors

descending to the water level. Popular in Indian cities between the 11th and 18th centuries, they allowed people to reach water as the level rose and fell with the seasons. During the monsoon, rainwater absorbed into the soil recharges the groundwater that supplies them. Beyond their practical function, they also offered shelter from heat and were a place for social gatherings. Largely forgotten under British colonial rule, which banned their use, these unique structures are now being revived with hopes that they could help mitigate India's growing water scarcity and restore community bonds that they used to maintain. "People used to walk down to the well and fetch water, so the connection with the community was very, very strong," said Kalpana Ramesh, an urban designer based in Hyderabad, Secunderabad's twin city and the capital of the southern state of Telangana. – APP

## NATO says it agrees to modernize nuclear capabilities

BRUSSELS: NATO agreed on Thursday to modernize its nuclear capabilities and strengthen its nuclear planning capacity, the alliance's senior body for nuclear deterrence said in a statement. All NATO allies except France are members of the Nuclear Planning Group, which serves as a forum for consultation and decision-making on nuclear deterrence. Defense ministers taking part in the meeting "recalled that the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance remain the supreme guarantee of Allied security and underpin NATO's extended deterrence architecture," the statement said. "NPG Ministers agreed to continue enhancing NATO's nuclear deterrence mission by modernizing NATO's nuclear capabilities, strengthening its nuclear planning capacity, and adapting to achieve its security interests," the group said. Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told NATO Thursday the Pentagon will review its force presence in Europe within the next six months, as Washington pressures allies to step up their defenses amid anger over their response to the Iran war. "This will be a real review. It will be designed to ensure that NATO is moving fast and irreversibly toward Europe leading, stepping up to take primary responsibility for the defense of Europe," Hegseth told a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels. "It's a review that some countries will fail, and others will pass with flying colors." The Pentagon chief said the move was also aimed at ensuring US "access, basing and overflight are clearly delineated and assured" after some European imposed restrictions on US forces during the Iran war. "It was shameful. These allies, they put America's sons and daughters, our sons and daughters, at risk," he said. "There's no excuse for that."

The US is piling on the pressure ahead of a NATO summit next month as it seeks to make sure that allies make good on a pledge made last year to massively ramp up defense spending. Hegseth said going forward Washington paying its dues to cover NATO organizational running costs – roughly some \$790 million in 2026 – would be "contingent" on allies reaching spending targets. "Where other allies do not spend with urgency, our dues contributions will go down," he said. The broadside from the US defense chief – who had initially signalled a conciliatory tone – will send a jolt through NATO allies concerned over US commitment to defending Europe. US President Donald Trump had lashed out against European allies over their response to his war in Iran. But there was hope the US peace deal with Tehran could help NATO put the bad blood behind it by the time alliance leaders meet in Türkiye. "Too many allied capitals seem to still miss something in translation," Hegseth said. Trump "gave our allies a test to support America when we asked for their help, and too many failed it," he added. Despite the tough language, Hegseth did acknowledge strides by many members of NATO to ramp up their defenses and said progress was being made. "Some of our allies have gotten the message and stepped up. You know who you are, and we very much appreciate it," he said. NATO will look to showcase increased expenditure by Europe to prove to Trump it is progressing on a pledge last year to reach five percent of GDP on defense-related spending. "Europe and Canada spending in 2025 more than \$90 billion extra compared to 2024, which is almost a 20 percent increase in defense spending," NATO boss Mark Rutte said. – APP

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