



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**Pope Leo says wars no solution to the conflicts**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Iranian President to visit Pakistan on Tuesday**

Detailed News On Page-02



**Messi makes world record of most goals**

Detailed News On Page-06



**JD Vance says**

## Iran to allow IAEA inspectors, talks to continue

Iran confirmed that a "brief discussion" on nuclear issues took place with the United States, though details remain limited

CENTRELINE REPORT

BERN: US Vice President JD Vance announced on Monday that Iran has agreed to invite inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) back into the country, describing the decision as "great progress" in ongoing nuclear negotiations. Vance underscored that technical-level discussions between Washington and Tehran will continue in the coming days, signaling cautious optimism about the trajectory of talks. According to Iranian state media IRNA, the Iranian delegation engaged in an 18-hour round of "intensive" negotiations with US officials before departing for Tehran. The report noted that a "brief discussion" on nuclear issues took place between the two sides, though Iranian officials offered few details about the substance of those exchanges. The delegation's swift return to Tehran suggests that consultations with domestic leadership will be necessary before further steps are taken. The announcement marks a notable development in efforts to resolve longstanding disputes over Iran's nuclear program.

Continued on Page 06

## USA issues license allowing Iran to export oil products

DNA

WASHINGTON: In a significant diplomatic development, the United States has granted Iran a license permitting the export of crude oil under specific conditions, marking what officials described as "a good step forward" in ongoing negotiations between the two countries. The license, valid until August 21, 2026, allows Iran to resume limited oil exports to global markets. However, the authorization explicitly excludes shipments to North Korea, Cuba, and Ukraine, countries still under separate US sanctions regimes. Officials in Washington said the decision reflects progress in technical-level talks aimed at stabilizing energy markets and advancing dialogue toward a broader US-Iran agreement. "This move is expected to boost confidence and help pave the way for a final deal," a senior administration source noted.

Iranian officials welcomed the announcement, calling it a "positive signal" that could ease economic pressure and encourage further cooperation. Analysts say the license could help Iran re-enter the global oil trade in a controlled manner while maintaining oversight through international monitoring mechanisms. Energy experts believe the measure will have ripple effects across the region, potentially lowering tensions and improving market stability. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other bodies are expected to play a role in ensuring compliance with export conditions. The license's expiration in 2026 provides a two-year window for both sides to finalize a comprehensive framework addressing nuclear, trade, and regional security issues. While challenges remain, the decision is widely viewed as a confidence-building measure that could mark the beginning of a new phase in US-Iran relations.

## Ashura holidays announced

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has declared two public holidays on the occasion of Ashura, falling on Thursday and Friday, June 25 and 26. The announcement was made on Monday, confirming that all government offices, schools, and institutions will remain closed for both days. In line with the decision, newspapers across the country will observe a one-day holiday on Friday, June 26. This adjustment ensures continuity of publication while allowing staff to mark the religious occasion. Media houses clarified that editions will be printed and distributed on Thursday, June 25.

Continued on Page 06

## 5.4-magnitude earthquake shakes parts of Pakistan

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: A 5.4-magnitude earthquake shook large parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Punjab on Monday, with the epicentre traced to the Hindu Kush mountain range in Afghanistan, the seismological centre said. The tremors were recorded at a depth of 215 kilometres, the seismological centre added. The earthquake was felt across a wide stretch of KP, including Peshawar and its surrounding areas, Swat, Buner, Hangu, Shangla, Kohat, Mohmand, Shabqadar, Bajour, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Charsadda,

Continued on Page 06

## US Fed Reserve chairman dies

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Alan Greenspan, hailed as the greatest Federal Reserve chairman when he retired in 2006 but derided for a severe financial crisis that followed barely two years later, died on Monday aged 100, NBC News reported. Greenspan, who exerted a powerful influence on the US economy during his tenure at the helm of the Fed from August 1987 to January 2006, died at his home from complications of Parkinson's disease, NBC reported, citing his wife, Andrea Mitchell, who is the outlet's chief Washington correspondent. Greenspan oversaw the second-longest economic expansion in US history, an uninterrupted decade of

Continued on Page 06



ZURICH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif being seen off at the Zurich airport. - DNA

## PM Shehbaz Sharif says

## Pakistan to continue playing sincere role in UA-Iran detente

The premier stated that the discussions were held in a "positive and constructive atmosphere and yielded encouraging progress," which included a roadmap towards the final deal within 60 days, the establishment of a high-level committee

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday expressed Pakistan's continued commitment to play an "honest and sincere" role in advancing dialogue in what were his first remarks after the conclusion of a high-level meeting between the United States and Iran under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding aimed at ending the Middle East conflict. In a post on X, PM Shehbaz expressed satisfaction at the "successful conclusion" of the meeting held in Switzerland's Burgenstock. The premier stated that the discussions were held in a "positive and constructive atmosphere and yielded encouraging progress," which included a roadmap towards the final deal within 60 days, the establishment of a high-level committee for political oversight and the commencement of further technical talks. PM Shehbaz commended the leadership of both the US and Iran for "continued commitment to constructive engagement".

Continued on Page 06

## Pezeshkian to visit Pakistan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian will arrive in Pakistan on Tuesday (tomorrow) following talks between Tehran and Washington in Switzerland, which were mediated by Islamabad, Iran's state news agency IRNA said while quoting the president's office. Expressing appreciation to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for "his mediation between Iran and the United States" is among the objectives of the visit, Habibollah Abbasi, director of public relations at the president's office, said. The United States and Iran made "encouraging progress" at the first round of talks aimed at reaching a final peace deal, mediators said on Monday, although tension persisted

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### South Sudan to hold national polls

DNA

JUBA: South Sudan will hold elections on December 22, its electoral commission promised Monday, after years of repeated delays and despite an increasingly dire security situation. International observers have warned of a return to full-blown conflict as government forces under President Salva Kiir battle groups loosely aligned with jailed opposition leader Riek Machar. A 2018 peace agreement ended the last civil war between Kiir and Machar but it has largely collapsed, and the country remains mired in deep poverty and extreme levels of corruption and violence. Under the peace process, elections were supposed to be held in 2022 but were delayed to 2024 and again to this year.

### Govt ends fuel subsidy

FIAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to discontinue fuel subsidies for motorcyclists, small farmers, and public and goods transport operators following a sharp decline in global oil rates. The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Steering Committee on Fuel Subsidy chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on Monday. The committee reviewed the implementation of the subsidy programme for motorcyclists, small farmers, and public and goods transport operators across the provinces, as well as in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). According to a statement, the committee noted that global fuel prices had fallen significantly and that the resulting relief had already been passed on to consumers.

## PPP's Amjad elected GB CM

The PML-N and IPP had decided to support the PPP in the elections for the slots of chief minister, speaker, and deputy speaker

STAFF REPORT

GILGIT: Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Advocate Amjad Hussain was elected unopposed as the new chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan. No other candidate submitted nomination papers for the office of chief minister. Amjad Hussain has become the fifth Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan. He was elected from GBA-1 constituency in the GB Legislative Assembly elections and currently serving as the President of the PPP GB chapter. The development came hours after PPP's Imran Nadeem was elected as speaker and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Malik Kifayat ur Rehman as deputy speaker, both unopposed. Imran Nadeem and Malik Kifayat ur Rehman secured the positions after no other candidates submitted nomination papers within the stipulated time. Members of the Assembly and political leaders congratulated the elected office-bearers and

expressed confidence that they would uphold democratic traditions and ensure the smooth and impartial functioning of the House. Earlier, newly elected members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly were sworn in by the outgoing speaker. The PPP secured 13 seats, the PML-N won nine, the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) claimed six, while Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) and a PTI-backed independent candidate secured one seat each in the June 7 GB polls. The PML-N and IPP had decided to support the PPP in the elections for the slots of chief minister, speaker, and deputy speaker. It is worth noting that the PPP has announced it will form a government in Gilgit-Baltistan with the support of the PML-N and IPP. Newly elected members of the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Assembly were sworn in on Monday by outgoing Speaker Nazir Ahmed Advocate. A total of 30 members took the oath as the

Continued on Page 06

## Starmer resigns

## United Kingdom to pick seventh leader in 10 years

EU says 'reassessing' July summit plan with UK after Starmer resignation

DNA

LONDON: Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Monday he would resign, with a new leader to be in place by the time parliament returns in September, paving the way for Britain to have its seventh leader in 10 years. Less than two years after he won a landslide election victory that promised to end chaos in British politics, Starmer said it was clear that his party wanted him to go. He said nominations for anyone to replace him would open on July 9. However his rival Andy Burnham is the clear frontrunner. "The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us



sharply on Friday when Burnham, the Greater Manchester mayor, decisively won a parliamentary election to return to Westminster, beating a candidate from Nigel Farage's Reform UK party, which has led national opinion polls for more than a year. Britain's Justice Secretary and deputy Prime Minister David Lammy (C) waits with members of Downing Street staff before Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer makes a statement on his future outside 10 Downing Street on the morning of June 22, 2026, in London. That victory gave hope to Labour lawmakers that Burnham, a career politician known for his communication

Continued on Page 06

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# Ulema pledge full coop to ensure peaceful Ashura

The commitment was made during a meeting organized by the Provincial National Paigham-e-Aman Committee Punjab, in collaboration with the Pakistan Ulema Council Dera Ghazi Khan, as part of nationwide efforts to maintain peace, religious harmony and public order during Muharram-ul-Haram

DNA

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Prominent religious scholars and spiritual leaders representing all schools of thought from across Pakistan pledged full mutual cooperation to ensure the peaceful observance of 10th Muharram-ul-Haram (Ashura), announcing that followers of different sects would demonstrate tolerance, mutual respect and solidarity during Friday congregations, mourning processions and religious gatherings. The commitment was made during a meeting organized by the Provincial National Paigham-e-Aman Committee Punjab, in collaboration with the Pakistan Ulema Council Dera Ghazi Khan, as part of nationwide efforts to maintain peace, religious harmony and public order during Muharram-ul-Haram. The participants unanimously resolved that members of all schools of thought would ex-

tend maximum cooperation to one another during Ahl-e-Sunnat Friday congregations and Ahl-e-Tashayyu processions and majalis on Ashura, ensuring that the timings and arrangements of religious events are respected in a spirit of sacrifice, tolerance, brotherhood and goodwill. The scholars categorically declared that every possible effort would be made to avoid any misunderstanding, confrontation or conflict, emphasizing that the sanctity of Muharram-ul-Haram demands unity, patience and mutual respect among Muslims.

The meeting was attended by Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council and Prime Minister's Coordinator for the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, as the chief guest. Among those present were Hafiz Maqbool Ahmad, Maulana Ashfaq Pitafi, Maulana Pir Asad Habib Shah

Naqshbandi, Haider Naqvi, Qari Abdul Jabbar, Advocate Ahmad Hassan Warak, Maulana Jabir, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Abdul Khaliq Marali, along with other distinguished religious scholars, spiritual leaders and representatives of all schools of thought.

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee's Code of Conduct and stressed that preserving peace during Muharram-ul-Haram is a shared religious and national responsibility. They urged scholars, religious leaders, procession organizers, volunteers and the general public to continue promoting inter-sect harmony, refrain from provocative speech or actions, cooperate closely with the administration and law enforcement agencies, and work collectively to ensure that Ashura is observed in an atmosphere of peace, dignity and national unity throughout the country.



KARACHI: Mr. Justice Munib Akhtar, Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, taking oath as Acting Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Pakistan at Supreme Court Branch Registry Karachi.

## PN rescues 3 persons safely from Indus River

SUKKUR: Pakistan Navy (PN) rescue teams saved three persons who were drowning in the Indus River near Rohri Bridge during two separate successful operations. According to details, Nadir Hussain Channa, a resident of Goth Ibrahim Channa, Taluka Khairpur Nathan Shah, District Dadu, was swept away by strong currents while bathing in the Indus River. Upon receiving information, Pakistan Navy's rescue team immediately reached the spot and pulled him out of the water safely through timely action. In the second rescue operation two underage boys, 15-year old Ali Hassan Mirani and 13 year old Zohaib Ali Mirani, were drowning when Pakistan Navy's rescue team responded promptly and rescued both children safely.

All rescued individuals were provided first aid and necessary medical examination before being handed over to their families. Residents and the affected families praised the Pakistan Navy's timely, effective and professional operation, commending the rescuers for their sense of duty, skill and commitment to protecting human lives. PN has appealed to the public to take precautionary measures while bathing in rivers, canals and water bodies, and to avoid deep water and areas with strong currents to prevent any untoward incidents.—APP

## Punjab CM launches 'SEHAR' programme for women

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday launched the "Skill Enhancement Through Home Reach Programme (SEHAR)" aimed at providing home-based vocational training to women across the province and enhancing their economic participation. Under the programme, women living in remote, semi-urban and urban areas would receive training in beautification services, hospitality and digital technology. The Punjab government has allocated Rs 970 million for the initiative, which seeks to impart vocational skills to 5,365 women across the province. According to official details, the programme would pro-

vide trainees with laptops, internet devices, data packages and monthly stipends to facilitate learning. Preference would be given to widows, differently-abled women and women belonging to minority communities. The hospitality training component includes courses in culinary arts, baking, guest relations, front desk management and airline management. The first batch of trainees in Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Multan and Gujranwala had successfully completed training. Under a collaboration with Nail Bar Pakistan, beautification courses covering hair styling, skincare, makeup and nail art were being offered to 2,065 women in four districts.

In addition, 1,260 women were receiving hospitality training in partnership with the Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (ITHM), while 2,040 women would undergo a six-month digital skills training programme in collaboration with the Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF). The digital skills component includes training in e-commerce platforms such as Daraz and Shopify, along with English language proficiency, product research and financial literacy. Congratulating women who successfully completed their training, the chief minister expressed confidence that the initiative would help transform Punjab's female population into a productive.—APP

## Two drug traffickers apprehended

KOHAT: The police arrested two drug traffickers and seized more than 2.4 kilograms of hashish during an anti-narcotics operation, the official sources said on Monday. The operation was conducted by Jarma police following directives from Kohat District Police Officer (DPO), Dr. Shahbaz Elahi as part of an ongoing campaign against drug smuggling.—APP

## Court Notice

In the Court of Intiaz Ahmed Gondal, Additional District Judge Jhelum, Appeal under Order 43 Rule CPC

Case title: Tanveer Ahmed vs Abdul Basir etc Against: 5- Nasreen Begum widow 6- Shahzad Ahmed 7- Shiraz Ahmed 8- Siraj Ahmed sons 9- Shazia Ahmed 10- Maria Ahmed daughters Qadeer Ahmed residence Shahmad pur Tehsil Dina District Jhelum (Currently Residence Abroad). As there is not possible to call the respondents through Summons in the instant Appeal so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 06.07.2026 at 08:00AM, otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.

## COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Syeda Hubab Akhtar Civil Judge 1st Class Jhelum, suit for dissolution of marriage basis of khulah

Case title: Salma Basheer etc vs Sajid Hussain Son of Khalid Hussain Residence House No. D-415 Bagh Mohalla Jhelum (Currently Residence Dubai). As there is not possible to call the defendants through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 04.07.2026 at 08:00 AM, otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.

## KP govt urged to devise 10-year long industrial policy

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) has urged the provincial government to formulate a 10 years long industrial policy and announce special incentives for business and trade growth in the province.

SCCI leadership sought KP government intervention to resolve issues being faced by the traders community, which are mostly associated with federal departments. The chamber emphasized the need for representation of relevant businesspeople in various boards of the provincial government departments. It also asserted the proactive role of KPBOIT and KPZDMEC in business and industrial growth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These demands were made by Junaid Altaf, president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry while speaking during visit of a delegation of provincial ministers led by former Speak-

er National Assembly Asad Qaiser here at the chamber house. Provincial Ministers including Mina Khan Afridi, Faisal Khan Tarakai, Aqul Khan and former provincial minister Shaikat Ali Yousafzai, former city nazim Zahid Nadeem and others were among the delegation. SCCI senior vice president Muhammad Nadeem, vice president Sabir Ahmad Bangash, Businessman Forum leader and former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, the chamber's former presidents Haji Muhammad Afzal, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Hasnain Khursid, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Fazal Moqem Khan, and IAP President Ayub Zakori, member of the SCCI's executive committee Sajjad Zaheer, Abbas Fuad Azeem, Shamsur Rahim, Saifullah Khan, Aftab Iqbal and Adnan Nasir, WCCIP President Qurtul Ain, SVP Zarea Intiaz and VP Zareen Akhtar, Sohail Javed, Tajir Insaf Presi-

dent Shahid Khan, and traders and industrialists were present at a large number on the occasion. On the occasion, SCCI former president, senior members and Senator Mohsin Aziz also shared his views and proposals through a video message. MS Sadaf Khalid Khan, Director of Silk Road Enterprises and Global Coordinator UK for the Silk Route Festival, also joined the meeting on the video link from London and urged KP businessmen to participate in the upcoming Silk Festival 2026 in Islamabad. We want public-private partnership. KP has vast potential to attract investment in various sectors, says Junaid Altaf. He said KP is at a tall end and its businessmen were being faced with a host of challenges and issues. He said the chamber has intended to hold a grand consultation session on Economic Growth of KPK in the provincial assembly.—APP

## KP plans partial suspension of mobile services on shura

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has finalized a comprehensive security plan for the observance of Ashura (9th and 10th Muharram) across the province and as part of the security measures, mobile phone services will be partially suspended in selected areas. According to security officials on Monday, mobile phone services will be completely suspended in some areas, while partial restrictions will be imposed in other sensitive locations. The measures are aimed at maintaining law and order and preventing any untoward incident during the religious observances. The authorities have declared a total of 400 Imambargahs across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as sensitive or highly sensitive. In addition, 286 processions have been categorized as highly sensitive, while 190 processions have been placed in the sensitive category. Strict security arrangements are being implemented in Peshawar for Ashura. Mobile phone services will face partial suspension and the Cantonment area will be completely sealed during the central procession on the 9th of Muharram. On the 10th of Muharram, enhanced security checkpoints and special security cordons will be established at all entry and exit points of the city. Walk-through gates will be installed around processions and Imambargahs, while CCTV cameras will be used for continuous monitoring. Security forces will also conduct search operations in various areas. Sources said that some markets in Peshawar's inner city may be closed in phases. Monitoring of hotels and residential facilities in sensitive areas will be intensified and temporary closures of certain locations are also under consideration. The provincial government has established a central control room at the Civil Secretariat to monitor security arrangements during Ashura. Monitoring and coordination centers have also been activated in the offices of Deputy Commissioners across all districts of the province.—DNA

## PTI has nothing to show in terms of performance: Azma

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bukhari on Monday said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had nothing to show the public in terms of performance. She said this while talking to the media outside the Punjab Assembly alongside Punjab Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani, said a press release issued here. She said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government allocated only Rs 100,000 per project for 189 projects and merely Rs 10,000 per project for 177 projects in its budget, raising serious questions about its commitment to development. Azma Bukhari said, "Despite grand claims of change, people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain deprived of basic facilities, and in some areas, residents are still forced to cross rivers using traditional carriers." She further stated that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir had demonstrated that the impossible can be made possible, and today the entire world and international media acknowledged their leadership and role. Referring to recent global developments, she expressed hope that recent agreements would prove lasting and would contribute to peace and

stability not only in the region but throughout the world. The minister said, "The Punjab Assembly is currently holding budget sessions, which are an important stage in public service and development planning." She regretted that instead of engaging in meaningful debate on the budget, the opposition had limited itself to social media propaganda and political sloganeering. Azma Bukhari said that the incumbent government had taken significant initiatives in areas such as agriculture, health, education, livestock and other sectors, which were bringing visible improvements for the public. She added that the Punjab government's "Suthra Punjab Program," educational scholarships, and laptop schemes were benefiting citizens across the province without discrimination. Speaking on the occasion, Punjab Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said that under the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, record investments and practical measures had been undertaken in the agriculture and livestock sectors. He stated that the agriculture and livestock budget, which stood at Rs 42 billion in 2021-22, had increased to Rs 116 billion in the current

fiscal year. Furthermore, 98% of the agricultural budget and 93% of livestock funds were utilized in the previous fiscal year. He said that Rs 8 billion was allocated for the restoration of 700,000 acres of flood-affected land, while wheat farmers received financial assistance worth Rs 15 billion. A total of 30,000 Green Tractors had already been distributed under subsidy programs, and another 20,000 tractors would be provided. Under the Kisan Card program, interest-free loans worth Rs 250 billion had been issued, and an additional Rs 200 billion would be provided this year. To combat smog, 5,000 Super Seeders were distributed, resulting in a reported 70% reduction in smog-related impacts. He said, "Another 20,000 Super Seeders are planned for distribution next year." The government established four Agri Malls, through which agricultural products worth Rs 4 billion were sold, and ten more Agri Malls were currently being established. In the livestock sector, 400,000 animals were fattened, 10,000 animals were distributed among widowed women, and artificial insemination was carried out for 800,000 animals, he said and added, additionally, citrus exports worth \$53 million were recorded last year.—DNA

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Plot No. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

**London**  
Plot No. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438,

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

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

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

## Enquiry

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



## Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....5611116
- Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



## Departments

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



## Islamabad Metropolitan

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

## Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Governor Kundi highlights KP's vast investment potential

International Tourism Summit to Showcase Pakistan's Positive Image; Business Leaders Stress Public-Private Partnership and Women's Economic Empowerment



## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a province rich in natural resources, tourism potential, agriculture, minerals, hydropower, and

vast oil and gas reserves, offering immense opportunities for both local and foreign investors. He emphasized the importance of restoring border routes and trade corridors, stating that Pakistan should secure better access to the Central Asian states in order to further enhance business, trade, and economic activities. He expressed these views dur-

ing a meeting with a high-level delegation of the United Business Group (UBG) at his residence in Islamabad. The delegation included ICCI Founder Group Chairman Tariq Sadiq, UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of Talagang Chamber of Com-

merce Malik Shabbir Awan, ICCI Executive Member Shamaila Siddiqui, President of Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce Samina Fazel, Group Leader of Rawalpindi Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries Shahid Ghafoor Paracha, Imtiaz Abbasi former executive member icci and other prominent business representatives.

# HEC's orientation highlights steps to enhance ORICs performance

## DNA

ISLAMABAD/PESHAWAR: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan organised an orientation session entitled "Importance of Establishing an ORIC and Measures to Enhance ORIC Performance and Ranking" for universities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at HEC Regional Centre Peshawar. The session was attended by representatives of public and private sector higher education institutions, including Directors Offices of Research, Innovation and Commer-

cialisation (ORICs), Directors Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs), and other relevant university officials. In his opening remarks, Deputy Director (HEC Regional Centre) Mr. Shaif Ur Rahman highlighted the pivotal role of ORICs in strengthening the research ecosystem of universities, promoting innovation, facilitating industry engagement, and enhancing the overall quality and performance of higher education institutions. He underscored HEC's continued commitment to supporting universities in establishing and strengthening ORICs as key drivers

of institutional development and research excellence. The technical session was conducted by Assistant Director (Research and Innovation Division) HEC Mr. Ahmad Gulzar Kiyani. The participants were briefed on the strategic importance of ORICs in fostering a culture of research, innovation, commercialisation, and industry-academia collaboration within universities. The session provided a comprehensive overview of the HEC ORIC Policy 2021, ORIC recognition framework, performance evaluation mechanisms, and the role of ORICs in supporting

# Over 15,000 personnel deployed for Muharram security

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Sunday said more than 15,000 police officers and personnel had been deployed to secure 177 processions and 929 Majalis being held across the federal capital during Muharram-ul-Haram. An official told APP that the IGP Rizvi visited Imambargah Asna Ashri, where he reviewed security arrangements, inspected the route of the main procession and met with the Imambargah administration. IGP Rizvi was briefed on security measures put in place for Muharram processions and Majalis and directed officers to ensure strict implementation of the security plan. Rizvi said foolproof security arrangements had been made for the central procession and all other religious gatherings being held across Islamabad. He said 10 field vigilance teams, working under the supervision of senior police officers, had been tasked with monitoring and inspecting security arrangements throughout Muharram-ul-Haram. The IGP said special checking points had been established in areas where processions and Majalis were being held, while dedicated patrolling units had been deployed across the district. Search operations were also continuing as part of the overall security plan.—APP

# Tarar urges opp to participate in legislative process

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday urged opposition lawmakers to actively participate in parliamentary committees and the legislative process instead of merely criticizing the government. Speaking in the National Assembly, he said representatives of the Ministry of Law and Justice had repeatedly requested members to attend meetings, but some

lawmakers had chosen not to participate. Tarar also informed the House that the government had introduced a comprehensive package of around 100 amendments to criminal laws, which is currently under consideration by the relevant standing committee. He urged lawmakers to engage in committee deliberations and contribute to legislative reforms. He said the government was still awaiting feedback from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa govern-

ment on the proposed amendments, which he termed non-political in nature. He stressed that strengthening the rule of law requires practical participation in legislative work rather than speeches alone. Referring to judicial matters, the minister said court proceedings and convictions are decided by the judiciary and not by the government, adding that anyone with objections to convictions could seek relief through the appellate process.

# Bangladeshi delegation concludes Pakistan visit

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level academic delegation from Bangladesh successfully concluded its week-long visit to Pakistan, aimed at strengthening academic cooperation and fostering greater collaboration between higher education institutions of the two countries. During the concluding phase of the visit, the delegation visited Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar; Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Peshawar; the University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Peshawar; and the Institute of Management Sciences (IMSciences), Peshawar. The delegation also visited the National University of Technology (NUTECH), Islamabad, where the delegates held detailed discussions with university leadership and faculty members on avenues for academic partnership. On the final day of the visit, the delegation visited Kohsar University Murree and later travelled to Nathia Gali, where they experienced the natural beauty of Pakistan.

Earlier, during the visit, the delegates visited Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences (LUMHS), Jamshoro; Iqra University, Karachi; NED University of Engineering & Technology; the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi; and the HEJ International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), Karachi. The delegation also held interaction with Minister of State, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajaha Qamar at HEC, in addition to its meetings with Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Additional Secretary Asia Pacific, Syed Asad Ali Gillani. The delegates also explored HEC and its functions during its visit to the HEC Secretariat, where they call on Chairman HEC Dr. Niaz Ahmed Akhtar and other senior HEC officers. The visit featured extensive academic engagements and interactive sessions with university administrators, faculty members, and researchers. Discussions focused on promoting faculty exchange initiatives, student mobility programmes, semester exchange opportunities, bilateral scholarships for students of both countries.

## ITP issues traffic plan

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) issued a traffic management plan for the 6th Muharram procession in Sector I-9 and advised commuters to use alternate routes to avoid inconvenience. An ITP official told APP on Monday that the procession would commence from the residence of Raja Bashir, House No. 184, Street No. 24, Sector I-9/1 and proceed through Streets 24 to 27 and Street No. 22 before concluding at Imambargah Jafria, I-9/1. The official said traffic diversions would remain in place along the procession route to ensure the smooth movement of mourners and effective security arrangements. According to the traffic plan, traffic would be diverted at the Service Road U-turn and near Street No. 18 Service Road adjacent to the Imambargah during the procession. Residents of I-9 travelling towards Rawalpindi, Faizabad, Pirwadhai and Katarian have been advised to use IJP Road as an alternate route.—APP

## Life imprisonment upheld in double murder of parents

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has upheld the life imprisonment sentence awarded to convict Taimoor Sattar in the double murder case of his parents and ruled that the two life sentences shall run consecutively rather than concurrently. According to the approved detailed judgment issued for reporting purposes, a three-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Ishaq Ibrahim dismissed Jail Petition No. 575 of 2018 and declined leave to appeal against the judgment of the Lahore High Court. The judgment stated that on February 10, 2010, the convict murdered his father, Abdul Sattar, and mother, Shamim Sattar, inside their home with a hammer after becoming upset over their refusal to transfer property in his name. The trial court had awarded him two death sentences, which were later converted into life imprisonment by the Lahore High Court. The Supreme Court observed that the prosecution had successfully established its case through strong circumstantial evidence.—APP

# CENTRELINE

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## Briefs

## ANF arrests 12 suspects

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) conducted nine operations across the country on Monday and arrested 12 suspects, including two women, and seized 102.848 kilograms(kgs) of narcotics valued at more than Rs 11.1 million. According to an ANF spokesperson, in an international drug interdiction operation, ANF officials recovered 12.3 kg of methamphetamine, commonly known as ice, soaked into 10 jackets from a parcel destined for Australia at a courier office located at Jinnah International Airport. In a separate operation at Lahore Airport, authorities recovered 70 capsules containing 509 grams of ice and 13 capsules containing 111 grams of heroin from the stomach of a passenger travelling to Qatar. At Jinnah International Airport, ANF personnel also seized 1 kg of hashish concealed in a crate of mangoes packed in the luggage of a passenger bound for Qatar. During domestic operations, ANF recovered 60 kg of hashish from a motorcyclist and a house near Gondlanwala Road in Gujranwala and arrested three suspects, including a woman.—APP

## Police foil contract killing plot

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Police have foiled an alleged contract killing plot and arrested four suspects who had travelled from another province to target a citizen, a police spokesman said on Monday. According to the spokesman, the suspects were members of a hired killer gang that had allegedly been promised Rs 5 million to kidnap and kill a citizen. Police recovered weapons, Rs 4 million believed to be part of the contract money, and two vehicles used by the suspects during the operation. The spokesman said, Naseerabad Police intercepted a suspicious vehicle during routine checking. Upon search, officers recovered weapons and discovered that the vehicle was carrying a fake number plate. During interrogation, the detained suspect disclosed that he was part of a hired killer gang and had arrived in Rawalpindi with three accomplices to carry out the planned crime. Acting on the information, police arrested the three remaining suspects and seized the weapons and vehicle allegedly used by the gang. Investigators said the suspects revealed that a resident of Haripur in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had hired them to target a citizen in Rawalpindi. According to the investigation, the gang had been offered Rs 2 million for carrying out the killing in Rawalpindi and Rs5 million if the intended victim was kidnapped and taken to Haripur before being killed.—APP

## FDE Summer sports camp continue at Sports Complex

ISLAMABAD: Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), under the visionary leadership and direction of the Director General FDE, has successfully organized a Summer Sports Camp 2026 here at the Pakistan Sports Complex. The initiative aims to promote physical fitness, healthy lifestyles, sportsmanship, and talent development among students of Federal Government educational institutions. The camp has brought together enthusiastic boys and girls from all six educational sectors of FDE, providing them with a unique opportunity to receive professional training in six sporting disciplines: Badminton, Hockey, Volleyball, Table Tennis, Cycling, and Chess. Students are actively participating in structured training sessions designed to enhance their technical skills, teamwork, discipline, and competitive spirit. A key highlight of the camp is the availability of international-level coaching and training facilities at various venues within the Pakistan Sports Complex. Experienced coaches and sports professionals are imparting modern techniques and practical knowledge, enabling young athletes to improve their performance and develop confidence in their respective games. The Summer Sports Camp reflects FDE's strong commitment to the holistic development of students by encouraging participation in extracurricular and sporting activities.—APP

## Saeed calls for following Quran teaching for success

Addressing a gathering at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here on Monday, he observed that the Holy Qur'an provides a complete framework for both individual and societal success

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan cricket star and renowned Islamic motivational speaker Saeed Anwar has that lasting success can only be achieved through obedience to Allah Almighty and adherence to the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Addressing a gathering at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here on Monday, he observed that the Holy Qur'an provides a complete framework for both individual and societal success. He said that believers who dedicate themselves to the service of Allah, uphold moral values, and work for the betterment of society are blessed with peace, prosperity, and divine guidance. Urging Muslims to seek forgiveness and reform their conduct, he stressed the importance of strengthening one's relationship with Allah through prayer, remembrance, and practical adherence to Islamic teachings. He also highlighted the significance of supporting charitable initiatives, paying Zakat, promoting virtue, and discouraging harmful practices as essential pillars of a healthy and prosperous society. In his welcome address, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood appreciated Saeed Anwar's efforts in promoting Islamic awareness and positive social values. He expressed confidence that such enlightening interactions would inspire individuals to contribute towards national unity, ethical



conduct, and collective progress. Reaffirming the Chamber's commitment to social welfare and community development, he said ICCI would continue to support initiatives aimed at building a stronger, more responsible, and resilient Pakistan. In his concluding remarks, Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub thanked the chief guest for delivering an inspiring address and enriching the audience with valuable religious insights. He reaffirmed ICCI's

resolve to continue organizing such meaningful events in the future. The event was attended by ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, executive members including Abdul Aziz Malik, Waseem Chaudhry, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Ishaq Sial, Aqeel Malik, Najeeb Ellahi Malik, Rohail Anwar Butt, Raja Naveed Satti, former SVPs Naveed Malik, Khalid Chaudhry, Convener ICCI Standing Committee on Religious Affairs Tariq Nusrat Wani business leaders, and

a large number of representatives from the Islamabad business community. Concluding his address, Saeed Anwar prayed for Pakistan's peace, unity, and prosperity, expressing hope that the nation would achieve lasting progress through adherence to Islamic principles and sincere devotion to Allah Almighty. Former Senior Vice President Mehmood Ahmed Warrich performed the duties of Stage Secretary.

Dismantling 'Dunki' death traps  
FIA crackdown cuts illegal migration by 47%

ISLAMABAD: Driven by the pursuit of better economic opportunities, thousands of Pakistani citizens fall prey every year to organized criminal networks operating hazardous, unauthorized international land and sea routes. Popularly known as the "Dunki" route, this journey promises a quick gateway to Europe but routinely delivers betrayal, financial bankruptcy, captivity, and catastrophic loss of life. The gruesome realities of illegal migration were brought to the forefront yet again in 2026, following two major government-facilitated operations that successfully repatriated over 200 Pakistani nationals from Libya. According to official data, in February, a joint mission by the Embassy of Pakistan and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) rescued 30 citizens from the Tajoura Detention Centre in Tripoli. This was followed by a large-scale repatriation operation in late May, which brought back 177 Pakistanis from detention facilities in Benghazi and Tripoli via a special flight from Mitiga International Airport. Most of these returnees were intercepted by Libyan authorities before taking unseaworthy, dangerously overcrowded boats across the central Mediterranean. The physical and psychological price exacted by human trafficking rings is immense. Survivors recount harrowing details of being sold to local Libyan gangs, facing brutal extortion, starvation, electric shocks, and severe physical abuse in makeshift, private detention spaces. The haunting memory of the 2023 Adriana shipwreck near Greece—which claimed the lives of 262 Pakistanis—and subsequent Mediterranean tragedies in 2025 that cost 83 more lives, serve as stark reminders that these shortcuts are fundamentally death traps. Beyond the physical trauma, families are stripped of their lifespans of savings. Human smuggling agents charge astronomical sums ranging between PKR 3 million to PKR 6 million per person. Desperate families finance these sums by selling ancestral lands, taking high-interest loans, or emptying household assets. When a "Dunki" attempt fails or is intercepted, the immediate financial consequence is total bankruptcy. Trafficking mafias often call families from

abroad, inflicting psychological torture through video clips of abuse to extract hundreds of thousands more in ransom. Survivors do not return to a blank slate; they return to a life buried under crippling, generational debt. Recognizing the gravity of transnational organized crime, the Government of Pakistan, primarily through the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), has launched extensive institutional reforms. Backed by the National Action Plan to Counter the Smuggling of Migrants (2026-2030), the state has fortified its borders and exit points. The FIA has introduced Second Line Control and AI-backed biometric profiling systems at major national airports, which successfully resulted in offloading nearly 40,000 suspicious travelers in 2025 alone. To date, ten official western border crossing points have been notified, alongside six overseas Link Offices to coordinate operations across borders. These stringent measures yielded a major breakthrough: a 47% decline in illegal migration attempts to Europe in 2025. Over the course of that year, the FIA arrested approximately 1,770 human smugglers and increased its field interceptions from 628 to 2,662. The European Union has formally acknowledged Pakistan's structural response as "exemplary," committing further bilateral funding to expand regional interception protocols. To care for those arriving home, dedicated Victim Reception Centres—such as the expansive facility at Taftan, which handled over 13,000 returnees—and specialized reception desks at airports in Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar have been fully equipped to provide psychological counseling, medical support, and initial legal processing. State institutions emphasize that the solution to economic hardship lies in self-improvement, not exploitation. Thousands of Pakistanis successfully secure futures abroad every year through legal employment networks and skilled migration frameworks. The real ticket out of poverty is vocational training and certified skill sets—learning high-demand professions such as IT, engineering, nursing, and technical crafts.—DNA

## Petroleum imports up by 2.2% to \$14.953 b

On a month-on-month basis, the petroleum imports into the country decreased by 36.78 percent during May 2026, as compared to the imports of \$2,271,311 million in April 2025, according to the data

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group witnessed an increase of 2.23 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the corresponding months of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-May (2025-26) stood at \$14,953.227 million against the imports of \$14,631.808 million during the same months of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products increased by 2.86 percent, from \$5,456.150 million last year to \$5,612.274 million during the period under review year. Likewise, the imports of Petroleum Crude increased by 27.29 percent from \$ 4,981,299 million last year to \$6,340,733 million while the import of Liquefied

Petroleum Gas (LPG) went up by 0.10 per cent in the first eleven months and stood at \$ 983.698 million as compared to \$ 982.753 million in the corresponding period in 2024-25. On the other hand, the import of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) decreased by 37.21 percent from \$3,211.257 million to \$2,016.240 million. The imports of all other petroleum group products went down by 19.19 percent and were recorded at \$0.282 million as against \$0.349 million. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed an increase of 7.84 percent and went up to \$ 1,435.930 million during the month of May 2026 as compared to imports of \$1,331,592 million in May 2025. On a month-on-month basis, the petroleum imports into the country decreased by 36.78 percent during May 2026, as compared to the imports of \$2,271,311 million in April 2025, according to the data.

## Syedaal, Sanaullah discuss political situation in Balochistan

The meeting concluded with a resolve to continue efforts for addressing public issues and advancing socio-economic development in the province

ISLAMABAD, Jun 22 (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan and National Party leader, former senator and former MNA Sanaullah Baloch on Monday discussed the political situation, development priorities and public welfare issues in Balochistan. According to a news release, the two leaders exchanged views on the challenges facing the province and stressed the need for coordinated efforts to ensure sustainable development, economic progress and political stability. They also reviewed measures to improve governance, strengthen democratic institutions and address public concerns. Speaking on the occasion, Syedaal Khan said the development and prosperity of Balochistan required collective efforts and a shared commitment from all stakeholders. He said peace, political harmony and socio-economic uplift were essential to real-

ize the province's potential and improve living standards. Sanaullah Baloch appreciated the role of the Deputy Chairman Senate in highlighting issues of Balochistan at parliamentary forums and emphasized continued dialogue and co-operation among political leaders to address public concerns and promote sustainable development. Both leaders agreed that strengthening democratic values, promoting national cohesion and ensuring equitable development were key to overcoming the province's challenges. They reaffirmed their commitment to working for peace, progress and prosperity in Balochistan and improving the well-being of its people. The meeting concluded with a resolve to continue efforts for addressing public issues and advancing socio-economic development in the province.

## Punjab launches electric shuttle service

ATTOCK: An electric shuttle service has been launched at the District Jail, Attock as part of the Punjab government's prison reform programme aimed at improving facilities for visitors and making prison services more accessible. The initiative was introduced under the directives of Punjab Home Secretary, Dr. Ahmad Javed Qazi and Inspector General, Prisons, Punjab, Mian Salik Jalal, the officials sources said. Assistant Commissioner, Attock, Arif Mahmood Qureshi formally inaugurated the service, which was established with the support of the Punjab Prisons Foundation. The project is part of wider efforts to modernize prison infrastructure and enhance public convenience across correctional facilities in Punjab. The electric shuttle will transport visitors between the jail's main entrance and the visitors' shed, providing a safer and more comfortable means of travel within the prison premises. The sources said the service was expected to particularly benefit elderly visitors, women, persons with disabilities, and families travelling from distant areas. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Superintendent District Jail Attock, Imran Naveed Ashraf appreciated the provincial authorities for supporting the project, describing it as a practical example of the government's people-focused prison reform agenda.—APP

## IRSA releases 274,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 274,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 219,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1441.37 feet, which was 41.37 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 120,700 cusecs and 147,900 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1170.45 feet, which was 120.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 26,800 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs, respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 204,300, 171,000, 115,100, and 63,700 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 41,100 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 7,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 07 Issue:13

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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## The US-Iran agreement is a first step

MOHAMED A. EL-ERIAN

THE memorandum of understanding signed by the US and Iran last week is an important step forward. After months of open hostilities that have exacted a heavy toll – in both lives and livelihoods – and inflicted significant economic damage worldwide, the memorandum provides a much-needed foundation for diplomacy that could reverse the stagflationary spillovers of the war. Since the war has complicated an already tricky outlook for most countries and companies, the announcement is understandably being celebrated. But as critical as it is, it is only a first step. A true return to global economic stability still depends on whether all the parties involved can move from a framework deal to a lasting agreement. Of course, this uncertainty has not stopped global financial markets from reacting as though normal economic activity had already been restored. Expectations for a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and a resumption of full-scale energy exports to international markets have triggered a sharp drop in global oil prices; and that, in turn, has boosted equity markets globally, as well as lowering borrowing costs. Moreover, in the initial hours after the agreement's announcement, portions of the bond market revised down their assumptions about how aggressively central banks would need to hike interest rates, having inferred that the memorandum could lead to an easing of supply-side constraints fueling inflation. But lasting relief for the global economy will depend on how the US and Iran navigate the profound operational complexities that their agreement entails. For economists and a substantial segment of financial markets, it is too early to declare "all clear." The next few weeks will be dominated by a step-by-step evaluation of whether renewed diplomacy can survive contact with structural realities. Specifically, further clarity is needed on four issues. First, can technical teams from both the US and Iran sort through what US Vice President J.D. Vance has described as "a lot" of yet-to-be-negotiated details? They must not only resolve current outstanding issues but also navigate the inevitable transition



from the memorandum of understanding to constructive talks on the fundamental issues that caused the war – not least Iran's nuclear program and the broader issue of regional security. The global economy remains in a state of suspended hope and not yet on a path toward definitive recovery. Second, international and regional actors' reaction could either solidify or sabotage the fragile peace. On one side are America's European and Middle East allies, who are eager to end the energy supply shock. They are hoping for a broader multilateral effort to ensure an enduring peace. But then there is Israel, which has continued to strike targets in Lebanon and has already signaled its refusal to withdraw from the territory it has held since the start of the war. Third, the speed of normalization will be critical for restoring global economic health. Reopening a chokepoint like the Strait of Hormuz is not as simple as flipping a switch. Adjusting shipping insurance rates, carrying out de-mining operations and ramping up energy production all takes time. Lastly, policymakers must carefully gauge the extent to which the war has left "economic scarring," on the one hand, and built additional resilience on the other. The ceasefire does not automatically reverse adverse effects such as the hit to global costs, some of which have yet to materialize (particularly in the food sector). But these shocks must be weighed against the resilience-building measures that countries and companies were forced to pursue – from establishing alternative energy supply chains that bypass current chokepoints to placing a heavier logistical emphasis on precautionary inventories. Most economists will refrain from declaring "all clear" as each of these issues could derail or prolong the process. A sense of caution will initially dominate policymakers' approach, as will become clear in the commentary surrounding major central banks' upcoming policy meetings. That includes the US Federal Reserve. It will welcome the ceasefire but it is unlikely simply to assume that a preliminary framework agreement constitutes a complete, immediate reversion of the war's adverse impact on inflation. The Fed and other central banks will wait for tangible proof that the details are sorted out, that the Strait of Hormuz will remain open, and that production and shipping will in fact be restored. While the memorandum of understanding is certainly good news, it is not definitive. The path from a statement of diplomatic intent to a fully restored, noninflationary energy supply chain is subject to political, technical and physical risks. Indeed, the coming weeks will be about how quickly the US and Iran can overcome challenges to implementation. Until then, the global economy remains in a state of suspended hope and not yet on a path toward definitive recovery.

## At the edge: How arbitrary fuel pricing threatens Pakistan's supply Chain

The companies that keep Pakistan supplied are being pushed toward insolvency by overnight changes to how fuel is priced. If they tip over, the disruption will not stay inside the industry. It will reach every pump, and every doorstep

Faraz Ahmed

For months, the industry's representations carried the language of concern. They now carry the language of alarm. The most recent communication to the Federal Minister for Energy did not warn of a risk of damage; it described something closer to a certainty: bankruptcy for the weakest participants and the flight of the investors who remain, if the present course holds. That is an extraordinary thing to say about a sector that, only weeks earlier, had kept the country supplied through a regional conflict, a scare over the Strait of Hormuz

PAKISTAN'S downstream petroleum sector is closer to the edge than most people realise. The refineries that process crude and the oil marketing companies (OMCs) that move fuel to every district are being pushed toward insolvency, not by competition or mismanagement, but by a pricing regime that changes without warning and without consultation. The relief motorists feel at the pump is genuine. The mechanism delivering it is quietly hollowing out the businesses that make supply possible. And if those businesses fail, the consequences will not be confined to their balance sheets. From concern to alarm. For months, the industry's representations carried the language of concern. They now carry the language of alarm. The most recent communication to the Federal Minister for Energy did not warn of a risk of damage; it described something closer to a certainty: bankruptcy for the weakest participants and the flight of the investors who remain, if the present course holds. That is an extraordinary thing to say about a sector that, only weeks earlier, had kept the country supplied through a regional conflict, a scare over the Strait of Hormuz, and some of the most violent price swings in living memory. The pricing whiplas at the root of the crisis is arbitrary pricing. Pakistan's fuel prices are set through a regulated formula administered by OGRA and notified by the government. Since April 2026, that formula has been changed again and again, and without consultation: a switch between five-day and fortnightly averages, the suspension of cost recovery, and a move to calendar year-to-date averages for premiums and duties. Each change is presented as a technical adjustment. Together they are anything but. One recent revision alone stripped roughly Rs. 23.83 per litre from the ex-refinery benchmark, and an estimated Rs. 104 billion was wiped from the value of fuel already sitting in industry tanks. Because cargoes are committed weeks in advance against the prevailing formula, a formula that no longer tracks the cost of importing fuel guarantees that importers recover less than they paid. This is not a market risk the industry signed up for. It is a policy risk imposed on it. A balance sheet running on empty. The damage is cumulative. Around Rs. 66 billion in Price Differential Claims, the money the State owes the industry for selling below cost on its instruction, remains unpaid; only about Rs. 54 billion

has been released, in tranches, against documentation demands that have stretched a two-day settlement promise into a months-long ordeal. The OMC margin has not been revised since September 2023, even as two years of double-digit inflation and rising costs eroded it. Since petroleum products were made sales-tax-exempt in 2024, more than Rs. 86 billion of unadjustable input tax has piled up, at a financing cost of roughly Rs. 7 billion a year. And demand for legitimate, taxed fuel is collapsing under a flood of smuggled product sold far below the notified price, with diesel sales in May 2026 falling to their lowest level in nearly three decades. Each pressure on its own might be survivable. Together, and with no relief in sight, they are not. Companies are now financing the government's price relief with borrowed money at an 11.5 percent policy rate, while they wait to be paid for fuel they have already delivered. The import lifeline, and how it snaps This is where the danger stops being financial and becomes national. Pakistan does not produce most of the fuel it consumes. The bulk of its crude and refined product is imported, procured from international suppliers and global trading houses that extend the industry credit, term contracts and open lines on the expectation of being paid on time. That expectation is the single thread the entire supply chain hangs from. An industry stripped of liquidity cannot open or retire its letters of credit, cannot meet its payment deadlines, and cannot honour its term commitments. When a buyer defaults, international suppliers do not wait and they do not absorb the loss. They withdraw credit terms, demand cash in advance, suspend deliveries, and invoke the force majeure and default protections written into their contracts. With close to 70 percent of the country's petrol, and a large share of its diesel and crude, arriving by sea, even a short interruption in that flow does not stay on a spreadsheet. It reaches the forecourt, and it reaches it fast. Through the recent crisis, the industry did not look away. Refineries capped the diesel margin, held kerosene at pre-war prices for the armed forces, supplied jet fuel for Hajj operations at pre-war rates, and voluntarily contributed over Rs. 7 billion towards reducing the PDC, while OMCs sustained nationwide supply and carried man-

datory twenty-day strategic stocks under intensifying financial strain. That goodwill is real, but it is not limitless. It cannot stand in indefinitely for the cash the system needs to keep importing. A crisis that will not stay in the boardroom. It is tempting to file all of this under corporate complaint. That would be a mistake. Fuel is the one shortage a population notices within hours, not weeks. A breakdown in supply would not be read by the public as a business failure; it would be read as a failure of the State to keep the country running. And it would arrive at the most sensitive possible moment. Pakistan's civil and military leadership have jointly staked their credibility on economic stabilisation and on attracting fresh investment, not least through the Special Investment Facilitation Council. Foreign investors heading for the exit, and citizens queuing at dry pumps, are precisely the images that would erode the public confidence that effort depends on. Energy security is national security, and a supply shock would land squarely on those who govern, not on the companies that warned of it. None of this requires the government to choose against consumers, and the remedy is far cheaper than the failure. A transparent, consultative pricing framework in place of overnight formula changes; timely and predictable settlement of PDCs; an automatic annual margin review; recognition of legitimate, verified costs; and protection of strategic inventories from arbitrary destruction would steady the sector almost immediately. Beyond that lies the durable answer the industry has urged for years: a phased, transparent move to a market-based, deregulated pricing regime that aligns the consumer's interest with a supply chain that can actually survive. The companies sounding the alarm are the same ones that kept fuel moving through war and volatility without a single day's disruption. They are not threatening to stop. They are warning that, on the present path, the decision may soon be taken out of their hands by suppliers an ocean away. The window to act is narrowing, and unlike an inventory loss, a broken supply chain cannot simply be written back.

## Iran-USA peace deal under siege

Faraz Ahmed



The fate of the emerging peace process may well determine not only the future of U.S.-Iran relations but also the economic stability of the world and the security architecture of the Middle East. The technical negotiations now underway in Switzerland are intended to transform the recently signed Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding into a permanent settlement

THE snow-capped mountains surrounding Switzerland's Bürgenstock Resort provide a picture of serenity. Inside its conference halls, however, some of the most consequential negotiations of the 21st century are unfolding amid extraordinary tension, diplomatic maneuvering, political resistance, and strategic uncertainty. What began as a breakthrough framework between the United States and Iran has now evolved into a global contest between advocates of diplomacy and champions of perpetual confrontation. The fate of the emerging peace process may well determine not only the future of U.S.-Iran relations but also the economic stability of the world and the security architecture of the Middle East. The technical negotiations now underway in Switzerland are intended to transform the recently signed Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding into a permanent settlement. The framework, reached after months of indirect and direct diplomacy and supported by Pakistan and Qatar, established a 60-day roadmap for resolving some of the most dangerous disputes in the region, including nuclear issues, sanctions, frozen assets, regional security, and freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Reports from Switzerland indicate that Vice President JD Vance is leading the American delegation, while Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf represent Iran. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Qatari officials continue to play an active mediating role. Yet even before negotiators could settle into substantive discussions, the process encountered turbulence. President Donald Trump, seeking to reassure domestic critics and maintain pressure on Tehran, warned publicly that military action could resume if Iran violated its commitments or threatened regional stability. Iran reacted sharply, by expressing its displeasure through diplomatic distance and symbolic gestures, reflecting the deep mistrust that continues to define relations between the two countries. Negotiations nevertheless continued, highlighting both the fragility and importance of the diplomatic track. The strongest resistance to the agreement has emerged from hawkish political circles in Washington. Several influential Republican figures have criticized the framework, arguing that it grants Iran economic relief without permanently eliminating what they regard as the core security threats posed by Tehran. Senator Bill Cassidy described the arrangement as a major strategic mistake. Senator Roger Wicker expressed concern that hard-won leverage was being surrendered too quickly. Senator Lindsey Graham

questioned both the substance of the agreement and the broader diplomatic strategy surrounding it. Collectively, these critics argue that sanctions relief, asset unfreezing, and economic normalization provide benefits to Iran before sufficient security guarantees have been secured. Supporters of the framework offer a different perspective. They argue that diplomacy succeeds not through the humiliation of one side but through the creation of incentives that encourage compliance and reduce incentives for conflict. They contend that years of sanctions, pressure campaigns, military operations, and threats have failed to produce a durable solution. If military force could permanently solve the dispute, they argue, the issue would have been resolved long ago. The most dramatic opposition, however, has emerged from Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly emphasized that Israel's strategic objectives differ from those of Washington. Israeli officials continue to insist that any lasting arrangement must permanently eliminate Iran's enrichment capabilities, constrain its missile programs, and weaken its regional network of allied groups. Netanyahu has publicly stated that Israel will continue pursuing its security objectives and will not permit Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. Israeli leaders have also signaled that they intend to maintain military pressure against Hezbollah in Lebanon regardless of broader diplomatic developments. This disagreement reveals a profound strategic divergence between Washington and Jerusalem. The Trump administration increasingly appears focused on preventing a wider regional war, stabilizing energy markets, reopening maritime trade routes, and reducing the economic burdens associated with prolonged military engagement. Israel, by contrast, remains focused on achieving what it views as decisive security outcomes against Iran and its regional allies. The resulting tension has produced one of the most visible policy disagreements between the two allies in recent years. The Lebanon issue has become the most immediate manifestation of this divide. Reports from the negotiations suggest that Tehran has made developments in Lebanon a central issue during the Swiss discussions. Iran argues that regional stability cannot be achieved while military operations continue on multiple fronts. Israel, meanwhile, insists that its campaign against Hezbollah remains essential to its national security. The dispute threatens to complicate implementation of the broader framework and demonstrates how interconnected Middle Eastern conflicts have become. At the center of this dip-

lomatic storm stand Pakistan and Qatar. Their role has evolved from facilitator to guardian of the process itself. Throughout months of negotiations, repeated setbacks, periods of military escalation, and diplomatic breakdowns, both countries continued to maintain channels of communication between adversaries who often appeared incapable of speaking directly to one another. Pakistan, in particular, has emerged as an increasingly significant diplomatic actor. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's direct involvement and the participation of Pakistan's senior leadership underscore Islamabad's determination to secure a peaceful outcome. The mediators now face the difficult challenge of preserving momentum while managing crises generated by regional developments and domestic political pressures. The stakes extend far beyond diplomacy. For the United States, the consequences involve energy prices, inflationary pressures, military expenditures, and broader strategic priorities. For Iran, the negotiations offer a potential pathway toward economic recovery, reconstruction, reintegration into global markets, and relief from years of economic isolation. For Europe, Asia, and energy-importing nations around the world, the stability of the Strait of Hormuz remains a matter of immense importance. Any renewed disruption would reverberate through global supply chains, financial markets, and national economies. The negotiations therefore represent far more than a bilateral dispute. They are a test of whether diplomacy can prevail over entrenched hostility, whether compromise can overcome ideological rigidity, and whether regional powers can choose stability over confrontation. History often remembers the battles that start wars. It pays far less attention to the exhausting negotiations required to end them. Today, in Switzerland, diplomats, mediators, and political leaders are engaged in precisely that difficult task. Their challenge is not merely to sign documents but to create enough confidence, accountability, and mutual interest to sustain peace beyond signatures and ceremonies. The road ahead remains uncertain. Hawks in Washington continue to criticize the agreement. Israel remains skeptical and defiant. Iran remains cautious and distrustful. Yet despite these obstacles, the talks continue. That fact alone offers a measure of hope. If the negotiators can withstand political pressure, regional spoilers, and domestic opposition, they may achieve something far more significant than a temporary truce: the foundation of a new strategic equilibrium in the Middle East. The alternative—a return to escalation, confrontation, and economic disruption—is a prospect neither the region nor the world can afford.

## Briefs

## Iran to allow IAEA inspectors, talks to...

FROM PAGE 01  
The IAEA has repeatedly raised concerns about restricted access to Iranian facilities, and the return of inspectors would represent a tangible step toward transparency. For Washington, the move is seen as a confidence-building measure that could lay the groundwork for more substantive agreements in the future. Vance's remarks in Bern emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum. "We view this as great progress, but we also recognize that much work remains," he said, adding that technical experts from both countries will continue to meet to address unresolved issues. The vice president framed the talks as part of a broader diplomatic push to reduce tensions and prevent further escalation in the region.

## UK to pick seventh leader....

FROM PAGE 01  
skills, could transform the fortunes of a party that has lost support under Starmer, whose popularity ratings have sunk to the lowest for any British leader. Starmer thanked his colleagues for their support, his voice cracking with emotion as he also paid tribute to his wife and children. The pound and British government bonds were steady in the immediate aftermath of Starmer's announcement, which investors had widely expected. Despite the attempt at a smooth handover, the change is not without risk. Beyond saying that the country needs fundamental change and to bring down the cost of living, Burnham has yet to make clear his approach to foreign affairs, the economy and defence. Like Starmer, he could find he has little room to manoeuvre, hemmed in by bond market investors opposed to any additional borrowing, and confronted by an angry electorate which believes the country is not working properly.

## PPP's Amjad elected GB CM

FROM PAGE 01  
first session of the sixth assembly convened in Gilgit. These included 21 lawmakers elected on general seats, six women members on reserved seats and three technocrats. The results for three general constituencies remain pending due to ongoing legal and electoral proceedings. The session was subsequently adjourned until 3pm. The assembly session was summoned for 9am on Monday for swearing in the newly elected representatives, and for the speaker and deputy speaker elections. Following the June 7 election, the PPP has won 13 seats, the PML-N nine, the Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party (IPP) six, and Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) and a PTL-backed independent one each.

## Pakistan to continue playing...

FROM PAGE 01  
He also expressed thanks for "all brotherly and friendly countries for their valuable support in advancing this historic process," particularly Qatar. The premier thanked Qatar for its "critical support" in creating the necessary conditions for the negotiations to move forward. "A word of thanks to the Swiss Government for their facilitation in hosting these talks," PM Shehbaz said. He also paid a "special tribute" to Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir. PM Shehbaz said that CDF Munir's "uniting efforts" ensured the success of the talks. "His dedication, commitment and perseverance are indeed commendable without which there would have been no progress," the premier remarked.



ISLAMABAD: State Minister Barrister Aqeel Malik, Ambassador of Austria Mr. Wolfgang Oliver Kutschera, US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A. Baker, Ambassador of Jordan Dr. Maen Khreasat, hold a football during the Argentina-Austria match. The Austrian ambassador hosted the gathering at his residence, arranging a big screen for the live broadcast. - DNA

# Salah inspires Egypt to beat New Zealand 3-1 for historic World Cup win

## Egypt, who drew 1-1 with Belgium in their opener, move top of group with four points from two matches

DNA

NEW YORK: Mohamed Salah inspired Egypt to their first-ever World Cup win as they came from a goal down to beat New Zealand 3-1 with a brilliant second-half display on Sunday, moving top of Group G and boosting their hopes of reaching the knockout stage. After a relatively quiet first half that saw them go in behind at the break, Egypt and Salah turned up the heat in the second period as the 34-year-old winger showed he is still capable of conjuring magic from his boots. "It's a great achievement for all the players. It's a great win. It's a great vibe. The next game is very important," Salah said as he took the plaudits amongst his teammates. Egypt, who drew 1-1 with Belgium in their opener, moved top of the group with four points from two matches. The All Whites,

held 2-2 by Iran in their opener, are bottom with one point. Belgium and the Iranians have two points after their 0-0 draw. New Zealand's first-half gameplan was as simple as it was effective, kicking long when they needed to and keeping possession when they could, and defender Finn Surman broke the deadlock from a corner, losing marker Ahmed Fatouh before steering a powerful header into the net. Though Callum McCowatt had a glancing header tipped over the bar early on for New Zealand, Egypt piled on the pressure after the break and they levelled through Mostafa Zico, who headed home Mohamed Hany's cross from the right in the 58th minute. Salah then finally gave the crowd what they wanted nine minutes later, breaking forward down the right and playing a one-two with Zico before slotting the ball into the far corner. Salah almost scored his second in the 81st minute, cutting in from

the right and firing a deflected shot over, but he notched an assist from the resulting corner as substitute Mahmoud Trezeguet dived to head home at the near post. The New Zealanders gave it all they had to reduce the deficit and Hossam Abdelmaguid had to be replaced late on with a suspected concussion, his eye swelling up as he left the field. By the 10th minute of stoppage time, the Egyptian fans were whistling loudly for the referee to end the game. When he did, an ear-splitting roar went up as Salah and company made history with the country's first World Cup win and coach Hossam Hassan lapped the stadium with an Egyptian flag. "My feelings are the same as those of the Egyptian people because I am one of them. I am one of them and I love them - those who came here and those who stayed up back in Egypt watching," Hassan said. "The stadium felt as if we were in Egypt.

The fans made it feel as though we were playing in Egypt, and I told the players, 'We're playing in Egypt.' The stadium was full, like Cairo Stadium." New Zealand, after twice being pegged back by Iran in their 2-2 draw, again let a lead slip, and this time it proved more costly as Salah worked his magic. "I think we contained them well enough, but they have good enough people in the whole side," New Zealand captain Chris Wood told reporters. "You can't just focus on one player, and he (Salah) can pop up with a goal at any time and he showed that." "He's a good player, you have to keep an eye on him, but there's also a lot of other boys in that team that create problems and eventually they scored goals as well." New Zealand round off the group stage against Belgium in Vancouver, while Egypt will meet Iran in their final game with all to play for in the race for a spot in the Round of 32.

## Iran leave note of thanks in LA locker room after draw with Belgium

DNA

INGLEWOOD: Iran left a message in their SoFi Stadium locker room on Sunday thanking Los Angeles for its hospitality during the World Cup and saying they are leaving with dignity after a 0-0 draw with Belgium kept alive their hopes of reaching the knockout stages. Los Angeles hosted both of Iran's Group G matches so far, with the team returning to their base in Tijuana, Mexico between games. Iran have spent the tournament based in Tijuana commuting to the US for their matches because of restrictions surrounding their stay in the country, while a number of Iran's team staff and officials have been banned. US officials have said the squad's travel arrangements would continue to be assessed, while discussions over easing some restrictions have continued. "From the ancient Persia of thousands of years ago to the civilised Iran of today, the spirit of Iran remains alive and steadfast," read the handwritten note, which was released by Iran's football federation. "Thank you Los Angeles for your hospitality. 'We came to Los Angeles with pride, competed with honour, and leave with dignity.' The note also thanked Iranian supporters who gave their "heart, voice and soul" for the team during the two matches and ended with a call for peace, respect and friendship among all nations.

## Cape Verde hold Uruguay to 2-2 draw in Miami thriller

MIAMI: Cape Verde put in another brilliant performance to hold Uruguay to a 2-2 draw in a Group H thriller on Sunday, backing up their goalless draw with Spain in their first ever World Cup match by defying a second footballing powerhouse. The Blue Sharks stunned the world by holding the European champions goalless on Monday but an even bigger upset looked on the cards when Kevin Pina gave the African side the lead in the 21st minute, sparking pandemonium at Miami Stadium. Goals from Maxi Araujo and Agustin Canobbio in the space of six minutes just before the break put Uruguay ahead at halftime but substitute Helio Varela pounced on a defensive mistake to level the scores around the hour mark. - APP

## Pakistan, China expand cooperation in language learning and youth development

BEIJING: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, held here a productive meeting with Li Jin Song, Founder of Tang Chinese Education, at Tang Headquarters to discuss the future roadmap for strengthening educational collaboration between Pakistan and China. The meeting focused on expanding Chinese-language education, enhancing skill development initiatives, and creating greater opportunities for youth empowerment for Pakistani students. According to China Economic Net, both sides discussed innovative ways to equip young people with the linguistic and professional skills they need to thrive in a global economy. During the discussion, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan emphasized the importance of investing in youth through quality education, international partnerships, and capacity-building programs. He highlighted the vision of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme to empower Pakistan's young generation by providing access to world-class educational opportunities, language learning, and market-relevant skills. Li Jin Song reaffirmed Tang Chinese Education's commitment to supporting educational initiatives that promote cultural understanding, language proficiency, and academic excellence among Pakistani students. He expressed confidence that enhanced cooperation would further strengthen the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and China. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to expanding bilateral cooperation in education, skills development, and youth exchange initiatives. They agreed to explore new avenues of collaboration aimed at creating meaningful pathways for Pakistani students and young professionals under this strategic partnership. Speaking on the occasion, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan stated that Pakistan's youth are the country's greatest asset and that strengthening educational and cultural linkages with China will help unlock new opportunities for learning, innovation, and professional growth. The meeting concluded on a highly positive note, reflecting a shared commitment to empowering the next generation and fostering a brighter future through education, innovation, and people-to-people connectivity. - APP

# Ageless Messi has World Cup scoring record

## The Argentina captain was tearful after his first goal, and it later emerged that his father is recovering from an unspecified health issue

LOS ANGELES: Lionel Messi and World Cup holders Argentina face Austria in Dallas on Monday with the Argentine great needing one more goal to rewrite the record books. Messi, who turns 39 on Wednesday, equalled Miroslav Klose's all-time mark of 16 World Cup goals when scoring a hat-trick in the 3-0 opening win over Algeria. The Argentina captain was tearful after his first goal, and it later emerged that his father is recovering from an unspecified health issue. Despite his personal travails and a troubled build-up because of a hamstring injury, Messi's mere presence appears to inspire his teammates. "If anyone thought this group was better off without Leo, today it became clear that Leo is the most important of them all," said midfielder Alexis Mac Allister after the win against Algeria. Argentina can qualify for the next round with a victory and would be assured of finishing top of Group J if Jordan fail to beat Algeria later on Monday. Mbappe's century Another player chasing the all-time World Cup scoring record, Kylian Mbappe, will play his 100th game for France when they meet Iraq in Philadelphia. "There is nothing bigger - one hundred is a historic figure, and to have the chance to reach that tally here at a World Cup means it will be a special match for me," Mbappe told reporters on Sunday. Mbappe, 27, is tied with West Germany legend Gerd Muller on 14 goals after he netted twice in France's opening



3-1 win against Senegal in Group I. France, who were beaten by Argentina on penalties in the last final in 2022, will expect to brush aside the Iraqis to guarantee a ticket to the knockout phase. Norway and their marksman Erling Haaland, who scored twice against Iraq in a 4-1 opening win, will also be guaranteed of going through from Group I if they beat Senegal in New Jersey and France defeat Iraq. Cape Verde magic In Sunday's action, Spain got their campaign back on track with a 4-0 thrashing of Saudi Arabia and debutants Cape Verde conjured another memorable performance to snatch a 2-2 draw with Uruguay. European champions Spain were frustrated in a 0-0 draw with World Cup debutants Cape Verde in their opening game, sparking criticism at home. But against the Saudis, Barcelona starlet Lamine Yamal opened the scoring as he made his first start in two months since recovering from a hamstring problem. Mikel Oyarzabal added two more, before a Hassan Al-Tambakti own goal. Spain coach Luis De la Fuente said his squad had been fueled by the criticism of their opening performance. "When someone questions your work, it is only human that anyone with courage and pride reacts to prove people wrong," said De la Fuente. The win put Spain top of Group H with four points after two matches. Cape Verde grabbed another point in an entertaining draw with Uruguay in Miami. - APP

## Pezeshkian to visit Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01

over Lebanon and the Strait of Hormuz. A joint statement from mediating nations Pakistan and Qatar said the US and Iran agreed to a roadmap towards a final deal within 60 days. Technical talks will continue for the rest of the week in the Qatari-owned Swiss mountain resort of Buergerstock, according to the statement, which was released by the Qatari foreign ministry. They also agreed on a mechanism to end fighting in Lebanon between US ally Israel and Iran-aligned Hezbollah, and opened a communications line to help ensure safe passage for commercial ships through the strait, a vital global oil supply route. The parties agreed to a mechanism to end the fighting in Lebanon and opened a communications line to help ensure safe passages for commercial ships through the contested strait, the statement said.

## Ashura holidays announced

FROM PAGE 01

but no newspapers will be published on Friday. Ashura, observed on the 9th and 10th of Muharram, holds deep religious significance for Muslims worldwide, particularly in Pakistan where processions, gatherings, and commemorations are organized to honor the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions in Karbala. Authorities typically announce holidays to facilitate participation in religious events and to ensure security arrangements during large public gatherings. The two-day closure is expected to affect routine business and administrative operations, with banks, schools, and offices remaining shut. Transport authorities have also indicated that special traffic plans will be implemented to manage processions in major cities, while law enforcement agencies will deploy additional personnel to maintain peace and order.

## 5.4-magnitude earthquake..

FROM PAGE 01

Swabi and Dera Ismail Khan and its adjoining areas. Tremors were also felt in Tank city and its suburbs, Upper South Waziristan, Lower South Waziristan including various areas of Wana. In Punjab, residents of Multan city and surrounding areas also reported feeling the tremors, while Rawalpindi and Islamabad were similarly affected. Rescue authorities confirmed that tremors were felt across various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and urged the public to immediately contact 1122 in case of any emergency. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage. Pakistan's susceptibility to earthquakes stems from its location along the boundary of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. The country has experienced multiple devastating quakes in recent decades.

## US Fed Reserve chairman...

FROM PAGE 01

growth from March 1991 to March 2001. His decision to let the economy run - despite pressure to raise interest rates against an inflation threat that never materialised - helped foster years of US prosperity and earned him rock star status as an economic "maestro". The era was marked by his prescient judgment that a productivity surge in the mid-1990s would keep inflation contained. His intuition in that moment is still a touchstone for policymakers, and has been referred to by former Fed chair Jerome Powell as an example of how judgment can sometimes outperform technical models of the economy. However, the one-time jazz musician's monetary policy acumen later came into question as critics attacked his policies for fueling a series of asset price bubbles and laying the groundwork for the 2007-2009 financial crisis

## Briefs

## Rupee gains 0.3 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.22 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.25. 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 279.25, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.30 and closed at Rs 318.43 from the previous day's closing of Rs 318.73, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained constant at Rs 1.72, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.38 and closed at Rs 367.04 compared to the previous day's Rs 367.42. The exchange rates of the Emirate Dirham remained constant at Rs.75.75, whereas it declined by Rs0.2 for Saudi Riyal which closed at Rs 74.13.—APP

## PSX remains bearish, loses over 450 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 450.89 points, a negative change of 0.25 percent, closing at 178,471.87 points against 178,922.76 points on the last trading day. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 807,467 million shares with a traded value of Rs 36.175 billion, compared to 1,050 billion shares valuing Rs 54.137 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization declined to Rs 19.976 trillion from Rs 19.995 trillion a day earlier. Out of 491 active companies in the ready market, 214 advanced, 240 declined and 37 remained unchanged. WorldCall Telecom topped the volume chart with 59,558 million shares, followed by TPL Corp Limited with 59,271 million shares and TPL Properties with 56,036 million shares. The top gainers included The Premier Sugar Mills, which increased by Rs 45.86 to close at Rs 606.83, and Colgate-Palmolive (Pakistan) Limited, which gained Rs 45.03 to settle at Rs 1,254.11. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 181.59 to close at Rs 25,801.74, while Nestle Pakistan Limited fell by Rs 147.30 to close at Rs 7,632.70. In the futures market, turnover stood at 669,542 million shares with a traded value of Rs 30,672 billion, compared to 257,107 million shares worth Rs 13,916 billion in the previous session. Out of 310 futures-market companies, 111 recorded gains, 194 declined and 5 remained unchanged, according to PSX data.—APP

## Gold price surges by Rs 4,643 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a significant increase in the local market on Monday, with the per tola rate rising by Rs4,643 to reach Rs442,636 as compared to Rs437,993 on the previous trading day, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs4,179 to Rs378,345 from Rs374,166, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs3,793 to Rs347,083 from Rs343,290. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$4,155.57 to \$4,202.00 from \$4,155.57, the association reported. Meanwhile, the prices of silver also registered a sharp increase in the domestic market, with per tola silver rising by Rs189 to Rs7,151 from Rs6,962, while the rate of 10 grams of silver climbed by Rs170 to Rs6,079 from Rs5,909. In the international market, silver prices increased by \$1,886 to \$66.714 from \$64.828, according to the association.—APP

## NA okays Rs 33.70b grants for Food Security Ministry

The minister said agriculture is a devolved subject under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, while food security remains a federal responsibility and agricultural research continues to be a concurrent subject

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Monday approved three demands for grants worth Rs33,706,435,000 (Rs33.70 billion) for the Ministry of National Food Security and Research after rejecting 112 cut motions moved by opposition lawmakers. The demands for grants were presented by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb to meet expenditures for the upcoming financial year.

According to details, the approved allocations included Rs22,231,937,000 for the National Food Security and Research Division, Rs7,291,498,000 for the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), and Rs4,183,000,000 for development expenditure of the National Food Security and Research Division. Responding to point raised by the lawmakers of the opposition, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain said the agriculture sector remains a top priority of the government under the leadership of the

Prime Minister, adding that it is believed to be the key driver in turning around the country's economy. He said it was regrettable that opposition members had not raised demands for increased funding for the sector, which he termed the backbone of the national economy. He added that duty-free machinery had been allocated in the current budget on the directions of the Prime Minister. The minister said agriculture is a devolved subject under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, while food security remains a federal responsibility and agricultural research continues to be a concurrent subject. He added that major research institutions, including provincial agricultural research bodies and universities, are working in collaboration across provinces. He said the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council and other institutions are actively engaged in improving agricultural productivity, while provincial governments manage a large share of research and extension services in their respective jurisdictions. He highlighted that both federal and

provincial governments have introduced significant support packages for farmers, including subsidies and relief measures such as electricity and input support in various provinces. He said Sindh provided a subsidy of around Rs52 billion last year for farmers owning up to 25 acres of land, while Punjab introduced a package of around Rs100 billion for the agriculture sector.

He added that the federal government has allocated nearly Rs200 billion for agricultural development in the current financial framework. The minister said the government is also focusing on technology transfer and international cooperation, particularly with China and Australia, to improve agricultural practices and modern farming systems. He said agreements and collaborations are being pursued to strengthen innovation and capacity building in the sector. Highlighting challenges, he referred to post-harvest losses and stressed the need for improved storage systems and supply chain management to re-

duce wastage. He said Pakistan had managed to maintain supply stability during climate-related challenges, floods, and global disruptions. Comparing regional productivity, he noted that Pakistan's agricultural output has improved and is now close to neighbouring countries, while acknowledging the need for further gains in yield and efficiency. On water-related concerns, he underscored Pakistan's vulnerability as an agriculture-dependent country and warned that regional tensions over water resources remain a critical issue for national food security.

He said that despite global inflationary pressures, the government has taken steps to stabilize essential food supplies and control price fluctuations to protect consumers, particularly low-income groups.

He said Pakistan exported certified seed worth around \$1 billion to countries including India and China, adding that it was later used for oil extraction, and stressed the need for greater value addition within the country's agricultural sector.—DNA



FAISALABAD: A vendor displays clay pots that traditionally used for distributing food during Muharram-ul-Haram.

## Prosperity Party Registers landslide victory in Ethiopia's general polls

DNA

ADDIS ABABA: The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has officially announced the results of the 7th General Elections, declaring a landslide victory for the Prosperity Party Following a transparent process that saw the participation of over 54 million registered voters, the results mark a significant milestone in Ethiopia's democratic journey. The official results of the 7th General Elections were announced by the officials of NEBE during a ceremony held in Addis Ababa to brief the media on official results. The Prosperity Party secured a thumping majority, winning 438 out of the 486 contested seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives, providing the party with the clear mandate required to form a new government under the Ethiopian Constitution. The party's seats distribution across regions included 167 seats in Oromia, 117 in Amhara, 35 in Southern Ethiopia, 28 in Central Ethiopia, 20 in Addis Ababa, 19 in Somali, 17 in Southwest Ethiopia, 13 in Sidama, 8 in Benishangul-Gumuz, 7 in Afar, 3 in Gambella, and 2 each in Dire Dawa and Harari. Opposition and independent candidates, including representatives from the Ethiopian Unity Party, the Afar People's Party, the Gumuz People's Democratic Party, the National Movement of Amhara and the New Generation Party, collectively secured the remaining 48 parliamentary seats. The Prosperity Party also achieved overwhelming success in regional council elections, reflecting broad national support. Highlights of these victories include 523 out of 528 seats in Oromia, 257 of 277 in Amhara, 214 of 252 in the Somali region, 182 in South Ethiopia, 176 in Gambella, 175 in Sidama, 161 in Dire Dawa, 145 in Benishangul-Gumuz, 144 in South West Ethiopia, 143 in Central Ethiopia, 134 in Addis Ababa, 124 in Afar, and 32 in Harari. The elections were held recently across 1,139 constituencies including 501 for the House of Peoples' Representatives and 638 for regional councils. The elections were held in a peaceful and transparent manner which was endorsed by international observers, including missions from the African Union (AU) and IGAD, who certified the transparency of the overall electoral process across the country.

## Rail link with KSA under review, financing options: Turkiye

RIYADH: Turkish Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said the proposed railway linking Turkiye and Saudi Arabia is currently undergoing technical evaluation and is expected to strengthen the Kingdom's position as a regional distribution and logistics hub connecting major global trade routes. The minister noted that signaling, communications systems, border crossings, and logistics operations will be unified within a single integrated framework, with the first phase focusing on defining the scope of work and costs, as well as assessing financing options and the implementation model. Regarding engineering obstacles, he denied that there are any insurmountable technical barriers to the rail connectivity project, stressing that implementation will begin once studies are completed, alongside railway construction works spanning 4,000 km in Turkiye as a link to Europe. However, he said the main technical challenge lies in integrating existing infrastructure and completing missing sections, noting that Saudi Arabia has railway infrastructure extending to the Jordanian border, while parts of the project, particularly in Syria and Jordan, require renewal, rehabilitation, and completion. The Turkish minister explained that the project aims to build a more flexible network rather than merely the shortest route, steering away from the risks of relying on a single trade corridor, particularly amid regional tensions. Today, one of the most im-

## Syria president denies wanting to intervene

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa denied that his country sought to intervene militarily in Lebanon where Israel and Hezbollah are at war, after US President Donald Trump repeatedly suggested Damascus could get involved. "We are looking for economic channels between Lebanon and Syria, not military ones," Sharaa said in an interview broadcast on television channel Al Mashhad. On Monday, Lebanon's Prime Minister, Nawaf Salam held a phone call with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani, in which he praised the brotherly and candid stance toward Lebanon expressed by Al-Sharaa during his television interview. Salam said that President Sharaa's remarks put an end to speculation and misleading assumptions about Syria's intentions toward Lebanon. On Sunday, Trump told Fox News he was "disappointed Israel can't put Hezbollah away," adding in reference to the fight against the militant group: "I'm close to giving it over to Syria." Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the killing of its leader Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes days earlier. Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion. An Iran-US deal signed this week on ending the regional conflict includes Lebanon, where fighting has paused since Saturday evening. At the G7 summit in France this week, Trump also said "if Israel can't do the job (against Hezbollah) without killing everyone else, then he (Sharaa) will do the job. Syria will do the job." Sharaa said in Sunday's interview that "we proposed with the United States that the war must stop," adding that "there must be various solutions, including economic, political and social, and the re-establishment of relations and the vital economic lifeline between Syria and Lebanon." "And alongside this, some security measures that respond firstly to Syrian and Lebanese concerns, and also Israeli concerns," he added. Hezbollah fought alongside longtime Syrian ruler Bashar Assad in his country's civil war, making Sharaa and the new authorities who toppled the former leader in 2024 deeply hostile to the group. Syria had dominated its neighbor for decades following its military intervention in Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, withdrawing only in 2005, making any new military involvement a fraught proposition. Syria offers "many tools for having a positive impact within Lebanon, but this also depends primarily on Lebanon's agreement," Sharaa said. "Syria is greatly concerned with Lebanon's domestic situation because Lebanon's security and stability are part of Syria's security and stability," he added. Responding to a question about whether he would sit at the table with Hezbollah, Sharaa said that "if this serves Lebanon's interests and safeguards Syria's interests, why not?" Earlier this month, Trump also told US broadcaster NBC that "I'd like to see a more surgical attack on Hezbollah... And we can help them with that, or we can recommend Syria," he said, adding that Sharaa "would love to help.—DNA

## Gaza's surfers seek solace in the sea

GAZA CITY: Carrying their boards past tents and bombed-out buildings, a group of Gazan surfers headed for the sea, seeking solace in the waves despite the risk of Israeli attacks. On the beach in Gaza City, the trio laid out their boards on the sand while they warmed up their limbs and readied their gear. A few children splashed in the shallows as the surfers paddled out to sea, fighting the crashing waves. "This sport is indescribable. When you catch a wave, ride it, glide along it, that feeling can't be put into words," said 23-year-old Taheem Abu Assi, who learned how to surf from his father. "I used to see him practicing it at the beach with his father, and I watched and learned from them," he told AFP. "We learned little by little, and even with the war, the shelling, and the destruction, we're still continuing with this sport, because it lets us breathe and makes us feel safe." A ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas came into effect in Gaza in October after two years of devastating war. But the tiny coastal territory remains gripped by bloodshed, with each side accusing the other of near-daily violations. Even out at sea, the violence persists. In mid-May, Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis reported receiving two fishermen who had been injured by Israeli naval gunfire near the beach in the southern Gaza Strip. A few days later, a Gazan security source reported that three fishermen were wounded by Israeli fire near the coast off Gaza City. "The situation is still unstable," Abu Assi explained. "At any moment, shells or explosives could land near you." Candle wax - Out at sea, the surfers glide effortlessly across the crests of waves, momentarily free from the hardships of daily life in Gaza. But the severe shortages caused by the war and ongoing Israeli import restrictions have posed obstacles for the sport. "One of the biggest challenges and difficulties we face as surfers in the Gaza Strip is the lack of tools and equipment specific to this sport," Abdel Rahim Al-Ustadh, 19, told AFP.

of the most important transport and logistics initiatives in the Middle East in the coming decades, as it would facilitate trade, strengthen supply chains, support regional integration, and elevate economic relations between our countries to a more advanced level. At the same time, this corridor should be considered alongside other strategic projects such as the Middle Corridor and the Development Road. Through these complementary transport networks, a much stronger connectivity framework can be built between Turkiye, the Gulf region, and the Middle East, as well as Europe. In this regard, the project is not merely a railway investment, but a strategic initiative that will contribute to regional development, economic prosperity, and stability. Global developments in recent years have made this need more evident. The pandemic, disruptions in supply chains, and new dynamics in international trade have once again demonstrated the importance of transport corridors. Countries now need not only existing routes, but also alternative and complementary transport networks. In addition, trade volumes between Asia, Europe, and the Gulf are increasing every year. Strengthening links between energy, industry, and logistics, as well as production and service hubs, has become a strategic necessity rather than a mere economic preference. Therefore, projects that enhance regional connectivity are returning to the forefront.—Agencies

## Japan-related vessels stranded in the Gulf falls to 37

TOKYO: The number of Japan-related vessels remaining in the Gulf has fallen to 37 from 45 at the start of the Iran war, with seven ships having transited the Strait of Hormuz and one transferred to a non-Japanese operator, according to the Japanese Shipowners' Association. Once safe passage has been confirmed, including the absence of mines, individual shipping companies will decide when to resume transit through the Strait, a spokesperson for the association said on Monday. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said on X on Friday that a vessel carrying three Japanese crew members had exited the Gulf and was headed to Japan. The vessel was not identified. With its departure, all 24 Japanese crew members who were in the Gulf when the war erupted have now left the region. As vessels from many other countries also remain in the Gulf, Japan is proposing that official bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation should take the lead in establishing fair rules to ensure an orderly departure from the Gulf, the spokesperson said. The immediate priority is securing the passage of vessels currently stranded in the Gulf. At present, there are no plans to send ships through the Strait to load cargo, the spokesperson said. The number of ships that passed through the Strait of Hormuz fell sharply on Sunday after Iran announced it had again closed the waterway, citing Israeli and U.S. violations of the interim peace deal, shipping data showed.—APP

## Syria nab former gen, 3 others in crackdown on Assad-era abuses

DAMASCUS: The Syrian Arab Republic's security forces have arrested a former military officer and three other individuals accused of crimes committed during the rule of former president Bashar Assad, as part of an expanding campaign against remnants of the deposed regime. The Interior Ministry said security forces arrested retired Brig. Gen. Abdul Ghaffar Al-Hussein following surveillance of his movements, the Syrian Arab News Agency reported. According to the ministry, preliminary investigations indicate that Al-Hussein was involved in violations during his command of the 66th Regiment and while overseeing a security checkpoint in Daraa province, where hundreds of residents were detained. Authorities also accuse him of participating in military operations in several areas, and involvement in cases that led to the arrest and disappearance of civilians. The ministry said investigations showed that after retiring in 2015, Al-Hussein allegedly became involved in corruption networks and the embezzlement of public funds through connections within administrative and service sectors.—APP

## Australian police uncover 3 tons of cocaine

MELBOURNE: Police found 2.7 metric tons (3 tons) of cocaine on a property on Sydney's outskirts in Australia's largest ever seizure of the drug, officials said on Monday. The drug was found on June 19 in plastic tubs buried in underground bunkers hidden beneath three shipping containers on a semirural property in the suburb of Londonderry on Sydney's western edge, the Queensland Joint Organized Crime Taskforce said in a statement. The containers had false floors that provided access to the cocaine, which police estimate had a street value of 816 million Australian dollars (\$572 million). Two Sydney residents, men aged 21 and 25, were arrested at the property and charged with possessing a commercial quantity of an illicit drug. They face potential sentences of life in prison. Australia's previous record cocaine haul was 2.34 metric tons (2.58 tons) seized in 2024 from a fishing boat near K'gari, formerly known as Fraser Island.—APP

## Briefs

### 18 missing after blast at giant Qatar LNG site

DNA

DOHA: Fifty-four people were injured and 18 are missing after an explosion at Qatar's massive Ras Laffan liquefied natural (LNG) gas complex which occurred as workers were restarting operations halted after an Iranian attack in March. Authorities said a 'technical accident' occurred at the Barzan local gas supply facility on Sunday evening and that there was no threat to public safety. The blast rattled windows and was felt across central Doha, panicking residents more than 70 kilometres from Ras Laffan. Qatar's Interior Ministry said in a statement that 54 people had been injured and rescue teams were looking for 18 missing people. Emergency response teams were deployed and the fire has since been brought under control. QatarEnergy did not say whether the explosion had caused any damage to the plant, which supplies pipeline gas to local industry and Qatar's power generation sector. It can also produce ethane, condensate, liquefied petroleum gas and sulphur for domestic and export markets. Qatar, which hosts a major US military base, has come under repeated Iranian missile and drone attacks during the Iran war. It has been among the hardest hit by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz as it has no alternative routes to export its LNG. The closure trapped around 20% of global LNG supply in the Gulf before shipments began to resume recently. The facility is located in Ras Laffan Industrial City, QatarEnergy's primary site for LNG production and export with an annual production capacity of 77 million metric tonnes. An Iranian missile attack in March struck two of its key gas-processing units, slashing about 17% of Qatar's LNG export capacity which QatarEnergy CEO Saad al-Kaabi told Reuters would take three to five years to repair.

### PPP not to support PTA bill: Sherry

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Amid vocal criticism of a bill aimed at advancing fibreisation across the country, PPP Vice President Senator Sherry Rehman said on Monday that the party would not support any such legislation in the Senate unless it was "thoroughly discussed threadbare" in the relevant standing committee and the party's proposed deletions were ensured in the final bill. Concerns about the intentions behind the Pakistan Telecommunication (Amendment) Bill 2026 have intensified due to the timing of the government's attempt to secure its passage through both houses of Parliament and criticism against its clause to allow telecommunication companies to use public land without a fee. The bill was approved by NA on June 11, a day before the presentation of the federal budget 2026-27, and was presented in the Senate on June 15.

# Pope Leo decries leaders who 'feed' wars

Leo, who drew Trump's ire earlier this year after criticizing the Iran war, did not mention any specific leaders on Monday

DNA

ROME: World leaders are "feeding" wars instead of the hungry, Pope Leo said on Monday, telling the UN food aid agency that global priorities were badly skewed. Leo, who has been more outspoken on political issues in recent months, urged governments to increase their spending to combat hunger and not subject food aid to limits based on geopolitical concerns. "Conflicts are 'fed' more readily than people are nourished," the first US pope said in a visit to the Rome headquarters of the World Food Programme (WFP). "This reality reflects not only operational shortcomings but also a fundamental imbalance in political and moral priorities," he said. The WFP is the largest provider of food aid worldwide. Its biggest donor is the US, which announced a new \$800 million contribution last week, following earlier cuts by President Donald Trump that more than halved planned US funding. Leo, who drew Trump's ire earlier this year



after criticizing the Iran war, did not mention any specific leaders on Monday. The pope lamented that the world's humanitarian crises were being relegated to a "secondary place among international priorities." He said that countries "have increasingly allocated their resources toward national security, economic growth and domestic stability, disregarding the close link between these issues and multilateral cooperation." Leo was welcomed to the WFP on Monday by Cindy McCain, who resigned as director of the agency earlier this year for health reasons. The WFP, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020, provided 15.6 billion daily rations to 121 million people in 2025, funded by \$6.5 billion in private donations, according to the agency. Leo said that access to food was "a fundamental human right grounded in the dignity of every person." He said alleviating hunger not only helped those in need but also addressed underlying causes of geopolitical instability. "Food security is an essential component of global and integral security," said the pope.

## Justice Munib Akhtar takes oath as acting CJP

ISLAMABAD: Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Munib Akhtar, on Monday took oath as the Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan during the absence of Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, who is currently abroad. According to a press release issued by the Supreme Court, the oath-taking ceremony was held at the Supreme Court Branch Registry in Karachi in a simple and dignified manner. The oath was administered by Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui. Justice Munib Akhtar will perform the duties of the Chief Justice of Pakistan for the duration of Chief Justice Yahya Afridi's visit abroad. As the senior-most judge of the apex court after the Chief Justice, Justice Munib Akhtar has assumed the responsibilities of the office in accordance with established constitutional and judicial practice. The ceremony was attended by judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan as well as judges of the Federal Constitutional Court. Senior judicial officers, court officials, and members of the Supreme Court staff were also present on the occasion. The Registrar of the Supreme Court conducted the proceedings of the oath-taking ceremony. - APP



**KARACHI:** Hon'able Mr. Justice Munib Akhtar the Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, taking oath as Acting Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Pakistan at Supreme Court Branch Registry Karachi today i.e 22th June, 2026. DNA

## Japan-related vessels stranded in the Gulf falls to 37

TOKYO: The number of Japan-related vessels remaining in the Gulf has fallen to 37 from 45 at the start of the Iran war, with seven ships having transited the Strait of Hormuz and one transferred to a non-Japanese operator, according to the Japanese Shipowners' Association. Once safe passage has been confirmed, including the absence of mines, individual shipping companies will decide when to resume transit through the Strait, a spokesperson for the association said on Monday. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said on X on Friday that a vessel carrying three Japanese crew members had exited the Gulf and was headed to Japan. The vessel was not identified. With its departure, all 24 Japanese crew members who were in the Gulf when the war erupted have now left the region. As vessels from many other countries also remain in the Gulf, Japan is proposing that official bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation should take the lead in establishing fair rules to ensure an orderly departure from the Gulf, the spokesperson said. - APP

## India in talks to sell supersonic BrahMos missile to UAE

DNA

NEW DELHI: The Indian government is in talks with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to sell some of its flagship defence systems, including the supersonic cruise missile BrahMos, four Indian sources said, as the Gulf nation steps up arms procurement following the war in the Middle East. The discussions, which have not been previously reported, include the potential sale of India's air defence system Akashteer, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters. "The UAE has shown interest for a number of our weapon systems, including BrahMos and Akashteer. The talks between India and the UAE are at initial stages and are progressing fast," said a third source with direct knowledge of the matter. Indian officials and the UAE foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment. BrahMos, jointly developed by India and Russia, is among the world's fastest cruise missiles and can be launched from land, sea and air platforms, while Akashteer is a fully automated air defence system developed by India's state-run Bharat Electronics Ltd and the Indian Army. The UAE is considering buying defence equipment from India and other sources after the Gulf nation was heavily attacked by Iran during the war and as it enhances its ability to respond to emerging threats. It also needs to protect the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial conduit for its energy exports. Earlier this year, the UAE signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with South Korea to promote defence cooperation that would be worth more than \$35 billion. "A diversified supplier base gives the UAE more strategic autonomy, and closer ties with India have the added benefit of not antagonising the US as the countries remain allies," said Pearl Pandya, South Asia senior analyst at Armed Conflict Location & Event Data, a conflict monitoring group. According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the US was the biggest exporter of arms to the Middle East between 2021 and 2025, supplying 54 per cent of imports, followed by Italy at 12pc and France at 11pc. Before clinching any BrahMos sale to the UAE, India would require Russia's approval, as the 290-km range missile is jointly developed. One source said this is unlikely to pose a hurdle given Moscow's close ties with Abu Dhabi.

## Leaders of European powers to meet for Ukraine talks

ROME: The leaders of Europe's top military powers will meet Wednesday in Berlin, Italy said on Monday, as Europe aims to play a bigger role in trying to end the Ukraine war. The government said Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni would attend the meeting with her British, French, German and Polish counterparts. The announcement came just before British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he would resign but remain in office until a new leader is chosen, meaning he could still attend the meeting. The E5 group was formed in 2024 following increasing calls for European rearmament and to improve coordination to support Ukraine against the Russian invasion. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz had said the meeting would take place this week without specifying a date. At last week's G7 summit attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, leaders agreed to increase supplies of air defense equipment to Ukraine and boost sanctions on Russia. - APP

## Confirmed Ebola cases in Congo

BUNIA: Confirmed cases in the Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo have reached 1,003, including 254 deaths, officials said in a statement late Sunday, as tracing those who had been in contact with patients remains a major challenge. A total of 100 people have recovered in the outbreak concentrated in the Ituri province since it was declared on May 15, Congo's Ministry of Health said. At least 365 patients are in hospitals or in isolation, it said. The Ebola outbreak caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus, which has no vaccines or treatment, was the worst ever in its first month. Officials admit there could be far more cases they still don't know about and that the peak of the outbreak is still ahead. Contact tracing remains a key issue for local authorities, who have only achieved a 55% coverage rate, the ministry said. Officials also are yet to identify the outbreak's patient zero and still need to trace more than 35,000 people who have come in contact with infected individuals as of last week, authorities said. - APP

## Oil slips after US-Iran conclude talks

Brent crude falls \$1.53, or 1.90%, to \$79.04 a barrel; US West Texas Intermediate crude futures at \$76.53 a barrel

LONDON: Oil prices slid on Monday after US-Iran talks concluded in Switzerland with Tehran saying it had secured waivers for oil and petrochemical exports, easing worries about a supply shortage in global markets. Brent crude fell \$1.53, or 1.90%, to \$79.04 a barrel by 0656 GMT. Prices had earlier climbed to \$82.30 at the start of trading, fuelled by a bumpy start to the talks with threats from US President Donald Trump to restart the war on Iran and Tehran's announcement it had again closed the Strait of

Hormuz. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were at \$76.53 a barrel, down 7 cents, ahead of the contract's expiry later on Monday. The more active August contract fell 55 cents to \$75.30 a barrel. There was no settlement in the US market on Friday due to a holiday. High-ranking US and Iranian officials wrapped up their first round of talks in Switzerland on Monday, mediators said. The talks began on Sunday under the terms of a memorandum of understanding reached last week to extend a tenuous ceasefire from April for at least another 60 days. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said his country had secured waivers for oil and petrochemical exports, the release of some frozen assets and the launch of a reconstruction and development plan for Iran. "High-level talks between the US and Iran in Switzerland over the weekend appear to have produced some progress, with both sides agreeing to establish a high-level committee," IG market analyst Tony Sycamore said. "However, whether these steps will deliver meaningful results on the ground remains to be seen, particularly in Southern Lebanon where both Israel and Hezbollah are seemingly intent on continuing their struggle." - DNA

# Philippines in shock after gunmen kill 3 in rare school shooting

DNA

MANILA: The Philippines was rocked on Monday by a deadly school shooting incident in Leyte province, where gunmen killed three students and wounded seven others. The incident took place at 9 a.m. at the San Jose National High School in Tacloban City in the central Philippines, where children were gathered for their class. Footage circulated on social media showed children hiding in a classroom, as multiple shots are heard. Tacloban City Police confirmed the casualties and said they had arrested two suspects and seized the firearms allegedly used in the incident - a revolver and a 9 mm Glock pistol. Earlier reports identified the shooters as students aged 15 and 14. Initial investigation by Tacloban police indicated that the incident

"may have stemmed from a personal grudge allegedly rooted in school bullying." In the Philippines, where no school shooting incidents have been recorded in recent history, the incident sent a wave of shock and anger among parents across the country. "It's very distressing. Are our youths copying their American counterparts?" Patricia Capuli from Pasay City told Arab News. "The mere fact that students in high school are planning to bring in firearms, ammunition and murder their fellow students is very, very alarming." He referred to viral footage in which the arrested students were seen showing off their weapons. "How did that happen? The suspects, have you seen their pictures? The kids were so proud of having gotten those firearms. They're brandishing them in social media," Capuli said. "How did two teenagers carry high-powered

weapons inside a schoolroom without the guards noticing it? As a parent, I find it very, very odd ... I find the response time of the authorities very slow considering that three people were killed." The Philippine Department of Education described the shooting as a "high-alert situation" and said it was "working hand-in-hand with relevant government agencies to deploy critical medical assistance and appropriate psychosocial interventions for the affected learners and personnel." Naz Romano, school administrator at a public high school in Romblon province, told Arab News the Tacloban City shooting should be a "wake-up call" for the Department of Education - both in terms of schools' security and establishing a clear policy on the responsibilities of parents and teachers when children are involved in bullying.

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