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Pak greatly values ties with Portugal, says Yousaf Gilani

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Info Ministry to welcome plans form RISJA: Tarar

Detailed News On Page-06

US won't go into war with Iran again

Detailed News On Page-01

Briefs

'Ukraine ordered Nord Stream sabotage'

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: Ukrainian state authorities were behind the 2022 sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipeline linking Russia with Europe, German prosecutors charged Thursday, a move that complicates close relations between Kyiv and its key military backer Berlin. The explosives attack in the Baltic Sea destroyed three of four seafloor pipelines of the major energy link to Germany and released record amounts of methane into the atmosphere. In a statement detailing the charges brought against one suspect, German prosecutors said that he and other members of the Ukrainian military had acted "on the orders of state authorities in Ukraine". The case is awkward for Germany and Ukraine at a time Germany, Europe's biggest economy, has emerged as the biggest military backer of Ukraine in its war against Russia. The suspect in question was arrested in summer 2025 in Italy and extradited to Germany the following November, and was named at the time as Serhii Kuzmetsov. In Thursday's statement prosecutors said he was "an officer in the Ukrainian army" and that following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, "he and other members of the military... developed a plan to destroy" the pipeline "in order to deprive Russia of gas revenues."

Tanveer Ilyas quits PPP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) prime minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas on Wednesday announced his decision to join the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP). The announcement came after a meeting with IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan and State Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Awn Choudhary. IPP chief and federal minister Aleem Khan welcomed Tanveer Ilyas into the party by presenting him with the IPP party muffler during the meeting. The development comes after Tanveer Ilyas Khan resigned from the primary membership of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP-AJK chapter) after days of unsuccessful negotiations over election tickets, a development that political observers have described as a setback for the party ahead of the July-27 AJK Legislative Assembly elections. The News reported on Wednesday.

Nine die in rain related incident in KP

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: At least nine people were killed and 23 others injured in rain-related incidents across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) over the past 48 hours as the first spell of monsoon rains coupled with strong winds and flash floods, wreaked havoc in the province. In a report, KP's Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) director general confirmed that the heavy rains and flash floods damaged at least 41 houses in different areas of the province. The DG said that the incidents occurred in Khyber, Lower Dir, Mardan, Shangla, Bajaur, Lower Chitral, Dera Par and other areas. The official said that the district administration was directed to intensify relief activities and provide immediate assistance to the affected families.

Funeral procession

Iran warns US, Israel against attacks

Senior Chinese lawmaker He Wei will also attend the funeral, the Chinese foreign ministry announced on Thursday

DNA

DUBAI: An Iranian military commander warned the United States and Israel on Thursday against any attack on Iran as it prepares for the state funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in airstrikes on the first day of the war. "We warn the enemies of Iran, especially the US and the Zionist regime (Israel), to avoid any miscalculation and to think about the harsh retaliation our armed forces would make to any threat and aggression against our country," Ali Abdollahi, commander of Khatam Al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, said in a statement carried by state media. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will attend the state funeral of the former supreme leader, Pakistan's foreign ministry said on Thursday. Senior Chinese lawmaker He Wei will also attend the funeral, the Chinese foreign ministry announced on Thursday. He is the vice chairman of China's top lawmaking body, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. India said on Thursday that its deputy foreign minister and a state governor would represent the country at

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Iran warns oil tankers

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Iran's joint military command warned Thursday that all oil tankers moving through the Strait of Hormuz must use its approved routes or face a "forceful response," again ratcheting up tensions over a waterway crucial for international energy supplies. The strait, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf, has emerged as one of the top issues in negotiations to reach a permanent end to the Iran war. The statement from the Khatam Al-Anbiya military command, reported by Iranian state television, comes after both US and Iranian diplomats met with mediators on Wednesday in Qatar. It wasn't immediately clear what sparked the threat from Iran. However, the US military's Central Command had put out a statement about having a

Continued on Page 06

Vance says US won't return to war with Iran unless needed

"I think they've [Iran] come a long way. We hit them very hard last week. I think they're fine," says Trump

DNA

WASHINGTON: US Vice President JD Vance said discussions between the US and Iran were going well as they held indirect technical talks in Qatar about the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, adding Washington would not return to full combat unless necessary. The talks are based on a 14-point interim accord signed last month that was meant to halt the war that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in February and reopen the strait, while setting up 60 days of negotiations for a permanent peace deal. However, the US and Iran have sparred publicly over the meaning of the interim pact, leading to tit-for-tat military strikes over the past week and leaving little sign of progress on more complex issues, including on Iran's nuclear programme. Vance said he could not guarantee that Washington would not return to full com-

bat operations ahead of next month's deadline but that for now President Donald Trump had directed officials to make a deal. "I can't commit to anything, because obviously it depends on what the Iranians are ultimately going to do," he told reporters on a visit to Virginia Beach, Virginia. "What I can commit to is: The president's not going to send our military back in unless he has to, unless there's a clearly defined purpose for it." In Doha, technical talks were focused on commercial shipping in the strait and would later turn to Tehran's nuclear capabilities, Vance said, adding: "It's still pretty early, but talks are going well." Iran is determined to win international recognition of its control over the key oil-shipping waterway and its ability to levy fees on ships entering or leaving the Gulf, even if it has to do so by force, according to two senior Iranian sources.

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Iranian ambassador appreciates Pak solidarity

Stressing the significance of regional cooperation, he proposed a closer engagement among Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to advance peace



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, organized a policy dialogue titled "Pakistan's Role in Building Regional Peace: Iran's Strategic Posture, Regional Alignments, and Pathways to Stability" to examine Iran's strategic posture, evolving regional alignments, the implications of the recent Iran-Israel conflict, and Pakistan's role in promoting

regional peace and stability. The dialogue also paid tribute to Iran's leadership on the occasion of commemorative ceremonies held across the Islamic Republic of Iran. It provided a timely platform for discussing emerging security challenges in West Asia and exploring pathways for diplomacy, regional cooperation, and conflict prevention. Delivering the keynote address, His Excellency Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, outlined Iran's assessment of the evolving strategic environment in West Asia and expressed appreciation for solidarity shown by the government and people of Pakistan during recent conflict. He identified unified leadership, national cohesion, strategic geography, and an indigenous defence industrial base as the principal pillars of Iran's deterrence posture. Stressing the significance of regional cooperation, he proposed a closer engagement among Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to advance

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia H.E. Nawaf Saeed A. Al Malkiy called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters. — DNA

Fuel prices remain unchanged

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to double the Climate Support Levy on petrol and diesel to Rs5 per litre, offsetting the increase with an equivalent cut in the Petroleum Levy so that retail fuel prices remain unchanged for consumers. The Petroleum Division late Wednesday issued notifications confirming that the revised levies came into effect from July 2. Under the new notification, the Climate Support Levy on both petrol and diesel has been increased by Rs2.50 per litre, taking the levy from Rs2.50 to Rs5 per litre. The same increase has also been applied to the high-octane blending component (HOB). To offset the increase in the Climate Support Levy, the government has reduced the Petroleum Levy on petrol and high-speed diesel by Rs2.50 per litre. The Petroleum Levy on

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After Iran visit

PM Shehbaz to visit Iran, Türkiye from July 3-5: Andrabi

During his stay in Istanbul, the prime minister would also address a business conference being hosted by Pakistan to spotlight Pakistan's trade and investment potential in priority areas, including the SEZs, energy, trade, Information Technology, and privatisation sectors

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is scheduled to undertake an official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Türkiye from July 3-5, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said on Thursday. The spokesperson, at the weekly press briefing, said that the prime minister would be accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, and other cabinet ministers and senior officials. He told the media that Prime Minister Shehbaz would travel to Iran first to participate in the funeral ceremony of the late Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei. He said that the prime minister would convey condolences on behalf of the people and the government of Pakistan to the Ira-

nian leadership and the bereaved families while reaffirming solidarity with the brotherly nation in their hour of profound grief. Later, he would proceed to Istanbul, Türkiye, at the invitation of the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, where he would hold discussions on the entire gamut of bilateral relations with a special focus on giving impetus to bilateral trade and investment cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The leadership meeting would also reflect on issues concerning regional peace and security, he added. During his stay in Istanbul, the prime minister would also address a business conference being hosted by Pakistan to spotlight Pakistan's trade and investment potential in priority areas, including the SEZs, energy, trade, Information Technology, and privatisation sectors.

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3 killed, seven injured in boat accident

PESHAWAR: At least three people were killed and seven others injured after a boat carrying tourists capsized at Saifullah Lake in Kalam, Swat. Rescue 1122 officials said on Wednesday. According to Rescue 1122 Swat, its control room received information about the incident and emergency response teams along with ambulances were immediately dispatched to the site. Initial reports indicated that the tourists on board belonged to Punjab province. Rescue teams reached the location, provided first aid to the injured and shifted all injured persons and the deceased to Kalam Hospital through ambulances. Authorities have not yet released further details regarding the identities of the victims.—APP

Orientation session to improve int'l standing KP varsities

ISLAMABAD/PESHAWAR, Jul 02 (APP):The Higher Education Commission (HEC) organized an orientation session entitled "Overview of the International HEI Ranking Framework and Strategies for Improving the International Ranking of Universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" at HEC Regional Centre Peshawar. The session aimed to enhance the capacity of university representatives and equip them with insights into global higher-education ranking systems and strategies to improve the international standing of universities in the province. In his welcome address, Director/In-Charge HEC Regional Centre Peshawar, Engr. Nauman Ahmed Khan, underscored the growing importance of international university rankings in promoting academic excellence, research visibility, innovation, and institutional reputation. He emphasized that universities must adopt strategic measures to improve their performance in globally recognized ranking frameworks. He reaffirmed HEC's commitment to supporting higher education institutions in achieving international competitiveness and excellence. The session was led by Prof. Dr Muhammad Usman Awan, Director, Institute of Quality and Technology Management (IQTM), University of the Punjab, and Convener of the Ranking Committee, who served as the resource person.—APP

KPRA collects Rs53b, records 20% growth in Sales Tax

PESHAWAR:The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) recorded a 20 percent growth in Sales Tax on Services (STS) collection during the financial year 2025-26, collecting an overall revenue of Rs 53.7 billion as compared to Rs 51.8 billion collected during the previous fiscal year. According to details shared by KPRA's Media Wing on Thursday, the Authority collected Rs 48.71 billion under Sales Tax on Services against Rs 40.60 billion collected during the last financial year, registering an increase of Rs 8.11 billion. KPRA also surpassed its assigned STS collection target of Rs 45.5 billion.—APP

KKAWF calls for greater investment in drug prevention efforts

Cristina von Sperling Afridi said that despite worldwide recognition and seizures, global drug use has reached record high with an estimated 331 million people having used drugs in 2024, equivalent to 6.2 per cent of the world's population aged 15 to 64, up from 5.2 per cent a decade ago

DNA

ISLAMABAD: To commemorate the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2026, the Karim Khan Afridi Welfare Foundation brought together policy makers, enforcement agencies, diplomats, youth, educationists and civil society at the Centaurus Mall to raise awareness on addressing the global rise in drug use and abuse. Presenting findings from the World Drug Report 2026, released by UN Office on Drugs and Crime on June 26th, KKAWF CEO, Cristina von Sperling Afridi said that despite worldwide recognition and seizures, global drug use has reached record high with an estimated 331 million people having used drugs in 2024, equivalent to 6.2 per cent of the world's population aged 15 to 64, up from 5.2 per cent a decade ago. The worry is that increasingly potent synthetic drugs are spreading and reshaping illicit markets and exposing vulnerable youth to greater health risks. In 2024, authorities identified 755 new psychoactive substances, including 118 reported for the first time, she said. Other speakers at the gathering also said that the urgency to implement evidence-based prevention responses in educational institutions has never been greater in light of reports showing 17 million youth between 18 - 30 being drug users (ANF, 2025), 53% of university students used drugs (2022) and drugs hitting every fourth household in the city of Karachi. Pakistan has to tackle many fronts-the challenge now includes synthetic drugs, online markets, new substances, organized crime networks, public health strain and the safety of communities. The event was addressed by Regional Commander Anti-Narcotics Force Brigadier Hasan Awaan, Sardar Yasir Ilyas-CEO Centaurus, UNODC Representative, DIG Jawad Tariq, Akhlaque Qureshi Joint Secretary Min of Narcotics Control and H.E. Paulo Domingues- Ambassador of Portugal. While Eman Fayyaz member National Football Team in her remarks called for youth to come forward to team sports for building resilience and keeping away from harms of drugs. The event held in the main lobby Atrium of Centaurus Mall drew big crowds of youth, families visiting the mall. It fea-



tured a series of activities including screening of KKAWF short film "Drive", inspirational Skits performed by local youth groups, distribution of advocacy material, interactive booths featuring quizzes, and photo-op spot, KKAWF, a civil society organization launched in 2015,

is dedicated in its mission to raise awareness and better educate the youth on harms of drug use and abuse to shape a brighter tomorrow. 2025 marked a significant milestone for KKAWF, as it commemorated its 10th anniversary since it was launched.

Lightning strikes kills 2 kids, injure over 15 students

The authority advised citizens to avoid unnecessary travel during adverse weather conditions and to follow safety instructions issued by the local administration to minimise the risk of further losses

DNA

PESHAWAR: Heavy rains, flash floods and lightning strikes caused casualties and widespread damage in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with two children killed and more than 15 female students injured, according to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). The PDMA said two children lost their lives and three others were injured after lightning struck in the Zakha Khel area of Bara in Khyber district. The injured were provided immediate

medical treatment. In a separate incident, lightning struck a women's madrassa in Lower Dir, injuring more than 15 students. Around 250 students were present at the seminary at the time of the incident. The injured were shifted to Wari Hospital for treatment. According to the PDMA, torrential rains and flash floods in Lower Chitral damaged 27 houses, two mosques, two shops and a bridge. Four vehicles and several motorcycles were also affected by flood waters. In Upper Chitral, flooding damaged a house in the Yarkhun and Mastuj areas. The district

administration and relief agencies have provided emergency assistance to the affected families. The PDMA said relief and rehabilitation activities were continuing in the affected areas. Two major roads in Lower Chitral, which had been closed due to flooding, have been reopened for traffic, while authorities were closely monitoring the situation in other affected regions. The authority advised citizens to avoid unnecessary travel during adverse weather conditions and to follow safety instructions issued by the local administration to minimise the risk of further losses.

Punjab on high alert to tackle rain emergencies

LAHORE :Punjab Minister and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee for Disaster Management, Khawaja Salman Rafique, on Thursday said that all relevant departments have been placed on high alert to effectively deal with any emergency situation arising from heavy rains or flooding across the province. The minister made these remarks during his visit to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab, where he reviewed the prevailing weather conditions and preparedness measures. During the visit, Director General PDMA Umar Javed briefed him in detail on the latest rainfall situation, dam conditions and water levels in rivers, including the water ratio in Indian dams. According to the briefing, pre-monsoon rains are expected in several districts of Punjab, including Lahore, until July 6. —APP

Punjab govt expands digital governance

LAHORE :The Punjab government has formally rolled out an advanced e-procurement system in the province as part of its drive to strengthen transparency and digital governance, with all government departments directed to shift public procurement to the new online platform in line with the vision of the Chief Minister. The directions were issued by Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman while chairing a meeting of administrative secretaries at the Civil Secretariat on Thursday. He instructed all provincial departments to ensure the effective implementation of the digital procurement system and accelerate the transition towards paperless governance. Officials briefed the meeting that the e-procurement system had generated estimated savings of Rs70 billion for the provincial exchequer during the 2025-26 financial year by improving efficiency and promoting competitive bidding. According to the briefing, more than 7,000 procuring agencies and 25,000 suppliers have so far been registered on the platform. To enhance transparency and verification, the system has been integrated with the databases of NADRA, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), the Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) and the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC). An online bank transfer facility and 1-Link-based bid security

payment mechanism have also been introduced to facilitate bidders. The meeting was also informed that 420 government services are now available online through the province's e-Biz Portal. Of the more than 106,000 applications received through the portal, over 90,000 have already been processed, enabling citizens to access public services without visiting government offices. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary directed all departments to identify their remaining manual services and integrate them into the e-Biz Portal without delay. He said the government's objective was to digitise all departmental services to improve service delivery, efficiency and public convenience. He added that the Dastak App was also functioning actively to provide selected government services at citizens' doorsteps. Besides digital governance initiatives, the meeting reviewed progress on the issuance of Green Property Certificates and assessed preparedness measures to address potential flooding during the ongoing monsoon season. The meeting was attended by the Additional Chief Secretary, Senior Member Board of Revenue, administrative secretaries of all provincial departments and directors general, while divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners participated through video link.—APP

KP Minister opens business incubation centre

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Sarzamin Khan presented commemorative shields to Provincial Minister Meena Khan Afridi, Local Government Secretary Zafar-ul-Islam and Additional Secretary Higher Education Muhammad Farooq

PESHAWAR :Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Archives and Libraries, and Local Government, Meena Khan Afridi, on Thursday inaugurated a newly constructed Business Incubation Centre and launched the I-LINK online e-payment system during a visit to the Agriculture University Peshawar. Speaking at the ceremony, the provincial minister said the university would continue to make progress and urged faculty members to focus on research and the development of new crop varieties. He stressed that research would have greater value when translated into industrial applications and practical use. The minister formally launched the I-LINK online payment system by conducting its first transaction. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Sarzamin Khan welcomed the minister and thanked Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and the provincial government for recognising the university's performance through a cash award. He said the government had introduced a transparent performance-based grant system to improve the quality of higher education and promote academic, research and administrative excellence in public universities. Dean Prof Dr Iqbal Munir and Registrar Dr Abdul Salam briefed the participants on the university's academic and administrative initiatives, while Director CNEP Gohar-ul-Rehman Khalil highlighted the features of the I-LINK online payment system. The university's Director Works said the new Business Incubation Centre houses a lecture theatre, display centre, workshops, video conferencing room, technology transfer unit, committee room, computer laboratory, library, professional development facilities, intellectual property office, industrial linkages section and administrative offices. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Sarzamin Khan presented commemorative shields to Provincial Minister Meena Khan Afridi, Local Government Secretary Zafar-ul-Islam and Additional Secretary Higher Education Muhammad Farooq.—APP

Raja Omar Kamran meets Mishaal Malik

Pakistan continues its vital, positive role as the primary diplomatic voice for Kashmir—a stance powerfully reinforced by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, who has firmly reaffirmed that Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Solidarity with the Kashmiri Freedom Struggle Regional stability in South Asia remains tied to the dispute of Jammu and Kashmir. While Kashmiri leader Yaseen Malik remains in Indian custody, his wife, Mishaal Malik, courageously champions the cause globally. Pakistan continues its

vital, positive role as the primary diplomatic voice for Kashmir—a stance powerfully reinforced by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, who has firmly reaffirmed that Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein. Standing in unwavering support of this shared national cause is Raja Omar Kamran of Sarai Alamgir, son of former MPA Raja Kamran Afzal, underscoring our deep, generational commitment to a free Kashmir.


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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan Self Defence Day

July 01/Singapore Armed Forces Day

July 01 / Canada National Day

July 01/Somalia Independence Day

July 04/USA Independence Day

July 05/Algeria Independence Day

July 09/Argentine Independence Day

July 09/Mongolia Revolution Day

July 14/France National Day

July 15/Brunei Sultan's Birthday

July 21/Belgium National Day

July 20/TRNC Independence Day

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July 26/Cuba National Day

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Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pak-Sri Lanka education cooperation programme

During the meeting with Chairman UGC Sri Lanka, Project Director HEC Mr. Jehanzeb Khan reiterated HEC's commitment to strengthening the bilateral relations through collaboration in the higher education sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD/COLOMBO (SRI LANKA) : A delegation of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan and eight Pakistani universities has embarked on its five-day academic visit to Sri Lanka with detailed meetings with High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka Maj. Gen. (R.) Dr. Nayyar Naseer, Chairman University Grants Commission (UGC) Sri Lanka Senior Professor Kapila Seneneratne, and other relevant key figures.

In the next five days, the delegation led by Project Director HEC Mr. Jehanzeb Khan is set to carry out academic activities under the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme, including meetings with top academicians, visits to renowned higher education institutions, and holding of education exhibitions to promote the programme during the next five days. As a part of efforts to strengthen academic relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the visit is taking place at a time when HEC has invited applications from Sri Lankan students to win Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships – the last date for submission for applications is July 5. High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka Maj. Gen. (R.) Dr. Nayyar Naseer welcomed the delegation and underlined the need for sustained efforts to strengthen bilateral academic relations. He stressed the significance of diversifying the Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarship Scheme and enhancing academic exchanges while putting efforts to build research collaborations. The delegates appraised the High Commissioner of the success of the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme. They highlighted the increase in the enrolment of Sri Lankan students in Pakistani universities during the last few years. During the meeting with Chairman UGC Sri Lanka, Project Director HEC Mr. Jehanzeb Khan reiterated HEC's commitment to strength-



ening the bilateral relations through collaboration in the higher education sector. He underscored the opportunities being offered under the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme, particularly the Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships. He briefed the Chairman on the accomplishments marked under the programme with special reference to the Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships. He emphasised the importance of support from UGC in expanding bilateral relations

through the initiatives like the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme. The Chairman UGC appreciated HEC Pakistan's efforts to execute the collaborative programme and held out assurance to extend support for the success of the programme. He acknowledged the potential of collaboration among the higher education institutions of Pakistan and Sri Lanka. He said the Vice Chancellors of Sri Lankan universities are being appraised of the programme and its features. Efforts in

this direction will further strengthen the bilateral academic linkages, he affirmed. In their visit to Baudhaloka Foundation – an entity that renders a wide range of services in religious, cultural and social spheres, the delegation held a meeting with notable officials. Speaking on this occasion, Mr. Jehanzeb Khan shed light on the vital relations between the two friendly countries and emphasised the role of collaboration in higher education in bringing the people of the two sides closer.

ANF seizes over 316 kgs of narcotics

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) conducted seven operations in different cities across the country on Thursday and arrested five suspects and recovered 316.724 kilograms(kgs) of narcotics worth more than Rs 40.4 million. According to an ANF spokesperson, the operations targeted international drug trafficking, inter-provincial smuggling and domestic narcotics networks. In an international drug interdiction operation at Sialkot International Airport, ANF recovered 12.160 kgs of ice soaked in seven Ithram garments packed in the luggage of a passenger travelling to Saudi Arabia. In another operation at a courier office in Faisalabad, officials seized 6.560 kgs of ice soaked in clothing concealed in a parcel destined for Saudi Arabia and arrested a suspect. Under inter-provincial drug interdiction efforts, ANF recovered 24 kgs of hashish from a passenger bus near Taunsa Toll Plaza and apprehended an accused. During domestic drug interdiction operations, ANF recovered 10 kgs of hashish from a motorcyclist near Shikarpur Road in Sukkur and arrested the suspect. In Peshawar, 3.450 kgs of ice were recovered from a vehicle near a CNG station on Ring Road, leading to the arrest of an individual. —APP

IRSA releases 306,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 306,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 408,200 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1458.85 feet, which was 56.85 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 247,600 cusecs and 152,400 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1163.15 feet, which was 113.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 37,000 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 203,600, 170,800, 101,800, and 40,500 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 48,400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera.—APP

Women's role in economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Institute of Rural Management (IRM), in collaboration with the Human Resource Development Network (HRDN), organized a high-level national seminar titled "Closing the Skills Gap: Women, Work and Sustainable Economic Growth" in Islamabad. The seminar brought together senior government officials, development practitioners, academicians, civil society representatives, private sector leaders, media professionals and development partners to discuss practical strategies for strengthening women's participation in Pakistan's workforce through skills development and inclusive economic policies, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. Barrister Nabeel Ahmad Awan, Secretary, Establishment Division, Government of Pakistan, attended the event as the chief guest. In his address, he underscored that women's economic participation is a national priority and emphasized that Pakistan's inclusive and sustainable growth depends on equipping women with market-driven skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship opportunities, financial inclusion, and stronger linkages to employment and

markets. He also appreciated IRM for organizing a timely platform that fosters collaboration among the government, academia, development partners and the private sector to translate dialogue into practical action. Earlier, Dr. Roomi S. Hayat, Chief Executive Officer of IRM, welcomed the participants and reaffirmed the institute's commitment to strengthening human capital development across Pakistan. He said skills development goes beyond employment by creating opportunities, empowering communities and contributing to national prosperity. Dr. Hayat stressed the need for stronger partnerships among the government, educational institutions, industry and development partners to bridge the gap between education, skills and labour market demands while promoting women's economic participation. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Noor Fatima, Director of HRDN and Head of the Department of International Relations and Political Science at the International Islamic University Islamabad. She spoke on the theme "Women, Skills and Sustainable Economic Growth in Pakistan," highlighting the importance of investing in women's education, future-ready skills and policy reforms to unlock Pakistan's economic potential and achieve inclusive development.

During the strategic reflections session, former Federal Secretary Ms. Fareena Mazhar emphasized that women's skills development should be viewed as an economic growth agenda rather than a welfare initiative. She highlighted the need to move beyond certificate-based training towards outcome-oriented programmes that lead to employment, entrepreneurship, income generation and market access. She further stressed the importance of equipping women with digital skills, financial literacy, e-commerce capabilities and climate-smart livelihood opportunities while strengthening partnerships among the government, the private sector, training institutions and civil society. The seminar also featured a moderated discussion, enabling participants from government institutions, academia, development organizations and the private sector to exchange ideas and share recommendations on strengthening Pakistan's skills ecosystem and expanding economic opportunities for women. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Israr Muhammad Khan, Director General of the Akhtar Hameed Khan National Centre for Rural Development (AHKNCRD). He appreciated the contributions of the chief guest, speakers, participants and the IRM team for organizing a meaningful forum. During his remarks, he also proposed that, considering IRM's institutional experience and national outreach, the organization be considered for recognition as a Centre of Excellence for Skills Development, Women's Economic Empowerment and Rural Capacity Building through the appropriate official process. Souvenirs were also presented to the distinguished guests, followed by a group photograph and a networking session, reaffirming the shared commitment of all stakeholders to advancing women's skills, inclusive employment and sustainable economic growth in Pakistan.

Two new flights set to operate at Gwadar new airport

ISLAMABAD: New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) is all set to see two new flights operation from South Air Pakistan from July 9, 2026, to October 31, 2026. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Gwadar Station Manager Muhammad Saleem said that the airline will operate two scheduled weekly flights to and from Gwadar under the new timetable. As per the schedule, on Thursdays, Flight Z8-922 will depart Karachi at 4:40 p.m. and arrive in Gwadar at 6:10 p.m. The return Flight Z8-923 will leave Gwadar at 6:40 p.m. and land in Karachi at 8:10 p.m. On Saturdays, Flight Z8-909 will depart Karachi at 7:00 a.m. and arrive in Gwadar at 8:30 a.m. It will then continue to Quetta, departing Gwadar at 9:00 a.m. and arriving in Quetta at 10:40 a.m. For the return journey, Flight Z8-910 will depart Quetta at 11:10 a.m., arrive in Gwadar at 1:10 p.m., and then leave Gwadar at 1:40 p.m., reaching Karachi at 3:10 p.m. Muhammad Saleem said that the implementation of the new flight schedule will further improve travel convenience for passengers in Gwadar and strengthen the city's air connectivity with Karachi and Quetta.—APP

HEC's organises orientation session

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ISLAMABAD/PESHAWAR: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) organized an orientation session entitled "Overview of the International HEI Ranking Framework and Strategies for Improving the International Ranking of Universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" at HEC Regional Centre Peshawar. The session aimed to enhance the capacity of university representatives and equip them with insights into global higher-education ranking systems and strategies to improve the international standing of universities in the province. In his welcome address, Director/In-Charge HEC Regional Centre Peshawar, Engr. Noman Ahmed Khan, underscored the growing importance of international university rankings in promoting academic excellence, research visibility, innovation, and institutional reputation. He emphasized that uni-

versities must adopt strategic measures to improve their performance in globally recognized ranking frameworks. He reaffirmed HEC's commitment to supporting higher education institutions in achieving international competitiveness and excellence. The session was led by Prof. Dr Muhammad Usman Awan, Director, Institute of Quality and Technology Management (IQTM), University of the Punjab, and Convener of the Ranking Committee, who served as the resource person. Drawing on his extensive experience in higher education quality assurance and university rankings, he delivered a comprehensive presentation on major international ranking systems, their methodologies, indicators, and emerging trends in global higher education assessment. Dr Awan provided participants with an in-depth overview of leading international ranking frameworks and the key performance indicators used to evaluate universities. He highlighted the significance

of research productivity, citation impact, internationalization, academic reputation, industry engagement, innovation, and sustainable development initiatives in determining institutional rankings. He also shared practical strategies and best practices for enhancing institutional visibility, strengthening research output, expanding international collaborations, and improving overall university performance. The orientation session provided an interactive platform for meaningful discussions on ranking-related challenges and opportunities. Representatives from public and private sector universities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) actively participated in the deliberations and sought expert guidance on improving institutional performance across various ranking indicators. The session concluded with a question-and-answer segment, followed by a vote of thanks to the resource person and participants for their valuable contributions.

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Briefs

Contract service can't be counted towards promotion, rules SC

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan has ruled that service rendered on a contractual basis could not be counted towards the qualifying service required for promotion, holding that contract employees did not fall within the definition of a "civil servant" under the Sindh Civil Servants Act, 1973.

The court further observed that an unlawful benefit mistakenly extended to one employee in the past did not create a legal right for others to claim the same concession. A three-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi and Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui announced its reserved judgment in two civil appeals filed against a decision of the Sindh Service Tribunal. Upholding the tribunal's ruling, the Supreme Court held that service rendered on a contractual basis could not be included in the minimum qualifying service required for promotion. The judgment said that under the Sindh Civil Servants Act, 1973, and the relevant rules, a contract employee was excluded from the definition of a "civil servant." Consequently, contractual service could not be treated as equivalent to regular government service for promotion purposes. The court distinguished between ad hoc and contractual appointments, observing that the two have different legal status. An ad hoc appointment was a temporary arrangement that continued until a regular appointment was made, whereas contractual employment was governed by the terms of a fixed-term agreement and did not confer any right to permanent appointment or regularisation unless specifically provided by law or government policy. APP

PPRA to launch EPADS 2.0 Nationwide

ISLAMABAD: The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) will formally launch EPADS 2.0, an upgraded digital public procurement platform, under the vision of "One Nation, One System" to modernise government procurement, enhance transparency and accountability, and reduce the cost of doing business. Managing Director Hasnat Ahmed Qureshi announced the initiative while addressing a press briefing here on Thursday. Addressing the media representatives alongside Director General (Legal), Muhammad Aslam Waseem and EPADS Project Director Sheikh Alzaal Raza, Qureshi said the upgraded system was developed in-house as a fully integrated, end-to-end procurement and contract management platform meeting international standards and supporting the government's Digital Pakistan agenda. APP

Call for addressing varsities common challenges

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Vice Chancellors' Forum of universities from Rawalpindi, Islamabad and surrounding areas was held at the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Islamabad, to strengthen inter-university coordination, discuss common challenges, and adopt measures to enhance collaboration and improve the quality of higher education. The meeting was chaired by Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr Zabita Khan Shinwari, and attended by vice chancellors, rectors and campus heads of 21 universities. Dr Zabita Khan Shinwari presented the agenda of the forum and briefed the participants on its objectives, role and future direction. The participants discussed the financial and administrative challenges faced by universities and reviewed coordination between higher education institutions, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and the government. The forum expressed concern over the recent temporary suspension of admissions to Computer Science programmes at several universities. APP

Call for dialogue, eco coop to reset Pak-Afghan ties

The speakers called for a calibrated policy framework that combines verifiable action against cross-border militancy with continued trade, people-to-people contact, Track 2 engagement, and greater involvement of regional and multilateral institutions

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ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Afghanistan must move beyond a predominantly security-driven paradigm and instead cultivate their relationship in sustained dialogue, socioeconomic cooperation, and pragmatic regional engagement to prevent bilateral tensions from hardening into prolonged hostility, speakers said at a roundtable titled "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations: What Next? Towards Pragmatic Policy Pathways in a Shifting Regional Order", convened by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) Bringing together experts and former officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Uzbekistan, the discussion examined the persistent trust deficit, the TTP challenge, border closures, trade disruptions, and the wider implications of strained Pakistan-Afghanistan relations for regional connectivity. Participants acknowledged Pakistan's legitimate security concerns but cautioned that prolonged border restrictions, reactive policies, and an ex-

cessive focus on government-to-government engagement risked deepening economic hardship, humanitarian suffering, and political estrangement. The speakers called for a calibrated policy framework that combines verifiable action against cross-border militancy with continued trade, people-to-people contact, Track 2 engagement, and greater involvement of regional and multilateral institutions. They stressed that geography made sustained engagement unavoidable and that economic interdependence should serve as the foundation for a more stable and functional relationship. Maj. Gen. (R) Inam Ul Haque argued that Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have been viewed too narrowly through a government-to-government lens, while it primarily needs to be seen through business-to-business and people-to-people ties - that bind the two countries - as the paradigm of engagement. He stressed that conflict is not the natural course of bilateral relations and called for socioeconomic considerations to take precedence over geopolitical cal-

culations. However, he cautioned that the TTP issue remains the principal source of contention and that unless it is addressed, relations are likely to remain marked by an uneasy peace in the years ahead. Abdul Waheed Waheed, Afghan scholar, argued that the deeper problem lies in the inconsistent and frequently changing policy choices pursued by both countries over the past five decades, which have repeatedly generated mistrust and instability. While the current terrorism challenge has placed the TTP at the centre of bilateral discourse, both sides must abandon the blame game, accept the undeniable reality of a permanent neighbourhood, and pursue solutions through sustained engagement and policy consistency. Pakistan's Former Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Asif Durrani, argued that, for Pakistan, the TTP constitutes the central issue in relations with Afghanistan, with most other bilateral tensions linked to the group's presence inside Afghanistan and use of Afghan territory to launch cross-border attacks against

Pakistani civilians and security personnel. He maintained that meaningful improvement in relations required concrete action to disarm the TTP and deny it safe havens. Drawing on his tenure, he said the Afghan authorities had repeatedly offered verbal assurances, but stressed that these needed to be translated into commitments under a written and verifiable mechanism. He also described dialogue with the TTP as deeply problematic because of the group's rejection of Pakistan's constitutional order and its rigid ideological position. Lt. Gen. (R) Asif Yasin Malik underscored the importance of Track 2 dialogue, citing its past contribution to resolving people-to-people issues. Drawing on his experience of dealing directly with the TTP, he said that no externally supported insurgency could succeed without a conducive domestic environment. He called for measured, consistent policymaking rather than knee-jerk reactions, arguing that Pakistan-Afghanistan relations could not remain security-driven and must instead be anchored in socioeconomic cooperation.

Weather conditions under observation

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ISLAMABAD: NDMA Expert Zahra Hassan issued a strong warning on Thursday emphasizing the urgent need for public vigilance as escalating climate crises and unpredictable weather patterns can pose a severe threat to water and food security, with ongoing monitoring by authorities underscoring the critical importance of immediate awareness, proactive measures and decisive action to safeguard the nation's future. In an exclusive appearance on a local media outlet, the NDMA expert highlighted the growing concerns over changing weather patterns and their severe impact on communities. She shed light on the increasing intensity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, reduced rainfall, glacier melts and unpredictable floods. These fluctuations are disrupting normal climatic cycles and posing significant challenges to public safety and infrastructure. The expert emphasized that Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab is particularly at risk, facing imminent water stress along with potential damage to agriculture and food security. The region's vulnerability is exacerbated by the ongoing shift in weather patterns, which threaten to worsen drought conditions and hinder crop production. Such environmental stress could have long-term socio-economic repercussions for local populations, she added. She pointed out that NDMA is well-prepared and actively monitoring these developments using advanced technology. The agency is issuing timely alerts and advisories to help communities prepare for and respond to extreme weather incidents. This proactive approach is crucial for minimizing damage, protecting lives and ensuring community resilience. Zahra also stressed that the issue is not confined to Pakistan alone but globally, monsoon patterns are becoming irregular, leading to above-normal rains in some areas and severe droughts in others. This irregularity is contributing to unpredictable weather phenomena, including major water shortages and flooding events across different regions. In conclusion, the expert called for increased awareness and coordinated efforts to address the climate crisis. She urged policymakers, communities and individuals to stay informed and prepared, emphasizing that climate change is a shared global challenge that requires immediate attention and action. APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Education and Professional Training, Wajih Qamar, addressing a Seminar titled: "105 Years of Communist Party of China: Achievements, Experiences, and the China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future" at Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI).

Greater investment in schools, teachers stressed

ISLAMABAD: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) directed the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to formulate a comprehensive education policy within two months, aimed at expanding access to quality education and addressing challenges in the federal capital's school system. The committee, chaired by Naveed Qamar, reviewed audit observations concerning out-of-school children in capital and stressed that investment in education and human capital should remain a national priority, said a press release on Thursday. The Chairman underscored that policy would be submitted to the federal cabinet for approval and funding, with the aim of strengthening educational infrastructure, improving teacher availability and expanding learning opportunities across capital. Secretary Education, Nadeem Mahbub, highlighted the numbers of schools established in capital since 2014, efforts made to secure additional development funding and challenges faced in this regard. Highlighting the need for long-term reforms, Naveed Qamar called for a thorough review of the education policy, greater investment in schools, and innovative public-private partnership models to meet the growing educational needs of the capital. Committee member emphasized improving school admissions and administrative performance to ensure more children benefit from quality education. Director General of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) informed the committee that enrollment in Islamabad schools has continued to improve with male students enrollment increased from 96,000 in 2021 to 99,000 in 2024, while female enrollment rose from 128,000 to 129,000 over the same period. DNA

Govt targets electrification of over 15,000 villages

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's power distribution companies (DISCOs) plan to expand electricity access in FY2026-27 by electrifying 15,327 villages and adding 1,689,849 new consumer connections, with rural access and consumer-base expansion emerging as key targets of the distribution sector plan. According to a document of the Power Division available with Wealth Pakistan, the planned investments aim to support progress on SDG Indicator 7.1.1, which relates to the share of the population with access to electricity. The initiatives are expected to significantly expand electricity access in both urban and rural areas. Village electrification will be led by Gujranwala Electric Power Company, which has been assigned the highest target of electrifying 8,876 villages during the year. Multan Electric Power Company follows with 2,798 villages, while Peshawar Electric Supply Company is targeted to electrify 1,104 villages, and Quetta Electric Supply Company 1,050 villages. Faisalabad Electric Supply Company is expected to electrify 825 villages, Islamabad Electric Supply Company 300 villages, Lahore Electric Supply Company 280 villages, Hyderabad Electric Supply Company 50 villages, Hazara Electric Supply Company 40 villages, and Tribal Areas Electric Supply Company four villages. No village electrification target has been shown for Sukkur Electric Power

Company in the document. On the consumer side, Lahore Electric Supply Company has been given the largest addition target of 453,000 new consumers in FY2026-27. Gujranwala Electric Power Company is projected to add 351,638 consumers, followed by Faisalabad Electric Supply Company with 296,000 and Multan Electric Power Company with 250,000 new consumers. Islamabad Electric Supply Company is expected to add 195,000 consumers, while Peshawar Electric Supply Company is targeting 77,489. Other targets include 22,617 consumers for Quetta Electric Supply Company, 21,500 for Hazara Electric Supply Company, 13,766 for Hyderabad Electric Supply Company, 7,253 for Sukkur Electric Power Company, and 1,586 for Tribal Areas Electric Supply Company. The document also shows that the wider distribution system will be strengthened through the addition of 799.5 kilometers of 132kV transmission lines and 2,087 MVA of 132kV capacity. The plan further includes 1,321.15 MVA of 11kV capacity addition, 4,134 kilometers of 11kV transmission line addition, and 1,742 kilometers of 400-volt transmission line addition. The planned expansion indicates that the government is focusing not only on adding consumers in major demand centers but also on extending electricity access to underserved villages. APP

Family alleges Rs 500,000 demand at PIMS

Newborn custody dispute reaches court

ISLAMABAD: The District and Sessions Court of Islamabad on Thursday heard a case of the custody of a newborn at a hospital after the child's grandmother filed a petition alleging that the baby has not been handed over to the mother despite the completion of legal formalities. The family has also accused a hospital staff member of demanding Rs 500,000 for the child's release. The case was heard by Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Ali Waraich, who sought a report from the administration of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS). The court also directed Islamabad Police to visit the hospital and submit a report on the matter

the same day. According to the petition filed by the child's grandmother, Nasreen Bibi, through her counsel Mehtab Abbasi, the newborn was delivered by Mehnaz Bibi at PIMS. However, the family claimed that the baby has not been handed over to the mother since birth. The petitioner told the court that all required legal procedures have been completed, but the hospital's gynecology department has allegedly continued to keep the child in its custody without justification. The petition further alleged that a head nurse at the hospital demanded Rs 500,000 from the family in exchange for handing over the newborn. According to the family, the nurse

allegedly stated that the baby would not be released to the mother unless the amount was paid. The application also claimed that the family was threatened that the newborn could be handed over to unknown individuals if the payment was not made. Seeking urgent intervention, the family requested the court to order the immediate transfer of the newborn to the mother. They argued that there was no legal reason to continue withholding the child after the completion of all formal requirements. Following the hearing, the court sought reports from both the hospital administration and Islamabad Police before proceeding further with the case. APP

Environment expert warn of existential threat

ISLAMABAD: An environmental expert called for an urgent regional response to the pollution flowing from India into Pakistan, advocating for high-level diplomatic engagement, media awareness, and private-sector collaboration to enforce the emergency steps necessary to curb the impact of smog, water scarcity, and urban flooding. Talking to PTV, environmental expert Dr. Zainab Naeem said that the trans-boundary movement of smog and systemic water mismanagement necessitate aggressive diplomatic channels and the urgent mobilization of public-private partnerships to drive sustainable agricultural innovation, effectively moving past empty rhetoric to confront existential threats. She highlighted that Pakistan remains uniquely susceptible to climate-induced disasters, with the seasonal practice of crop burning in India significantly worsening the nation's air quality and intensifying its vulnerability to extreme heatwaves. APP

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Pakistan's Search for Productive Governance



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

MORE than two centuries ago, the French social thinker Henri de Saint-Simon advanced an idea that continues to resonate in societies struggling with economic stagnation, institutional weakness and political polarization. Writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution and at the dawn of industrial capitalism, Saint-Simon argued that nations prosper when they are governed not by inherited privilege or political intrigue, but by those who

contribute directly to social and economic progress. Scientists, engineers, industrialists, skilled workers and administrators, he believed, should play a central role in shaping public policy because they possess the knowledge necessary to improve society. Although Saint-Simon belongs to the tradition of early socialism, many of his ideas transcend ideological labels. His emphasis on productive governance, economic planning, meritocracy and public welfare remains relevant for developing countries seeking sustainable growth. Pakistan, confronted by recurring economic crises, governance challenges and institutional inefficiencies, offers a compelling case through which to examine the enduring significance of Saint-Simon's thought.

At the heart of Saint-Simon's philosophy was a distinction between productive and unproductive social forces. He criticized aristocracies that enjoyed privilege without contributing meaningfully to economic development. In his view, society should reward those who create wealth, expand knowledge and strengthen collective prosperity. Political authority, therefore, should be closely connected to competence and public service rather than status, patronage or inherited influence. Pakistan's post-independence history reflects a recurring tension between these two models of governance. On one hand, the country possesses a vibrant pool of professionals, entrepreneurs, engineers, academics and skilled workers capable of driving economic transformation. On the other, public institutions have often been shaped by political calculations that prioritize short-term interests over long-term development. The result has been an uneven trajectory marked by periods of growth followed by cycles of instability.

Saint-Simon would likely argue that Pakistan's central challenge is not the absence of talent but the inability to systematically mobilize that talent in service of national development. The country's universities produce thousands of graduates each year. Its private sector has demonstrated resilience in fields ranging from information technology to agriculture and manufacturing. Yet the connection between expertise and policymaking often remains weak. Decisions with profound economic consequences are frequently influenced by political expediency rather than technical assessment. This observation becomes particularly relevant when



examining Pakistan's economic management. Saint-Simon believed that economic affairs should be guided by knowledge, planning and coordination. He did not advocate rigid state control; rather, he envisioned a society where economic activity would be organized to advance collective welfare. For him, planning was not a bureaucratic exercise but a means of aligning resources with national priorities. This perspective offers valuable insights for Pakistan, where economic inequality and social disparities continue to pose significant challenges. Despite progress in several sectors, millions of citizens still face limited access to quality education, healthcare and employment opportunities. Economic growth, while essential, cannot be regarded as an end in itself. Its success must be measured by its ability to improve living standards across society. Saint-Simon would likely support investments in human capital as a foundation for national progress. Education, vocational training and scientific research were central to his vision of development. For Pakistan, this means moving beyond short-term fixes and prioritizing sectors that enhance productivity and competitiveness over the long run. A country with a young population cannot afford to neglect the skills and knowledge required by a rapidly changing global economy.

Yet perhaps the most striking feature of Saint-Simon's philosophy is his belief in cooperation. Unlike thinkers who viewed politics primarily through the lens of conflict, he emphasized collaboration among social groups. Industrialists, workers, professionals and public officials, he argued, share an interest in collective prosperity. Social progress becomes possible when institutions encourage cooperation rather than confrontation. Pakistan's contemporary political environment often appears dominated by polarization. Political parties, state institutions and interest groups frequently find themselves engaged in confrontations that consume energy and undermine governance. While disagreement is an inevitable component of democratic life, prolonged instability can weaken public institutions and discourage investment. Saint-Simon's emphasis on cooperation serves as a reminder that national development requires a minimum level of consensus regarding fundamental economic and social objectives. Of course, Pakistan cannot simply import a nineteenth-century European philosophy into a vastly different political and cultural context. Nor should Saint-Simon's ideas be viewed as a complete blueprint for contemporary governance. His writings emerged from a specific historical moment and reflected assumptions that may not fully align with modern democratic principles. Nevertheless, his central insight remains remarkably relevant: societies flourish when competence, productivity and public welfare occupy a higher place than privilege, patronage and short-term political calculation. As Pakistan confronts the challenges of the twenty-first century, the question is not whether it should become Saint-Simonian in a literal sense. Rather, it is whether its institutions can better harness expertise, reward merit, invest in human development and pursue policies that serve the broader public interest. These objectives transcend ideological divisions and speak directly to the practical demands of governance. In an era marked by economic uncertainty and political contestation, Saint-Simon's message retains a quiet but powerful relevance. Nations advance not merely through rhetoric or ambition, but through institutions capable of transforming knowledge into progress and public authority into collective prosperity. For Pakistan, that lesson remains as important today as it was in Europe two hundred years ago.

How the 2026 World Cup Mirrors a Shifting Planet

Qamar Bashir



Africa appears to be the next great football frontier. It has youth, speed, hunger, physical power and a huge talent base. African players already shape European leagues. The missing piece has often been national organization, federation stability, coaching continuity and infrastructure.

But Morocco's 2022 semifinal run and its 2026 continuation show that when African talent is organized properly, it can challenge anyone. Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Egypt, DR Congo and South Africa all represent different dimensions of this rise

FOOTBALL is not merely a game. It is the most universal emotional language on earth. No other sport commands the same depth of passion, the same river of tears, the same roar of hope, and the same national longing. It belongs to streets, villages, capitals, stadiums, television screens, migrant communities, rich clubs, poor neighborhoods and entire continents. A football match can become a national festival, a public tragedy, a diplomatic signal and a cultural declaration all at once. The FIFA World Cup sits at the center of this global emotion. The 2026 World Cup is the biggest edition in history: 48 teams compete across 104 matches in Canada, Mexico and the United States. FIFA presents this tournament as the largest and most ambitious World Cup ever staged. But the real importance of 2026 is not only its size. Its deeper meaning is that football power is becoming more democratic. The old monopoly of Europe and South America is visibly under pressure. The tournament is now in the Round of 32, and the evidence is on the field. African teams are not present as decoration; they are present as serious competitors. Morocco eliminates the Netherlands on penalties and reaches the last 16. Morocco beats the Dutch 3-2 in a shootout after a 1-1 draw and now faces Canada in the Round of 16. Paraguay eliminates Germany on penalties. Brazil survives Japan only by a narrow 2-1 margin. France defeats Sweden, but the old European aura of automatic superiority is weaker.

In the Round of 32 field, Africa is strongly represented by Morocco, South Africa, Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Senegal, Algeria, Egypt, Cape Verde and Ghana. Asia and the wider AFC zone are represented by Japan and Australia, while Middle Eastern and North African football is present through Morocco, Algeria and Egypt, with the broader regional rise visible in the growing investment of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states.

For decades after the Second World War, South America carried the soul of football. Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay give the world beauty, rhythm, improvisation and artistry. Brazil's five World Cup titles remain the highest by any country. Argentina and Uruguay add their own legendary chapters. South American football is not only about tactics; it is about imagination. It teaches the world that the ball can be danced with, not merely kicked. Then Europe rises. Germany brings discipline. Italy brings defensive intelligence. France

brings athletic diversity and tactical balance. Spain brings possession football. England, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal become central to the modern football economy. European clubs become the richest and strongest institutions in the game. They attract the best players from Africa, South America and Asia. Europe becomes the training ground, marketplace and tactical laboratory of world football. But 2026 shows that the old football map is changing. Europe still has money, clubs, academies and history, but fear is disappearing. African and Asian teams no longer enter the pitch with inferiority. They press, attack, organize, counterattack and take penalties with belief. Morocco's victory over the Netherlands is not only a result; it is a message. Japan's narrow loss to Brazil is not failure; it is proof that Asia can push the five-time champions to the edge. African teams reaching the knockout stage in large numbers shows that the continent is no longer waiting outside the palace. It is already inside.

Africa appears to be the next great football frontier. It has youth, speed, hunger, physical power and a huge talent base. African players already shape European leagues. The missing piece has often been national organization, federation stability, coaching continuity and infrastructure. But Morocco's 2022 semifinal run and its 2026 continuation show that when African talent is organized properly, it can challenge anyone. Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Egypt, DR Congo and South Africa all represent different dimensions of this rise.

Asia's rise is different but equally important. Japan and South Korea build through discipline, school systems, domestic leagues and technical education. Japan now plays with confidence against the strongest nations. South Korea has already shown in past tournaments that Asian football can reach deep stages. Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and other West Asian nations add another layer: physical courage, tactical compactness and growing investment. The Middle East is becoming a football investment zone. Qatar hosts the 2022 World Cup. Saudi Arabia is preparing to host the 2034 World Cup. Gulf states are buying clubs, attracting stars, building academies and placing football inside national development strategies. Money alone cannot produce greatness, but money combined with youth development, coaching, facilities and football culture can accelerate history.

This shift in football also resembles a wider shift

in the world. The old global order is no longer as fixed as it once appeared. Power is moving from a narrow Western center toward a more complex, multipolar world. China is rising economically and strategically. India is growing. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and other regional powers are asserting themselves more visibly. The comparison is not exact – football results do not prove military, economic or diplomatic supremacy – but football does reflect confidence, investment, identity and the psychology of nations.

That is why the 2026 World Cup feels larger than sport. When Morocco defeats the Netherlands, when Paraguay removes Germany, when Japan pushes Brazil, when African teams fill the knockout stage, the message is clear: history is no longer owned by the same few countries. The world is becoming more competitive, and football is one of the most visible arenas where this change is seen.

Europe and South America remain giants. Brazil, Argentina, France, Spain, Portugal, England and others are still elite. But the gap is narrowing. The next twenty years may not produce the complete fall of Europe or South America, but they are likely to produce a new football order. Quarterfinals and semifinals will increasingly include African and Asian teams. The first World Cup champion from outside Europe and South America is no longer impossible. Africa appears the strongest candidate to break that wall first, followed by Japan or South Korea from Asia. The 2026 World Cup is therefore a turning point. It is not only expanding the number of teams; it is expanding belief. It is giving the global South, Africa, Asia and the Middle East a larger stage. And these teams are not merely filling spaces. They are creating shocks, rewriting assumptions and forcing the old powers to sweat. Football's power map begins with South American genius, moves into European organization, and now enters the age of global redistribution. The ball is moving from old centers to new frontiers. The World Cup is no longer only a contest between Europe and South America. It is becoming a world parliament of talent, emotion, money, identity and ambition. The beautiful game is telling us something profound: the world is changing, and the football field is changing with it.

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

Babur's Mango and the Modern Heatwave

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Europe has begun to feel the sting of its own making. The summer of 2022 claimed over 60,000 lives across the continent from heat-related causes.

Subsequent years have seen tens of thousands more, and the early 2026 heatwave has already produced more than 1,300 excess deaths in a short span, with climate change identified as a major...

AS the fierce heat of early June descends like a heavy mantle upon the plains of South Asia, it brings with it a trial as ancient as the rivers that carve through these lands. In Pakistan and across the adjacent regions, the sun beats down with unsparring intensity, drying the soil into cracked earth and intensifying drought even before the monsoon clouds gather on the horizon. This seasonal rhythm has shaped the lives of millions for centuries, forging a people whose endurance has become legendary. The founder of the Mughal Empire, Zahiruddin Babur, captured something of this in his celebrated autobiography, the "Tuzk-e-Babri". He described the three months of monsoon in India as a period difficult to endure, marked by stifling humidity and discomfort, yet he found consolation in the surpassing sweetness of a certain fruit—widely believed to be the mango—whose ripe abundance offered delight amid the hardship. The very sight of its leaves, he noted, brought a measure of cheer. Nevertheless, Babur's inclinations often drew him toward the cooler breezes of his native Ferghana Valley or the shaded hills and mountain retreats of his new dominion, where one might escape the oppressive warmth.

In our own era, the same longing stirs in the hearts of Pakistanis when the temperatures climb. Families make plans to seek relief in the lush northern valleys or the misty heights of Murree and the Galyat. Those blessed with greater means fly to the temperate shores of Europe, while countless others whose sons and daughters have settled abroad journey to Canada, America, or Britain to pass the hottest weeks in familiar comfort.

In my quiet neighbourhood in Islamabad, such discussions unfold over cups of tea beneath the slow-turning fans. My neighbour former banker Mr. Shahid Ansari, a robust and cheerful man whom our mutual friend and neighbour Mr. Yousuf Khalid, a veteran merchant Navy Captain titled him "Maz'ay kay Aadmi" often teases for

his boundless optimism and love of sport, spoke to us only days ago of his hopes. A devoted follower of cricket and football alike, Ansari had arranged for his son in Canada to host him, with dreams of attending a live FIFA match in a grand stadium. Yet fresh reports of worsening heat across Europe gave him pause. Hundreds of excess deaths have already been recorded in the ongoing European heatwave, with temperatures soaring above forty degrees Celsius in several countries and placing unprecedented strain on the elderly, the young, and healthcare systems. "If one must suffer such warmth," Ansari observed with his characteristic wry humour, "it is wiser to stay among our own resilient people in Pakistan." Indeed, the inhabitants of this region possess a hardy spirit tempered by long acquaintance with extremes. Allah Almighty has endowed them with an immunity to hardship that astonishes outsiders. Even as the mercury approaches or exceeds fifty degrees Celsius in places like Sindh and southern Punjab—conditions that have gripped parts of the country in recent weeks—one may still witness labourers repairing roads or roofs, mechanics tending engines, or women preparing meals over open flames in the scorching air. Daily life continues with quiet determination, pots simmer on stoves, and markets bustle despite the oppressive haze.

Pakistan has faced prolonged heatwaves this season, with temperatures several degrees above normal, exacerbating drought and straining water resources ahead of the uncertain monsoon. Yet it would be a grave injustice to hold these people accountable for the broader forces now intensifying such trials. The inhabitants of Pakistan and South Asia have contributed minimally to the global accumulation of greenhouse gases. The primary responsibility lies with the great industrial powers of past and present. Authoritative records leave no room for doubt. Since 1750, the United States has emitted nearly a quarter of all historical carbon diox-

ide—roughly 400 billion tonnes or more—far outstripping any other single nation.

The countries of the European Union together account for almost a fifth of cumulative emissions. China, today the largest annual emitter with more than 13 billion tonnes of CO₂ recently, stands second in historical terms at around 11 percent. Russia, and nations such as Brazil and Indonesia through land-use changes, also feature prominently. Global energy-related CO₂ emissions reached a record 37.8 gigatonnes in 2024, with significant contributions from China, the United States, India, and others. These long-term emissions have driven the warming that makes heatwaves more frequent, intense, and deadly worldwide.

Europe has begun to feel the sting of its own making. The summer of 2022 claimed over 60,000 lives across the continent from heat-related causes. Subsequent years have seen tens of thousands more, and the early 2026 heatwave has already produced more than 1,300 excess deaths in a short span, with climate change identified as a major amplifying factor. What was long a distant problem for distant lands has now arrived at prosperous doorsteps. As the proverb wisely observes, one truly understands pain only when it touches one's own flesh. The time for reckoning is upon us all. Wealthier nations, having reaped the fruits of early industrialisation, bear a moral duty to slash emissions sharply, invest in clean technology, and support adaptation in vulnerable countries like Pakistan. Emerging economies must chart greener courses of development. Every individual—through mindful consumption, advocacy, and stewardship—must play a part. Only through such collective wisdom, rooted in justice and foresight, can we shield our children and grandchildren from a future of unendurable heat. In the shade of the mango tree or the cool breeze of the northern hills, may we resolve to act before the trials of summer become the fate of every season.

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Iran warns
US, Israel
against...

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The state funeral of Khomeini. Governor of Bihar, Syed Ata Hasnain, and deputy foreign minister Pabitra Margherita will visit Iran on July 3, the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement. "The high-level representation in the ceremony underscores the importance of civilizational ties, including people-to-people connection, providing a robust foundation to political and economic engagements," it said. Funeral processions for Khomeini will begin on July 4 in Tehran and conclude on July 9 with his burial in his hometown of Mashhad, with additional ceremonies planned in Qom and Iraq in-between these dates. On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi gave a similar warning that Tehran would deliver an immediate and powerful response to any threat against its people or leadership after comments by Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz that Iran's current Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khomeini was "marked for death." Iranian media reported heightened security measures during the funeral period, while the head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization said on Wednesday that temporary airspace restrictions would be implemented over several cities including Tehran and Mashhad.

Vance says
US won't
return to...

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Traffic has partially resumed through the strait, which handled one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas trade before the war. Trump, who has said removing Iran's highly enriched uranium is a top priority, told reporters on Wednesday that "the denuclearisation of Iran is moving along well", without giving details. Asked about the possibility of returning to all-out war with Iran, Trump added: "Well, I think they've come a long way. We hit them very hard last week. I think they're fine." The indirect talks, mediated by Qatar and Pakistan, began on Tuesday night and were continuing on Wednesday, an Iranian official said. They are structured as sessions between chief negotiators and specialists, a source with knowledge of the talks said, adding that Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff met Qatar's prime minister to lay groundwork for the talks but would not be attending. Kushner and Witkoff later met Qatar's emir to discuss US-Iran negotiations and developments in Lebanon, where a parallel conflict between Israel and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah erupted in early March. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi headed a delegation of representatives from Iran's foreign ministry, central bank and agriculture ministry, meeting Qatar's prime minister and holding talks with mediators. Iran has stated publicly its priorities include agreeing on management of the strait and the release of \$6 billion in Iranian frozen assets, and the Iranian official said the current discussions would focus on those two issues.

Fuel prices
remain...

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HOBC has also been cut by Rs2.50 per litre. As a result of the simultaneous increase in the Climate Support Levy and reduction in the Petroleum Levy, the current retail prices of petrol and diesel remain unchanged despite the revision in the tax structure. The Petroleum Division issued the notifications as part of the government's revised fuel levy framework, which took effect from July 1. The latest changes come after the federal government last week kept the prices of petrol and diesel unchanged at Rs299.50 and Rs311.47 per litre, respectively, following its fuel price review. On June 19, the government announced a substantial relief package, cutting petrol prices by Rs74 per litre and diesel by Rs67 per litre, following a sharp decline in international crude oil prices and easing tensions in the Middle East.

In collaboration with Serena Hotels

RISJA celebrates World
Sports Journalists Day

Atta Tarar Pledges Full Support to Sports Journalists



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RISJA) celebrated World Sports Journalists Day with great enthusiasm, reaffirming its commitment to promoting responsible, ethical and professional sports journalism in Pakistan. The ceremony, organized with the support of Serena Hotels, brought together senior sports journalists, former athletes, government officials and representatives of leading sports organizations. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar

attended the event as the chief guest, cut the World Sports Journalists Day cake alongside sports journalists, and administered the oath to RISJA's newly elected office-bearers. Among the distinguished guests were Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Badr Shahbaz, Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mohyuddin Wani, Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Yawar Hussain, Serena Hotels Director Sales & Marketing Imran Hassan, Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) President Afzal Butt, National Press Club (NPC) President Abdul Razaq Sial, Finance Secretary Abid

Abbasi, former Pakistan hockey captain Shakeel Abbasi, officials from the Pakistan Olympic Association and various national sports federations. Addressing the gathering, Minister Attaullah Tarar paid rich tribute to the services of sports journalists, saying sports hold a special place in his heart and that without sports journalists, the excitement and achievements of athletes could never reach the public. He noted that renowned sports journalist Abdul Mohi Shah had been awarded the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz by the government, describing it as an honour for the entire journalist community. The minister assured RISJA mem-

bers of the government's full cooperation and invited sports journalists to form a committee to present recommendations for the welfare of the fraternity. He pledged to personally support practical implementation of their proposals and reiterated that the Ministry of Information would continue extending every possible assistance to sports journalists. Speaking on the occasion, Federal Secretary IPC Mohyuddin Wani acknowledged the vital role played by sports journalists in promoting sports across the country. He praised the media's contribution in highlighting athletes and sporting events, adding that their

partnership with the sports community remains invaluable. Referring to the revival of hockey, he said hiring foreign coaches had been a challenging task, while highlighting that the Pakistan Hockey Federation's financial resources had increased significantly from just Rs2 million to nearly Rs400 million. The ceremony also featured tributes to veteran sports journalists for their lifelong contributions to sports media, while young journalists were encouraged to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and ethical reporting as they continue strengthening sports journalism in Pakistan.

‘Iran, Iran!’ Iranian World Cup
squad serenaded on return home
“We deserved to go further, but they really made the
task more complicated for us,” says Ramin Rezaeian

TEHRAN: Iran's disappointed World Cup squad returned to a much warmer welcome at Tehran airport on Wednesday than they experienced on arrival in the US for their three group games. "Iran, Iran!" a crowd of several hundred children, their parents and devoted fans chanted in unison. Some waved the Iranian national flag while others sported bracelets with the national colours or wore the jersey of "Team Melli" as they feted the squad who had gone so close to reaching the knockout stages for the first time. They finished third in the

group, having drawn all three of their matches, but missed out as one of the eight best third-placed sides on goal difference. The fervour reached fever-pitch when it was announced their flight from Turkiye — they had flown there first from Mexico, where they had been based during the tournament — had landed. As the players descended from the aircraft they were also serenaded by musicians in military uniform playing the national anthem. A lot of supporters brandished photographs of goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand, who became a nation-

al hero for his performance in the scoreless draw with Belgium. "We apologise in front of you, for failing to qualify and to bring you happiness," a contrite Beiranvand told the fans on arriving at Mehrabad airport. His teammate, defender Ramin Rezaeian voiced a common complaint amongst the Iranian World Cup entourage that but for US immigration restrictions they would have made history. "We deserved to go further, but they really made the task more complicated for us," he said. The sentiment was shared by fan Mona Banisafa, who was among the crowd that

PM National Under-21
Women's Hockey
Championship Begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister National Under-21 Women's Hockey Championship, organized by the Pakistan Hockey Federation, got underway in Islamabad with 16 teams from across the country competing for the coveted title. The opening ceremony was held at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium and was inaugurated by PHF President and Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mohyuddin Wani. Speaking on the occasion, Wani reaffirmed the federation's commitment to the revival, promotion and development of hockey in Pakistan. He announced that the championship would serve as a talent hunt to select players for two national women's squads. He further revealed that the selected players will represent Pakistan in the Under-18 Women's Asia Cup, while the Under-18 Five-a-Side Asia Cup will be held in Oman later this month. Wani also said that efforts are underway to build a strong Pakistan senior women's hockey team, adding that highly qualified coaches will be appointed to nurture and enhance the skills of female players. He reiterated the PHF's commitment to strengthening women's hockey and restoring Pakistan's prominence on the international hockey stage.

Iranian
ambassador
appreciates
Pakistan...

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peace, stability, and shared prosperity, while reaffirming Iran's commitment to dialogue and diplomacy. Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, observed that Iran's strategic posture remains a key factor shaping the security landscape of West Asia. He noted that understanding Iran's security priorities is essential for assessing regional stability, energy security, and opportunities for diplomacy. Emphasizing the dialogue's relevance for Pakistan, he highlighted its implications for border security, regional connectivity, energy cooperation, maritime interests, and Pakistan's broader engagement with West Asia. Ambassador Asif Ali Khan Durani, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran, described West Asia as standing at a strategic inflection point where broader questions concerning the regional order remain unresolved.

Iran warns
oil tankers

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meeting with officials from Mideast nations in Bahrain that said "leaders underscored their shared commitment to the free flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz." "Any failure to comply, deviation from the designated route, or disregard for the navigation protocols of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Strait of Hormuz will be met with an immediate and forceful response from the armed forces, endangering the security of the violating vessels," the Iranian statement said. It also said the continued presence of US fighter jets over the strait "causes insecurity in this waterway and threatens regional security." "Any attempt by the United States to interfere in security matters or any disruptive action in the Strait of Hormuz will be considered a threat to Iran's national sovereignty and will be met with a rapid and decisive reaction," the Iranian warning added. Iran and the United States agreed as part of an interim deal to allow ships to pass without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran insisted it must control the routes of the vessels and later charge fees for passage, upending decades of practice in the waterway. The US and many Gulf Arab states say they won't agree to the charges. An effort by Oman and a United Nations agency to launch a new route near Oman's shore sparked attacks across the Middle East last weekend, highlighting the tensions.

PM Shehbaz to visit
Iran, Turkiye from
July 3-5: Andrabi

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The spokesperson also touched upon the indirect US-Iran talks in Doha. Andrabi said that Pakistani mediators held separate meetings with US and Iranian negotiators, where "positive progress" was made on various aspects of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). He said that the parties agreed to continue the negotiation process and hold the next round of talks at the earliest opportunity. "Pakistan, alongside Qatar, will continue to facilitate the negotiations," he added. The spokesperson added that DPM Dar remained engaged with the foreign ministers and senior leaders of Saudi Arabia, China, Bahrain, Iran, the United Kingdom and the European Union. Separately, Andrabi said that Afghanistan's charge d'affaires was summoned to lodge a strong protest over the recent terrorist attack in Karachi, while Pakistan's ambassador in Kabul delivered a formal protest note to the Afghan Foreign Ministry. Three Pakistan Rangers personnel embraced martyrdom, and four others were injured when militants belonging to an Indian proxy, Jamaat ul Ahrar, launched a coordinated attack on a Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) camp in Karachi on Saturday, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations. Three terrorists were killed, and an Afghan national was arrested in an injured condition.

Belgium stun Senegal to reach
World Cup last 16Belgium go through to a
potential meeting with the
US, who face Bosnia and
Herzegovina later on Wednesday

SEATTLE: Youri Tielemans scored the latest winner in World Cup history as Belgium mounted an incredible comeback from two goals down to beat Senegal 3-2 and qualify for the last 16 of the World Cup on Wednesday. Senegal appeared on course for a first win in a World Cup knockout match since their 2002 debut after taking a 2-0 lead through strikes from Habib Diarra and Ismaila Sarr in Seattle. However, Belgium forced extra time as Romelu Lukaku and Tielemans scored in the final five minutes, before the Aston Villa midfielder completed a remarkable turnaround by converting a penalty in the 125th minute. Belgium go through to a potential meeting with the US, who face Bosnia and Herzegovina later on Wednesday, but it will be a bitterly painful pill to swallow for Senegal. A defeat would surely have signalled the end of the road for the last remnants of Belgium's golden generation -

Lukaku, Kevin De Bruyne and perhaps Thibaut Courtois - but instead they live to fight another day. After a 5-1 win over New Zealand that clinched top spot for Belgium in Group G, Rudi Garcia named an unchanged side with Atalanta forward Charles De Ketelaere leading the attack and Lukaku on the bench. Senegal coach Pape Thiaw made three changes to the side that thrashed Iraq 5-0, which allowed them to squeak through as the last of the eight best third-place teams. Pape Gueye started after scoring twice as a substitute in that match, while Pathe Ciss and Everton winger Iliman Ndiaye came into the lineup. Senegal nearly went ahead through the in-form Sarr, who hit the post after Courtois inadvertently diverted a cross into the Crystal Palace forward's path. The Lions of Teranga did take the lead, however, when Sarr's header from Sadio Mane's cross came back off the same post, with Diarra reacting quickest to turn the rebound home. Belgium's best chance of the half fell to Maxim De Cuyper, whose curling effort from outside the area drew an outstanding full-stretch save from Mory Diaw. Diaw was again filling in for Edouard Mendy, who returned to Saudi Arabia for tests on a knee injury he suffered in Senegal's second game of the tournament. - APP

PCB announces constructing cricket
stadium in Saudi ArabiaTwo cricket bodies will collaborate to develop world-class
cricket infrastructure to strengthen sport in Saudi Arabia

THE Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced plans to construct a modern international-standard cricket stadium in Jeddah, in a joint venture with Saudi Arabia to promote cricket in the kingdom. The MoU was signed by PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and the Chairman of the Saudi Arabia Cricket Federation (SACF) in a ceremony held on Thursday. Under the partnership, the two cricket bodies will collaborate to develop world-class cricket infrastructure, operational standards, and other initiatives to strengthen the sport in Saudi Arabia. The proposed stadium will be designed to meet all the requirements for hosting international cricket competitions. PCB Chairman Naqvi said the board was proud to contribute to the growth of cricket in Saudi Arabia. This partnership will further strengthen the promotion



of cricket and enhance the longstanding relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Naqvi said. The chairman of the SACF described the project as an important milestone for the future of cricket in Saudi Arabia, saying the partnership would not be limited to stadium construction alone but would also focus on developing the sport at various levels. Chairman Naqvi had offered comprehensive support to Saudi Arabia in promoting cricket and constructing cricket stadiums in December 2024 during his visit to Saudi Arabia. The PCB chairman had extended an invitation to his Saudi counterpart to visit Pakistan and witness the Champions Trophy tournament matches. Naqvi had proposed a player exchange programme to enhance cricket development, suggesting that Riyadh could send emerging players to Pakistan for training. - APP

Briefs

Albania police fire water cannon as Trump-linked protests boil over

TIRANA: Violent clashes erupted between police and demonstrators outside Albania's parliament on Thursday, as protests against a controversial resort development linked to US President Donald Trump's family threatened to escalate. Since late May, protests have been held against the construction of a luxury hotel linked to Trump's daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner in a nature reserve in Zverec, on Albania's southwestern coast. For the second time this week, large groups of protesters had gathered outside the country's parliament in an attempt to confront lawmakers and block entry to the building. Hundreds of demonstrators were met with lines of riot police who pushed them back from the building, leading to clashes and several arrests, according to AFP journalists at the scene. Police used pepper spray and a water cannon in an attempt to break up the crowd as some protesters attempted push through lines of officers. Nine officers were injured by projectiles thrown by protesters, police said, but did not confirm arrest numbers.

People were also seen smashing the windows of an empty police car in a nearby street as the crowd was pushed away from area. It comes after six protesters were arrested on Tuesday when demonstrators lobbed eggs at lawmakers' cars. The violence is a marked contrast to the overwhelmingly peaceful daily gatherings that have drawn thousands to the streets since the movement began. The planned resort was first unveiled in 2024, but the latest wave of protests began after barbed-wire fencing and bulldozers appeared on beaches in late May. Opposition to the project has become a flashpoint for anger over perceived corruption, with protesters calling for Prime Minister Edi Rama to step down over what they describe as a lack of transparency.—APP

Philippines reaches upper-middle income country rank

MANILA: The Philippines has been reclassified by the World Bank as an upper-middle income country — a target it has been trying to achieve since the 1980s — after posting a record gross national income per capita of \$4,850. The upper-middle income, or UMIC, rank is the World Bank's category for economies with GNI per capita ranging from \$4,636 to \$14,375. The Philippines was previously in the global lender's lower-middle income bracket. The World Bank's latest country income classification on Wednesday showed that the Philippines' GNI increased in 2025 by 8.5 percent from \$4,470 in 2024, when it narrowly missed the UMIC threshold by \$26. "The Philippines achieved its reclassification through broad-based expansion. GDP grew at an average of 5.8 percent per year over five years, reflecting gains across all major industries, not a single sector boom, but an economy-wide shift," the World Bank said in a statement on Wednesday. For the Philippines — a country of nearly 120 million people — aspiring to the upper-middle income rank has for decades been a long-standing national development goal. "It validates the progress we have made and the resilience of the Filipino people," President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said in a video message. "After nearly four decades as a lower-middle income country since 1987, this milestone affirms that the economic policies we have pursued over the past four years have been effective." The year 1987 is when the World Bank's classification system started to be introduced. Based on GNI — the total income earned by a country's residents in a year, including money made both inside the country and sent by nationals working abroad — and divided by population, it is mainly used to compare development levels and guide lending, aid, and policy decisions.—APP

India, Japan sign AI, energy coop pacts on Takaichi's first visit

India's foreign ministry listed 16 outcomes following Modi's meeting with Takaichi, including a joint declaration on economic security that covers collaboration in semiconductors, critical minerals, AI, clean energy and pharma, aimed at deepening partnerships and diversifying supply chains

NEW DELHI: India and Japan signed on Thursday cooperation agreements covering economic security, artificial intelligence and energy resilience, during Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's first official visit to New Delhi. Takaichi arrived in the Indian capital on Wednesday for the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit, a trip that followed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Tokyo last August. The two leaders held "wide-ranging talks on the full spectrum of India-Japan ties," covering trade, investment, economic security, energy, emerging technologies, defense and people-to-people exchanges, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said. "In today's atmosphere of global upheaval, mutual trust is our greatest strategic asset. And I am proud that the India-Japan partnership stands fully tested on this touchstone," Modi said, as quoted by his office in an X post. India's foreign ministry listed 16 outcomes following Modi's meeting with Takaichi, including a joint declaration on economic security that covers collaboration in semiconductors, critical minerals, AI, clean energy and pharma, aimed at deepening partnerships and diversifying supply chains. India's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry adopted a joint statement on energy resilience, which covers strategic stockpiling and mechanisms for oil reserves, with the two countries also agreeing to cooperate more closely in battery manufacturing and critical minerals exploration. India and Japan "must leverage our respective strengths to become stronger and more prosperous together," Takaichi told reporters during a joint press conference. "Amid a turbulent international landscape, establishing such a mutually complementary, cooperative relationship has become ever more important," she said. "As both countries face challenges such as economic weaponization and non-market practices, we need



to urgently build resilience in our critical mineral supply chains." Japan is among India's largest foreign investors and has backed major infrastructure projects, such as the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail line. There are about 1,400 Japanese companies operating in India, nearly half of which are in manufacturing. Bilateral trade reached \$27.5 billion in the 2025-26 fiscal year, while Japanese investment in India was valued at \$3.2 billion between April and December 2025, according to Indian government data. India and Japan

are deepening ties amid strained relations with China and the US, said Vanshika Saraf, a research analyst at the Takshashila Institution. "The summit is unfolding against a backdrop of worsening China-Japan relations ... China has increased its coercive actions vis-a-vis Japan, both militarily and economically (and) India has borne the brunt of Chinese aggression several times," she told Arab News. "Therefore, it is only natural that the two countries share a similar vision on what a stable and free Indo-Pacific region should look like." New Delhi and

Tokyo also had to navigate rocky ties with Washington under US President Donald Trump's administration, which slapped both countries with high tariffs. "Both Japan and India felt they were being treated unfairly by the current administration. Japan, even more so, given its US treaty ally. Moreover, reduced trust in the American security umbrella is also bringing both these powers closer together," Vanshika said. By forging stronger relations, the two countries have "much ... to gain, given their ideological alignment and ambitions."

Inter-communal clashes kill 48 in Nigeria

KANO: Intercommunal violence in western central Nigeria killed at least 48 people on Wednesday, a security report seen by said on Thursday. The report, prepared for the United Nations, said "herder militia" armed with machetes raided farmers from the Kamuku ethnic group in the town of Tegina in Niger state, "killing at least 42 people," prompting a reprisal that killed six herders working in a plantation. Niger state is already reeling from deadly violence by militants as well as kidnapping-for-ransom and cattle rustling gangs called bandits. A local community leader Abdullahi Alhassan told AFP that herders from the Fulani ethnic group invaded the area, attacking residents with machetes and burning others alive in their homes. "The raid was reprisals for the killing last month of the herders' patriarch they blamed on vigilantes from Kamuku farmers," Alhassan said. Kamuku farmers launched retaliatory attacks on three herding settlements around Tegina, also burning homes and killing at least two herders, Alhassan said. Last month Kamuku farmers killed Muhammad Shehu, a respected community leader among the herders, over the sharing of money donated to the community by a politician, the security report said. The killing of the herders' leader led to "a cycle of communal rifts between the two communities," it said. Niger, known for its huge gold deposits and considered to be a food basket, has been terrorized by bandits and militants who carry out deadly raids and displacing agrarian communities. A month into the annual rainy season which runs between June and September, a huge number of farmers have failed to access their lands due to attacks by bandits and militants who impose hefty levies on farmers in exchange for permission to work their farms. International aid agencies have warned that displacement of communities across the north and center poses risk to Nigeria's food security. In its latest advisory on Thursday, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned that Nigeria's food security is "worsening faster than previously anticipated." WFP said more than 17 million people are experiencing "crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels" of hunger in northern Nigeria. Illegal mining, from which militants and bandits benefit, partly drives the violence in some regions of Nigeria, according to officials. Nigeria's north-western and central regions regularly see deadly violence over land and water exploitation between farming and herding communities, which has worsened in recent years because of population pressure and climate change.—APP

Syria, Lebanon form joint ministerial committee on security, economy

LONDON: Syria and Lebanon agreed on Thursday to establish a joint ministerial committee aimed at strengthening security coordination, expanding economic cooperation and advancing bilateral ties. The agreement was signed in the Lebanese capital Beirut by Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani and Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, according to the Syrian state news agency SANA. "Today, we finalized an agreement to establish a joint Syrian-Lebanese Higher Committee comprising ministers from both countries. The committee will meet regularly to strengthen bilateral cooperation," Salam said at a joint press conference with Al-Shaibani. Al-Shaibani said the body would provide a framework for expanding economic cooperation and strengthening security coordination. "Our partnership with Lebanon will provide a platform for expanding economic cooperation and strengthening security coordination between our two countries," he said. Talks at Baabda Palace also focused on electricity interconnection, the trans-

port and exchange of goods, and easing the movement of people between Syria and Lebanon, Salam told reporters. Both sides also stressed the importance of respecting each other's sovereignty. Al-Shaibani described his visit to Beirut as a sign of Syria's "support for Lebanon and our commitment to building a healthy and constructive relationship between our two countries." He also voiced support for Lebanon's stability and condemned Israeli attacks on Lebanese territory. "Syria rejects all Israeli aggressions against Lebanon, including shelling and forced displacement, and supports the Lebanese state in its efforts to achieve stability," he said. Similarly, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun expressed support for Syria's stability and welcomed what he called "a new chapter" in ties between the neighboring countries, SANA reported. Aoun's remarks came after meeting Al-Shaibani at Baabda Palace. He also said Syria's interim president, Ahmad Al-Sharaa, had assured him repeatedly that Damascus's approach toward Lebanon had changed.

"President Ahmad Al-Sharaa has assured me in more than one meeting and phone call that Syria's role will not be what it was in the past and that a new chapter has opened between our two countries," Aoun said. "Syria will not side with one Lebanese party against another but will stand alongside all Lebanese." Aoun also welcomed the creation of the joint committee. Earlier on Thursday, Al-Shaibani met with Aoun and Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to discuss bilateral ties and economic cooperation. On Syrians detained in Lebanon, Al-Shaibani said legal proceedings were underway and expressed hope they would result in their transfer to Syria. "Regarding Syrian prisoners and detainees in Lebanon, a judicial process is underway, and we hope it will lead to the transfer of all of them to Syria," he said. Before the fall of Syria's longterm ruler Bashar Assad, Syrian-Lebanese relations were shaped by decades of Syrian dominance, Lebanese resentment and periodic attempts to normalize ties. — APP

Thailand denies viral claim Macron knelt before king

BANGKOK: Thailand's foreign ministry denied Thursday that French President Emmanuel Macron knelt before the country's king during his state visit to Paris this week, after an AI-generated picture circulated online. King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida's trip was the first official visit by a Thai monarch to France since 1960, marking the 170th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between the two nations. During a state dinner at the presidential palace, Macron presented the 73-year-old king with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour — France's highest award — and Queen Suthida with the Grand Cross of the National Order of Merit, according to Thai media. An image widely circulated online in Thailand purported to show Macron kneeling as he presented the awards. One Thai-language Facebook post showing the image on Wednesday garnered more than 40,000 likes and more than 2,000 shares by the following day.—Agencies

Palestinians face uncertain future as Gaza marks 1,000 days of war

NEW YORK: Israeli strikes have lessened considerably since the ceasefire took effect, but they continue almost daily. It's the 1000th day of war since a Hamas-led attack on Israel that sparked the war in Gaza. Other conflicts have emerged in the region, and fragile ceasefires show scars of persistent attacks. Both Israelis and Palestinians are weary of the strain. The fate of over 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, largely displaced and living amid ruins, remains uncertain. Israeli forces controlled over half of the territory under the ceasefire that took effect on Oct. 10, but Israel's government has expanded that and says it aims to hold 70 percent. Few people can get in or out. Further ceasefire steps, including Hamas' disarmament and the immense task of reconstruction, have stalled. "Much more needs to be done so that even a semblance of normalcy can come back, and we are far, far away from this," the International Committee of the Red Cross regional director, Nicolas von Arx, said this week. Here's a look at what has happened over the 1,000 days and what may lie ahead. Palestinians are still being killed. Israeli strikes have lessened considerably since the ceasefire took effect, but they continue almost daily. Gaza's Health Ministry counted 1,053 Palestinians dead since the ceasefire as of Tuesday, including over 350 women and children. In recent days, they included a teenage girl on her way to school and a mother with her 1-year-old daughter. "Where is this ceasefire they keep talking about?! Shame on them," one Palestinian, Wisal Abu

Khater, said this week after another deadly strike, lashing out at Arabs who she said have failed Gaza's people and are busy watching World Cup games instead. The United Nations on Wednesday warned that the Israeli expansion in Gaza increases deadly risks for civilians in "areas lacking clear demarcation on the ground." The Health Ministry said over 3,400 people have been wounded since the ceasefire. The ministry is part of the Hamas-led government and maintains detailed casualty records seen as generally reliable by UN agencies and independent experts. It does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants but says women and children make up roughly half the dead. Israel's military says it targets Hamas and other militants, often asserting they were planning attacks, and accuses Hamas of using civilians as human shields. The Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on southern Israel killed about 1,200 people and took 251 hostage. All hostages or their remains have been freed or handed over, some of them recounting abuses. Israel's retaliation has killed a total of 73,066 Palestinians as of Tuesday, Gaza's Health Ministry says. The Trump-created Board of Peace has made little progress. The top diplomat overseeing the ceasefire, Nikolay Mladenov, has made it clear: The next steps in implementing the US-brokered deal are stalled over the difficult issue of Hamas disarmament. This has been a high-profile test of the Board of Peace created and led by US President Donald Trump. Launched with fanfare and billions of dollars in international pledges

earlier this year with the sole aim of Gaza's recovery from war, the board now says little publicly. Hamas' disarmament would open the way for other steps, including new administration of Gaza and the deployment of an international stabilization force to assist with security and reconstruction efforts. While Hamas hasn't outright rejected disarming, it has indicated it wants to hold on to some weapons and demanded further concessions from Israel. A divided Israel faces an election in the past 1,000 days have been traumatized by the Oct. 7 attack — the deadliest in Israel's history — and other conflicts that followed: against the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen and Iran itself. Iran's armed proxies had attacked Israel, saying they acted in solidarity with Palestinians. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pressed Trump to jointly attack Iran on Feb. 28. That revived the conflict in Lebanon, where Israeli forces have advanced to their deepest point in over a quarter-century. None of these fronts has completely calmed. These conflicts and their toll — including mounting deaths for Israeli soldiers, continuing attacks along Israel's border with Lebanon and international allegations of genocide in Gaza, which Israel rejects — are weighing on Israelis and the national mood as Netanyahu seeks reelection this fall. Netanyahu has projected confidence, but he faces a tough challenge.—Agencies

OIC condemns Israel's muezzin bill

LONDON: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation denounced on Thursday the Israeli Knesset's preliminary approval of a bill that seeks to restrict the Muslim call to prayer through mosques across the country. The OIC described the proposed law as a "discriminatory and racist legislative measure that constitutes a flagrant violation of freedom of religion and worship." It added in a statement: "This legislation represents a dangerous escalation within the context of a series of racist Israeli decisions, legislation, and measures aimed at restricting the Palestinian presence and targeting Arab and Islamic identity; it also constitutes a direct attack on the sanctity of religious rites and Islamic holy sites." Israeli lawmakers on Wednesday passed the so-called "muezzin bill" in a preliminary vote, with 50 votes in favor and 36 against. The bill, which aims to restrict the use and volume of mosque loudspeakers, requires three additional votes before it can become law. Knesset member Zvika Fogel, from the right-wing Otzma Yehudit party led by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, introduced the bill. It earned support from the opposition party Yisrael Beiteinu and the ultra-Orthodox party Shas, which is part of the government coalition. The muezzin is an official who proclaims the call to the Islamic prayer five times a day, including the pre-dawn Fajr prayer. If the law is enacted, mosques will be required to obtain a permit to use loudspeakers, and those that do not comply may face a fine of about \$16,700. Police will have the authority to confiscate loudspeakers and issue fines of \$3,340 for repeated violations.—APP

IMF cuts Israel's economic growth estimate to 3.5pc

TEL AVIV: The International Monetary Fund lowered its estimate for Israel's economic growth in 2026 to 3.5 percent from a prior 4.8 percent, it said on Wednesday citing regional tensions. In a report, the IMF also expects inflation to rise temporarily due to higher energy prices and supply constraints despite shekel appreciation to a more than three-decade peak against the dollar. "The elevated regional tensions are casting a shadow on Israel's economy," it said, referring to conflicts with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas. The IMF noted that the economy has shown resilience despite repeated shocks, but that elevated regional geopolitical uncertainty and long-standing structural impediments are expected to weigh on the outlook. "Furthermore, renewed intensification of regional tensions remains a key downside risk," it said. Israel, the IMF said, needs to implement "prudent" policies to safeguard macroeconomic stability and advance structural reforms to boost growth potential. After a 2.9 percent growth rate in 2025, the war with Iran in March and April led the Bank of Israel to trim its 2026 growth forecast to 3.8 percent, while the Finance Ministry sees growth of up to 4 percent this year. Israel's economy shrank an annualized 3.8 percent in the first quarter. The IMF projects Israel's economy will grow 4.4 percent in 2027, with an inflation rate holding steady near 2 percent in 2026 and 2027. Forecasts, it noted, were based on data up until June 10. The IMF recommended Israel's government rebuild fiscal buffers for example by raising revenue, along with fiscal consolidation, due to higher defense spending to finance the military conflicts. The IMF also seeks moderately tight monetary policy since higher energy prices look to push inflation higher. In recent weeks, a ceasefire between the United States and Iran has led to a drop in oil prices. "The Bank of Israel should continue to closely monitor war-related effects on labor supply, the pass-through of higher energy prices and exchange rate movements, and the impact of the latest rate cut on financial conditions and domestic demand," it said. Policymakers need to "stand ready to adjust course" if incoming data or the heightened risk environment lead to renewed price pressures.—APP

Briefs

PEMRA seek CCI advice on Geo News license issue

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) has written to the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) seeking "guidance" on whether Geo News' response to the recent suspension is adequate or requires further action, it emerged on Thursday.

On June 28, Pemra suspended with "immediate effect" Geo News' licence for 15 days over airing a special transmission that the body said was "liable to hurt the religious sentiments of viewers". Geo News has acknowledged its mistake in airing the transmission broadcast on Muharram 10 and has also taken action against two employees.

The letter, dated July 1, and addressed to the CII chairman, Pemra requested guidance on the matter, with Council of Complaints (CoC) Chairperson Lubna Zaheer stating, "The CII is requested to guide whether the suspension order already passed and the public apology as well as actions so far rendered by Geo News constitute an adequate response and if not, to what extent any further action may be warranted in light of Islamic teachings and injunctions". It further requested that the guidance be given in the next seven days – up to July 8. The letter said that Pemra ordered the suspension of Geo News' licence for a period of 15 days and directed that the channel's transmission be suspended on satellite and across all distribution networks during this period.

Pre-arrest bail of MPA extended

LAHORE: A sessions court extended on Thursday the interim pre-arrest bail of PML-N MPA Saqib Chadhar and his wife – both of whom have been facing legal proceedings for allegedly harassing television actress Momina Iqbal – till July 13. Additional District and Sessions Judge Nusrat Ali Siddiqi presided over the hearing, during which Chadhar appeared before the court along with his counsel, Mian Ali Ashfaq. However, Chadhar's wife did not attend the hearing, citing health reasons. Judge Siddiqi, concluding the hearing, extended Chadhar's and his wife's bail, directed them to join the investigation initiated against them and instructed the prosecution to submit a progress report of the probe at the next hearing on July 13. The case garnered attention after a social media appeal by Momina Iqbal went viral in May and drew the attention of senior PML-N leadership, especially Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. – APP

Pakistan values relations with Portugal, says Gilani

Ambassador Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez thanked the Chairman Senate for the warm welcome and reaffirmed Portugal's commitment to further deepening cooperation with Pakistan in the political, parliamentary, economic, educational, and cultural fields



ISLAMABAD: ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Paulo Domingues called on Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. – DNA

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez, called on Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at Parliament House on Wednesday. Welcoming the Ambassador, Chairman Sen-

ate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani underscored Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its longstanding and friendly relations with Portugal. He noted that both countries enjoy cordial ties and cooperate closely at bilateral and multilateral levels to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development. The Chairman emphasized the importance

of continued high-level engagement and expressed confidence that the upcoming Bilateral Political Consultations in Islamabad would further enhance cooperation between the two countries.

Highlighting economic relations, Chairman Gilani noted the steady growth in bilateral trade and stressed the need to explore

greater collaboration in trade, investment, agriculture, information technology, education, culture, and the blue economy. He also appreciated Portugal's support for Pakistan, particularly regarding the GSP Plus framework, and expressed hope for continued cooperation in this regard.

Referring to the Pakistani community in Portugal, he described the diaspora as an important bridge between the two countries. He also emphasized the importance of expanding educational cooperation, academic exchanges, and workforce mobility, expressing hope for the early conclusion of the Labour Mobility Partnership Agreement. Chairman Gilani highlighted the role of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening bilateral relations and welcomed continued interaction between Parliamentary Friendship Groups and legislators of both countries.

Ambassador Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez thanked the Chairman Senate for the warm welcome and reaffirmed Portugal's commitment to further deepening cooperation with Pakistan in the political, parliamentary, economic, educational, and cultural fields. The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation for the mutual benefit of the peoples of Pakistan and Portugal.

Oil falls for a third straight day

LONDON: Oil prices dropped about 1% on Thursday, down for a third consecutive day, after Qatar said Iran and the US had made progress in indirect talks focused on the Strait of Hormuz, which handled one-fifth of global oil supply before the war.

Brent futures lost 77 cents or 1.1% to \$70.80 a barrel by 0256 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude fell 84 cents or 1.2% to \$67.74 a barrel. Both benchmarks also fell more than 1% in the previous session, hitting their lowest levels in four months.

The Doha talks produced "positive progress" on issues related to the memorandum that halted the war in June, a Qatar Foreign Ministry spokesperson said in a post on X. There was, however, no sign that the two sides had made headway towards a lasting peace. As the strait stays open and crude oil flows out, there are growing expectations of oversupply and competition for market share is pushing prices down, Haitong Futures said in a note. OPEC+ oil-producing countries will likely agree to a further hike in their output targets from August when they meet on Sunday, sources said on Wednesday. – APP

Another roof collapse incident in Lahore

LAHORE: A child was killed, and at least four people were injured after the roof of an under-construction house caved in Lahore's Baghbanpura neighbourhood on Thursday. As per a statement issued by Rescue 1122, the roof of the third floor of an under-construction house collapsed, killing a child and leaving four injured, while another person still remained buried under the rubble.

It said that the child's age was between eight and ten years. It added that the rescue operation was under way with seven rescue vehicles and 25 personnel engaged. The injured were rushed to the Services Hospital after being provided with first aid, it added. Roof and building collapses are common across Pakistan, mainly due to poor safety standards and the use of sub-standard construction materials in the South Asian country of more than 240 million people. – APP

Eight Thai monks killed after boy drives truck into procession

"The suspect is a child. The vehicle has been taken for forensic examination to determine the cause"

BANGKOK: An 11-year-old drove his parents' truck into a Buddhist procession in Thailand on Thursday, killing eight monks and injuring more than 20 others, police and health officials said. The group of 35 monks and five lay followers were walking along a roadside in the northeastern Mukdahan province during a pilgrimage when the incident occurred. "I saw a boy driving a pickup truck, approaching. At that moment I was chanting 'Buddho, Buddho' (a meditation mantra)," one monk, identified as Phra Sompong, said in a video posted online by local rescue workers.

"Then suddenly the truck hit at full speed and crashed as like this," he said, gestulating. "Luckily another monk and I managed to jump out of the way in time," he added. "The first nine monks in line survived. But others who were hit were thrown into the air." Five monks died at the scene and three more later died in hospital, police said. CCTV footage from a nearby property shows the

monks walking along the road, multiple vehicles driving past and then the sound of a loud crash before the procession stops. Health authorities said four monks were in critical condition in Mukdahan Hospital and 10 others were seriously hurt, while more were being treated for lighter injuries.

Police said the boy had taken his parents' pickup truck without permission before losing control of the vehicle and crashing into the monks.

"The suspect is a child. The vehicle has been taken for forensic examination to determine the cause," Police Major General Pairoj Thaiputsa, commander of the Mukdahan Provincial Police, told reporters.

"We've asked the child's parents to come in so we can determine who is responsible for the child's care, so we can go on with legal process," he added.

Prayut Ruanthongkam, chief of Mukdahan City Police, told AFP by telephone that the child was a boy aged 11.

Buddhist monks are highly venerated in Thailand, entrusted with preserving and passing on the Buddha's teachings. They often hold public processions and are widely seen receiving alms of goodwill from ordinary Thais.

Mukdahan provincial governor Worayan Bunnarat said the case should serve as a wider warning on road safety. – APP

World Bank asks Pakistan to revise NFC Award formula

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) has asked Pakistan to revise the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award formula, both vertically and horizontally, and adopt fiscal 'equalisation' for resource distribution among the provinces based on spending needs and projected revenue capacity. The WB also supported excluding population from the main criteria for resource distribution and suggested fiscal equalisation as the way forward.

This was mentioned by World Bank lead economist and report author Tobias Haque while launching the report titled "Strengthening Fiscal Federalism in Pakistan," alongside Country Director Bolormaa Amgaabazar at the WB's office on Wednesday. The bank highlighted the fragmented General Sales Tax (GST) on goods and services as a major challenge and proposed a unified collection mechanism,

with the collected amount then distributed among provinces – though this would require legislative changes.

The WB also noted that out of Rs1,035 billion in grants committed by provinces for the Centre under Article 164, Punjab reversed grants of Rs546 billion and Sindh Rs260 billion. The PTI-led KP and Balochistan governments did not commit any amount for the Centre in their provincial budgets for 2026-27. On the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the WB asked for the continuation of national registry at the federal level but with cost-sharing from all provinces, as social protection falls under the domain of federating units.

The report stated, "Fiscal federalism arrangements have led to the emergence of a structural federal fiscal deficit. Provincial revenues, including federal transfers, rose from less than 4% of GDP to an average of 6.5% over FY10 to FY24, but federal expenditures did not adjust commensurately. The loss in federal revenues from transfers (1.9% of GDP) was roughly equivalent to the increase in federal primary deficits post-devolution (1.7% of GDP)."

In the context of weak overall revenue and macroeconomic performance, the misalignment between federal financing and functional needs has been a material contributor to Pakistan's fiscal deficit and to the accumulation of public debt." – DNA

Syria open to meeting Hezbollah

DNA

BEIRUT: Syria's foreign minister said during a visit to Beirut on Thursday that Syria was open to meeting the Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah "if interests require it," Lebanon's state news agency reported. Asaad Al-Shibani met Lebanese government leaders including President Joseph Aoun and parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally. It was his first visit there since US President Donald Trump raised the possibility of Syrian forces combating Hezbollah in Lebanon. Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa has previously denied what he called rumors about any Syrian presence entering Lebanon. The former rebels and commanders that now run Syria fought against Hezbollah for years while it deployed to Syria to support former President Bashar Assad. Now that they are in power, they are having to calibrate alliances and military action carefully in efforts to maintain relative stability in Syria, which is still recovering from 14 years of civil war. Shibani said the "Hezbollah file" was not raised during his meetings in Lebanon on Thursday, but that Syria was open to meeting the group, the Lebanese state news agency cited him as saying. It did not immediately publish any further comments from Shibani. A statement from Aoun said that neighbors Syria and Lebanon wanted each other's stability and that Sharaa had assured him that Syria would not take sides in Lebanon's internal issues. Syria's new government under former al-Qaeda commander Sharaa has emerged as a US ally since his forces toppled President Bashar Assad in 2024, and has largely stayed out of the regional war between the US and Israel, and Iran.

Facing barbs and pressure from Trump, Europe leaders close ranks

US President Donald Trump's attacks on Italy's premier have had an unintended consequence

DNA

ROME: After Trump questioned Italy's reliability as a wartime ally and claimed Giorgia Meloni had groveled for his attention, European leaders rallied to Meloni's side, thawing what had been a frosty relationship over her hard-right political roots. It is the latest example of how the often divisive American president is helping to draw Europe closer together. European leaders are finding more reasons to coordinate on defense, tariffs and foreign policy as they confront wars in Ukraine and Iran, a ballooning trade deficit with China, and threats from Russia. That leaves Trump, who has often preferred to negotiate with European countries individually, with less ability to do so, analysts say. "Most of the mainstream leaders realize that Europe is getting squeezed between China and America, and so, if not now, then when?" said Sudha David-Wilp, vice president at the German Marshall Fund. "They need to act as a bloc in order to maintain Europe's place in the world." This newfound European unity could be tested next week at a NATO summit in Türkiye.

European leaders rally around Meloni Meloni's spat with Trump has helped her strengthen ties with European leaders once wary of her party's post-fascist roots. A pivotal moment came in March when she wouldn't allow US bombers headed to the Middle East to use a base in Sicily without parliamentary approval. For years before then, France and Germany often kept Meloni outside the small-group talks that helped shape Europe's response to major foreign policy crises. That persisted into 2026 amid disagreements over the Russian war on Ukraine, including Meloni's rejection of a proposal by Britain and France to send European troops there following a possible ceasefire. But Trump's escalating attacks on Meloni – who called Trump's criticism of Pope Leo "unacceptable" – helped shift


the dynamic, prompting European leaders to rally around her.

After all, they, too, have been on the receiving end of Trump's barbs.

Meloni was firmly in the fold at a late June meeting in Berlin with the leaders of Germany, France, Britain and Poland. And she met the next day with French President Emmanuel Macron in southern France – the first bilateral summit since the pandemic. Europe's nationalist parties are adjusting. Even nationalist parties across the continent once aligned with Trump are recalibrating their stances because his trade policies and war with Iran are proving unpopular with voters. In France, far-right leader Jordan Bardella recently blasted US actions as "foreign interference" and described Trump as "erratic" and "extremely unsteady." Bardella had previously welcomed Trump's brand of nationalism as a "wind of freedom."

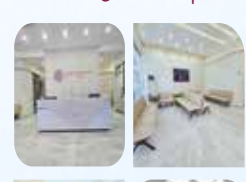
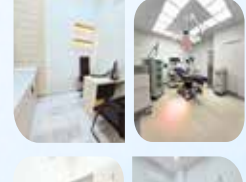
In Germany, leaders of the far-right Alternative for Germany party have criticized the US military campaign against Iran. The co-leader of the party, Tino Chrupalla, said in March he was "extremely disappointed" with Trump, whom he had viewed as a politician who would avoid new conflicts. The changing rhetoric comes as elections approach, putting more focus on domestic issues. "This pushes everyone to consider a European horizon more than an international one," said Lorenzo Castellani, a political analyst and professor at Rome's LUISS University. Beyond Europe's biggest powers These dynamics are playing out beyond the European Union, from the Arctic Ocean to the Balkans.

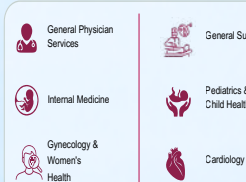
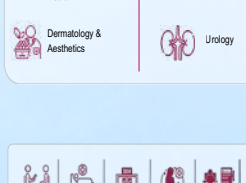
When Trump threatened to take Greenland by force, protests erupted in its capital, Nuuk, and in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. Leaders across the political spectrum bristled at the threatened infringement of European sovereignty and feared it could shatter the already stressed NATO military alliance. In Albania, a luxury development being planned that is linked to Trump's family business has become a major political issue, drawing protests in June. The political risks of close alignment with Trump were perhaps most clearly illustrated in Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán – long regarded as Trump's closest ally in the European Union – was voted out of office in April despite support from the US president and prominent figures in the MAGA movement. An analysis by the consultancy Maplecroft suggested that negative perceptions of the Trump administration may have weighed on Orbán politically.



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