



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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KP governor for 'single bill for privileges of MPs'

Detailed News On Page-08

APNS welcomes Raisa Adil as the new PIO

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France moves to last four stage of WC

Detailed News On Page-06

Briefs

China tests sea-based rocket system

Test marks China's first successful retrieval of an orbital-class rocket

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China on Friday successfully tested an experimental rocket retrieval system using a net attached to a sea platform, state media reported, in the hope of breaking US dominance in reusable rockets. The Long March 10B rocket lifted off from the Hainan commercial space launch site in southern China at 12:15pm (0415 GMT) and, about six minutes after separation of its booster and upper stage, the booster returned vertically and was recovered on an offshore platform, state broadcaster CCTV reported. The test marks China's first successful retrieval of an orbital-class rocket, putting the country closer to developing reusable rockets. Shares in Chinese aerospace firms jumped on the news, with China SpaceSat and China Satellite Communications hitting their daily limits. The Long March 10B has been compared to the Falcon 9, SpaceX's widely used medium-lift rocket.

Petrol, diesel prices increased

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The price of kerosene oil has also been increased by Rs11.19 per litre, according to a notification issued by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra). Following the reduction, the new price of kerosene oil has been set at Rs242.33 per litre. In the previous weekly review, the government reduced petrol and high-speed diesel prices by Rs1.97 per litre each. Global Oil prices fell on Friday after the latest round of US-Iran fighting as traders grew hopeful that shipping would eventually resume in the Strait of Hormuz, but prices remained on track to close the week sharply higher. Brent futures were down 52 cents, or 0.68%, at \$75.78 a barrel by (1735 GMT). US West Texas Intermediate crude dropped 83 cents, or 1.15%, to \$71.25. Iranian armed forces launched attacks on US military infrastructure in Gulf states on Thursday after US strikes on Iran's southern coastal and eastern provinces.

France condemns Iran for vessels attack

DNA

PARIS: France has condemned Iran over attacks on neighbouring countries and on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz in the past few days, Al Jazeera reports. French envoy Jerome Bonafont says that "despite Pakistan and Qatar's mediation, Iran has violated the MoU (memorandum of understanding). "It has carried out unacceptable attacks on Bahrain, Qatar and Jordan. France condemns these attacks. Iran is responsible for this situation. It needs to end this violence as part of the 60-day ceasefire period as part of the MoU," he adds Calling for the urgent implementation of the US-Iran MoU, Bonafont says, "Iran must guarantee the full, unhindered re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz under the international laws of the sea."

Iran attacks US sites in Gulf states

Trump agrees to continue Iran talks, reiterates ceasefire is 'over'

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: In a dramatic escalation, Iran launched strikes on U.S. military sites in Gulf states, framing the attacks as a direct response to Washington's earlier operations. According to IRGC statements, U.S. intervention in the Strait of Hormuz has disrupted efforts to reopen the critical waterway, intensifying regional tensions. The Strait, a vital artery for global oil shipments, now faces renewed instability as military confrontations threaten maritime security.

This development marks a dangerous turn in U.S.-Iran relations, with both sides trading blows in one of the world's most strategically sensitive regions. Analysts warn that continued escalation could imperil energy markets and heighten risks of wider conflict. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's (IRGC) top commander has pledged vengeance against the US and Israel for the killing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, saying it won't "be erased from the historical memory", Al Jazeera reports.

Brigadier-General Ahmad Vahidi called for the "full realisation of justice and a fitting response to the criminals, especially the child-killing American army". "The criminal leaders of America and all enemies of the Islamic Revolution and the Resistance Front must know that by the cowardly assassination of this divine leader they will never... bring the flag of resistance to the ground," Vahidi said in a statement carried by Sepah news agency. "Avenging the mar-

IEA says global oil demand picks up despite war fears

DNA

THE International Energy Agency said Friday that "a recovery" in global oil demand had started as supplies tentatively start moving through the strategic Strait of Hormuz again and prices ease. A recovery in world oil demand is underway, with consumption set to rise from its May nadir, the IEA's monthly report said. According to the IEA, world supply improved to 102.6 mbd in June and would continue to get better if there were "a swift de-escalation of renewed hostilities". "If transit volumes improve, oil supply will expand by 7.5mbd next year," the agency added. The agency said world oil reserves increased for the first time since the US-Israeli attacks on Iran on February 28 set off the war.

tyrs and the punishment of the perpetrators... will remain a definitive, legitimate, and an unforgettable demand." Meanwhile, China has announced a temporary export ban on helium, effective immediately, as resumption of military conflict in

Continued on Page 06

Over 40 terrorists killed in Operation Shaban in Balochistan

Attack on Khuzdar police station repelled, with forces killing eight militants, say sources

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: At least 17 more India-backed terrorists have been killed during ongoing Operation Shaban in Balochistan, raising the total number of militants killed in the operation to 43, security sources said on Friday. The operation was launched in the aftermath of the attack on the Mangi Dam police station and is being carried out jointly by the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps (FC) and Balochistan Police, security sources said. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Wednesday said that India-backed terrorists attacked the checkpoint, but police personnel fought the terrorists bravely and killed 15 militants during the initial engagement. At the time, the military spokesperson said nine police personnel embraced martyrdom in the initial fighting, adding that militants had taken police personnel hostage before security forces reached the area.

The military spokesperson had said security forces carefully tightened the cordon around the militants because "our children were being held hostage." He said that security forces remained engaged with the militants in the mountains of Ziarat from July 6. "When the terrorists realised the cordon had tightened, these cowards martyred 18 police personnel." Lt Gen Chaudhry said 27 police personnel embraced martyrdom in the Mangi checkpoint attack, while 26 militants were killed in that operation. Meanwhile, security sources said today that an attack on a police station in Khuzdar was also repelled, adding that Pakistan Army and FC troops carried out an operation in response, with reports indicating that eight militants were killed. They further said that, since July 5, a total of 79 militants had been killed during Operation Shaban and other intelligence-based operations. Separately, security sources also reported that five to

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While hapless masses continue to suffer...

Former MPs also to have blue passports

Under the bill, former parliamentarians would become entitled to free blue passports, which are official travel documents issued to government officials, lawmakers, judges and military personnel undertaking official state assignments

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Interior on Friday approved a proposal to grant official blue passports to former parliamentarians, endorsing amendments contained in a private member's bill. The proposed legislation, titled the Members of Parliament (Salaries and Allowances) Amendment Act, 2026, was introduced by Senator Abdul Qadir. Under the bill, former parliamentarians would become entitled to free blue passports, which are official travel documents issued to government officials, lawmakers, judges and military personnel undertaking official state assignments. Senator Faisal Saleem Rehman chairs session of Senates Standing Committee on Interior and Narcotics Control at Parliament

House, Islamabad, on July 10, 2026. - Senate of Pakistan website Senator Faisal Saleem Rehman chairs session of Senate's Standing Committee on Interior and Narcotics Control at Parliament House, Islamabad, on July 10, 2026. - Senate of Pakistan website The bill stated that spouses of former parliamentarians would also be eligible to obtain free blue passports under the proposed amendments. In addition, dependent children of former lawmakers under the age of 28 would also qualify for official travel document without charge. According to the bill, retired federal secretaries and their families already enjoy the same facility. The proposed amendments seek to place former parliamentarians on an equal footing with retired

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ISLAMABAD: Macky Sall, candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House. - DNA

PM Shehbaz talks to Iranian president

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation today with the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian. During their warm and cordial conversation, the Prime Minister expressed deep concern over the recent escalation in tensions in the region and underscored the urgent need to restore regional peace and stability. He called on Iran and all other parties to exercise restraint and refrain from any action that could jeopardize the hard-earned peace gains achieved over the past few months. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of upholding the commitments undertaken under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), describing it as an enduring framework for promoting mutual

Continued on Page 06

Ms. Rebeca Grynspan also meets PM

Pakistan committed to multilateralism, says PM Shehbaz

Macky Sall, candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations, calls on Prime Minister; seeks support

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Macky Sall, candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House. While welcoming Mr. Sall, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to multilateralism and reiterated its strong and unwavering support for the central role of the United Nations in global affairs. He expressed the hope that the incoming UN leadership would continue to advance the three pillars of the United Nations—peace and security, development, and human rights—in a balanced and effective manner. The Prime Minister reiterated Pakistan's abiding commitment to upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, ensuring the faithful implementation of

Continued on Page 06

GB uplift gov't's priority: PM

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday, termed the development of Gilgit-Baltistan a priority of the federal government, said that special attention was being paid to improve infrastructure, communications, energy, education, health, and tourism sectors besides increasing employment opportunities in the region. The prime minister, in a meeting with the newly-elected members of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), who called on him here, said that the local

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13 held for allegedly deducting BISP funds

LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore Zone on Friday arrested 13 suspects during targeted raids in Lahore and Nankana Sahib for their alleged involvement in illegal deductions from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) funds. According to an FIA spokesperson, the Anti-Corruption Circle conducted the operations following reports that the suspects were unlawfully deducting between Rs.1,500 and Rs.2,500 as an unauthorized commission from the financial assistance meant for deserving women under the welfare scheme. The spokesperson stated that the suspects were caught red-handed at the payment centers while receiving the illegal commission. A large number of women beneficiaries present at the centers were reportedly being subjected to these unlawful deductions by the suspects.

During the raids, the FIA teams recovered several Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs), transaction registers, mobile phones, bank connect devices and other relevant incriminating material from the possession of the arrested individuals. Separate cases had been registered against all the suspects at the FIA Anti-Corruption Circle, and further investigation was underway to trace other facilitators involved in exploiting the beneficiaries. APP

SCCI Discuss Key Issues Relating EFS

SIALKOT: The Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Friday held a productive Zoom meeting with Syed Shakeel Shah, Member (Customs Operations), FBR to discuss key issues relating to the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) particularly the requirement of Bank and Insurance Guarantees for enhancement of import quotas. The meeting was attended by M. Jawed Bilwani, Ex-President KCCI and Khuram Mukhtar, Patron-in-Chief PTEA, along with representatives of Pakistan Customs and SCCI. During the discussion, SCCI strongly advocated the acceptance of Indemnity Bonds and Post-Dated Cheques (PDCs) for Category-A exporters seeking enhancement of their import entitlement beyond the average imports of the preceding two years.

The proposal aims to ease financial pressures on exporters while ensuring uninterrupted execution of export orders. Syed Shakeel Shah responded positively to the proposal and assured that the matter would be pursued to facilitate genuine exporters. He also reaffirmed Customs' commitment to resolving operational issues through close coordination with the business community. SCCI welcomed the constructive approach of Pakistan Customs and appreciated the Member (Customs Operations) for his continued support towards creating a more business-friendly export environment. APP

Bold regulatory reforms vital to transform Business environment

Business facilitation must replace bureaucratic complexities: ICCI acting President

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Tahir Ayub, has urged the government to launch a comprehensive regulatory reform agenda aimed at significantly improving the ease of doing business, reducing the cost of compliance, and creating a more investment-friendly environment for domestic and foreign investors. Talking to different visiting delegations at the Chamber House here on Friday, Tahir Ayub said that Pakistan possesses immense economic potential, a strategic geographic location, and a vibrant entrepreneurial community. However, cumbersome regulations, overlapping jurisdictions, excessive documentation, and lengthy approval processes continue to impede business growth and discourage investment. He emphasized that simplifying regulatory procedures has become imperative to stimulate economic activity, attract investment, and generate sustainable employment opportunities. He said the business community firmly believes that economic growth is driven by a vibrant private sector, but businesses require a predictable, transparent, and efficient regulatory framework to flourish. He stressed that reducing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles would not only improve investor confidence but also enhance Pakistan's competitiveness in regional and global markets. Tahir Ayub called for the establishment of a fully integrated one-window digital system for business registration, licensing, tax payments, utility connections, and regulatory approvals. Such an initiative, he said, would substantially reduce compliance costs, improve transparency, minimize human interaction, and curb discretionary practices that often delay legitimate business activities. He also highlighted the importance of ensuring consistency and predictability in government policies, stating that frequent changes in taxation, regulatory requirements, and compliance mechanisms create uncertainty for investors and undermine long-term business planning. Stable and business-friendly policies, he noted, are essential for attracting both local and international investment. Tahir Ayub stressed that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which constitute the backbone of Pakistan's economy, deserve special regulatory facilitation. He recommended simplified



tax filing procedures, easier business registration, quicker access to finance, and reduced compliance requirements to enable SMEs to expand their operations and contribute more effectively to employment generation and exports. ICCI Vice President Mohammad Irfan Chaudhry said that improving the ease of doing business is no longer merely an economic reform but a national necessity. He observed that

businesses spend considerable time and resources complying with multiple regulatory requirements imposed by various departments, affecting productivity and increasing operational costs. He said digital transformation of public services, time-bound approvals, transparent inspection mechanisms, and greater coordination among government institutions would significantly improve the business climate

Three held for allegedly selling of citizen's telecom data

Punjab NCCIA Director Operations Muhammad Ali Wasim said that indiscriminate action against individuals involved in the illegal trade of citizens' personal and sensitive data would continue

DNA

LAHORE: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), Lahore arrested three suspects allegedly involved in an organised network engaged in the illegal acquisition and sale of citizens' sensitive telecommunications data, including Call Detail Records (CDRs), SIM ownership information, family registration records, location data and other confidential information. According to officials, the suspects had allegedly been obtaining citizens' confidential data through unlawful means and selling it for commercial purposes, posing a serious threat to individuals' privacy, digital security and national interests. The action was taken after the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Lahore lodged a complaint, following which the NCCIA registered FIR No.146/2026 and launched an investigation. During the investigation, the agency arrested three suspects identified as Muhammad Saghir, Muhammad Ashfaq and Malik Saddam. Preliminary findings revealed that they were allegedly operating an organised network to illegally obtain and sell citizens' CDRs, SIM registration and other sensitive information. During the

operation, the NCCIA recovered 14 mobile phones, a laptop, a tablet, 38 SIM cards, 10 internet devices, nine Biometric Verification System (BVS) devices, seven fingerprint scanners, three Bluetooth fingerprint scanners, three card readers, 11 memory cards, nine USB drives, eight hard disks and RAM modules, and hard copies of 60 fingerprints from the suspects' possession. Punjab NCCIA Director Operations Muhammad Ali Wasim said indiscriminate action against individuals involved in the illegal trade of citizens' personal and sensitive data would continue, adding that all those involved in organized cybercrime would be brought to justice in accordance with the law. The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) on Friday arrested three suspects allegedly running an organized network involved in the illegal acquisition and sale of citizens' sensitive telecommunications data. According to agency officials, the suspects had been obtaining confidential data through unlawful means and selling it for commercial purposes, posing a serious threat to individual privacy, digital security, and national interests. The compromised data included Call Detail Records (CDRs), SIM ownership information, family registration records, and location data. The action was

taken after the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Lahore lodged a formal complaint, prompting the NCCIA to register FIR No. 146/2026 and launch a thorough investigation. During the operation, the agency apprehended three key suspects identified as Muhammad Saghir, Muhammad Ashfaq and Malik Saddam. Preliminary findings revealed that the trio was actively operating an organized network to illicitly trade citizens' private records. The NCCIA team also recovered a large cache of digital and biometric equipment from the possession of the suspects. The seized items included 14 mobile phones, a laptop, a tablet, 38 SIM cards, 10 internet devices, nine Biometric Verification System (BVS) devices, seven fingerprint scanners, three Bluetooth fingerprint scanners, three card readers, 11 memory cards, nine USB drives, eight hard disks and RAM modules, alongside hard copies of 60 fingerprints. Punjab NCCIA Director Operations Muhammad Ali Wasim said that indiscriminate action against individuals involved in the illegal trade of citizens' personal and sensitive data would continue. He reiterated that all those involved in organized cybercrime would be brought to justice in strict accordance with the law.

20 injured in Abbottabad road accident

The hospital administration stated that the condition of all admitted patients is being continuously monitored and that every possible medical facility is being provided to ensure their best possible recovery

ABBOTTABAD: At least 20 people, including 14 children under the age of 12, were injured in a horrific road accident after a Suzuki passenger vehicle lost control and plunged into a roadside ravine on the Dhamtor-Havelian Bypass on Saturday. According to Rescue 1122, the victims, who belong to Haripur, were returning home after a family picnic in Galiyat when the accident occurred. Rescue teams recovered all the injured passengers from the vehicle, administered first aid at the scene, and shifted them to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital, Abbottabad. Following medical examination, the condition of four children was declared critical. They were referred to Ayub Teaching Hospital

(ATH), Abbottabad, in Rescue 1122 ambulances for advanced medical care, while the remaining injured continued to receive treatment at DHQ Hospital. Some of the injured children required emergency surgical intervention and were shifted to the operating theatre. Ayub Teaching Hospital (ATH) sources said eight injured children were later admitted to the Emergency Department of Ayub Teaching Hospital. The injured children were identified as Aqsa, Asma Noor, Samiullah, Javeria, Zainab, Zain, Siyam and Ibrahim. Upon their arrival, doctors, nurses and paramedical staff immediately initiated emergency treatment. Initial medical assessments indicated that three of the admitted children were in critical condition, while the others were

undergoing detailed evaluation and treatment. On the advice of the attending physicians, the injured children were shifted to the Surgical and Orthopedic wards for further treatment, including surgery where required, and specialized medical care. Teams of specialist doctors remain engaged in their treatment and are closely monitoring their condition. Deputy Director of Ayub Teaching Hospital, Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, personally supervised the emergency response and reviewed treatment arrangements alongside on-duty doctors, nurses and other medical staff. He directed hospital officials to ensure the provision of timely and the highest possible standard of medical care to all injured children. APP

Kashmir Martyrs' day to be observed

MIRPUR (AJK): The authorities and civil society groups Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) are preparing to observe the 95th Kashmir Martyrs' Day on July 13 with commemorative events across the region, the officials and organizers said on Friday. The prayer gatherings, seminars, rallies and tribute ceremonies are scheduled at district and tehsil headquarters, including Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, Kotli, Bagh, Rawalakot, Sudhanoti, Neelum Valley, Haveli, Hattian Bala and Bhimber. The organizers said that the participants were expected to include representatives of civil society, political and religious groups, lawyers, business organizations and the media. The annual observance commemorates 22 Kashmiris' martyrdom outside Srinagar's Central Jail on July 13, 1931, during protests linked to the trial of Abdul Qadeer. The anniversary is regarded by many Kashmiris as a significant event in the region's political history. The AJK government has declared July 13 a public holiday to facilitate public participation in the commemorative events. The reports from across the Line of Control said that the similar observances, including prayer meetings and visits to the graves of those commemorated, were expected in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The organizers there have also called for a shutdown to mark the anniversary. The speakers at events in AJK are expected to reiterate support for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in line with United Nations resolutions and the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. APP

Remembering literary icon Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi

Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi passed away in Lahore on July 10, 2006, at the age of 89. Two decades after his death, his poetry, fiction, and essays continue to inspire readers and writers alike, cementing his legacy as one of the greatest literary icons of the Urdu language.

ISLAMABAD: Renowned literary icon Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi was commemorated on his 20th death anniversary as speakers paid homage to his exceptional contributions to Urdu poetry, fiction and journalism. While Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi is no longer among us, his words continue to speak across generations. His poetry, fiction, and essays remain as relevant today as ever, reflecting a vision of humanity, justice and hope that has stood the test of time. According to media reports, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi was born on November

20, 1916, in the village of Anga in present-day Khushab District. He went on to become one of the most celebrated voices in Urdu literature, earning recognition for his remarkable contributions as a poet, fiction writer, journalist, literary critic, and broadcaster. Throughout his distinguished literary career, Qasmi authored around 50 books spanning poetry, fiction, journalism, literary criticism and the arts. His writings, rooted in humanism and social consciousness, earned him a lasting place among the leading literary figures of Pakistan. A master

of both ghazal and nazm, he produced several acclaimed poetry collections, including Jalal-o-Jamal, Shola-i-Gul, and Kisht-i-Wafa. His short stories, celebrated for their realistic portrayal of rural life and human emotions, were compiled in collections such as Chopaal, Sannata, Kapaas Ka Phool, Bagolay, Tal-o-Gharoob, Sailab-o-Gardab, Anchal, and Ghar Se Ghar Tak. Beyond his literary achievements, Qasmi also served as a scriptwriter for Radio Pakistan, where he contributed significantly to the country's cultural

and literary programming. His lifelong dedication to literature was recognized with several prestigious honors, including the Pride of Performance, the Sitara-i-Imtiaz, and the Pakistan Academy of Letters' Lifetime Achievement Award. Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi passed away in Lahore on July 10, 2006, at the age of 89. Two decades after his death, his poetry, fiction, and essays continue to inspire readers and writers alike, cementing his legacy as one of the greatest literary icons of the Urdu language. APP

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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
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- RGH.....9290301-7
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- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

HEC holds orientation for faculty, researchers of Varsities on NRPU

The participants appreciated the initiative and acknowledged the valuable insights shared by the resource persons, expressing confidence that the session would help them prepare stronger proposals for future funding opportunities. The event concluded with a question-and-answer session and a vote of thanks to the resource persons and participants



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD/PESHAWAR: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Regional Centre Peshawar organised an orientation session entitled "NRPU Overview, Evaluation Parameters and Strategies for Winning Research Grant" for faculty members and researchers from higher education institutions across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In his welcome address, Director/In-charge HEC Regional Centre Peshawar Mr. Nauman Ahmed Khan high-

lighted the importance of research funding in promoting innovation, academic excellence, and evidence-based solutions to national challenges. He encouraged researchers to avail themselves of opportunities under the National Research Programme for Universities (NRPU) and emphasised HEC's commitment to strengthening the research culture in universities. During the session, the resource persons provided a comprehensive overview of the NRPU programme, including its objectives, eligibility criteria, funding mechanisms, and applica-

tion procedures. They explained the key evaluation parameters used in assessing research proposals, such as originality, relevance, scientific merit, methodology, feasibility, and potential impact. The speakers also shared practical strategies for developing competitive research proposals, highlighting the importance of identifying significant research problems, aligning projects with national priorities, adopting robust methodologies, and clearly demonstrating expected outcomes. The participants were further guided on common

shortcomings in grant applications and ways to improve proposal quality. The interactive session enabled researchers to seek expert guidance on proposal development and the NRPU evaluation process. The participants appreciated the initiative and acknowledged the valuable insights shared by the resource persons, expressing confidence that the session would help them prepare stronger proposals for future funding opportunities. The event concluded with a question-and-answer session and a vote of thanks to the resource persons and participants.

Business community welcomes new auto policy

RAWALPINDI: The business community has welcomed the newly announced Automotive Industry Development and Export Plan 2026-31 framework, terming the 75 percent reduction in regulatory duties a major step toward lowering manufacturing costs and modernizing the domestic automotive sector. In an exclusive interaction with APP on Friday, President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Usman Shaukat said that the business community highly appreciates the government focus on affordability, localization and environmental stewardship. He noted that the simplified tariff structure directly addresses long-standing cost pressures, while extended financing options like seven-year loan tenures with a 15 percent down payment limit will significantly improve vehicle accessibility for middle-class buyers. However, the president emphasized that the ultimate success of the framework depends on formally taking nationwide chambers on board before and during the implementation phase. He explained that local manufacturers require complete predictability regarding the timeline and phase-in schedules for duty cuts, along with clearly defined local content thresholds to ensure the incentives drive genuine domestic localization rather than simple import substitution. To a question, Usman added that while the target of 30 percent new energy vehicles by 2030 is highly commendable, achieving this transition requires seamless coordination among state regulators. "Local manufacturers are fully prepared to invest in green technologies provided that the duty-free import of critical electric vehicle components is securely protected through aligned policies.—APP

CDNS mobilises Rs61 billion in FY2025-26

The performance marks another milestone in CDNS's sustained efforts to strengthen its Islamic finance portfolio. During fiscal year 2024-25, the directorate successfully achieved its Shariah-compliant investment target of Rs24 billion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has surpassed its annual target for Shariah-compliant investments by mobilising Rs61 billion during the fiscal year 2025-26, reflecting growing public confidence in Islamic financial products and the country's expanding Islamic finance sector. According to official sources, CDNS had set an annual mobilisation target of Rs55 billion for its Shariah-compliant investment portfolio but successfully achieved Rs61 billion by the end of the fiscal year spanning July

1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. The strong performance underscores the increasing demand for Islamic savings instruments as investors continue to shift towards interest-free financial products that comply with Shariah principles while offering secure and competitive returns. The Senior official said the remarkable achievement demonstrates the growing role of Islamic finance in Pakistan's financial system and highlights the public's confidence in government-backed Shariah-compliant investment schemes. "We intensified our efforts to promote Islamic finance during the outgoing fiscal year, and

the overwhelming public response reflects the increasing trust of investors in these products," a senior CDNS official said. "The continued expansion of Islamic savings schemes will play an important role in strengthening Pakistan's Islamic economy and promoting sustainable financial growth." The official attributed the success to the increasing popularity of Islamic savings certificates and Sukuk-based investment instruments, which have attracted both individual and institutional investors seeking halal investment opportunities. Besides providing faith-based financial solutions.

Inquiry committee highlights safety gaps

ISLAMABAD: An inquiry committee formed by the Islamabad district administration has released its report on the H9 Market fire, detailing how a blaze that started at 9:45 pm spread through the market before being brought under control at 1:20 am. The report traces the sequence of events, identifies safety concerns, and proposes measures to prevent similar incidents in the future. According to the report, the fire initially broke out in stalls C-432 and C-433. The committee recorded statements from security personnel, shopkeepers, and other individuals connected to the market to determine the circumstances surrounding the incident. The report states that market staff first attempted to extinguish the fire on their own after it erupted at 9:45 pm. —APP



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Following amendment / rectification is made in the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board Advertisement Notice No: PID (I) No. 262/26 for the hiring of FCPS / MCPS training Surgery, Medicine and Pediatrics Department at Cantonment General Hospital, Rawalpindi.

Discipline	Qualifications Advertised in Notice No: PID (I) No. 262/26	Amendment / Rectification in Required Qualifications
FCPS (Surgery)	MBBS or Equivalent FCPS Part-1 Obs & Gynae 01 Year House Job Valid PMC(PM&DC) Registration	MBBS or Equivalent FCPS Part-1 in Surgery 01 Year House Job Valid PMC(PM&DC) Registration
	MBBS or Equivalent FCPS Part-1 Obs & Gynae 01 Year House Job Valid PMC(PM&DC) Registration	MBBS or Equivalent FCPS Part-1 in Medicine 01 Year House Job Valid PMC(PM&DC) Registration


Note: All other terms and conditions will remain the same. PID(I)296/26

Cantonment Executive Officer Rawalpindi Cantt

FCCP withdraws Supreme Court's general orders


ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCCP) has withdrawn the Supreme Court's general directions imposing restrictions on land conversion in Karachi and ordering the demolition of illegal constructions, holding that building regulations and their enforcement fall within the jurisdiction of the provincial government, not the courts. In a 10-page written judgment authored by Justice Aamer Farooq, the court observed that the Constitution and relevant laws require the Sindh Building Control Authority and the Sindh government to take action against illegal constructions. It said officials of the SBCA and the provincial government are responsible for enforcing the law and must fulfil their constitutional and legal obligations. According to the judgment, the matter before the Supreme Court originally concerned an appeal relating to an illegally constructed building in Lyari. However, the scope of the case was subsequently expanded to cover the whole of Lyari and later the entire city of Karachi. The Supreme Court had also issued directions for the demolition of illegal marriage halls, shopping centres, markets and structures constructed in violation of the Karachi Master Plan. The Federal Constitutional Court held that, while hearing the appeal, the Supreme Court effectively exercised powers akin to suo motu jurisdiction without fulfilling the constitutional requirements, amounting to an overreach of judicial authority. The judgment further stated that no demolition order could be issued solely on the basis of an SBCA report, as every citizen has the fundamental right to due process and a fair hearing before any adverse action is taken. The court clarified that its ruling does not legalise any illegal construction. Rather, it emphasises that the Constitution and the law already provide a proper legal framework for taking action against unlawful buildings, which must be followed by the competent authorities.—APP

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Fred Seneviratne
July 2026
Editor: Ansar M Bhatti

Sri Lanka: Climbing global rankings in governance and integrity

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Briefs

Short-term
inflation
declines by
0.45pc

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI)-based weekly inflation decreased by 0.45 percent during the week ended on July 9, 2026, for the combined consumption group, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday. According to PBS data, the SPI for the week under review fell to 352.66 points from 354.24 points recorded in the previous week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 11.94 percent. The weekly SPI, with base year 2015-16=100, covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) declined by 0.36 percent to 342.98 points from 344.22 points. Likewise, the SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517 and Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 decreased by 0.33 percent, 0.32 percent, 0.33 percent and 0.55 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 22 items (43.14 percent) increased, eight items (15.69 percent) decreased, while 21 items (41.17 percent) remained unchanged. On a week-on-week basis, the prices of tomatoes witnessed the sharpest decline of 23.30 percent, followed by LPG 15.12 percent, pulse moong 2.15 percent, petrol 0.69 percent, diesel 0.63 percent, pulse masoor 0.52 percent, sugar 0.07 percent and mustard oil 0.06 percent. On the other hand, prices of potatoes increased by 3.94 percent, followed by chicken 3.70 percent, onions 3.54 percent, wheat flour 1.61 percent, eggs 0.81 percent, beef 0.59 percent, cooked daal 0.58 percent, fresh milk 0.50 percent and washing soap 0.44 percent.—APP

ITP holds
road safety
seminar

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) organized a road safety seminar at the Pakistan Red Crescent Headquarters to promote awareness about traffic laws and safe driving practices. An ITP official told APP on Friday that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Kainat Azhar Khan attended the seminar as the chief guest. Director ITP FM 92.4 Ayesha Jamil, officers of the ITP Education Wing and officials of the Pakistan Red Crescent also participated in the event. ITP Education Wing delivered awareness sessions on compliance with traffic laws, defensive driving, the use of seat belts and helmets, speed limits, pedestrians' rights and the dangers of using mobile phones while driving.—APP

Al-Shifa Trust warns against
increased eye health risks

He added that children, outdoor workers and older adults should be monitored closely during periods of extreme heat and humidity, as they are more susceptible to dehydration and weather-related eye irritation

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Doctors at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital have warned that persistent heat and high monsoon humidity are contributing to a rise in dry eyes, irritation, redness and blurred vision, urging people to take preventive measures as temperatures remain above normal. According to eye specialists, the combination of intense heat, humidity, dust, pollen, smoke and prolonged exposure to fans or air conditioners can disrupt the eye's natural tear film, leading to irritation and discomfort. People who work outdoors, drive for long hours or spend extended periods in air-conditioned environments are particularly vulnerable. Dr. Tayyab Afghani, Head of the Orbit and Oculoplastic Department at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, said dry eye disease is more than a minor irritation. Repeated dryness can cause burning, excessive watering, a gritty sensation and difficulty focusing, while frequent rubbing of the eyes may further damage the eye surface and increase the risk of complications. He said office workers, students, older adults, contact lens users and people living with diabetes



or allergies are more likely to experience symptoms during the current weather conditions. Dr. Afghani urged patients recovering from eye surgery, particularly cataract,

glaucoma, corneal or retinal procedures, to take extra care by using their prescribed eye drops regularly and attending follow-up eye examinations as advised by their doctors. The Pakistan Meteorological Department has forecast above-normal temperatures across much of the country from July to September 2026, with prolonged heat-wave conditions possible in parts of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. Dr. Afghani advised people to stay well hydrated, wear sunglasses, avoid rubbing their eyes and minimise exposure to dust and smoke. He also recommended taking regular breaks from digital screens, blinking more frequently, removing contact lenses if the eyes become dry, and using lubricating eye drops only on the advice of an eye specialist. He urged people not to ignore persistent redness, eye pain, light sensitivity, discharge or sudden blurred vision, saying these symptoms require prompt medical evaluation to prevent complications.

He added that children, outdoor workers and older adults should be monitored closely during periods of extreme heat and humidity, as they are more susceptible to dehydration and weather-related eye irritation.

Federal
secretariat
being
upgraded

ISLAMABAD: The Committee on Improving Government Efficiency on Friday discussed, deliberated, and finalised the actionable recommendations of the five sub-working groups on restructuring and reforms. The committee meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar finalised the recommendations on restructuring of the federal secretariat, upgradation of e-office into a decision-making processing system, transformation of the MS Wing, reforming the Performance Evaluation Report (PER) system, and developing a whole-of-government approach. The recommendations of the committee will be presented to the Prime Minister for consideration. The meeting was attended by the ministers for petroleum and information technology, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Bajwa, federal secretaries of Cabinet Division, Establishment Division, Economic affairs, Telecom, and other relevant stakeholders.—APP

SP Hamzah
addresses
Bomb Disposal
training session

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Safe City Capt. (R) Hamzah Humayun addressed a Bomb Disposal training session at the Capital Police College Islamabad, emphasizing the importance of specialized training to effectively respond to explosive threats and other emergency situations. An official told APP on Friday that course instructors and participants from various police units attended the training session. Participants successfully completed the specialized course, during which they received professional training in bomb identification, safe handling of explosive devices, search techniques, threat assessment and practical field exercises to enhance their operational capabilities. Addressing the participants, Capt. (R) Hamzah Humayun underscored the importance of continuous professional training and said such specialized courses played a vital role in improving the operational preparedness and response capacity of Islamabad Police. He encouraged the participants to effectively utilize the knowledge and skills acquired during the training while performing their professional duties. At the conclusion of the ceremony, certificates were distributed among the successful participants in recognition of the successful completion of the Bomb Disposal Course, the official added.—APP

Diamer Basha Dam sign
MoU for Rs972.6 mln
Livelihood Schemes

ISLAMABAD: The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has signed an agreement to launch livelihood development schemes worth nearly Rs973 million for communities in the Diamer Basha Dam project area. This leads to another step in the project's broader socio-economic development program linked to one of the country's largest hydropower and water storage initiatives, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Thursday between the Diamer Basha Dam Project of the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and the District Administration of Diamer to implement projects valued at Rs972.571 million under the project's Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). The agreement was signed by General Manager and Project Director of the Diamer Basha Dam Project, Dr. Engr. Nazakat Hussain, and Deputy Commissioner Diamer Lt. Muhammad Owais Abbasi (Retd.), in the presence of Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Secretary Arshad Majeed. Under the agreement, the livelihood initiatives will be carried out through relevant government departments under the supervision of the Diamer district administration and in consultation with local communities. According to officials, a joint oversight committee comprising representatives from the district administration, WAPDA, and the local community will monitor implementation and ensure the quality of the development schemes. The latest package forms part of a much larger socio-economic development program attached to the Diamer Basha Dam Project. WAPDA has earmarked Rs78.5 billion for community welfare and development in the project area, according to official figures. Authorities said several major public infrastructure projects financed under the program have already been completed, including the Thore Hydel Power Station, Thak Hydel Power Station, and Cadet College Chilas.—APP

Turkish Language
Summer Camp
2026 concluded

ISLAMABAD: Closing ceremony of Turkish Language Summer Camp 2026 held in collaboration between Allama Iqbal Open University Lahore and Yunus Emre Institute Pakistan. It was held today at the AIU Regional Campus Lahore. The ceremony was attended by a large number of students, parents, teachers, and distinguished guests. Among the distinguished guests were Mr. Mehmet Emin Şimşek, Consul General of the Republic of Türkiye in Lahore; Mr. Eren Miyaso lu, Country Director of Yunus Emre Institute Pakistan; Dr. Zahid Majeed, Director, Director International Collaborations, Allama Iqbal Open University; and Dr. Uzma Tariq, Deputy Regional Director, Allama Iqbal Open University Regional Campus Lahore. Mr. Mehmet Emin Şimşek, Consul General of Türkiye in Lahore, remarked that educational and cultural exchanges further strengthen the friendship and cooperation between the two countries while creating new opportunities for young people. Mr. Mehmet shared his plan to extend such people to people activities in other cities of Punjab through Yunus Emre Institute, Pakistan and AIU with full support of Consulate general, Lahore. He appreciated the efforts of Allama Iqbal Open University and Yunus Emre Institute in successfully organizing the program. In her welcome address, Dr. Uzma Tariq warmly welcomed the guests, parents, and students. She stated that Allama Iqbal Open University remains committed to organizing meaningful academic, cultural, and personality development programs to enhance students' knowledge, skills, and overall development. She also expressed her sincere appreciation to Yunus Emre Institute Pakistan for its valuable collaboration in making the Summer Camp a success. Addressing the audience, Mr. Eren Miyaso lu appreciated the strong fraternal relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and emphasized that bringing young people closer through language and culture is one of the key missions of Yunus Emre Institute. He also commended the students for their enthusiastic participation and keen interest throughout the Summer Camp. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Zahid Majeed highlighted the significance of international educational and cultural activities in promoting students' personality development, global awareness, and mutual respect among diverse cultures. He reaffirmed that Allama Iqbal Open University remains committed to collaborating with international institutions in organizing similar beneficial and meaningful programs in the future.—APP

New hajj policy brings
advanced digital system

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Friday said the Hajj Policy and Plan 2027-2030 will transform the Hajj system into a state-of-the-art digital framework, covering online complaints, secure payments and improved pilgrim services, while maintaining the first-come, first-served application policy. Speaking exclusively to local media outlet, Minister for religious credited the present government for introducing Pakistan's first comprehensive digital Hajj system and a new long-term hajj policy, describing the initiative as a historic step towards bringing greater transparency, efficiency and convenience for pilgrims. The minister said the state-of-the-art digital framework will transform the Hajj process by providing secure data protection, easy payment facilities and an efficient complaint man-

agement system. He added that the new system will make services more accessible and ensure a smoother experience for pilgrims. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said the Hajj application process will continue under the first-come, first-served policy, ensuring a transparent and fair mechanism for applicants. He said the new policy also includes short and long Hajj packages ranging from three to six years to provide better planning and flexibility for pilgrims. The minister also appreciated the efforts of the Saudi Arabian government for continuously improving Hajj arrangements and providing world-class facilities to pilgrims from across the globe. Yousaf said Saudi Arabia's modern infrastructure, advanced management system and commitment to pilgrims' comfort have played a vital role in making Hajj operations more efficient.—APP

Minister reaffirms govt commitment
to sports development

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing & Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, met with the President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), Syed Mohsen Gilani, who called on him to discuss the progress of football in Pakistan and ongoing efforts to revive the sport across the country. During the meeting, Syed Mohsen Gilani expressed his gratitude to the Federal Minister for his unwavering support and commitment to the promotion of sports, particularly football. He briefed the Minister on the recent positive developments within Pakistan football, including initiatives aimed at strengthening grassroots and creating greater opportunities for young athletes. The PFF President also informed the Minister about the progress of the FIFA Arena Mini Pitch Project for Danish School Hasilpur in the District Bahawalpur under the FIFA Arena Programme. He appreciated the Minister's valuable support in facilitating this important initiative, which will provide world-class football infrastructure and encourage youth participation in sports in the region of South Punjab. On the occasion, Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada

lauded the efforts of the Pakistan Football Federation in revitalizing football and nurturing young talent. He remarked that the youth of Pakistan possess immense potential and, if provided with the right opportunities and facilities, can make a meaningful difference at both national and international levels. The minister shared that he has personally been a sportsman throughout his school and college years and has actively participated in various sports. He emphasized his firm belief that healthy minds thrive in healthy bodies, adding that sports play a vital role in developing disciplined, confident, and productive citizens. Reaffirming the Government's commitment to the promotion of sports, the Minister assured Syed Mohsen Gilani of his full support for future initiatives aimed at the development of football and youth engagement. He appreciated the Pakistan Football Federation's dedication and acknowledged its efforts in securing the FIFA Arena Mini Pitch Project for Danish School Hasilpur, describing it as a significant milestone in promoting grassroots football in Pakistan. At the end of the meeting, the President presented a commemorative souvenir to the Federal Minister.—APP

Ombudsperson reaffirms equal
enforcement of workplace harassment law

She also urged women not to fear retaliatory action for reporting harassment, assuring that the law protects complainants against victimization and ensures that those engaging in any form of revenge or intimidation can also be held accountable

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Fauzia Waqar on Friday urged women to report every incident of workplace harassment without fear, stressing that awareness and timely complaints are key to ensuring legal protection and holding offenders accountable. Fauzia Waqar, talking to a local television programme said that the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace law is enforced equally across both public and private sector institu-

tions, warning that anyone found guilty would be held accountable under the law. She said workplace harassment is not limited to physical misconduct but also includes gender-based discrimination, denying women equal opportunities, reserving senior positions only for men, ignoring merit and performance in promotions and unwelcome physical contact. Waqar said repeated attempts to invade a woman's personal space, standing unnecessarily close, or any conduct that creates an intimidating or hostile work environment

may also constitute workplace harassment under the law. She urged women not to remain silent out of fear of victim-blaming and encouraged them to report such incidents, reaffirming that the law provides equal protection and applies uniformly across both public and private sector institutions. Waqar said the law provides for stringent penalties, including substantial fines and other legal punishments, for those found guilty of workplace harassment or for anyone attempting to suppress a complaint or retaliate against a complainant. She also urged

women not to fear retaliatory action for reporting harassment, assuring that the law protects complainants against victimization and ensures that those engaging in any form of revenge or intimidation can also be held accountable. Concluding her remarks, Waqar said the government maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy towards workplace harassment, adding that the Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment (FOSP) remains committed to ensuring timely justice.—DNA

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Revisiting Hobbes in Pakistan's Constitutional Debate



Dr. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

THE 26th Constitutional Amendment has entered Pakistan's constitutional discourse at a moment when questions of institutional balance, governance efficiency and political stability remain deeply contested. Beyond legal drafting and parliamentary arithmetic, it invites a broader intellectual reflection on the nature of authority itself and the conditions under which a state sustains order. Read through the lens of

Thomas Hobbes, the amendment becomes more than a procedural adjustment; it appears as part of an enduring struggle to reconcile power, legitimacy and stability within an evolving constitutional framework.

Hobbes wrote in a time of civil war and political fragmentation in England, where competing centres of power produced instability and fear. His central concern was not liberty in abstraction, but the avoidance of disorder. In his famous formulation, life without a strong and recognised sovereign authority would descend into a condition where uncertainty dominates and collective life becomes fragile. In such a "state of nature," political actors act primarily in pursuit of their own interests, and the absence of a binding authority makes resolution of disputes difficult, if not impossible. This perspective offers a useful, though not complete, way of reading Pakistan's constitutional development. The state has repeatedly experienced tensions among institutions, shifting alignments of political forces, and periodic confrontations over the limits of authority. In such an environment, constitutional amendments are often justified as mechanisms to clarify roles, reduce friction and strengthen governance. The 26th Constitutional Amendment is no exception. Its supporters present it as an attempt to streamline institutional functioning, reduce ambiguity in decision-making structures, and reinforce the capacity of the state to govern effectively.

From a Hobbesian standpoint, such arguments carry a certain logical appeal. For Hobbes, political order precedes all other political goods. Economic development, civil liberties and institutional refinement all depend on a prior condition of stability. Where institutions are locked in confrontation, governance becomes inconsistent and authority fragmented. In that sense, any constitutional intervention that reduces institutional conflict and enhances predictability in governance could be seen as moving in the direction Hobbes would have considered desirable: the preservation of peace through consolidated authority.



Yet Hobbesian reasoning does not imply blind endorsement of authority for its own sake. The legitimacy of sovereignty, in Hobbes's framework, is grounded in an implicit contract. Individuals surrender certain freedoms to the state in exchange for protection from disorder and violence. The state, therefore, is not merely an instrument of power but a provider of security and predictability. When constitutional change is assessed through this prism, the key question becomes whether it strengthens the state's capacity to deliver stability in a way that is perceived as legitimate by those governed. It is here that the debate surrounding the 26th Constitutional Amendment becomes more complex. Critics argue that changes in institutional arrangements may disturb the balance of power among organs of the state, particularly with respect to the judiciary and its independence. In contemporary constitutional theory, such concerns are not peripheral. Modern democracies have evolved beyond the Hobbesian preference for concentrated authority and instead emphasise a structured distribution of power. This includes checks and balances, judicial autonomy, and parliamentary oversight, all of which are designed to prevent the arbitrary exercise of authority. The tension, therefore, lies between two conceptions of stability. In the Hobbesian sense, stability is achieved through stronger central authority capable of resolving disputes decisively. In the modern constitutional sense, stability is achieved through a balance of institutions that ensures no single centre of power becomes dominant enough to undermine the system's credibility. Pakistan's constitutional evolution has oscillated between these two impulses, reflecting both the practical demands of governance and the normative aspirations of constitutional democracy.

Applied to the present amendment, a Hobbesian interpretation would not be concerned solely with whether authority has been strengthened, but whether institutional conflict has been reduced in a meaningful and sustainable way. If constitutional restructuring results in clearer jurisdictional boundaries and more efficient governance, it may be seen as reinforcing the social contract. If, however, it generates new ambiguities or deepens mistrust among institutions, it risks undermining the very stability it seeks to secure. The question of public confidence becomes central in this context. Hobbes's social contract depends not only on coercive capacity but also on acceptance. Citizens obey the state because they expect protection and order in return. When institutional changes are perceived as favouring one organ of the state at the expense of another, or when they are viewed as lacking transparency, the legitimacy of the arrangement can come under strain. In such circumstances, even reforms intended to strengthen governance may produce unintended consequences.

This is where Hobbes intersects, somewhat uneasily, with modern constitutionalism. While he prioritised order above all else, contemporary democratic systems recognise that order without legitimacy is unstable in the long run. Concentrated authority may produce short-term coherence, but without institutional trust, it risks generating cycles of resistance and reform. Pakistan's constitutional history reflects this dilemma repeatedly: efforts to stabilise governance structures have often been accompanied by debates over institutional autonomy and democratic balance. The 26th Constitutional Amendment, therefore, should not be viewed narrowly as a legal instrument alone. It is part of a larger constitutional conversation about how authority is structured, how disputes are resolved, and how trust is maintained between the state and its citizens. In a system where political contestation is intense and institutional boundaries frequently tested, the challenge lies in designing arrangements that both enable governance and preserve legitimacy.

Hormuz: The Fourth Road Is the Only Way Out

Qamar Bashir



The second scenario is now frighteningly close: full-scale war. The scale of the latest American strikes shows how quickly limited retaliation can expand. The United States has already targeted a large number of Iranian coastal military facilities, missile and drone infrastructure and naval assets. Iran has responded across the region. Each side now possesses its own justification for another round of escalation.

President Trump has already threatened Iran's energy infrastructure. The conflict will move from military degradation towards the systematic destruction of Iran's economic foundations

THE latest U.S.-Iran strikes have turned the four possible futures of Hormuz from strategic theory into an urgent choice between negotiation, devastating war, prolonged economic strangulation and a regional settlement. The Strait of Hormuz crisis has entered a new and far more dangerous phase. What only days ago remained a tense diplomatic standoff has now descended into a violent cycle of American strikes and Iranian retaliation. The United States has attacked scores of Iranian military targets along the coast, while Tehran has fired missiles and drones at American-linked military facilities across the Middle East. The fragile peace arrangement reached in June is now close to collapse. The latest developments make one reality impossible to ignore: the four scenarios facing Washington and Tehran are no longer academic possibilities. The first scenario is a return to the MoU. Washington and Tehran could suspend military operations, restore the 60-day diplomatic process and resume negotiations. Iran would immediately halt attacks on commercial vessels and guarantee safe passage, while the United States would stop further strikes and withdraw its threats against Iranian civilian-supporting infrastructure.

But a simple return to the MoU may no longer be enough. The original arrangement contained an unresolved Hormuz question. Its relevant provision envisaged Iran and Oman discussing the future administration and maritime services of the Strait during the interim period, with other Persian Gulf littoral states involved and the sovereign rights of coastal states recognised. Instead of allowing that process to mature, an American-supported passage closer to Omani waters emerged as an alternative to Iran's preferred route. Washington viewed it as a safe route for international shipping. Tehran saw it as an attempt to bypass Iran's remaining leverage and determine the future of Hormuz before negotiations had reached a settlement. Oman's participation was particularly damaging to Iranian trust. Muscat has historically been one of the Gulf's most respected mediators between Iran and the United States. By helping facilitate a route that Tehran interpreted as an American-backed bypass, Oman risked compromising the neutrality that made its mediation valuable.

The second scenario is now frighteningly close: full-scale war. The scale of the latest American strikes shows how quickly limited retaliation can expand. The United States has already targeted a large number of Iranian coastal military facilities, missile and drone infrastructure and naval assets. Iran has responded across the region. Each side now possesses its own justification for another

round of escalation. President Trump has already threatened Iran's energy infrastructure. The conflict will move from military degradation towards the systematic destruction of Iran's economic foundations. For the United States, full-scale war would mean another open-ended Middle Eastern military commitment without a clearly defined political end state. Israel may initially welcome further degradation of Iran's military capacity. A weakened Iranian missile force and damaged command structure could improve Israel's immediate strategic position. But Israel would remain a principal target of Iranian retaliation and could face another prolonged period of missile and drone attacks. The Gulf states would face perhaps the greatest immediate danger. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and other countries host American military facilities. Iran may regard those installations as part of the American war structure regardless of the wishes of the host governments. The latest Iranian retaliation has already demonstrated how quickly Gulf territory can become part of the battlefield. The global economic consequences could be catastrophic. Millions of people who have never seen Hormuz would pay through higher fuel and food prices. Vulnerable economies carrying heavy debt and weak currencies could face recession and renewed poverty. Iran does not claim leadership of the global economic system. The United States does. With that claim comes responsibility for calculating the global consequences of military escalation.

The third scenario is neither peace nor full war. It is a prolonged low-intensity confrontation. Indeed, the present situation may already be moving in that direction. Iran attacks or pressures shipping. Washington responds with large but geographically limited strikes. Tehran fires missiles at American-linked facilities. Regional states intercept them. Sanctions and oil restrictions intensify. Mediators attempt to reopen diplomatic channels. Then the cycle begins again. The greatest danger is miscalculation. One missile killing dozens of American personnel, one U.S. strike causing mass Iranian civilian casualties or one tanker disaster killing an international crew could destroy the invisible limits of low-intensity conflict within hours. The third road therefore offers no peace. It simply stretches the crisis over a longer period and distributes its economic pain across the world. That brings us to the fourth scenario—the only option that attempts to remove the cause of confrontation rather than repeatedly suppressing its symptoms. A comprehensive regional Hormuz

settlement is now urgently required. The United States must accept an equally obvious reality. It is not a coastal state of Hormuz. American military superiority does not create geography. Freedom of navigation gives Washington a legitimate international interest in safe passage, but it does not automatically make the U.S. Navy the administrator or political manager of the Strait.

Iran and Oman should form the geographical core of the arrangement. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and other directly affected Gulf countries should participate in a broader maritime mechanism. International maritime institutions can provide technical expertise and independent verification. Iran must guarantee non-discriminatory commercial passage and permanently stop attacks on civilian vessels. Any future environmental, navigation or maritime service charges should be transparent and regionally negotiated rather than imposed through military coercion. In return, the United States should step away from direct management of Hormuz and should not attempt to become the traffic authority of a Strait thousands of miles from the American coastline. This fourth road gives every party space to retreat without surrender. Washington can claim that it secured free navigation and prevented unilateral Iranian control. Tehran can claim that its legitimate coastal role was recognised and that Hormuz did not become an American-administered military corridor.

Oman can recover its historic position as peacemaker. Muscat should understand that the United States can change presidents, military doctrines and strategic priorities. Oman cannot move away from Iran. Geography will remain when aircraft carriers eventually leave. Pakistan should now urgently help revive mediation as the four roads are now clearer than ever. A return to the MoU may temporarily stop the fighting but could fail again if Hormuz remains unresolved. Full-scale war would devastate Iran, expose Israel and Gulf states to retaliation and trap America in another unpredictable Middle Eastern conflict. Prolonged low-intensity warfare would slowly strangle regional and global economies. The fourth road is different because it addresses the central dispute. The fourth road is no longer simply the best option. After the bloodshed of July 9, it may be the last sensible road still open.

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

Neighbours by Destiny

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Good relations between neighbours are indeed desirable, yet they cannot flourish on words alone. A knife in the side and a greeting on the lips will never mend what is broken. For any lasting improvement, India must abandon its policy of proxy warfare, its interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, its support for terrorists and separatists, and its attempts to use...

IN the teachings of Islam, the bonds of human society are held in the highest regard, alongside the duties of worship. The rights of neighbours, in particular, have been emphasised time and again in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It is related that the Archangel Jibreel (AS) counselled the Prophet so persistently concerning the obligations owed to neighbours that the Messenger of Allah came to believe he might soon be instructed to make them partners in inheritance. Such is the profound importance attached to neighbourly conduct.

At the level of individuals, a man who finds himself at odds with his neighbour may, if he chooses, change his dwelling and settle elsewhere. Nations, however, enjoy no such liberty. Geography has bound them together, for better or for worse, and no amount of wishing can alter the map. This truth was brought home to me with particular force during an international conference held in Malaysia in 2008. Representatives from some thirty countries had gathered, including delegations from India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. At the opening ceremony, as participants exchanged greetings, a certain coolness was evident between the Pakistani and Indian delegates. Yet through repeated interaction, the natural spirit of neighbourliness began to stir. During the proceedings, a participant from Singapore approached me directly with a question that seemed to carry the weight of the entire gathering. "Why," he asked, "has Pakistan not been able to develop as much as it should, given its vast potential in skills, resources, and human talent?" The query, posed in that international forum, visibly astonished many, particularly the Indian participants. By the grace of Allah, I found myself able to reply with composure. I told the questioner that his inquiry was of genuine

importance. "Consider," I said, "your own neighbours — Malaysia and Indonesia. Now imagine if, instead, you had a neighbour like India. How would your development fare then? We in Pakistan are compelled to devote enormous sums to defence because of persistent hostility from that quarter. Were those resources freed for constructive purposes, we should doubtless have advanced far beyond our present state. My response appeared to satisfy many while displeasing some, as is often the case when plain truths are spoken. Yet the underlying reality remains beyond dispute; neighbours cannot be changed. Pakistan has, on numerous occasions, extended the hand of friendship toward India, only to meet with little or no positive response.

It is therefore heartening to note that, in recent days, more than a hundred prominent personalities from both India and Pakistan have jointly appealed through an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif according to the media report. They urge the two leaders to take concrete and permanent steps toward restoring peace, dialogue, and normal bilateral relations. The letter rightly observes that the long-standing tension between the two countries is depriving millions of young people of opportunities, prosperity, and a secure future. Among the practical measures proposed are the restoration of full diplomatic relations, the reappointment of high commissioners, the resumption of visa services, the reopening of airspace for commercial flights, and the reopening of the Attari-Wagah border for trade and movement. The signatories also call for the revival of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service and other cross-border connections. India and Pakistan together are home to nearly one-fifth of humanity, the greater part of which is young.

The appeal wisely recommends the reactivation of confidence-building measures, including the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, access to religious sites such as Sharda Peeth, and comprehensive bilateral talks on all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. It further suggests a review of the framework agreed between 2004 and 2007, a reduction in military tensions, and the addressing of legitimate security concerns on both sides. The letter concludes by inviting both governments to choose connectivity over isolation, dialogue over hostility, and cooperation over confrontation, for the sake of the welfare and aspirations of nearly two billion people.

Good relations between neighbours are indeed desirable, yet they cannot flourish on words alone. A knife in the side and a greeting on the lips will never mend what is broken. For any lasting improvement, India must abandon its policy of proxy warfare, its interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, its support for terrorists and separatists, and its attempts to use water as a weapon. A just and honourable resolution of the Kashmir dispute remains essential. Pakistan has shown, through its efforts to bring even distant powers such as America and Iran to the negotiating table, that it possesses both the will and the capacity for diplomacy. Surely, then, the path to reconciliation with its closest neighbour is not beyond reach. Ultimately, India must alter its attitude in a fundamental way. Trade agreements and occasional air corridors may offer temporary relief, but they cannot substitute for genuine goodwill. Only by confronting the core issues with honesty and courage can the two nations move forward. The future of South Asia need not be defined by division and conflict. With wisdom and sincerity on both sides, it may yet be shaped by peace, shared prosperity, and the common hopes of their peoples.

Briefs

Iran attacks
US sites in
Gulf states

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the Middle East threatens to trigger new shortages of the gas critical for chip manufacturing, Reuters reports. Earlier in the year, the war led to helium shortages, disrupting companies globally, including in China, where the AI industry increasingly relies on domestic chips for training and running AI models. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump says that he has agreed to continue talks with Iran after receiving a request from Tehran. "The United States has stated to them, in no uncertain terms, that the ceasefire is over!" he writes on Truth Social.

Over 40
terrorists
killed in...

FROM PAGE 01
six militants were killed in helicopter operations. While security forces inflicted heavy losses on terrorists in ongoing operations, 42 people, including security personnel and civilians, were martyred in three recent terrorist attacks in Balochistan. Addressing a meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee on the National Action Plan in Quetta on Thursday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the resolve of the civil and military leadership to eliminate India-backed terrorism in Balochistan. "We have to thwart the nefarious designs of Fitna al-Khawarij. He said that the entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with the armed forces. "This war [against terrorism] will continue until the last terrorist in Pakistan is eliminated," the premier added. Referring to India, PM Shehbaz said Pakistan's "eastern neighbour" was behind the terrorist attacks, adding that Afghan soil was being used to launch attacks in Pakistan. The prime minister said that the "enemy was unable to digest Pakistan's diplomatic achievements." Premier Shehbaz reaffirmed that all available resources will be utilised to eradicate the scourge of terrorism and put the country on the path of sustainable development and prosperity. A day prior to that, Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir reiterated that terrorism emanating from across the borders will be crushed with the full might of the state. Addressing a ceremony at the National Defence University, Field Marshal Munir said that the armed forces remained fully cognizant of state-sponsored attempts by hostile intelligence agencies to destabilise Pakistan.

Former
MPs also to
have blue...

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federal secretaries regarding entitlement to blue passports. Official passports are issued to Pakistani nationals who are senators, MNAs, provincial Ministers, judges of the Supreme Court and high courts, officers serving with the government and proceeding abroad on official assignments etc, according to the Directorate General of Immigration & Passports' website. The development follows a similar move in May, when the Senate committee unanimously approved a bill providing blue passports to serving and retired senators. It also considered separate legislation seeking to extend the official travel document facility to senators for life. During that meeting, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry informed the committee that the ministry had no objection to granting lifetime official passports to serving and retired senators. However, he expressed reservations about extending the facility to dependent children up to the age of 28, citing concerns over reported misuse. The committee, chaired by Senator Faisal Saleem Rehman, also raised concerns over the issuance of blue passports to adult children of senior civil servants and directed the interior ministry to submit a detailed list of active blue passports. The News reported.

Punjab Clinch U-21
Women's Hockey Title

Punjab's Shariqa starred in the final by scoring a hat-trick, while Lareeb and Safina added one goal each to complete the comprehensive victory



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Punjab produced a dominant performance to defeat Sindh B 5-0 and lift the Prime Minister's National Under-21 Women's Hockey Championship title at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium in Islamabad on Friday. Punjab's Shariqa starred in the

final by scoring a hat-trick, while Lareeb and Safina added one goal each to complete the comprehensive victory. The closing ceremony was attended by Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah as the chief guest. MNA Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto, Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Yawar Hussain, Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) President Mohyuddin Wani, and

other dignitaries were also present. Addressing the ceremony, Rana Sanaullah congratulated the Pakistan Hockey Federation for successfully organizing the championship and said Pakistan has no shortage of hockey talent. He emphasized that sports are not only a means of winning medals but also a symbol of a healthy and progressive future. He said the country's daughters are Paki-

stan's future and assured that the government remains committed to encouraging young athletes in every sport. He praised the players' dedication, saying their passion and commitment would inspire future generations. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Rana Sanaullah distributed medals, trophies, and prizes among the winning teams and outstanding players.

Mbappe scores as France seal
last-four spot with 2-0 win

Mbappe equals the all-time French record held by Hugo Lloris for World Cup matches

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Foxborough: France captain Kylian Mbappe missed a penalty but curled in a superb goal on the hour as France struck twice in six minutes to brush aside Morocco 2-0 on Thursday and book their spot in the World Cup semi-finals. Mbappe, who at 27 became the youngest player to rack up 20 World Cup appearances, also bagged his 20th World Cup goal with a curling shot from just inside the box before Ousmane Dembele added another six minutes later with a low drive to set up a last-four meeting with Belgium or Spain. Mbappe is the tournament's

joint top scorer with eight goals, level with Lionel Messi, and he trails the Argentine by one goal in the World Cup all-time scoring list. "That's three (semi-finals) in a row - it's good," France coach Didier Deschamps said. "It seems logical and natural, but you still have to get the job done. It was tricky, the penalty... when it's Kylian. He never has any doubts. "But we're exactly where we wanted to be," said Deschamps, who substituted Mbappe late in the game after a knock to his ankle. "We're taking another step forward today, finding ourselves in the final four once again. It shows we're right there in the mix." In a repeat of the 2022 World Cup semi-final, France, who have now kept clean sheets in all three knockout matches, looked the hungrier throughout with Morocco, aiming for a second straight last-four spot, badly missing injured forward Ismael Saibari, and failing to get a shot on target until the 84th minute. "We are very disappointed, we wanted to advance," said Morocco coach Mohamed Ouahbi.

FIFA Scandal: Former
referees question
different fates of
Balogun, Quansah

NEW YORK: FIFA's handling of two World Cup red-card cases came under renewed scrutiny on Thursday after England defender Jarell Quansah got a two-match suspension while US striker Folarin Balogun avoided an immediate ban for a similar challenge. That has left former international referees unable to reconcile the two decisions. Quansah was sent off in England's last-16 victory over Mexico after a video review deemed his sliding studs-up challenge serious foul play. He was later handed a two-match ban that England's Football Association said it could not appeal. Balogun, by contrast, was sent off during the United States' round-of-32 win over Bosnia but received a one-match suspension that world soccer's governing body FIFA later suspended. Balogun's ban was suspended on probation for one year under Article 27 of the disciplinary

code, FIFA said, although it has not publicly explained why it considered that sanction appropriate in his case. The fact that US President Donald Trump had personally urged FIFA President Gianni Infantino to review Balogun's case only intensified the controversy, even though FIFA insisted the conversation played no part in its decision. "FIFA have failed in their duty toward the game after they delayed the ban for Balogun. They allowed outside interference by the president," former referee Keith Hackett wrote on social media on Thursday. "FIFA the major lawmaker are at fault. But both players committed Serious Foul Play challenges sanctioned by a red card." Jonas Eriksson, who was a FIFA referee for 16 years from 2002, said if Balogun got a one-match suspension, Quansah should have as well, seeing their two on-field incidents were roughly equal in terms of intensity and aggression. "What everyone wants from referees, they want the correct decisions, yes, but more important always is consistency," Eriksson told Reuters. "That you identify, okay, player A gets the same sanction as player B. Team A gets the same sanction as team B. You know, that's what you expect. And this is not the case when it comes to Quansah and Balogun." British media quickly drew comparisons between the two cases, with The Independent running the headline: "FIFA confirms Jarell Quansah ban just days after Folarin Balogun reprieve." - APP

Noskova books all-Czech Wimbledon
final clash with Muchova

Noskova took just 79 minutes to see off Ukrainian 12th seed Kostyuk in sweltering heat on Centre Court

LONDON: Linda Noskova swept into her first Wimbledon final with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Marta Kostyuk on Thursday, setting up an all-Czech title match against Karolina Muchova. Noskova took just 79 minutes to see off Ukrainian 12th seed Kostyuk in sweltering 33C heat on Centre Court. In her maiden Grand Slam final, the ninth seed faces her 10th seeded compatriot Muchova, who beat Coco Gauff in a three-set thriller earlier on Thursday. Noskova had never been past the quarter-final of a Grand Slam prior to arriving at Wimbledon last week. Now the 21-year-old is on the brink of her maiden Grand Slam title. "I just tried to keep cool, be as patient as possible and somehow get the last point," Noskova said. "When I play my best I know I can play with the best players in the world and I have a great result, which is a final in a Grand Slam I guess!" For the third time in the last four years, there will be a Czech women's champion at Wimbledon after Barbora Krejčíková in 2024 and Marketa Vondroušová in 2023. Wimbledon has a rich history of Czech winners, with Noskova inspired by the success of her childhood idol Petra Kvitová, who triumphed at the All England Club in 2011 and 2014. Jana Novotná memorably won Wimbledon in 1998 after losing two previous finals. Noskova was the eighth Czech player since 2000 to make it to the final four of the women's singles at Wimbledon. "Karolina is such a great fighter, such an incredible player, but mainly she is such a great person. I'm glad I can play my first final against her,"

National Chess
Championship
Begins in Islamabad

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The 35th Men's and 10th Women's National Chess Championship got underway in Islamabad on Friday, bringing together more than 250 chess players from across the country. The six-day championship is being held at Rodham Hall, Pakistan Sports Complex. The event was formally inaugurated by Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mohyuddin Wani. Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, along with Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Yawar Hussain and Pakistan Chess Federation President Syed Zeeshan Naqvi, officially launched the championship by making the ceremonial opening move on the chessboard. Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Chess Federation President Syed Zeeshan Naqvi said that chess is gaining immense popularity among Pakistan's youth and remains an important part of the country's cultural heritage. He said the federation's next major objective is to organize chess tournaments at the school level to promote the game from the grassroots and encourage greater student participation. The National Chess Championship will continue for the next six days at the Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad.

ICC seeks explanation
from ECB over Stokes
retirement video

LONDON: The ICC sought clarification from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) over footage of former Test captain Ben Stokes informing his teammates of his decision to retire from international cricket, according to reports published in the English media on Wednesday. The ECB made the news of Stokes' retirement from international cricket public by sharing the footage on social media during the fourth day of their third and final Test of the home series against New Zealand, which the apex body alleged contravened its standards for Players' and Match Officials' Areas (PMOA) at international matches, report suggested. - APP

PM Shehbaz
talks to
Iranian
president

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understanding, respect and shared prosperity in the region and beyond. Reaffirming Pakistan's steadfast commitment to regional peace, the Prime Minister assured President Pezeshkian of Pakistan's readiness to continue playing an honest and sincere role in facilitating dialogue and supporting all efforts aimed at preserving peace and stability. President Pezeshkian thanked the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and other senior Pakistani leaders for attending the funeral ceremony of the late Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. He also reaffirmed Iran's commitment to peace and appreciated Pakistan's constructive support and sincere efforts for regional stability. The two leaders also reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken during President Pezeshkian's visit to Islamabad last month and agreed to expedite follow-up actions to further strengthen bilateral cooperation across diverse fields. The Prime Minister conveyed his respectful regards and best wishes for His Eminence Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei. Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact and continue consultations on matters of mutual interest and regional peace.

Pakistan
committed
to multilateralism...

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the United Nations Security Council resolutions, and promoting respect for international law and international treaties as the foundation for global peace, security, and prosperity. Mr. Macky Sall expressed his deep appreciation for Pakistan's longstanding contributions to the United Nations and commended Pakistan's leadership for playing a constructive role in ongoing international peace efforts. Meanwhile, Ms. Rebecca Grynspan, Candidate for the position of United Nations Secretary-General, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House today. During the meeting, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast and unwavering commitment to multilateralism and reiterated the country's abiding resolve to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. He underscored the need to devise effective mechanisms for the faithful implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions, as well as respect for international law and treaties, to promote global peace, security, and prosperity. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of ensuring balanced progress across the three pillars of the United Nations—peace and security, development, and human rights.

GB uplift
govt's
priority: PM

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economy would be further strengthened by utilizing the natural resources, tourist destinations, and mineral reserves of Gilgit-Baltistan. Moreover, he said that providing quality education, modern technical training, and dignified employment to the youth was a key priority of the government, enabling them to play a role in national development. He said that elected representatives served as a direct source of awareness of public expectations, problems, and priorities, and emphasised that, regardless of political affiliations, the sole purpose of leadership must be public service and creating ease in people's lives. Appreciating the people of Gilgit-Baltistan for practically proving their love, loyalty, and national unity with Pakistan, the prime minister told the lawmakers that the construction of four Danish Schools in the region was in the final stage, and classes would commence there from next year.

Briefs

Peru's president-elect seeks to restore Mexico ties

LIMA: Peru's president-elect said on Thursday she has "every intention" of restoring diplomatic relations with Mexico, which have been suspended since November. Peru broke off formal ties after Mexico granted asylum to former prime minister Bettsey Chavez who was on trial for allegedly aiding a 2022 coup attempt. "On my part, there will be every intention to restore relations between Peru and Mexico," Keiko Fujimori said as she left a public event in Lima, without giving further details. Fujimori won the June 7 presidential runoff and will succeed interim leader Jose Maria Balcazar on July 28. She will govern until 2031. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Wednesday she had not yet spoken with Fujimori. "We are going to wait," Sheinbaum said when asked about Fujimori at a press conference. "They (Peru) broke off relations. Why? Because we said that (former) president Castillo is being held illegally. That is our point of view," she said. Former president Pedro Castillo was ousted in 2022 for trying to dissolve Congress and rule by decree to avoid impeachment. Castillo has been imprisoned for three years in a special penitentiary for ex-leaders at a police base east of Lima. He was sentenced in November to more than 11 years in jail.—APP

Pacific Islands reject missile test in 'blue continent'

SYDNEY: Pacific Islands denounced China's ballistic missile test because they say it landed in the heart of their shared "blue continent," politicians and analysts told AFP. Even Pacific nations indebted to Beijing joined criticism of Monday's submarine-launched ballistic missile test, which reached far into the Pacific Ocean. The term "Blue continent" is used by Pacific Islands to describe a joint home and shared stewardship of the ocean. The nuclear-capable missile fitted with a dummy warhead landed somewhere between Nauru, Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands, according to monitors and Pacific officials. The reported landing spot lies amidst the Pacific islands, but in one of the few patches between them that is not part of an exclusive economic zone (EEZ). China said the missile test "was not directed at any country" and breached no international law. But Palau President Surangel Whipps, who will host an annual meeting of Pacific leaders next month, said the missile landed "right between our EEZs." "We have missiles going right into the heart of the Pacific, unannounced," he said in an interview with AFP. China's Pacific envoy had days earlier met with the Pacific Islands Forum, after Beijing donated \$1 million to the regional bloc, but made no mention of a looming test. The forum's 18 members see themselves as custodians of 20 percent of the earth's surface, jointly managing fisheries and fighting climate change, within combined EEZs spanning 25 million square kilometers (10 million square miles).—APP



ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of National Heritage & Culture, Farah Naz Akhbar awarding prize to a participant during 2nd Edition of the Pakistan International Food & Restaurant Awards 2026 at local hotel, in the Federal Capital.

World Bank approves \$375.9m to modernize Pak power grid

New installations would be built on elevated platforms to reduce flood risks, while key equipment will be designed to operate at temperatures of up to 55 degrees Celsius, ensuring reliable performance during heatwaves and monsoon seasons

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors on Friday approved financing of \$375.9 million for Pakistan's Grid Stability Enhancement Project, the first phase of a 10-year programme aimed at modernizing the country's electricity transmission network, reducing power outages and accelerating clean energy integration. The project would be implemented under the Boosting Energy Security through Transmission in Pakistan (BEST-PAK) Multiphase Programmatic Approach and is designed to strengthen the national power transmission system while supporting Pakistan's transition to a more reliable, efficient and sustainable electricity sector, a news release said. World Bank Country Director for Pakistan Bolormaa Amgaabzar said Pakistan's energy challenges were closely linked to its broader economic sta-

bility, adding that investment in advanced transmission technologies would help reduce electricity costs, improve grid reliability and enable greater integration of renewable energy. She said the project would lay the foundation for a more resilient power sector that better serves households, businesses and industries while supporting the country's economic growth. Pakistan's transmission network has long faced grid instability and bottlenecks that have constrained reliable electricity supply and limited the utilization of renewable energy resources, resulting in frequent outages, higher costs and reduced economic productivity. Under the project, advanced grid-stabilizing equipment, including Static Synchronous Compensators (STATCOMs), will be installed at three major 500-kilovolt substations, while fixed reactors and capacitor banks will be deployed across 26 substations to improve electricity flow and system stability. The upgrades are expect-

ed to enable the transmission of 640 megawatts of currently curtailed wind power, allowing the full utilization of 1,840 MW of wind generation capacity in southern Pakistan. The project would also facilitate the integration of about 491 MW of planned private sector-led renewable energy projects. According to the World Bank, these improvements would contribute to Pakistan's target of achieving a 60 percent share of renewable energy in its electricity mix by 2030 under its Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement. Over its 25-year operational life, the project is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by about 832,500 tonnes annually, amounting to more than 20.8 million tonnes cumulatively. World Bank Lead Energy Specialist Waleed Saleh Alsurah said a modern and reliable transmission network was essential for Pakistan's energy future, adding that the project would pave the way for large-scale

clean energy deployment, improved energy security and a commercially oriented transmission sector while creating conditions for greater private investment. The initiative also supports the government's ongoing reforms in the transmission sector by assisting the restructuring of the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) into specialized successor entities to strengthen governance, accountability, operational efficiency and long-term financial sustainability. Recognizing Pakistan's vulnerability to climate-related risks, including floods and extreme heat, the project incorporates climate-resilient infrastructure standards. New installations would be built on elevated platforms to reduce flood risks, while key equipment will be designed to operate at temperatures of up to 55 degrees Celsius, ensuring reliable performance during heatwaves and monsoon seasons.

Syria authorities say captured Daesh-linked cell behind blasts

DAMASCUS: Syrian officials on Thursday said the country had captured a Daesh-linked cell responsible for two bomb blasts during French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Damascus earlier this week. "The cell responsible for the terrorist bombings that targeted Damascus two days ago is now in our custody," Interior Minister Anas Khattab posted on X. "Once the investigations are completed, we will reveal to the public the identities of the cell's members, their roles, and all of their affiliations and connections," he added. Ahmad Dalati, head of interior security for the Damascus region, said on Syrian state television that preliminary investigations indicated "the cell was affiliated with Daesh." The interior ministry said in a statement that the cell had been captured following a series of raids "carried out at the same time against the suspects' different locations across Damascus and its countryside." The statement said the raids occurred in four neighborhoods, two of which have populations from toppled ruler Bashar Assad's Alawite minority. Two blasts hit central Damascus on Tuesday, killing one person and wounding dozens during the French president's first visit to Syria. The blasts near the hotel where Macron had spent the night came after his departure from the building, and moments before Syrian state media announced his arrival at the presidential palace to meet his Syrian counterpart Ahmed Al-Sharaa. In a joint news conference after the blast, Macron said we must "not let ourselves be destabilized" by such attacks, and reiterated Paris's support for the country. Macron became the first head of state from the European Union to visit Syria since the fall of Assad in 2024.—APP

One million women lose aid access due to funding cuts

GENEVA: At least one million women and girls have lost access to life-saving support within the last year due to global donor aid cuts, a new United Nations report on Friday found. Nearly nine in 10 women's organizations can no longer meet the needs on the ground despite a large increase in demand since January last year, following the steepest drop in aid funding on record, the UN Women report found. The Trump administration slashed billions of dollars in foreign assistance this year, while other major international donors have also reduced aid budgets due to fiscal pressures and increased defense spending. The US had previously been the world's largest aid donor. Some 120 million women and girls require humanitarian assistance and protection worldwide. However, 40 percent of the 855 women's organizations surveyed in countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Haiti are at risk of shutting down temporarily or permanently within the next year due to a shortage of funds, the report found. The majority of organizations surveyed said they can no longer meet current levels of need, with 60 percent saying they are reaching fewer women and girls than they did before January 2025, despite a surge in demand for their services. The reduction is creating critical gaps in humanitarian coverage, the report said, as these organizations are sometimes the only actors able to reach women and girls in need.—DNA

Hasina Wajid to return to Bangladesh in December

NEW DELHI: Ousted Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, facing a death sentence back home where her party is banned, told Reuters she and senior party colleagues plan to return from exile in India around December and surrender. The South Asian nation's longest-serving leader said she and members of her Awami League aim to return voluntarily to the country they fled two years ago and present themselves in court, testing Bangladesh's handling of its most prominent political opponent. "They may arrest me on my return, they may even kill me," Hasina, 78, said in the nearly hour-long telephone interview late on Thursday and into



Friday. "Still, I have to go," she said. "My party leaders and workers are being subjected to tremendous repression. If death comes, I want it to come on my own soil, where my parents are buried and where their blood was shed." BANGLADESH-INDIA TIES STRAINED BY EXILE

Hasina fled Bangladesh in 2024 after protests ended her 20 years as prime minister across multiple terms. The country's war-crimes court sentenced her in November to death in her absence for ordering a deadly crackdown on a student-led uprising. She has denied the charges from exile. A return could sharpen political divisions in the garment-export powerhouse as the government in Dhaka seeks to restore stability after two years of upheaval. On the other hand, it could improve strained ties with India, which deteriorated sharply after New Delhi gave her refuge. Bangladesh has repeatedly urged India to extradite her. Hasina, who has fielded writ-

ten questions from news outlets but not previously given an interview during her exile, said she has not consulted with any foreign government on whether or when to return. This is the first time she has set out a timetable for her return, said she plans to surrender or said other exiled Awami League leaders would do so. Among them, former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal also faces a death sentence. Reuters could not contact the other party members or establish where they were. The authorities in Dhaka "want to take me back, they are repeatedly sending letters to India seeking to have me sent back," she said. "I will go myself.—DNA



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Briefs

More wreckage of crashed cargo plane found

DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Aviation Authority (PAA) said on Friday that the search for the crew of a cargo plane that crashed into the Arabian Sea was ongoing, adding that additional wreckage had been located. In a statement, the authority said the search and rescue missions by the Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency in the deep sea were still in progress. "The search for the crew members is continuing with full vigour through the coordinated employment of aerial and sea-borne assets," it said. "Additional parts and debris of the ill-fated aircraft have been located and retrieved for subsequent analysis by the investigation team," it said, adding that updates would be shared as the search and rescue operations continued. On Tuesday night, a K2 Airways Boeing 737-400 cargo aircraft en route from Sharjah to Karachi had disappeared from radar over the Arabian Sea, about 300 kilometres west of Karachi, while approaching Pakistani airspace. The pilot had reported a navigation problem during the flight and requested assistance from the area control centre. Five crew members were on board the aircraft, including two pilots, two engineers and one support staffer. After 12 hours of a search and rescue operation in the deep sea, the wreckage of the plane was found 53 nautical miles (98km) south of Ormara port on Wednesday. - APP

Modi visits New Zealand as trade sparks backlash

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi lands in New Zealand on Friday touting a free trade deal that has sparked a backlash despite promises it will unlock jobs and economic riches. On the agenda are trade, tourism and sport - but recent undercurrents of anti-migrant sentiment risk tarnishing his trip to a nation long proud of its tolerance. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon celebrated the signing in April of the free trade deal with the world's most populous nation, touting an export boom that would deliver jobs and investment in spades. The pact is widely expected to be approved by New Zealand's parliament. But not everyone is happy at the prospect. Lawmakers in the populist New Zealand First Party, part of Luxon's governing coalition, railed against parts of the agreement covering migration and visas. "I don't care how much criticism we get, I am just never going to agree with a butter chicken tsunami coming to New Zealand".

KP governor seeks 'single bill for MPs privileges'

The post came shortly after he appeared to distance himself from KP's new law, saying that his observations were "on record" and that "public money belongs to the people"

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday urged the National Assembly speaker and the Senate chairman to convene a meeting for deciding on a single bill for lawmakers' privileges. His remarks come after the KP Assembly passed the KP Provincial Assembly (Powers, Immunities and Privileges) Act, 2026 on April 30. The law expanded provincial assembly members' powers and immunities, including the issuance of lifetime official passports to them and their spouses. Kundi had assented to the law, alongside others, on May 6. However, following

backlash, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi this week ordered a review of the new law's provisions. In a post on the social media platform X, Kundi called on National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq and Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani to "immediately convene a meeting of the speakers of all four provincial assemblies and agree on a single, harmonised bill governing the salaries, privileges and entitlements of legislators across Pakistan". "No province should legislate extraordinary privileges for itself while expecting the people to embrace austerity," he said, adding that salaries, security, official passports, allowances and "every other entitlement" should be "uniform across the federation, ensuring one standard

for all". "A harmonised national framework is the only way to ensure fairness, accountability and public confidence," he said. The post came shortly after he appeared to distance himself from KP's new law, saying that his observations were "on record" and that "public money belongs to the people". In a separate post on X, Kundi said his observations had been "on record since May" and that he had made it clear that "no law should become a means of expanding privileges when the people of Pakistan, especially the people of KP, were being asked to endure austerity and economic hardship". He said he had urged that the law be implemented "in the true spirit of fiscal discipline and prudent use of public resources",

adding that "a government that speaks of financial constraints cannot, in the same breath, legislate greater privileges for those in power". "My position was clear then, and it remains unchanged today: public money belongs to the people, not to the perks of those who govern them," Kundi said. In a copy of his observations published with the post, he recommended that the provincial assembly's finance committee implement the spirit of the prime minister's 14-point austerity measures, including expenditure cuts, fuel rationing and the elimination of unnecessary privileges. He also suggested that the committee reconsider the law to operationalise those principles "in true letter and spirit".

UN-based diplomats go 'virtual'

UNITED NATIONS: Representatives from 12 countries carried out a "virtual diplomatic field visit" to a displacement site in the war-shattered Gaza Strip and heard from some of the residents about their pressing needs, according to the United Nations said.

The UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Ramiz Alakbarov, and his deputy, Suzanna Tkalec, led the online visit to the site in Al Mawasi, Khan Younis. "Just like journalists, diplomatic missions have had difficulty getting into Gaza since October 2023," UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said during his regular briefing from New York.

Via videolink, the diplomats observed the living conditions and relief efforts at the displacement site, interacting with children, adults and aid workers. At a distribution point, they saw how community members - including children - collected water carried by truck through a project operated by a local partner and funded by the UN's OPT Humanitarian Fund. "Displaced people told the diplomats that they need sustainable water services, especially during the hot summer days, and cash-for-work opportunities to feed their families," Dujarric said. - APP

Voting to take place as scheduled: CEC AJK

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AJK Justice (Retd.) Ghulam Mustafa Mughal on Friday dismissed the possibility of any delay in the July 27, 2026 General Elections, saying polling would take place in all constituencies as scheduled under stringent security arrangements. While speaking exclusively to a local media outlet, he stated that all necessary arrangements for the upcoming elections have been completed. He assured that there would be no delays in any constituency during the polling process and that all preparations had been made to ensure smooth and efficient conduct of the elections. CEC further emphasized that the electoral process would be conducted in accordance with the law and the Constitution. - APP



ISLAMABAD: MS. Rebeca Grynspan, Candidate for the Position of United Nations Secretary-General, call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

APNS welcomes Raisa Adil as new PIO

APNS urges implementation of advertising rate increase; calls for early clearance of pending advertising dues

DNA

KARACHI: The All Pakistan Newspapers Society welcomes the appointment of Ms. Raisa Adil as Principal Information Officer of Press Information Department. Senator Sarmad Ali, President and Mr. Muhammad Athar Kazi, Secretary General of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society have hoped that during her tenure as Principal Information Officer Ms. Raisa Adil would protect and safeguard the freedom of press and address the problems of print media. They are confident that during her tenure, the print media will continue to enjoy good relations with the PID and the government. The APNS officer bearers acknowledged the services of the outgoing PIO Mr. Mobishir Hassan and appreciated him for the support and cooperation extended to print media during his tenure. The APNS officer bearers hoped that issues pertaining to the print media which are still pending would be addressed. These include the implementation of already approved increase in government advertising rates, increase in the quantum of government advertising and payments of long outstanding dues so that the print media could face the liquidity crunch.

Seafarers attacked in the Strait of Hormuz

The compensation was inadequate because they have since been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, leaving them unable to continue working as sailors for the foreseeable future, he said

BANGKOK: Three former crew members of a Thai cargo ship struck in the Strait of Hormuz in March filed a lawsuit Friday against the vessel's operator over labor rights violations and unfair dismissal. The ship, the Mayuree Naree, was hit by a projectile north of Oman on March 11, killing three people. The remaining 20 crew members were rescued and returned to Thailand about a week later. Former crew members Panithi Tumkaew, Noppadon Wongsuvan and Surades Manpuen filed the lawsuit against Precious Shipping Co. as well as two affiliated companies and the ship's captain. The lawsuit alleges that the defendants endangered their lives by sailing through the strait despite the security risks, according to their lawyer Kunpat Singhathong. Kunpat said the three men were also dismissed before the completion of their nine-month employment contracts after the attack rendered the ship inoperable. He said they received compensation equivalent to two months' salary. The compensation was inadequate because they have since been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, leaving them unable to continue working as sailors for the foreseeable future, he said.

"We tried to negotiate with the company, but it denied responsibility, so we believe the matter should be brought to the court," Kunpat said before filing the case with the Central Labor Court in Bangkok. He de-

clined to identify the amount of compensation they are seeking, only that it would be over a million baht (\$30,000) per person. Panithi, who said he had worked for Precious Shipping for more than a decade, said his wife encouraged him to seek medical treatment after noticing changes in his behavior. "When there are loud noises, I'll get startled," he said. "I can't work now, and I have to take medication." Precious Shipping did not respond to requests for comment. The remains of the three crew members killed in the attack were repatriated to Thailand earlier this month. In a statement on July 3, Precious Shipping thanked everyone involved in the repatriation process and expressed its condolences to the victims' families. The company said it "remains committed to providing full assistance, care, and support to bereaved families throughout this difficult time." On Thursday, the United States launched new airstrikes against Iran, which responded by targeting American allies in the Middle East. The exchange of fire threatens an interim deal intended to help end the Iran war. The conflict has choked off the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for about a fifth of global trade in crude oil and liquefied natural gas. Most of this was bound for Asia, which has struggled with a continentwide energy shock since the war began on Feb. 28. - APP

Israel says ready to attack Iran

JERUSALEM: Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz on Thursday said his country was prepared to resume its military campaign against Iran if needed, vowing to do so "with even greater force." The latest remarks came as new fighting erupted between the United States and Iran, raising fears of a return to full-scale war after an April ceasefire and a June US-Iran agreement to end hostilities. "The army is ready and on alert for a resumption of fighting, in order to regain air superiority and strike again... in Iran, to eliminate threats, including a third time if necessary," Katz said at a military ceremony. "If we have to go back, we will go back, with even greater force," he added. Speaking at the ceremony, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Iran had been weakened by the two previous military campaigns Israel launched against it. But he also acknowledged that the conflict was not yet over. "The Iranian axis is weaker than ever before, while Israel is stronger than ever before," he said. "We proved that the long arm of the Israeli Air Force can reach anywhere, from Yemen to Iran. Yet we must also acknowledge that the campaign is not over." - APP

PM Shehbaz talks to Qatar Amir to discuss escalation

The Prime Minister extended Pakistan's sincere gratitude to His Highness the Amir for Qatar's consistent and steadfast support in peace initiatives

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a warm and cordial telephone conversation today with His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar. The exchange reflected the enduring friendship between Pakistan and Qatar and underscored their shared commitment to peace, stability, and cooperation in the region. Prime Minister Sharif expressed his deep concern over the recent escalation of tensions in the region. He conveyed Pakistan's solidarity with the people of Qatar following the recent attacks, emphasizing that Pakistan stands firmly with Qatar during this difficult time. The Prime Minister urged all parties involved to exercise restraint and avoid actions that could undermine peace and stability. He reiterated Pakistan's principled position that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable path to resolving disputes. The Prime Minister extended Pakistan's sincere gratitude to His Highness the Amir for Qatar's consistent and steadfast support in peace initiatives. He highlighted Qatar's

constructive role in facilitating the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding and the first round of high-level technical talks at Burgenstock. These milestones, he noted, were crucial in building trust among stakeholders and advancing dialogue toward a sustainable peace framework. Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement and adherence to the commitments made under the peace memorandum. They agreed that dialogue must remain the cornerstone of efforts to resolve disputes and prevent further escalation. The conversation reflected a mutual understanding that peace in the region requires consistent cooperation, respect for agreed frameworks, and a willingness to compromise for the greater good. His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani expressed appreciation for Pakistan's leadership role in promoting peace. He specifically thanked Prime Minister Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for their contributions to regional stability. The Amir assured Pakistan of Qatar's continued support, pledging to work closely with Islamabad in advancing peace initiatives and strengthening bilateral ties.



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