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Detailed News On Page-08


Hassan backs Babar Azam amid poor form

Detailed News On Page-06



China's support was crucial in securing IMF deal

PM stresses need to strengthen agriculture to ensure food security, boost exports

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Accentuating the significance of Pakistan-China friendship, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday credited Beijing for Islamabad's International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme saying that it wouldn't have been possible sans the neighbouring country's support. The premier's remarks — made during a ceremony held in connection with the PM's initiative for capacity building of 1,000 agriculture graduates in China — came in the context of last month's deal between Islamabad and the IMF on the first review of the ongoing 37-month bailout programme worth \$7 billion. Upon approval by the IMF Executive Board, Pakistan will have access to approximately \$1 billion under the EFF, bringing total disbursements under the programme to around \$2 billion. The lender's body will consider approval of approximately \$2.3 billion in a six-week period with expectations that Islamabad will be able to secure the loan amount in the first week of May 2025, ahead of the upcoming budget for the financial year 2025-26. The global lender had also announced a new 28-month deal — pending board approval, Pakistan can unlock the \$1.3 billion under a climate resilience loan programme spanning 28 months. The prime minister, in his speech today, emphasised that China was Pakistan's one of the most sincere friends who always stood by it in difficult days. Reiterating his commitment to transform the agriculture sector, Prime Minister Shehbaz termed it essential for achieving sustainable economic growth and emphasised that strengthening the agricultural backbone of the country would help ensure food security, boost exports and improve livelihoods for millions of farmers. "We must focus on meaningful farming practices, digitalised crop management, and

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Ambassador Jiang calls for stronger regional unity

He highlighted the remarkable achievements of CPEC, noting \$25.4 billion in direct Chinese investment, 236,000 jobs

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong, in a powerful online address at an international seminar held here, reaffirmed China's unwavering commitment to deepening ties with Pakistan and accelerating the next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ambassador Jiang conveyed greetings on behalf of the Chinese Embassy and praised the efforts of stakeholders supporting Pakistan-China friendship. Sharing insights from the recent Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries in Beijing, he emphasized President Xi Jinping's vision of building a "Community with a Shared Future," rooted in mutual trust, development, and regional integration. He highlighted the remarkable achievements of CPEC, noting \$25.4 billion in direct Chinese investment, 236,000 jobs, and critical infrastructure

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif awards shield Ambassador of People's Republic of China Jiang Zaidong during a function in Islamabad. — DNA

PM vows action against human traffickers

He said that Pakistan's Mission in Tripoli and the Foreign Office were working with the local authorities

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed grief over the death of four Pakistani nationals in a boat capsizing incident in Libya, reiterating his government's commitment to act against human traffickers. "Deeply saddened by reports from our Mission in Tripoli of yet another boat capsizing incident off the Harawa coast near Sirte City, Eastern Libya, in which at least four Pakistanis have been confirmed dead out of 11 casualties," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. He said that Pakistan's Mission in Tripoli and the Foreign Office were working with the local authorities to

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Pakistan-China agree to deepen maritime coop

The dialogue was co-chaired by Additional Secretary (Asia-Pacific) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have agreed to maintain ongoing communication and strengthen coordination on maritime policies, besides continuing to deepen both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the sector. The bilateral ties and cooperation were discussed during the Fifth Round of the Pakistan-China Dialogue on Maritime Cooperation held in Beijing on Tuesday, according to a Foreign Office press release.

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Warns rulers of protests

KP's minerals bill against provincial autonomy: Fazl

Maulana Fazl alleges not only federal govt but int'l powers also seizing national resources

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: As Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's mines and minerals bill continues to draw criticism from friends and foes alike, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on Wednesday that the legislation was "unacceptable" for his party and termed it against the provincial autonomy. "Not only Centre, but international powers are also seizing our resources," Maulana Fazl alleged while addressing a press conference in Peshawar today. Calling upon rulers to keep provincial autonomy in mind, the cleric said that any bill must not be adopted by the KP Assembly in violation of the 18th Amendment. He also warned rulers that his party would take to streets if they failed to take sensible decisions. The JUI-F chief said the federal government adopted an alternative way to achieve its desired goals, as well as devised

Continued on Page 06

Imran being denied meetings with family: Raja

The jail officials are only allowing unconcerned visitors to meet Imran Khan

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan and PTI leader Salman Akram Raja said the party founder Imran Khan isn't being allowed to meet the family and lawyers. Talking to media outside the Islamabad High Court, they said that the jail officials are allowing unconcerned visitors to meet Imran Khan. "There are over 300 cases against Imran Khan in different courts.

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Briefs

SCO Secretary General to visit Pakistan

During his stay, the secretary general will have meetings with the deputy PM, Minister of Commerce and Foreign Secretary

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: At the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, the Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Nurlan Yermekbayev, will visit Pakistan on April 17-18, 2025. He will be heading a delegation comprising of officials from the SCO Secretariat in Beijing, a press release issued by the Foreign Office said on Wednesday. During his stay, the secretary general will have meetings with the deputy PM, Minister of Commerce and Foreign Secretary. He will visit NDMA and the FPCCI.

Parvez Elahi granted bail

Judge Ejaz Ali of the special accountability court heard arguments

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A Rawalpindi accountability court has granted bail to former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi in a land-grabbing case involving 6,000 kanals of Takhat Parhi forest land. The case, heard by Judge Ejaz Ali, names 18 suspects including Elahi. During the hearing, Elahi and his son Rasikh Ali appeared before the court, with Elahi also requesting exemption from future personal appearances. The court approved his bail and directed him to submit surety bonds worth Rs500,000, which were submitted on the spot. Elahi is accused of abusing his authority and being involved in the illegal appropriation of forest land.

Amidst growing tensions

Pak and Afghanistan govts set to hold talks

Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq is greeted by Afghan officials on his arrival in Kabul

CENTRELINE REPORT

KABUL: Pakistan and Afghanistan are holding key talks on security and border issues in the 7th session of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), set to take place in Kabul, officials said on Wednesday. The meeting comes in the light of rising tensions between the two countries, with Afghan refugee deportations, skirmishes along the border, and the increased activity of armed groups within Pakistan since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. Pakistan maintains that these armed groups operate from within Afghan soil, a claim that Afghan officials have denied, maintaining that no one can use Afghan soil against any country. Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mohammad Sadiq is leading Pakistan's delegation, which includes both military and intelligence officials. Ambassador Sadiq's office in Islamabad said that he had reached Kabul this morning.

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Taliban govt has expressed willingness for return of migrants

Consul General Mohibullah says time has come for Afghan nationals to return to their homeland

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Afghan Consul General Mohibullah Shakir has acknowledged Pakistan's four-decade-long support for Afghan refugees, saying that the Taliban-led government is prepared to facilitate the return of its nationals. Speaking to journalists in Peshawar, he noted that a special commission has

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Balochistan National Party-Mengal calls off 20-day long Mastung dharna

Party held protest sit-in to demand release of BYC leader Dr Mahrang Baloch and other detained female activists

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: In a significant development, the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) on Wednesday announced to call off their 20-day long sit-in protest being held in Mastung against the arrests of Baloch rights activists and police action. BNP-M leader Akhtar Mengal announced that the party will end its protest at Lak Pass, citing public inconvenience, and will instead hold rallies across various districts. He said that the party's central cabinet will meet in Quetta on April 18 to decide the future course of action. The party had been protesting for nearly three weeks, demanding the release of Dr Mahrang Baloch, Chief Organiser of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, and other detained female activists, leading to prolonged road closures. Sindh police had arrested BYC leader Sammi Deen Baloch during a crackdown on demonstrators protesting the arrest of the movement's leadership, including Dr Mahrang, in Karachi. Mahrang was taken into custody earlier, along with 16 other activists from their protest camp in Quetta, a day after they accused police of beating up three of their protesters to death during an anti-riot action. However, Sammi was later released, but BNP-M's protest continued. Key highways connecting Quetta to


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Pak FS Baloch lands in Dhaka after 15 years

DNA



DHAKA: Pakistan Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch arrived in Bangladeshi capital on Wednesday where she was received at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by Ishrat Jahan, director general of South Asia wing at the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry. According to Bangladesh media, Amna Baloch arrived in Dhaka to join a foreign secretary-level talks between the two South Asian countries. The talks, the first such meeting in 15 years, will take place at state guest house Padma on Thursday, with foreign secretary of Bangladesh Md Jasim Uddin leading the host delegation and Amna Baloch leading the Pakistani side. According to the draft itinerary, Baloch will attend the high-level talks scheduled for Thursday morning. Later, she will pay courtesy calls on foreign affairs adviser Md Touhid Hossain and chief adviser to the interim government Professor Muhammad Yunus. Speaking to Prothom Alo,




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Pakistan, Romania step to enhance bilateral trade

The MOU was signed by Sohail Shamim Firpo, Chairman PRBC, and Registrar Superior University Mudassar Kamran, in the presence of Mr. Ahmad Ikram Lone, President PRBC North Chapter

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Romania Business Council (PRBC) and Superior University signed a Memorandum

of Understanding (MOU) on April 15, 2025, to foster economic cooperation and trade relations between the two nations. This partnership is particularly significant given Romania's recent accession to the Schengen Zone on January 1, 2025, and its membership in the EU. According to Atif Farooqi, Advisor and COO of PRBC, "With Romania's recent accession to the Schengen Zone and its membership in the EU, this partnership opens up new avenues for Pakistani businesses to access the European market seamlessly." The collaboration aims to enhance trade ties between Pakistan and Romania, leveraging Romania's strategic position in the European market. The MOU was signed by Sohail Shamim Firpo, Chairman PRBC, and Registrar Superior University Mudassar Kamran, in the presence of Mr. Ahmad Ikram Lone, President PRBC North Chapter. This development follows a previous agreement between the Romanian Embassy and PRBC in July 2024, which aimed to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. Romania's entry into the Schengen Zone is expected to boost travel, trade, and tourism, contributing to a stronger internal market and potentially increasing economic benefits for both nations.

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Farmers harvesting wheat in a field at Golra area, in the Federal Capital.

Efforts afoot to bring investment for uplift: Muqam

MALAKAND: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam here Wednesday said that Government's policies was aimed to bring direct foreign investment to the country imperative for creation of jobs opportunities, foster industrial & agriculture development and prosperity of people. Addressing a big public gathering at Palai Dargai here after inauguration of the NAD-RA Office, Engr Amir Muqam said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has announced a historic relief package for overseas Pakistan that would greatly help bringing direct foreign investment in Pakistan. He said that Pakistan especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was blessed with abundance of mines, gemstones, marble, granite and mineral resources and its exploration on scientific line would be used on the country's fast track development. Engr Amir Muqam who is also the provincial President of PMLN KP said that mines and mineral besides gemstones reservoirs have made Pakistan an ideal investment destination and urged the investors to take advantage of the Govt pro-mineral policies. Through investment, he said that mines and mineral rich areas would be largely benefited besides ensuring employment opportunities for the area's people. He said that the Prime Minister has provided a significant relief to domestic and industrial consumers after reducing the per unit electricity price, benefiting millions.

Rs 15b relief package for wheat farmers: Punjab CM

DNA

LAHORE :Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced a landmark relief package worth Rs 15 billion for wheat farmers, an unprecedented initiative in the history of the province. The historic package aims to directly benefit 550,000 wheat farmers across Punjab under the newly established Wheat Support Fund, with financial assistance being provided through the Kisan Card. Chairing a meeting here on Wednesday, the CM, in a move aimed at easing the burden on the agricultural community, announced a complete exemption from irrigation and fixed taxes for wheat farmers during the current year. To protect wheat stocks from climate-related risks and market volatility, the package includes free stor-

age facilities under the Electronic Warehouse Receipt (EWR) system for up to four months. Under this system, farmers storing wheat will receive electronic receipts that can be presented to banks within 24 hours to secure loans of up to 70 percent of the total value of their stored produce. As part of the package, the Punjab government has also committed to paying the markup on loans up to Rs 100 billion secured by flour mills and green license holders for wheat procurement from the Bank of Punjab. The provincial cabinet will be approached for immediate approval to make wheat procurement mandatory for these stakeholders. Furthermore, wheat storage of at least 25 percent of total capacity has been made compulsory for license holders. The chief minister also directed that

the ban on wheat and flour transportation across provincial and district borders be lifted immediately, facilitating smoother market access and supply chain efficiency. To strengthen long-term storage infrastructure, the Bank of Punjab will offer financing to the private sector for the construction and renovation of warehouses, with the Punjab government covering markup costs up to Rs 5 billion. Moreover, the provincial government will formally approach the federal government to allow the export of wheat and wheat-based products, providing further avenues for market expansion. The CM said, "Our farmers are our strength. We will not allow them to suffer losses. Any farmer who has cultivated wheat will be fully compensated. We stand by our farmers, and will always stand by them."

Kundi advocates enhanced Pak-Oman trade

Islamabad: A delegation of Pakistani-origin businessmen residing in Oman called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi at his residence here Wednesday and discussed strengthening bilateral trade, tourism and economic collaboration. Ahmad Kundi, Parliamentary Leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party in KP Assembly, was also present at the meeting. The delegation was led by Shaandar Bukhari and included M. Imran Siddiqui, Ahmad Subhani and Sajjad Hussain all distinguished members of the Pakistani business community in Oman. Governor Kundi highlighted the potential of launching a direct ferry service between Pakistan and Oman, viewing it as a means to promote tourism and facilitate trade. He assured the delegation that the issues raised particularly those related to visa challenges faced by overseas Pakistanis would be presented at the federal level for appropriate action. The Governor acknowledged the vital contributions of the nearly 450,000 Pakistanis residing in Oman, who remit approximately \$1.4 billion annually. Pakistan's main exports to Oman include fruits, vegetables, meat, and cereals, with a total export value of around \$173.3 million in 2023. The delegation invited Governor Kundi to visit Oman to explore future partnerships. The Governor welcomed the invitation and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting its diaspora and enhancing economic ties with Oman.—APP

PM's welfare package sparks jubilation among expats

PESHAWAR: The Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's newly announced welfare package for overseas Pakistanis has sparked widespread jubilation among expatriates across the globe, who have hailed the initiative as historic and transformative. The comprehensive package, unveiled on Monday last, includes an array of incentives designed to address long-standing legal and bureaucratic hurdles faced by overseas Pakistanis while encouraging them to invest in development of their homeland. Haji Ehsanullah Khan, a prominent expatriate residing in Dubai, told APP on Tuesday that the PM's package had "won hearts and minds" of millions of Pakistanis living abroad. "This is the first time an elected Prime Minister has introduced such a holistic

and thoughtful workable plan that directly impacts our lives. It will not only protect our rights but also promote investment and connectivity with Pakistan," he said. The Prime Minister's package features wide-ranging reforms, including dedicated special courts for expatriates established in Islamabad on pilot phase, with plans to expand to all provinces to ensure speedy resolution of legal cases involving overseas Pakistanis. Similarly under digital legal reforms, e-recording and e-filing systems would now enable overseas Pakistanis to submit evidence and attend court proceedings via video link, reducing the need to travel back home. A 5% quota allocated for children of overseas Pakistanis in all chartered universities and federal capital degree-awarding institutes, with a notable 15% quota in medical colleges

that was widely hailed by overseas Pakistani of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and erstwhile Fata. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC) will offer 5,000 skill development courses for children of expatriates, equipping them with modern technical skills. Electrician Mushtaq Khan, an overseas Pakistani based in Saudi Arabia, also welcomed the package, particularly praising the age relaxation in government job applications—five years for men and seven years for women—saying it would "open new opportunities for overseas citizens to serve the country." While appreciating the establishment of facilitation offices by the Boards of Revenue in Punjab and Balochistan, he expressed the hope that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh governments would follow suit and provide relief to them.

Oscar winning documentary screened at ISSI

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised the screening of the Oscar-Winning Documentary 'No Other Land' in collaboration with the Embassy of the State of Palestine H.E. Dr. Zuhair Zaid, Ambassador of the State of Palestine, Mr. Jamal Shah, Former Minister for Culture and Heritage, and Mr. Jawad Sharif, a renowned filmmaker and National Geographic explorer, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, and Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan spoke before the screening. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, while giving his remarks said that today's screening of No Other Land is more than just an experience, it is a call to conscience. It reminds us of the collective responsibility we bear as members of the global community to amplify the voices of the Palestinian people and to stand unwaveringly for justice and human dignity. The Palestinian people's struggle is not just about land; it is about identity, survival, and the right to live with dignity and freedom. What sets 'No Other Land' apart is not just its subject matter, but its collaborative nature. The film is co-directed by both Palestinians and Israelis, providing a rare insight into the systematic oppression of living under occupation. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood also highlighted the excessive and completely disproportionate Israeli response to the 7 October 2023 attack, the unabated humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, the responsibility of the international community to take practical steps to ensure justice for the Palestinians, and Pakistan's consistent solidarity with the Palestinians and its support for their right of self-determination. Ms. Amina Khan, while speaking at the occasion, was of the view that the screening of 'No Other Land' serves as a powerful moral awakening. Israel has persistently worked to erase Palestine from the political map, rendering the Palestinian struggle for justice a challenging one. She further said the film does not simply chronicle suffering; it highlights the determination of the Palestinian people to stay on their land and preserve their way of life despite the odds. Their resilience stands as a testament to their strength in the face of the relentless oppression imposed by the Israeli government. Ambassador Dr. Zuhair Zaid, while speaking at the occasion, appreciated the efforts of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) for screening the documentary. He said that such initiatives play a crucial role in keeping the Palestinian narrative alive and in amplifying the truth that is often silenced. He stated that Israeli repression has continued unabated since 1948.

Yousaf, Mashhood discuss technical training in Madaris

Their students display exceptional discipline and the examination systems in these institutions are commendable," he concluded

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf and Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood on Wednesday held an important meeting to discuss the integration of technical education into religious seminaries (madaris) and youth empowerment initiatives across Pakistan. Rana Mashhood revealed that the government is planning to introduce technical and vocational training programs in madaris to empower students with practical skills. "We

aim to provide 1.5 million employment opportunities abroad annually. Students of madaris, owing to their discipline and knowledge of Arabic, have significant potential in Gulf countries," he said. Highlighting the significance of youth in national development, Rana Mashhood said, "Our provinces have individual youth policies, but we lacked a unified national youth policy. Now is the time to reflect on the kind of Pakistan we want to leave for future generations." He also announced a nationwide survey to assess the needs and poten-

tial of school-going children, seminary students, and youth working in the fields. Federal Minister Sardar Yousaf emphasized the important role of madaris in Pakistani society. "Our seminaries are doing exemplary work. Students from madaris are second to none in terms of discipline and training," he said adding that during the previous term, a Council of Ulema and Mashaikh comprising over 50 senior religious scholars was established, and now efforts are underway to revive it for guidance on social issues. Referring to past

initiatives, Sardar Yousaf noted, "We worked significantly on the Nizam-e-Salat (prayer timings system) to promote national unity. Once again, we seek the guidance of our religious scholars in finalizing the National Youth Policy." Appreciating the inclusion of scholars in the youth policy consultation process, prominent scholar Shabbir Usmani congratulated both Rana Mashhood and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. "This is the first time that scholars are being formally consulted in youth-related programs,"

he remarked. The meeting also acknowledged the contribution of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, who delivered a powerful speech recently and expressed strong support for the youth program. Sardar Yousaf affirmed that the Ministry of Religious Affairs will play an active role in shaping and implementing the youth program and policy. "We have a close relationship with the seminaries and scholars. Their students display exceptional discipline and the examination systems in these institutions are commendable," he concluded.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

April 04/Senegal National Day

April 07/W. H. O. World Health Day

April 12/Somalia Armed Forces Day

April 15/DPR Korea The Day of the Sun

April 16/Denmark National Day

April 17/Iran Army Day

April 17/Syria Independence Day

April 18/Zimbabwe Independence Day

April 24/Holy See Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate

April 25/DPR Korea Armed Forces Day

April 26/Tanzania National Day

April 27/Sierra Leone Independence Day

April 27/South Africa Freedom Day

April 30/Sweden Birthday of His Majesty

April 30/Netherlands Birthday of Queen



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Emergency

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



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Cantt Hospital.....	9270907-11
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RGH.....	9290301-7
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PIMS.....	9261170-79
Polyclinic.....	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666



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RTA.....	5555864
TMA.....	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi attended a dinner hosted by the Malam Jabba Group as the chief guest. Barrister Mansoor Shah and his colleagues also appeared in the group photo alongside the KP Governor. – DNA

Sudden spell of rain, hailstorm lashes Islamabad

Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, officers and teams were deployed across the city to manage the situation and inspect vulnerable areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A sudden spell of rain and hailstorm lashed Islamabad, prompting immediate response from the district administration. According to the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, officers and teams were deployed across the city to manage the situation and inspect vulnerable areas. He said that the Islamabad received heavy rainfall and hailstorm disrupting daily activities in several parts of the capital. Following the weather alert, the district administration sprang into action to deal with the situation. On the instructions of the Deputy Commissioner Is-

lamabad, all Assistant Commissioners were sent to the field to monitor conditions in low-lying and affected areas. Their visits aimed to assess water accumulation, ensure clearance of blocked roads, and support ongoing drainage efforts. Teams from the Capital development Authority (CDA) and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) accompanied the Assistant Commissioners to assist in relief operations and provide technical support where needed. According to officials, the administration teams remained active in all sectors, including E-11 and other areas prone to flooding. The teams reviewed the situation on ground and coordinated with civic agencies to drain excess rainwa-

ter. Residents of the capital faced temporary disruptions due to waterlogging on roads and in residential areas. However, the administration reported no major damage or injuries during the storm. Authorities also directed staff to stay alert for any emergencies and remain available throughout the day. Machinery and equipment were mobilized to clear blocked routes and support public movement. Officials said that rainwater was being cleared from main roads and residential areas using pumps and other resources. They assured that the administration would continue to monitor the situation and respond as needed. The district administration advised the public to avoid unneces-

sary travel during rain and to report any emergency via helplines. The rainfall and hailstorm were part of a weather system that affected several parts of the country, including northern regions. Meteorological officials had earlier warned of possible heavy rain in Islamabad and surrounding areas. The city's civic bodies have been working in coordination with the administration to minimize inconvenience for the residents and to ensure quick restoration of normal conditions. The district administration stated that all field officers would remain on duty until the weather improves, and that steps were being taken to avoid water accumulation in the coming hours.

Digital transformation, tax reform take center stage at PSDE's moot

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The second day of the 38th Annual Conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE), hosted by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), brought together renowned scholars, economists, policymakers, and development professionals from across Pakistan and abroad. Held in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (MoP&SI), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

(PPAF), RASTA, CPEC Centre of Excellence, and the Bank of Punjab, the day focused on pressing national challenges including digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI), and fiscal sustainability. With expert insights and policy-focused dialogue, the conference continues to chart a bold course toward inclusive, tech-enabled economic development. Professor Pier Paolo Savioti of Utrecht University delivered the prestigious Allama Iqbal Lecture, presenting a powerful case for structural change in economic development. Using the TEVECON model, he argued that while improving efficiency within

existing sectors provides temporary gains, long-term growth depends on qualitative change through the creation of new sectors and diversified output. He described this phenomenon as "creative destruction," where the economy continuously regenerates itself through the emergence of new industries. Savioti emphasized the need for a strong institutional framework to enable these transformations and stressed that economic development is a bi-causal process—both driven by and driving structural change. Discussants Dr. Adnan Rafiq and Dr. Idrees Khawaja reinforced this perspective,

highlighting the importance of innovation, ecosystem development, and public service delivery to sustain growth. Chairing the session, Dr. Safdar Sohail urged policymakers to go beyond efficiency and pursue sectoral reinvention as a strategic imperative. In the Quaid-e-Azam Lecture, Nobel Laureate Professor Michael Spence presented "Digital Transformations, AI, Productivity, and the Future of Work: A Conversation for Pakistan." He explored the global AI landscape, stating that AI is a transformative force fundamentally altering productivity and labor markets.

Bakhtawari, Jeroen discuss Pak-EU business forum

Jeroen Willems emphasized that the European Union is a larger trade and investment partner for Pakistan than both the United States and China, and that the EU is keen to further expand these relations

ISLAMABAD: The Secretary General of United Business Group (UBG), Zafar Bakhtawari, held an important meeting with the Head of the European Union Delegation, Jeroen Willems. The two discussed bilateral trade and investment relations, mutual cooperation, and the upcoming Pakistan-European Union Business Forum to be held in Islamabad next month. Speaking on the occasion, Jeroen Willems said that the high-level Business Forum scheduled for May 14 and 15 in Islamabad will prove to be a milestone in promoting trade and investment between the EU and Pakistan. He added that the forum will not only provide high-level networking opportunities for the business community, but also help establish direct links between European institutions and Pakistani business circles. Jeroen Willems emphasized that the European Union is a larger trade and investment partner for Pakistan than both the United States and China, and that the EU is keen to further expand these relations. On this occasion, UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari appreciated the European Union's efforts to strengthen trade and investment ties with Pakistan and assured full cooperation from UBG. He said that UBG will play a proactive role in promoting connections between European and Pakistani business institutions, investors, and traders—not only at an institutional level but also personally. Zafar Bakhtawari added that such forums promote mutual trust, economic growth, and sustainable trade partnerships, and Pakistan's business community is fully prepared to take advantage of this opportunity—DNA

ICCI & NCC promotes compliance culture for international trade

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), in collaboration with the National Compliance Centre (NCC), organized a comprehensive training and consultative session on "Compliance of Regulations and Standards for International Trade (Exporters/Importers)". The session witnessed a large turnout of business leaders from the region, who gathered to familiarize themselves with the evolving landscape of global trade regulations and compliance requirements for smoother business operations. In his thought-provoking address, Dr. Nabeel Amin, Head of Compliance at the National Compliance Centre, briefed participants on the NCC's roadmap and emphasized the pivotal role of Chambers of Commerce, trade associations, industry stakeholders, and SMEs in fostering a compliance-oriented business environment. He introduced the core functions of the NCC, highlighting its efforts to implement emerging compliance mechanisms, including the ESG framework, Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) standards, and the Digital Product Passport (DPP). These initiatives aim to equip Pakistani exporters with the tools needed to meet international sustainability benchmarks. In his opening remarks, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, reiterated the Chamber's commitment to promoting sustainable, responsible, and competitive economic growth. He lauded the Ministry of Commerce for the establishment of NCC, calling it a landmark initiative that institutionalizes a compliance culture in Pakistan. He emphasized that in today's interconnected economy, international compliance is vital for gaining access to global markets, building trust, and ensuring long-term growth.

Wajiha inaugurates Sarah Hall at NSU

ISLAMABAD: Minister for State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajiha Qamar on Wednesday marked a significant milestone in women's education by officially inaugurating Sarah Hall, a newly constructed women's hostel at the National Skills University Islamabad (NSU). The inauguration ceremony was attended by university officials, faculty, and students, celebrating not just the opening of a building, but a broader commitment to women's empowerment through safe and inclusive educational infrastructure. "The inauguration of Sarah Hall is not just about a building," said Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar in his opening address. "It is about a message: that the daughters of Pakistan deserve not only a place in the classroom but also the dignity, safety, and resources to thrive there." Sarah Hall features 18 fully furnished rooms, a TV lounge, dining area, a modern kitchen, and a hybrid solar backup system to ensure uninterrupted power. It also includes high-speed internet and a dedicated recreational space, reflecting NSU's vision of holistic development for its female students. During her visit, Ms. Qamar visited the facility, met with residents, and expressed her admiration for the university's student-centered approach. She commended the addition of a Daycare Center on the premises, calling it "an essential support for working women and a reflection of forward-thinking campus planning." The Minister also visited the Noor-e-Ilahi Garden, an open space created for female students to study and unwind. There, she planted a fig tree, symbolizing growth, continuity, and the rooted strength of women in education. "Sarah Hall is more than accommodation—it is a home, a symbol of respect, and a platform for progress," Ms. Qamar said. She listened attentively to students' stories and concerns, assuring them that the government remains committed to inclusive and equitable education reforms. In a later meeting with faculty and staff, the Minister emphasized her focus on expanding technological and skills-based education across Pakistan, with a vision that ensures no segment of society is left behind. Prof. Mukhtar thanked Ms. Qamar for her support, highlighting her efforts in advancing reforms that empower students through hands-on education and innovative learning environments—APP

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Briefs

SSP reviews security at checkpoints, urges vigilance

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan on Tuesday visited various police checkpoints across the city to inspect ongoing security arrangements. An official told APP that the SSP Shoaib reviewed the performance of deployed officers and encouraged those performing alert duties to ensure the safety of citizens. SSP Shoaib said Islamabad Capital Police is always present to fulfill its responsibilities, adding, "Ensuring the safety of the public and responding promptly to every call is our fundamental duty." SSP directed all officers to remain active in the field and warned that no negligence in duty would be tolerated under any circumstances. SSP Shoaib emphasized that Islamabad Police is committed to maintaining peace and protecting the lives and properties of citizens through unwavering dedication.—APP

Motorways police inspector martyred

ISLAMABAD: An inspector of National Highways and Motorways Police was martyred after a truck rammed into a patrolling vehicle near Aminpur on M4. According to motorway police spokesperson, Inspector Mansoor Asghar was on duty along the M4 Motorway when a speeding truck rammed into a patrolling vehicle. The martyred inspector was giving a briefing to road users at the time of the accident. Inspector Mansoor was in a marked patrol vehicle when a Mazda truck, bearing registration number JW-1778, crashed into it from behind. The driver of the truck reportedly fell asleep at the wheel before hitting the police mobile, he added. Inspector Asghar died on the spot. He said the driver has been arrested and handed over to police or further legal action.—APP

Justice Baqar Najafi takes oath as Judge SCP

ISLAMABAD: Justice Yahya Afridi, Chief Justice of Pakistan administered the oath of office to Mr. Justice Ali Baqar Najafi, Judge, Lahore High Court as Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP), in a simple and impressive ceremony held at the Supreme Court of Pakistan here Wednesday. Judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Attorney General for Pakistan, senior lawyers, Officers of the Federal Judicial Academy, Law Officers and officers of Pakistan attended the ceremony. Mr. Muhammad Salim Khan, Registrar Supreme Court of Pakistan conducted the proceedings of the oath taking ceremony. Officers and staff of the Supreme Court of Pakistan were also present on the occasion.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a delegation led by Executive Director of the President's office from Zimbabwe. Our conversation centered around education, training, IT and skill enhancement for youth. Agriculture, small industry, health care and possible joint ventures were also discussed.—DNA

Single Country exhibition in Addis Ababa

Business forum held in Rawalpindi to mobilize business community

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A grand business forum was held at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) on Wednesday to mobilize the business community for Pakistan's Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa, scheduled for May 15-17, 2025. The business forum was organized by the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), and the RCCI. H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, co-preside the business forum along with H.E. Usman Shaukat, President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The event was graced by H.E. Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Chief Guest, while H.E. Nudrat Hussain, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, attended as the Guest of Honor. The forum witnessed a



substantial participation from the business community interested in exploring business and investment opportunities in Africa, including Ethiopia. On the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Jemal urged the business community to explore the significant business, trade, and investment opportunities in Ethiopia as well as in Africa. He highlighted the potential benefits of participating in the Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa that coincides with

the High-Level Business Forum 'Invest in Ethiopia', aimed at a global audience, which will also be held in Addis Ababa on May 12-13, 2025. "These two events present an opportunity for the Pakistani business community to participate in significant gatherings that will feature representation not only from their Ethiopian counterparts but also from across the entire African continent – a continent with a population exceeding 1.4 billion

and possessing abundant natural resources," the Ambassador remarked. He also briefed them on the comparative advantages available to the Pakistani business community in Ethiopia, including access to clean, green, and sustainable energy, affordable and skilled labor, Ethiopia's strategic location, its large population, and the growing bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan. He also mentioned the Government of FDR

Ethiopia's incentives for foreign investors, the ease of doing business, and dedicated industrial parks for sectors such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, and IT, among others in Ethiopia. On the other hand, the RCCI President encouraged the business community members to participate in the Single Country Exhibition, describing Ethiopia as a large market brimming with opportunities. H.E. Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan underlined the need for Pakistani businesses to explore new markets, particularly in Africa, highlighting the continent's huge population. He also recalled his recent visits to African countries, including Ethiopia, noting the significant transformation the country has undergone under the leadership of H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia. The Joint Secretary of the Commerce Ministry stated that the Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa is being organized under Pakistan's 'Look Africa' and 'Engage Africa' policy. She affirmed that the Government of Pakistan is fully committed to strengthening its relations with African countries, including Ethiopia.

Masses deprived of benefit of reduced inflation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, stated on Wednesday that although official data shows the nation's inflation rate has reached a record low, consumers do not see any real improvement in their daily lives. He asserted that the ongoing burden of rising prices clearly indicates a significant disconnect between economic data and the realities people experience in their daily lives. Shahid Rasheed butt highlighted the significant financial setbacks faced by traders, which was a direct result of diminished consumer spending power. In a statement issued today, he said that opportunistic price gouging has evolved into a substantial threat to the public and poses a considerable challenge to governmental authority. The business leader pointed out that the failure to translate reduced inflation into consumer savings stems from intermediaries' unbridled avarice and the populace's continued suffering. He asserted that illicit collaborations, manipulative tactics, and artificially created shortages within the essential goods market have become commonplace, imposing a severe economic strain on citizens. Shahid Rasheed Butt emphasized the necessity for a unified strategy between federal and provincial administrations to combat this issue starting from controlling powerful sugar mafia.

Consultative workshop on salt mining concludes

ISLAMABAD: A two-day consultative workshop on salt mining titled 'Safe and Productive Mining' concluded here on Wednesday, sensitizing participants on modern techniques to produce international standard products. The workshop was organized by National Productivity Organization (NPO) in collaboration with Asian Productivity Organization (APO) and Salt Manufacturing Association of Pakistan (SMAP), said a press release. The workshop aimed at to sensitize participants regarding modern productive mining, processing, branding, and export of premium salt products. Additional Secretary Ministry of Industries and Production Asad Salam Mahni appreciated the participants and organizers for making the workshop successful.—APP

PM commends valuable services of overseas Pakistanis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's announcement of a welfare package for overseas Pakistanis is genuinely commendable and demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting our citizens abroad. He stated that the purpose of this package is to acknowledge the significance of overseas Pakistanis and address their legal and other issues. It will also offer them job and education quo-

tas and various incentives, such as awards and skill development programs, to enhance their morale. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, while addressing the first two-day Overseas Pakistanis Convention held in Islamabad, paid tribute to the expatriates for their unparalleled contribution to nation-building and called them the pride of the nation. On this occasion, the Prime Minister said that a special court for overseas Pakistanis has already been established in Islamabad and will be extended to all provinces so that legal cases filed by expatriates can be decided as soon as possible. It is also noteworthy that the government is introducing e-recording and e-filing facilities for over-

seas Pakistanis so that they can provide evidence through video links without coming to Pakistan. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the Prime Minister announced quotas in educational institutions under which children of overseas Pakistanis will be given a 5% quota in all chartered universities, 5% in federal educational institutions, and 15% in medical colleges. He noted that the Federal Board of Revenue will now consider overseas Pakistani filers, which will provide them with relief in banking, business transactions, and other matters. The federal government has also relaxed the age limit for job applicants abroad. The Prime Minister praised Punjab's digital reforms and announced that this system would be launched at the Pakistani High Commission in Lon-

don and later on in other missions worldwide. It also announced restoring the green channel for overseas Pakistanis at airports. In addition, he said that on August 14, every year, overseas Pakistanis will be awarded civil awards based on remittances, which will encourage them. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the Prime Minister pledged to monitor the investments of overseas Pakistanis in the country personally and assured them of all kinds of protection. Mian Zahid Hussain said that on this occasion, Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir appreciated the patriotic spirit of Pakistanis abroad, thanked them for sending \$4.1 billion to the country in March, and assured them of all kinds of cooperation and protection, which is commendable.

B & R trade enter inaugurated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Belt and Road Economic and Trade Center (BRET), a strategic initiative by IBI International Group, was inaugurated in Changshu city, Suzhou, marking a milestone in enhancing economic and trade collaboration among Belt and Road countries. The center aims to serve as a one-stop platform for trade, investment and cultural exchanges, facilitating deeper integration between China and partner countries, China Economic Net reported. Once put into operation, BRET will offer comprehensive solutions spanning bilateral bulk trade, supply chain management, engineering procurement and construction (EPC), transfer-operate-transfer (TOT) projects, production line setup and financing services for both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) engagements. Among its core objectives are facilitating joint ventures, providing project and trade financing, and helping partner countries access China's market. The center features dedicated country display zones and liaison offices for key partners, including Pakistan, Jordan, Nigeria and others. Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, described BRET as an initiative that embodies connectivity, collaboration and practical opportunities. "The center's integrated services - from procurement facilitation to legal support and business matchmaking - are precisely what our private sector requires to compete successfully in international markets," he emphasized. IBI Group Chairman Ibrahim Munir highlighted that BRET goes beyond traditional trade facilitation by providing a one-stop solution for cross-border collaboration. "This platform will accelerate partnerships not only in textiles but also in IT, mining, agribusiness, and clean energy," he said.—APP

Financial literacy week to empower nation financial future
This effort underscores the SBP's commitment to promoting financial inclusion and supporting the economic empowerment of women in Pakistan, he concluded

ISLAMABAD: State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) Managing Director (MD) Maraj Mahmood Wednesday announced the 'National Financial Literacy Program' to promote financial awareness, especially among those engaged in online businesses, enabling them to make informed financial decisions. In an exclusive conversation with a private news channel, MD announced the launch of Financial Literacy Awareness Week, aimed at empowering the nation's financial future. He said the initiative seeks to educate individuals about personal finance, budgeting and investments, promoting financial inclusion and stability across the country. By enhancing financial knowledge and skills, the program aims to enable citizens to make informed decisions, contributing to Pakistan's economic growth and development. This effort underscores the SBP's commitment to fostering a financially literate and resilient economy, he added. He underscores the significance of financial literacy in driving economic progress and stability in Pakistan. By empowering individuals with financial knowledge, the country can unlock its economic potential and foster a more inclusive and resilient economy, he highlighted. He highlighted the significance of Financial Literacy Awareness Week, emphasizing its potential to empower women-led home-based businesses. By equipping these entrepreneurs with essential financial knowledge and skills, the initiative aims to enhance their ability to manage finances, access credit, and grow their businesses sustainably, he added. This effort underscores the SBP's commitment to promoting financial inclusion and supporting the economic empowerment of women in Pakistan, he concluded.—DNA

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EU, China relations

In 2025, Europe stands adrift in geopolitical limbo. As Washington sets the tempo and Beijing expands its reach, the European Union clings to ambiguity. Brussels' inability to formulate a coherent China policy has left it vulnerable precisely when autonomy matters most. Donald Trump's re-election as US president has shattered Europe's diplomatic complacency, revealing the cost of years spent deferring to American leadership. Confronted with a combative White House, the EU now needs a functional relationship with China as a counterweight – yet finds itself without the framework to build one. Beijing, meanwhile, watches with growing impatience, having expected the EU to meet this moment with determination. Indeed, three months into Trump's second term, China still waits for a coordinated EU response to American unilateralism. Instead, it encounters weakness, division and indecision – paralysis rooted not only in Brussels' approach to Washington, but in its unresolved posture toward Beijing. This inertia can be traced back to the bloc's 2019 strategic outlook. Rather than providing clarity, it institutionalised confusion by labelling China a "cooperation partner", "negotiating partner", "economic competitor" and "systemic rival". What leaders presented as balance came off as an indecisiveness formalised into policy. In the years that followed, Brussels outsourced its China policy to Washington. Multiple so-called European measures – 5G restrictions, semiconductor export bans or tariffs on electric vehicles – often dovetailed with US policy. Europe didn't lead; the EU merely rebranded American initiatives as its own strategy, mistaking imitation for direction. The result is the absence of a coherent approach towards one of Europe's top trading partners. The evidence speaks loudly. Despite repeated threats of tougher measures, the EU recorded a trade deficit of 304.5 billion (US\$345 billion) with China in 2024, a 4.6 per cent increase over the previous year, while European manufacturers lost market share in China. The gap between EU rhetoric and economic outcomes eroded Brussels' credibility. Multiple crises – the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and supply chain disruptions – exposed the EU's vulnerabilities yet failed to trigger meaningful correction. Instead, Brussels continued to sidestep difficult choices and default to Washington's lead. After former US president Joe Biden took office, the EU embraced the "systemic rivalry" line out of routine rather than conviction. This placed transatlantic alignment above strategic interests like securing China's market access. Trump 2.0 exposes the emptiness of the EU's approach by upending its core assumptions. When Washington shifted its focus from security to trade, the EU lacked capacity to engage China on its own terms. With no independent framework, Brussels was unable to adapt when American priorities changed. The failure wasn't just dependence – it was the belief that Biden's stance could outlast his presidency. After the EU faced open pressure from the US – including over Trump's ambition to buy Greenland in 2019 – European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen became more hawkish on China. This political miscalculation ignored both European industrial needs and the question of whether Atlantic loyalty would be reciprocated. A critical moment came in December 2024 when EU top diplomat Kaja Kallas branded China as partly "malign" while praising the US as the EU's "most consequential partner".

Islam from graphic novels to media (Part-II)

Qamar Bashir



After years of facing Islamophobia and passive or active discrimination, they are asserting their identities with newfound confidence. Bold, intuitive, creative, and forward-looking, they are shattering the psychological barriers that once hindered their entry into high fashion. We are witnessing the rise of a new aesthetic

In a world where fashion has become the stage for bold experimentation, the lines between tradition and futurism are increasingly blurred. The Muslim silhouette—once marginalized in Western fashion shows—has now emerged as an icon of transformation and creativity. Today, Muslims across the globe, especially those in fast-developing societies and diasporic communities in the West, are spearheading a revolution in the fashion world. They are no longer silent or sidelined. After years of facing Islamophobia and passive or active discrimination, they are asserting their identities with newfound confidence. Bold, intuitive, creative, and forward-looking, they are shattering the psychological barriers that once hindered their entry into high fashion. We are witnessing the rise of a new aesthetic—one that preserves the modesty prescribed by Islam while embracing innovation, luxury, and diversity. Whether in the streets of Paris or the malls of Dubai, Muslim fashionistas are no longer apologetic about their religious values or sartorial traditions. Instead, they are redefining them, merging tradition with trend, and faith with flair. This cultural shift in fashion is not merely symbolic—it has substantial economic implications as well. According to New York-based firm DinarStandard, global Muslim spending on Islamic fashion reached €300 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow significantly, hitting €402 billion by 2027. This growth trajectory, representing an annual increase of 6.1%, highlights that the Islamic fashion market is not just a fleeting trend but a sustainable and thriving segment that is reshaping the global fashion economy. The 2023–2024 State of the Global Islamic Economy (SGIE) report underscores this seismic shift. The modest fashion industry, distinct from other sectors of the Islamic economy, is evaluated across four critical dimensions: financial performance, public awareness, social impact, and innovation. Significantly, governance plays a less central role in this sector, providing brands and designers with greater freedom and flexibility, thereby fueling creativity and rapid market evolution. Several countries have emerged as critical players within this transformative landscape. Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Italy have been par-

ticularly influential in shaping the modest fashion industry. On the consumer front, the strongest demand has consistently come from markets such as Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Egypt. These nations not only represent significant consumer bases but are also increasingly influential in shaping global fashion trends. Investment activity further validates the vibrancy and potential of this sector. Between 2022 and 2023, Islamic fashion attracted approximately 121.6 million in trade-related investments. The United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Indonesia are leading the investment charge, acting both as substantial consumer markets and as proactive developers and exporters of Islamic fashion. Innovations such as modest surfwear, garments designed to optimize vitamin D absorption, and practical water and windproof hijabs reflect the sector's dynamism. Furthermore, trends like social commerce, clothing resale, and rentals to promote sustainability, alongside rising demand for specialized modest sportswear for women, represent exciting growth opportunities highlighted by the SGIE Report. Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has seen ten of its member countries emerge as top importers of Islamic fashion. These include the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Indonesia, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, and Kuwait. This proves that demand is not limited to Western Muslims or diaspora populations—it's global, encompassing the heartlands of Islam and reaching well into Central Asia and beyond. This surge is not merely economic or aesthetic; it is cultural and political. Muslim women and men are using fashion as a tool of empowerment and resistance. In the face of homogenizing global trends, they are reclaiming their narrative—showing that modesty does not preclude modernity, and faith does not hinder freedom of expression. For years, Muslim attire was seen through a narrow lens—too traditional, too conservative, or simply incompatible with Western ideals of beauty and style. But today, hijabs are worn with high heels, abayas are tailored with futuristic silhouettes, and turbans grace the covers of fashion magazines. In an era that celebrates individuality, Muslims are proving that their style is not only relevant but revolutionary. This transformation is

driven in part by rising levels of education and purchasing power among Muslims—particularly in the Middle East and in Western societies. Today's Muslim consumers are globally aware, digitally savvy, and eager to support brands that reflect their values. This has led to the emergence of Muslim-owned fashion labels, modest fashion weeks in major cities, and collaborations with international luxury brands. What's remarkable is that this fashion revolution is occurring without compromising on Islamic principles. Modesty remains central—but it is being reinterpreted through a modern lens. Flowy garments, layered designs, and elegant accessories are replacing outdated stereotypes. The result is a unique style that respects religious guidelines while pushing creative boundaries. This also allows Muslims to engage confidently with the global fashion community, no longer needing to justify their beliefs or fashion choices. In fact, their designs are now inspiring non-Muslim audiences who seek stylish, ethical, and sustainable alternatives to mainstream fashion. In the West, this has translated into broader social recognition. Islamic fashion is being integrated into mainstream runways, covered by global media, and appreciated in multicultural neighborhoods. This not only boosts the visibility of Muslims but also fosters greater understanding of Islamic culture in secular societies. As Islamic fashion asserts itself as a pillar of the global economy, it paves the way for a new wave of stylistic diversity. It challenges long-held assumptions about beauty, femininity, and identity. More importantly, it tells a powerful story: one of resilience, creativity, and a refusal to be sidelined. Fashion is no longer just about clothing—it's about values, identity, and self-expression. The global Islamic fashion movement offers a glimpse into the future of style—one that fuses spirituality with sophistication, and heritage with high fashion—where tradition meets innovation, modesty meets modernity, and where Islam, far from being a constraint, becomes a canvas for elegance, creativity, and cultural pride.

—The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC Macomb, Detroit, Michigan

Charting new waters: Pakistan's tech-driven maritime vision for South Asia

Muslim Bin Aqeel

The strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil passes, further amplifies the need for vigilant MDA. Pakistan's maritime sector also plays a crucial role in its energy security, with the country's reliance on imported oil and gas transported via sea. The Port of Gwadar, developed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is set to become a key node in regional trade, further elevating the importance of MDA. As global trade increasingly relies on sea routes, and with emerging challenges such as piracy, illegal fishing, and environmental threats, Pakistan's commitment to enhancing its MDA capabilities has never been more critical. Central to Pakistan

Pakistan, with its extensive coastline along the Arabian Sea, occupies a pivotal position in South Asia's maritime landscape. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), the comprehensive understanding of activities and threats in the maritime domain, is crucial for safeguarding Pakistan's economic interests and ensuring regional security. Pakistan's maritime heritage, though often overshadowed by its terrestrial narratives, is deeply woven into the fabric of its national identity. From the ancient port of Debal to the modern-day bustling hub of Karachi, the sea has been a lifeline for trade, culture, and security. Today, with over 95% of its international trade conducted via sea routes, Pakistan's economic vitality is inextricably linked to its maritime domain. The strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil passes, further amplifies the need for vigilant MDA. Pakistan's maritime sector also plays a crucial role in its energy security, with the country's reliance on imported oil and gas transported via sea. The Port of Gwadar, developed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is set to become a key node in regional trade, further elevating the importance of MDA. As global trade increasingly relies on sea routes, and with emerging challenges such as piracy, illegal fishing, and environmental threats, Pakistan's commitment to enhancing its MDA capabilities has never been more critical. Central to Pakistan's MDA strategy is the Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC), established in 2013 in Karachi. This center serves as the nerve center for Pakistan's MDA, collecting and disseminating information on maritime incidents, including piracy, smuggling, and environmental hazards. By integrating data from coastal radars, satellite imagery, and international partners, it provides a comprehensive maritime picture, enabling timely decision-making. Since its inception, the JMICC has been involved in coordinating responses to several maritime incidents, including the interception of smuggling vessels and the rescue of distressed fishermen. Its ability to integrate data from multiple sources has proven invaluable in maintaining situational awareness. The JMICC's partnerships extend beyond national borders, including collaborations with Italy's Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre and the Combined Maritime Forces, a multinational naval partnership, which have been instrumental in countering piracy and ensuring the safety of shipping lanes. These efforts exemplify Pakistan's dedication to a collaborative approach in maritime security, fostering interoperability and networking with regional and global stakeholders. Recognizing the importance of skilled manpower in sustaining these efforts, Pakistan has proposed the establishment of Regional MDA Training Centers. These centers aim to not only enhance the capabilities of Pakistan's own personnel but also to foster trust and cooperation with friendly navies in the region. The proposed training programs are envisioned to offer specialized courses in maritime intelligence, surveillance techniques, and legal frameworks, equipping participants with the skills needed to address complex maritime challenges. In addition to these proposed centers, Pakistan already conducts various maritime training programs through institutions like

the Pakistan Navy War College and the National Centre for Maritime Policy Research. These programs cover a wide range of topics, from naval strategy to maritime law, and are open to international participants, fostering regional cooperation. By inviting personnel from neighboring countries, these training initiatives seek to build a network of maritime professionals who can collaborate on shared issues such as illegal fishing, human trafficking, and environmental protection. This approach not only enhances Pakistan's soft power but also contributes to regional stability by promoting a collective approach to maritime security. While direct evidence of Pakistan's integration of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and drones into its MDA framework is limited, regional and global developments suggest a growing trend towards such innovations. In South Asia, countries like India have begun deploying AI-based surveillance systems along shared borders, indicating the potential for similar applications in maritime contexts. Globally, countries like the United States and Australia have successfully integrated AI and drones into their MDA frameworks. For example, the U.S. Coast Guard uses AI to analyze Automatic Identification System (AIS) data, while Australia employs drones for border protection. AI technologies, such as machine learning algorithms, can revolutionize MDA by automating the analysis of vast data sets, identifying patterns that human analysts might miss. For instance, AI can predict vessel behavior based on historical data, flagging suspicious activities for further investigation. Similarly, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, offer a cost-effective solution for persistent surveillance over large maritime areas, complementing traditional patrol methods and reducing risks to personnel. Pakistan's existing drone capabilities, primarily used for land-based operations, could be adapted for maritime surveillance, enhancing its ability to monitor its extensive coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). As the region witnesses an arms race in drone technology, with both India and Pakistan developing advanced platforms, the integration of these tools into MDA is a logical next step. A landmark initiative that underscores Pakistan's commitment to leveraging technology and innovation in the maritime sector is the Pakistan Maritime Science and Technology Park (PMSTP), inaugurated in 2023 at Bahria University in Karachi. This park is poised to catalyze the blue economy, with projections indicating it could contribute \$70-80 billion annually to the national GDP. By focusing on sectors such as coastal tourism, aquaculture, seafood processing, shipbuilding, renewable ocean energy, and seawater desalination, the PMSTP aims to harness Pakistan's maritime potential, fostering sustainable development and economic growth. Structured as a hub for maritime innovation, the park's master plan includes state-of-the-art laboratories, a maritime museum, and a business incubation center. It also aims to establish partnerships with international universities and research institutions, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaborative research. By bringing together academia, industry, and government, the PMSTP seeks to translate research into commercial applications through public-private partnerships, positioning Pakistan as

a leader in maritime science and technology in South Asia. Despite these advancements, Pakistan faces several challenges in its pursuit of comprehensive MDA. Climate change poses a significant threat, with rising sea temperatures threatening the sustainability of fisheries, a vital source of livelihood for coastal communities, and sea-level rise posing risks to port infrastructure and urban areas. The fisheries sector, which employs thousands and contributes significantly to the economy, is particularly vulnerable to these changes. The economic cost of climate change on Pakistan's maritime sector could be substantial, with potential inundation of coastal areas and disruption to fisheries and trade. To mitigate these risks, Pakistan can invest in sustainable fishing practices and marine conservation efforts, while also leveraging technology to monitor environmental changes and adapt to new conditions. Additionally, geopolitical tensions, particularly with India over maritime boundaries and resource exploitation, underscore the need for robust surveillance and quick response capabilities. Tensions over fishing rights have led to frequent arrests of fishermen, straining bilateral relations. The 2024 incident involving an Indian drone straying into Pakistan-administered Kashmir highlights the delicate balance required in maintaining regional stability and the importance of advanced MDA to prevent escalation. Looking ahead, Pakistan's path to enhanced MDA lies in leveraging international cooperation and fostering innovation through platforms like the PMSTP. By embracing technological advancements such as AI and drones, and prioritizing manpower development through training initiatives, Pakistan can address both contemporary and future challenges. International cooperation, particularly with regional partners and global maritime organizations, will be crucial in sharing best practices, resources, and intelligence. Despite historical rivalries, there is scope for collaboration on non-traditional security threats, such as maritime pollution and natural disasters. Joint exercises and information-sharing agreements can build confidence and reduce misunderstandings. Moreover, by drawing lessons from successful MDA models in other regions, such as Southeast Asia's National Coast Watch Centre in the Philippines, Pakistan can refine its approach to information sharing and inter-agency coordination. As Pakistan navigates these waters, it has the potential to emerge as a leader in South Asian MDA, ensuring a secure and prosperous maritime future for itself and the region. The journey towards comprehensive MDA is complex, but with concerted effort, innovation, and collaboration, Pakistan is well-positioned to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead.

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Briefs

China's support was crucial in...

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the development of climate-resilient seeds," the premier said while highlighting the urgent need to revive and modernise the country's agricultural research institutions. It is pertinent to know that under the initiative, 300 selected graduates are being sent to China for a three-month training programme during the first phase. In the second phase, 400 graduates will undergo a six-month training programme, followed by the remaining 300 graduates who will participate in a three-month training programme in the final phase.

Ambassador Jiang calls...

FROM PAGE 01
developments, including power generation, highways, and the operationalization of the world-class Gwadar New International Airport. Humanitarian efforts like distributing health kits, rebuilding schools in KP, and treating children with heart disease were also mentioned as symbols of "ironclad friendship." Ambassador Jiang also announced new people-centric initiatives: solar-powered systems, food packages, safe drinking water projects, and expanded scholarship programs, especially for students from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

KP's minerals...

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such legislations which affected the country's judiciary. Fazl alleged that provinces had been forced into passing such legislation and mining authorities were being constituted to utilise their resources. The cleric urged the Centre to do businesses with the province while respecting their autonomy under the 18th Amendment. He also alleged that international powers were being given way to seize the national resources.

Imran being denied...

FROM PAGE 01
The legal team needs his guideline but the jail officials don't allow the lawyers to meet him," they said. Salman Akram Raja said that three lawyers of Imran Khan and his spokesperson Niazuallah Niazi were not allowed to meet him yesterday. Aleema Khan emphasized that meetings with lawyers are essential for case discussions and legal instructions. Salman Akram Raja added that Advocate Salman Safdar had to approach the Supreme Court for seeking permission to meet Imran Khan. He stated that if lawyers are not allowed to meet their client, legal proceedings cannot move forward.

Balochistan National...

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Karachi and Taftan remained closed, causing severe economic disruption, critical shortages of essential goods and mounting frustration among the public and business community alike. President of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) Muhammad Ayub Maryani said that the blockade was inflicting daily financial losses amounting to millions of rupees. He stated that over 1,200 trucks and containers, including 847 tankers carrying LPG and other petroleum products from Iran, had been stuck at the Pak-Iran border.

Pakistan-China...

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The dialogue was co-chaired by Additional Secretary (Asia-Pacific) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, and Director General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hong Liang. The two sides positively reviewed the progress of their cooperation since the fourth round of the dialogue.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Blind Cricket Council Syed Sultan Shah addressing a press conference along with Womens Blind Cricket team captain Nimra Rafique, at a local hotel, in the Federal Capital. – Online

PSL 2025: Lahore Qalandars beat Karachi King by 65 Runs

Hasan Ali's four-wicket haul was the only bright spark in Karachi's otherwise forgettable outing with the ball. In reply, the home side's innings never got going. Lahore's pace spearhead Shaheen Afridi rattled the top order with three quick strikes, while debutant Rishad Hossain left the middle order in tatters with a superb spell of wrist-spin, finishing with 3 for 26

DNA

KARACHI: After electing to bat first, Lahore set the tone with a commanding total of 201/6, built on the back of explosive half-centuries from Fakhar Zaman (76) and Daryl Mitchell (75). The duo tore into the Kings' bowling attack, dominating both pace and spin with fearless strokeplay. Hasan Ali's four-wicket haul was the only bright spark in Karachi's otherwise forgettable outing with the ball. In reply, the home side's innings never got going. Lahore's pace spearhead Shaheen Afridi rattled the top order with three quick strikes, while debutant Rishad Hossain left the middle order in tatters with a superb spell of wrist-spin, finishing with 3 for 26. Karachi were reduced to 50/7 before a late fightback from Khushdil Shah (39)



and Hasan Ali (27) added some resistance. But it was never enough against Lahore's disciplined bowling unit. Haris Rauf was economical and finally got a deserved wicket, while Sikandar Raza applied the finishing touches with two wickets of his own - including the final blow to dismiss Adam Milne and wrap up the innings for just 136 in 19.1 overs. Lahore's fielders backed their bowlers with sharp catching and committed ground work, amplifying the pressure on a struggling Karachi unit. From dominating with the bat to suffocating with the ball, For Karachi, it was a sobering defeat at home, with little to take away other than brief resistance from Khushdil and Hasan. Their top-order collapse, sluggish scoring, and lack of bowling support around Hasan Ali contributed to a defeat that exposed major issues heading into the rest of the tournament.

4th Derajat Off-Road Jeep Challenge from tomorrow

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Preparations for the Fourth Derajat Off Road Jeep Challenge under the "Derajat 2025 festival" have been finalized. The event will be held from tomorrow April 17th to 20th in Dera Ismail Khan, and about 100 participants including women from across the country will take part in this event. The Derajat off-road challenge was being organised by the Sports and Youth Affairs Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and divisional administration, DI Khan. The Derajat off-road challenge has been divided into four different Categories, Stock Category, Women Category, local Categories and professional Category. The Off-Road Challenge, will run from April 17 to 20, with over 100 top Renowned racers including Nadir Magsi, Sahibzada Sultan, Deena Patel, Zain Mehmood, Roni Patel, Tusna Patel, and Salma Marwat are expected to participate. The rally will start from Yarik Interchange along the CPEC Motorway, covering a 100 kilometre track, where various points have been set up for the spectators and camps have also been set up at specific distances. At the same time, medical centres and ambulances have been arranged by the department of health and Rescue 1122 to deal with any security and emergency situation. While talking to APP, City Mayor and Chief Organiser of Derajat 2025 festival Sardar Umar Amin Gandapur said that Men and women jeep racers from all over the country besides some foreign sports persons are expected to participate in the jeep rally. – APP

Messi wants to play in '26 World Cup'

DNA

WASHINGTON: Messi, who turns 38 this summer, has not announced his plans for the 2026 tournament being held in the United States, Mexico and Canada. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner was the Most Valuable Player of Argentina's run to the championship at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Argentina has already qualified for 2026. In a recent interview with El Pais, Suarez was asked whether he and Messi had talked about retirement. "No, we do talk (about it). Jokingly, many times, but he (Messi) also has that desire to play in next year's World Cup," Suarez said. "Obviously, after being away from the national team for a while, that desire is fading more on my side than on his, but we haven't talked about it (retirement) yet."

Hassan Ali backs Babar Azam amid poor form

"We made Babar the king, and we are also bringing him down," he said, adding: "If my words 'the king will deliver' hurt anyone, I apologise. But my stance remains [that] Babar is our best player, and he will bounce back"

KARACHI: Pakistan fast bowler Hassan Ali has thrown his full support behind under-fire former captain Babar Azam, who is currently battling a dip in form and performance. Speaking at a press conference after his Pakistan Super League (PSL) match on Monday, the fast bowler described Babar as Pakistan's "best player" and dismissed criticism of his form, though he acknowledged that the star batter was going through a tough time. Hassan's remarks came when a journalist referred to one of his past comments about Babar in which he termed the former captain a "King" by saying "King kar lega" which means, the "King will deliver". "We made Babar the king, and we are also bringing him down," he said, adding: "If my words 'the king will deliver' hurt anyone, I apologise. But my stance remains [that] Babar is our best player, and he will bounce back."

Reflecting on the Karachi Kings' performance, the right-arm pacer admitted their batting collapse cost them the match. Karachi Kings were beaten by Lahore Qalandars in yesterday's match. "We lost early wickets, couldn't build partnerships, and the pressure mounted," he said, adding that the team would review their inconsistencies. The 2017 Champions Trophy winner also addressed the broader issue of player criticism, condemning personal attacks while accepting constructive feedback. "Criticism for improvement is fine, but when families are targeted, it affects everyone," he said, referencing abusive crowd behaviour during Pakistan's recent tour of New Zealand. – DNA

How Palestine's U-20 Women's team went from underdogs to champions

Palestine has been absolutely abject in youth football. Since gaining admission to the Asian Football Confederation and FIFA in 1998, Palestine's men's and women's teams have qualified for a single youth tournament, the U-23 Asian Cup

DNA

RAMALLAH: Palestine's U-20 Women's team did just that. While Palestine's senior men's team has been punching above its weight for the past decade it has been an entirely different story for other teams in the program. Palestine has been absolutely abject in youth football. Since gaining admission to the Asian Football Confederation and FIFA in 1998, Palestine's men's and women's teams have qualified for a single youth tournament, the U-23 Asian Cup. The gaps have only widened for female sides as other countries in the region invested in the sector, leaving Palestine far behind neighbours Lebanon and Jordan. When the U-20 West Asian Football Federation Championship kicked off last week, not much was expected from Palestine. Jordan were seen as heavy favorites due to their home advantage and the absence of Lebanon, the only other side of note in the region. Palestine were expected to finish above Kuwait but behind Jordan and Syria in the four-team tournament. Preparation was anything but ideal with the team meeting only 48 hours before their first

game. With football suspended throughout Palestine there was a heavy reliance on the diaspora to fill the gaps. Palestine's squad featured players born in Sweden, Canada and the United States as well as professionals plying their trade in Chile and Egypt. The tournament got off to the best possible start for Al-Fidai'yat, a 90 hammering of Kuwait set the stage, but a 3-0 loss to bitter rivals Jordan had the doubters circling the team. Many of the comments of the Palestine Football Association Facebook page were tinged with sexism while others demanded women's football have its funding suspended. The nature of the loss was particularly frustrating for Palestine who showed an ability to compete with their more established rivals but were undone on a series of corner kicks and set pieces. Palestine emerged from Matchday 2 in good shape thanks to Syria's narrower margin of victory against Kuwait. That result meant Palestine needed only a draw against the Qasoun Eagles to set up a rematch against Jordan in the final. A goalmouth scramble after an early corner kick was finished off by Narin Abu Asfar giving Palestine the lead against Syria. They looked the better side for much of the match but a late Syrian equalizer

against the run of play in the 84th minute set up a grandstand finish. A series of corner kicks in the game's dying seconds had fans fearing the worst but Palestine's players held their nerve and saw the game out. A rematch against Jordan was on the cards. Palestine's futility at the WAFF Championship is well documented. The senior men's team has never advanced past the group stage of the regional tournament. The senior women's team's greatest accomplishment was a second-place finish in 2014 in a four-team tournament in which they were battered 10-0 by champions Jordan. Palestine were not expected to put up much of a fight. After all, success in women's football starts with investment, and Jordan has been the leading light in the region, punching above their weight in all age categories for both genders since the turn of the century. A cagey first half under the hot Aqaba sun ended scoreless, just as it did five days earlier. Manager Ahmed Hammad went to his bench and called on Selina Ghneim to change the match. The forward did just that, thumping home a header from Narin Abu Asfar's corner to open the scoring. Jordan answered through a substitute of their own, Marah Abbas, who also scored off a corner kick. A pen-

alty shootout was needed to settle the match, which ended 1-1. Typically, underdogs favor the lottery of the shootout, which increases their chances of victory considerably. There was just one problem for Palestine. Their goalkeeper Miraf Maarouf had broken her foot in warmups. Any doubt as to the imperious goalkeeper's ability to perform injured and under pressure was immediately put to rest. Maarouf dove to her right and blocked Jordan's first two attempts giving Palestine a lead in the shootout they would not relinquish. An embarrassing moment of confusion took place after captain Naomi Philips scored to make it 3-1 after three and a half rounds. Palestine's players rushed on to the pitch to celebrate with Maarouf, who was imploring her teammates to clear the area because there was still a Jordanian kick to deal with. Jordan scored to force a fifth round of kicks but Miral Kassis did not feel the pressure. The FC Masar forward had to leave the team midway through the tournament due to club commitments. She had played in Egypt less than 24 hours before and arrived in Aqaba only on the day of the final. Her winning penalty came with a high dose of bravado, with the 19-year-old seeming to ask Céline Seif which side she wanted to be scored on.

Pakistan FS Baloch lands in Dhaka...

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Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Md Jasim Uddin said the foreign secretary-level meeting is going to take place in Dhaka on 17 April. Both sides will discuss a wide range of bilateral issues, including unresolved historical matters between the two nations. "After such a long hiatus, it is difficult to prioritize topics in advance, but the talks will be comprehensive." Bangladesh's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Md Iqbal Hussain Khan, who is currently in Dhaka to attend the meeting, told BSS that Islamabad is particularly keen to enhance trade ties with Dhaka. "Pakistan sees potential for boosting exports to Bangladesh, especially if their products are price competitive," he said.

Pak and Afghanistan govts set...

FROM PAGE 01

While on the other side, Afghan Deputy Defence Minister Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir is set to lead the meeting, according to Afghan government spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid. Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir is a senior Taliban leader, who once led the Taliban military commission during the 20-year war against the US-Nato forces. "SAPM/ Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan arrived at Kabul at the head of a delegation to attend the JCC meeting. JCC meeting is being held after a long gap," according to Sadiq's X.

Taliban govt has...

FROM PAGE 01

been formed by the Afghan authorities to oversee the repatriation process. He added that camps have been established in Afghanistan for the returnees, where transportation and basic facilities are being provided to ensure a smooth transition. "Afghan nationals will not face any difficulties during the return process," he assured. The federal government announced at the start of March that 800,000 Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) would be cancelled – the second phase of a deportation programme which has already forced 800,000 undocumented Afghans across the border.

Imran being denied...

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The legal team needs his guideline but the jail officials don't allow the lawyers to meet him," they said. Salman Akram Raja said that three lawyers of Imran Khan and his spokesperson Niazuallah Niazi were not allowed to meet him yesterday. Aleema Khan emphasized that meetings with lawyers are essential for case discussions and legal instructions. Salman Akram Raja added that Advocate Salman Safdar had to approach the Supreme Court for seeking permission to meet Imran Khan.

PM vows action...

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retrieve the remains of the deceased. "While we are taking strong action against those responsible for luring our citizens into this death trap, we will continue to come down hard against such elements so no family has to carry the coffin of their loved ones in such accidents," he reiterated. Earlier, the Foreign Office, in a statement, said that among the Pakistani nationals killed in the boat tragedy were: Zahid Mehmood s/o Liaqat Ali, a resident of Gujranwala with passport No. LY0161441, and three residents of a Mandi Bahaiddin includng Sameer Ali s/o Raja Abdul Qadeer (passport No. RS1825681), Syed Ali Hussain s/o Shaqfat ul Hussain(Passport No. JG6912511) and Asif Ali s/o Nagar Muhammad(Passport No. RS1825681). The foreign ministry has also activated its Crisis Management Unit to monitor the situation. For any assistance and information, people can contact at: Phone No: 051-9207887 Email: cmu1@mofa.gov.pk Emergency contact details at the Embassy: Ashique Ali, HOC: +92-305-2185882, Hassan Saleem, PRO: +218-91-8644064.

Briefs

PSX
witnesses
bearish trend

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 755.40 points, a negative change of 0.65 percent, closing at 116,020.11 points as compared to 116,775.50 points on the last trading day. A total of 481,813,460 shares were traded during the day as compared to 479,465,114 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs38.536 billion against Rs30.449 billion on the last trading day. As many as 451 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 140 of them recorded gains and 260 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 51 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Energycio PK with 35,607,758 shares at Rs 8.51 per share, B O Punjab Limited with 25,483,545 shares at Rs 11.11 per share and Fauji Foods limited with 25,268,499 shares at Rs 15.91 per share. —APP

Rupee gains 10
paise against
US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.46 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.56. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.65 and Rs282.15, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 07 paise to close at Rs319.01 against the last day's closing of Rs318.94, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.97, whereas an increase of Rs1.12 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs372.35 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs371.23. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 paise each to close at Rs76.35 and 74.74 respectively. —APP

Gold price
reaches all
time high

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.8,600 and was traded at all time high at Rs.348,000 on Wednesday as compared to its sale at Rs339,400 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.7,373 to Rs 298,353 from Rs.290,980 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up to Rs.273,500 from Rs.266,741, respectively. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs. 63 to Rs. 3,460 and ten gram silver increased by Rs. 54 to Rs.2,966. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$86 to \$3,310 from \$3,224 whereas that of silver also increased by \$0.63 and at \$32.98, the Association reported. —APP

Istanbul's
Hagia Sophia
prepares
for next big
quake

ISTANBUL: The Hagia Sophia of Istanbul is no stranger to change — through the centuries the city's architectural jewel has gone from church to mosque to museum, back to mosque again. But the latest renovation aims not only to restore the wonders of the 1,488-year gem, but to ensure it survives the next earthquake to hit the ancient city. From afar, its dome, shimmering rock and delicate minarets appear to watch over Istanbul, as they have for centuries. As visitors get closer however, they see scaffolding covering its eastern facade and one of the minarets. While “the renovation of course breaks a little bit the atmosphere of the appearance from the outside” and the “scaffolding takes away the aesthetic of the monument... renovation is a must,” said Abdullah Yilmaz, a guide. —APP

Center for Pakistan studies
inaugurated at Shenzhen varsity

Ambassador Hashmi was also given a tour of the Shenzhen University History Museum.

DNA

BEIJING: The Center for Pakistan Studies at Shenzhen University was officially inaugurated today by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, in the presence of Mr. Mao Junfa, President of Shenzhen University, scholars, and students. The Center marks a new avenue for academic engagement between Pakistan and China, with a special focus on deepening mutual understanding through research, dialogue, and educational exchanges, particularly in the domains of new and emerging technologies. In his remarks, Ambassador Hashmi thanked the university leadership for its strong support in realizing this initiative. He underlined the growing momentum in Pakistan-China relations across all domains, especially education and research. The Ambassador noted that Shenzhen, known globally for its innovation and reform, was a fit

Musadik calls for global support
in textile waste recycling

“Pakistan has proven that circularity is possible even with limited resources—imagine what we could achieve with the right backing,” Malik said. “The world must unite for a fair and sustainable future

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Musadik Masood Malik, has underscored the critical role of the used textiles trade in combating global fashion waste, stating that millions of tons of clothing end up in landfills each year. Speaking at a high-level dissemination meeting on circularity and the used textiles trade, organized by a non-governmental organization in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Union, Minister Malik emphasized that recycling, reusing, and up cycling textiles can significantly reduce environmental harm. Minister Malik highlighted

Pakistan's growing influence in the sector, noting that used textile exports surged to \$283 million in 2024, up from \$255 million in 2023. Pakistan remains among the top three global re-exporters of second-hand clothing, accounting for nearly 60% of the country's total textile exports. Pakistani travel guides “This trade is not just commercial—it's about environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic resilience,” he said. The sector supports millions of low-income families, including 39% of Pakistanis living below the poverty line, by providing affordable clothing, especially in extreme weather. Pakistan has demonstrated exceptional efficiency in textile waste manage-

ment, with less than 1% of imported used textiles ending up in landfills. Faisalabad's processing over 85% of the country's textile waste. Recyclers handling 1,000 to 3,000 tons annually. “Despite limited resources, Pakistan has turned waste into resources, making a substantial contribution to global climate action” Malik stated. However, the minister raised concerns over post-COVID challenges, including an influx of textile waste disguised as second-hand goods. He stressed the need for globally accepted criteria to differentiate between usable textiles and waste, urging international regulatory cooperation. The Ministry of Climate Change is drafting Paki-

stan's first National Circular Economy Policy, aiming to shift industries toward sustainable practices. The used textiles sector is being recognized as a national success story in this transition. Minister Malik called on the European Union to acknowledge Pakistan's role in managing Global North-generated textile waste—done without recycling fees or financial support. “While policies like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) are important, incentives must accompany regulation,” he said. “Pakistan is providing an **environmental service to the world—this deserves recognition and support.”

EU lists seven ‘safe’
countries of origin,
tightening asylum rules

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Wednesday published a list of seven countries it considers “safe,” in a bid to speed up migrant returns by making it harder for citizens of those nations to claim asylum in the bloc. The European Commission said it was proposing to designate Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Kosovo, Bangladesh, Colombia, and India as “safe countries of origin.” The move, criticized by rights groups, is set to allow EU governments to process asylum applications filed from citizens of those countries more quickly — by introducing a presumption that such claims lack merit. “Many member states are facing a significant backlog of asylum applications, so anything we can do now to support faster asylum decisions is essential,” said Magnus Brunner, the EU's commissioner for migration. Brussels has been under pressure to clamp down on irregular arrivals and facilitate deportations, following a souring of public opinion on migration that has fueled hard-right electoral gains in several countries. On Wednesday, the commission said EU candidate nations would also in principle meet the criteria to be designated as safe countries. But it also laid out exceptions, including when they are hit by a conflict — something that would for example exclude Ukraine. The EU had already presented a similar list in 2015 but the plan was abandoned due to heated debates over whether or not to include Turkey, another candidate for membership. The list published Wednesday can be expanded or reviewed over time and was drawn up looking at nations from which a significant number of applicants currently come, the commission said. Several member states already designate countries they deem “safe” with regard to asylum — France's list for instance includes Mongolia, Serbia and Cape Verde. —APP

Xi's Malaysia
visit to
deepen ties,
enhance trust

KUALA LUMPUR: Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived here at dusk on Tuesday for a state visit to Malaysia. Xi was warmly welcomed by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. In a written statement released upon his arrival, Xi expressed the hope for fruitful outcomes from the visit that would usher in a new “Golden 50 Years” for bilateral relations. The two countries celebrated the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2024. In 2023, Xi met with Anwar in Beijing, where the two sides agreed to jointly build a China-Malaysia community with a shared future. Malaysia is the second leg of Xi's ongoing tour of Southeast Asia, which will also take him to Cambodia later this week. The visit is his second trip to Malaysia as the Chinese head of state. During the visit, Xi will discuss with Malaysian King Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar and Prime Minister Anwar bilateral relations, as well as international and regional issues of common concern. —APP

Highly attended
‘Pakistan Day’
reception hosted in
Ankara

ANKARA : The Embassy of Pakistan in Ankara hosted a grand reception to commemorate the 85th National Day of Pakistan. The event was graced by the presence of H.E. Numan Kurtulmuş, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye as a chief guest.

The event was attended by H.E. Yasar Güler, Minister of National Defence, H.E. Prof. Dr. Ömer Bolat, Minister of Trade, former Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, former Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc, Chief of Turkish General Staff General Metin Gurak, Turkish Land Forces Commander General Selçuk Bayraktaroglu, Commander Turkish Air Force General Ziya Cemal Kadioglu, Commander Turkish Naval Forces Admiral Ercument Tatlioglu, former Minister Agriculture Mehmet Mehdi Eker, Member of Turkish Parliament Derya Yanik, Chairman Saadet Party MP Mahmut Arkan, MP Burhan Kayaturk, Chairman Pakistan-Türkiye Parliamentary Friendship Group MP Ali Sahin, Deputy Foreign Minister Ayse Berris Ekinci, President Secretariat of Defence Industries (SSB) Prof Haluk Gorgun, Former President SSB Ismail Demir, Members of Parliament, several deputy ministers as well as high-ranking Turkish civil and military officials, ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, academia, Pakistani community, and media representatives. Ambassador of Pakistan to Türkiye, Dr. Yousaf Junaid, welcomed the dignitaries and guests, and reflected on the significance of Pakistan Day, marking the adoption of the Lahore Resolution in 1940, which laid the foundation for an independent homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent. He paid tribute to the visionary leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the intellectual contributions of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Allama Iqbal. —APP

Haroon for
institutional
reforms to
enhance skill
training

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday called for skilled training and institutional reforms to meet modern challenges and to enhance productivity to achieve sustainable economic growth. During a detailed briefing at the Pakistan Institute of Management (PIM), the special assistant highlighted the critical role of management and marketing courses in strengthening professional, said a news release. In line with the Prime Minister's vision, skilled individuals play a pivotal role in the development of the country. He further emphasized that the presence of experienced professionals in training institutes is essential for producing high-quality trainees and underscored the need for the younger generation to learn accounting, marketing, and finance to meet modern-day challenges. —APP

Pak, UAE sign
MoU for 2nd Date
Palm festival

ABU DHABI: In a significant step towards strengthening agricultural ties between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed for the Second Pakistan International Date Palm Festival 2025, set to be held later this year in Pakistan. The agreement was signed by Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, and Professor and General Secretary of the Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation Dr. Abdelouahhab Zaid here on the sidelines of the grand ceremony of the 17th Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation at the Emirates Palace on Wednesday. The event, held under the patronage of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister, honored global leaders in agricultural innovation, including Pakistani scientist Dr. Ghulam Sarwar Markhand who received the prestigious award in the “Influential Figure” category. Rana Tanveer Hussain appreciated the UAE's visionary leadership in promoting sustainable agriculture and fostering international partnerships. He emphasized the strong bilateral ties between Pakistan and the UAE, particularly in agricultural research and innovation. “The Khalifa International Award is a beacon of excellence in agricultural advancement, and Pakistan takes great pride in Dr. Markhand's recognition,” said Minister Hussain. “This achievement reflects Pakistan's commitment to scientific research and sustainable farming, aligning with global efforts to combat food security challenges and climate change.” Sheikh Nahayan Mabararak Al Nahayan recognized several national and international figures for their outstanding contributions to the growth and progress of the date palm cultivation and production sector. —DNA

Malnourished kids in Afghanistan at
‘high risk of dying’ without US aid

“This is a country that's been through so many shocks,” the World Health Organization representative in Afghanistan, Edwin Ceniza Salvador, told AFP. “So with a fragile system, even basic care of screening, those are even not there,” he said, underscoring that “of course the most vulnerable are the most affected”

KABUL: At a malnutrition treatment centre in Afghanistan's capital, the cries of children have given way to a heavy silence, as patients are turned away and medical staff laid off due to US aid cuts. Entirely funded by Washington, the project had to shut down when the United States — until recently the largest aid donor in Afghanistan — froze all foreign assistance. The many children who would have come to the centre won't be treated now, said Cobi Rietveld, country director for the non-governmental organisation Action Against Hunger (ACF), which manages the clinic in the west of Kabul. “If they don't get treatment, there's an extreme high risk of dying,” she told AFP. Without new funding, the stuffed animals, toys and baby bottles were put away and the pharmacy locked when the last patient left in March. “When malnourished patients come to our clinic, it's a big challenge for our staff to explain the situation to them and to tell them that they need to go elsewhere for proper treatment,” said chief doctor Farid Ahmad Barakzai. After four decades of war and crises, Afghanistan faces the second-largest humanitarian crisis in the world, behind war-torn Sudan, according to the UN. On average, 65 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition with complications were treated at the clinic every month. They stay there for several days with their mothers not only to be fed but to prevent them from spiralling into illness. “Every infection a child can get, a malnourished child will get as well, with an increased risk of dying,” said Rietveld. It's “painful” for the staff, finishing their last days of work, Rietveld added, because “they have to send them somewhere else where they don't have the same specialized treatment”. Child malnutrition in Afghanistan, where 45 percent of the population is under 14 years old, is one of the most significant challenges because it affects entire generations in the long term. Some 3.5 million children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition and the country has one of the highest rates of stunting in the world, according to the UN. Adults are also affected: 15 million Afghans are currently food insecure, including 3.1 million who are already on the brink of famine. Last week, the World Food Programme said the United States had ended funding for its work in Afghanistan, having gone back on cuts to other countries. “This is a country that's been through so many shocks,” the World Health Organization representative in Afghanistan, Edwin Ceniza Salvador, told AFP. “So with a fragile system, even basic care of screening, those are even not there,” he said, underscoring that “of course the most vulnerable are the most affected”. —DNA

WHO countries agree to landmark
deal on tackling future pandemics

GENEVA: Years of negotiations culminated early Wednesday with countries agreeing the text of a landmark accord on how to tackle future pandemics, aimed at avoiding the mistakes made during the Covid-19 crisis. After more than three years of talks and one last marathon session, weary delegates at the World Health Organization's headquarters finally sealed the deal at around 2:00 am (0000 GMT) Wednesday. “Tonight marks a significant milestone in our shared journey toward a safer world,” said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Five years after the emergence of Covid-19, which killed millions of people, devastated economies and upturned health systems, a sense of urgency hung over the talks, with new threats lurking — including H5N1 bird flu, measles, mpox and Ebola. The final stretch

of the talks also took place under the shadow of cuts to US foreign aid spending and threatened tariffs on pharmaceuticals. Right until the last minute, disagreement lingered over a few thorny issues. Negotiators stumbled over the agreement's Article 11, which deals with transferring technology for pandemic health products toward developing nations. During the Covid-19 pandemic, poorer states accused rich nations of hoarding vaccines and tests. Countries with large pharmaceutical industries have strenuously opposed the idea of mandatory tech transfers, insisting they must be voluntary. But it appeared the obstacle could be overcome by adding that any transfer needed to be “mutually agreed.” The core of the agreement is a proposed Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System (PABS), aimed at allowing the swift sharing of pathogen data with pharmaceutical companies, enabling them

to quickly start working on pandemic-fighting products. In the end, the 32-page agreement was entirely highlighted in green, indicating all of it had been fully approved by WHO member states. “It's adopted,” negotiations co-chair Anne-Claire Amprou announced, to thunderous applause. “In drafting this historic agreement, the countries of the world have demonstrated their shared commitment to preventing and protecting everyone, everywhere, from future pandemic threats.” The finalized text will now be presented for sign-off at the WHO's annual assembly next month. Congratulations quickly poured in. “Excellent news from Geneva,” European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen said on X. “We have learnt the lessons of COVID. To beat a pandemic, you need tests, treatments and vaccines. And you equally need solidarity and global cooperation.” The EU had led the charge arguing

for flexibility and voluntary measures in the text. The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA), which participated in the talks, had also taken that stance. Looking ahead toward implementation, the leading pharma lobby said intellectual property and legal certainty would be essential for encouraging investment in high-risk research and development in the next crisis. “The pandemic agreement is a starting point,” insisted IFPMA chief David Reddy. Developing countries and NGOs also hailed the agreement, while acknowledging that not all of their ambitions were met. “While the process may not have yielded all the outcomes we aspired for, it has opened an important avenue for future collaboration,” Tanzania's representative told the gathering, speaking on behalf of dozens of African countries. As

intense talks in corridors and closed rooms drew toward an end late Tuesday, Tedros told reporters he thought a deal would bring “more equity.” While taking measures against pandemics could be costly, “the cost of inaction is much bigger,” he insisted. “Virus is the worst enemy. (It) could be worse than a war.” The United States, which has thrown the global health system into crisis by slashing foreign aid spending, was absent. US President Donald Trump ordered a withdrawal from the United Nations' health agency and from the pandemic agreement talks after taking office in January. The US absence, and Trump's threat to slap steep tariffs on pharmaceutical products, still hung over the talks, making manufacturers and governments more jittery. —Agencies

Briefs

Sh. Rashid hints at comeback

Says his experience tells the fast won't last long

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Former federal minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has said he is currently observing a "political fast" and will break it when the time is right. While speaking to the media outside the Supreme Court, the Awami Muslim League chief emphasised the importance of timing in politics, stating, "I know when to break the fast, and that moment will come." He added that the fast won't last long and remarked, "I've served as a minister 17 times, I understand timing well, and Pakistan's situation will eventually improve." Earlier, Sheikh Rashid appeared briefly at the anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi for a hearing related to the GHQ attack case. After marking his attendance, he was granted permission to leave due to a scheduled case at the Supreme Court.

PAC member claims he received threats

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A session of National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) witnessed on Wednesday serious allegations from PAC member, PTI MNA Sanaullah Masti Khel, who accused the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) of retaliatory action following his inquiries into a multibillion-rupee hydropower project. Speaking to the media following the meeting, Masti Khel said he had questioned Wapda Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Sajjad Ghani during the previous day's session about discrepancies in the Dasu hydropower project's cost. "Yesterday, chairman Wapda was asked why a project worth Rs4 billion was completed for Rs36 billion," he said, adding that he had also raised concerns about Ghani's appointment.

Gandhis charged in money laundering case

NEW DELHI: Sonia and Rahul Gandhi have been accused of laundering millions of dollars - charges they have strongly denied India's opposition Congress party has said it will organise nationwide protests on Wednesday after the country's financial crimes agency charged senior leaders Sonia and Rahul Gandhi and others with money laundering. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) presented its findings in a Delhi court on Tuesday, accusing the Gandhis of forming a shell company to illegally acquire assets of the National Herald newspaper worth more than 20bn rupees (\$233mn; £176mn). - Agencies

Govt asks SC to dismiss pleas of IHC judges in transfer case

In its response, federal govt says judges not required to take fresh oath following transfer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday submitted its response in the Supreme Court regarding the judges' seniority case, urging the apex court to dismiss all petitions challenging the appointments of judges, including those of the Islamabad High Court. "The contentions of the petitioners are denied on all counts and it is submitted that the process initiated under Article 200 for the transfer of judges from Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan High Court demonstrate and deliver transparency and in no way undermine the independence of the judiciary," the Centre said in its seven-page response - a copy of which is available with Geo News. A five-member bench, headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and comprising Justices Naeem Akhtar Afghan, Shahid Bilal Hassan, Salahuddin Panhwar, and Shakeel Ahmed took up petitions filed by five IHC judges, the Karachi Bar Association (KBA) and the IHC Bar Association, among others. In February, five judges of the IHC moved the SC against the appointment of Justice Sarfraz Dogar as the acting chief justice of IHC as well as the transfer of judges from three high courts to the capital's high court. Five IHC judges - Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan and Justice Saman Riffat Imtiaz - filed a petition in the top court under Article 184(3) of the Constitution. The IHC judges urged the apex court to declare that the president does not have

IHC orders recovery of missing brothers within two weeks

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ordered police to recover the four missing Afghan brothers within two weeks. Justice Muhammad Asif told the Islamabad police officials that he had already given enough time to law enforcers and that the court wanted results. He called petitioner Gull Seema, the mother of the four missing persons, to the dock and spoke to her in Pashto. He later translated the communication for all. He quoted the hapless woman as having said she had been visiting court since August 2024 and she should be clearly informed if her sons had died. The Islamabad DIG sought more time from court for the recovery of the missing brothers. When the petitioner's counsel pointed out that the case had been lingering for eight months, the judge asked police why the IGP didn't appear in court despite notice. The state counsel said as the case was scheduled to

unfettered and unbridled discretion to transfer judges from one high court to another, under Article 200(1) of the Constitution, without a manifest public interest, and in a manner that hampers the principles of independence of judiciary and

begin at 11am, the IGP couldn't come but the DIG, the RPO and other senior officers were present. He sought more time for submission of report. The judge responded that it's futile to give more time. "We want the missing persons," he said while allowing police to do the job within two weeks. The court adjourned the hearing till May 5. On previous hearing the IHC summoned the inspectors general of police (IGPs) of Islamabad and Punjab on the woman's plea seeking recovery of her four sons. Justice Muhammad Asif summoned the Islamabad and Punjab IGPs for April 16 to explain away their stance. The four brothers had gone missing in January 2024 and since then their mother has been moving from pillar to post to find a clue to their whereabouts. "We can realise (the gravity of the situation) only if it happens to any of us. You evade responsibility by simply expressing ignorance of any missing person's whereabouts," a visibly perturbed judge remarked (while addressing policemen).

separation of powers. The five IHC jurists also prayed the apex court to declare that in line with the settled law pronounced by the highest court in the case of Aslam Awan and Farrukh Irfan, the inter-se seniority of Respondents No 9-11 shall be determined



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Hungary Béla Fazekas called on Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. They expressed keen interest in strengthening bilateral ties and looked forward to the upcoming visit of the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Péter Szijjártó. - DNA

Pakistan ready to boost anti-narcotics Cooperation with GCC

Pakistan Makes History with First-Ever Pak-GCC Anti-Narcotics Summit to Tackle Drug Trafficking

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in history, Pakistan hosted the Pak-Gulf Cooperation Council Anti-Narcotics International Conference. The conference held in Islamabad, witnessed special participation from the heads of anti-narcotics departments of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries-Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait. Director Generals of Anti-Narcotics Forces from GCC countries also attended the conference. The participants unanimously agreed on the need for a joint strategy and collective measures to combat narcotics. Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi, warmly welcomed the high-level delega-

tions. Director General of ANF Pakistan, Major General Abdul Mueyed, extended his greetings to the DGs of Narcotics Control from the GCC nations. Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in his address at the Pak-GCC Anti-Narcotics Conference, termed it a historic initiative aimed at strengthening global cooperation against drug trafficking, fostering bilateral relations, and formulating joint cross-border strategies. He thanked the heads of delegations from the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and GCC-CICCD. He stated that the aim of the conference is to enhance international collaboration to tackle the global threat of drugs. He emphasized that this conference marks significant progress toward a drug-free world and a safer future. Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force is playing a pivotal role in eradicating drugs alongside international partners.

Hailstorm wreaks havoc in Islamabad, Khyber PK

NDMA issues warning of extreme summer, heatwaves, and wildfire risks in KP, Balochistan, Potohar, Murree

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) were pummelled by a heavy hailstorm on Wednesday afternoon, leaving a trail of destruction that included smashed car windscreens, damaged solar panels, and broken tree branches. In Islamabad, the storm hit suddenly and lasted around 35 minutes, with strong winds and large hailstones battering everything in their path. Tarnol was among the worst-affected areas, where several trees were uprooted, causing traffic disruptions. The downpour also triggered flash flooding in some low-lying parts of the capital, straining the already overwhelmed drainage systems and catching commuters off guard. Several politicians took to X to share their stormy experiences, describing the wild weather as both intense and oddly refreshing - a dramatic spell that brought a welcome break from the heat. Meanwhile, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has forecast extreme summer conditions, warning of intensifying heatwaves that could heighten the risk of wildfires in mountainous regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, the Potohar region, Murree, and nearby areas. The three-month forecast (April-June), presented to media representatives at the NEOC, indicates that cyclones are expected to form in the Arabian Sea during May and June, with potential impacts on nearby coastal areas.

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Tehran: Right to enrich uranium non-negotiable

The remarks came as Araghchi and Witkoff are due to meet again in Oman on Saturday, a week after they held the highest-level talks between the two sides since US President Donald Trump unilateral walked out of a landmark nuclear deal with Iran in 2018

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: The Iranian foreign minister says enrichment of uranium as part of the country's peaceful nuclear program is "non-negotiable," and that Tehran-Washington talks would yield no results if held under pressure and lack of mutual respect. Abbas Araghchi made the assertion on the sidelines of the Iranian administration's weekly cabinet meeting in the capital Tehran on Wednesday, after US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff said Tehran "must stop and eliminate" its nuclear enrichment program to reach a deal with Washington. The remarks came as Araghchi and Witkoff are due to meet again in Oman on Saturday, a week after they held the highest-level talks between the two sides since US President Donald Trump unilateral walked out of a landmark nuclear deal with Iran in 2018. "Iran's enrichment [program] is a real and genuine matter, and we are ready to build trust regarding potential concerns, but the issue of enrichment is non-negotiable," Araghchi told reporters. Pointing to the continuation of the so-called US pressure campaign on Iran during the negotiations, the Iranian foreign minister said, "Both our position and our actions are clear. They will not achieve anything through pressure. If the negotiation is based on an equal footing and is carried out in a respectful environment, it can

US intensifies bombing Yemen amid reports of ground invasion

Sana'a: The United States has carried out a fresh wave of airstrikes across multiple regions in Yemen, targeting various sites and infrastructure in the Arab country in the latest acts of aggression. Yemen's official Saba news agency, citing local sources speaking on condition of anonymity, reported that a US airstrike hit Mayfa'a 'Anss district in the southwestern province of Dhamar early on Wednesday. No casualties were reported. Earlier, American fighter jets carried out a series of airstrikes on Harf Sufyan district in the northwestern province of 'Amran, with no immediate reports of casualties or damage. Al Salem district in the northwestern province of Sa'ada was also hit by six airstrikes, while Kitaf wa al-Boqe'e district underwent four aerial raids. At least three airstrikes were also reported east of Sa'ada city. No immediate reports about possible casualties and the extent of the destruction have been released. An airstrike hit the Az Zahir district of the central province of al-Bayda as well. Kamaran Island in the Red Sea saw the heaviest bombardment, with at least 15 airstrikes reported by Yemeni media outlets. The reports did not specify casualties or the extent of infrastructure damage resulting from the bombardments. US strikes lay groundwork for 'ground invasion' of Yemen by UAE-backed militants. - Agencies

progress, but nothing will be achieved through pressure and imposition of their positions, and we have proven this both in our action and in positions. We will participate in the talks with complete calmness and tranquility, without being influenced by any pressure or current." Araghchi also censured the "contradictory and conflicting positions" coming out of the Trump administration ahead of Saturday's talks. "As I mentioned, during this time we have heard contradictory and

conflicting positions, and Mr. Witkoff has spoken in several ways so far; the real positions will be clarified at the negotiation table," said the top Iranian diplomat. "However, we need to be cognizant of the genuine opinions of the American side during the negotiation session. If they come with constructive positions, I am hopeful that we can begin negotiations on the framework of a potential agreement. If not, if the positions remain contradictory and conflicting, it will be difficult."

Trump raises China tariffs to 245%

US president signs executive order raising China import tariffs to 245% amid ongoing trade tensions

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed an executive order increasing tariffs on Chinese imports to 245%, citing China's retaliatory measures as the trigger for the move. The order, issued on April 15, marks a significant escalation in the ongoing US-China trade dispute. According to a White House factsheet accompanying the announcement, the tariff hike follows what the administration referred to as "Liberation Day" - the date when initial tariffs were imposed. Since that time, over 75 countries have reportedly approached the United States to negotiate new trade agreements. The document states that China, unlike other countries, responded with retaliatory tariffs, prompting the administration to take what it described as "decisive economic action." The White House maintains that the heightened levies serve both economic and national security objectives. "China's retaliatory actions left us no choice," the factsheet said, framing the order as a necessary response to unfair trade practices. - Agencies

China appoints new trade envoy

BEIJING: Li Chenggang is a former World Trade Organization and UN representative China has unexpectedly appointed a new trade envoy, as officials said the US's practice of "tariff barriers and trade bullying" is having a serious impact on the global economic order. Li Chenggang, a former assistant commerce minister and WTO ambassador, is taking over from veteran trade negotiator Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen. The shift comes as Beijing refuses to back down in an escalating trade war with Washington triggered by US President Donald Trump's hefty tariffs on Chinese goods. China's already sluggish economy is bracing for the impact on a key source of revenue - exports. Beijing announced on Wednesday its GDP grew by 5.4% between January and March, compared with the same period a year earlier. The figure has exceeded expectations but reflects the period before US tariffs jumped from 10% to 145%, and Chinese officials warned of more economic pain ahead. - Agencies