



Islamabad POST

Friday, April 25, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

China supports Iran-US indirect nuclear talks: FM

Detailed News On Page-08

At UN, Pakistan urges revival of multilateralism

Detailed News On Page-08

Shanto takes blame for test match defeat

Detailed News On Page-06



Stopping water 'act of war'

Trade, ties and flights off-limits as Pak retaliates

"The Treaty is a binding international agreement brokered by the World Bank and contains no provision for unilateral suspension"

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC), today. The participants discussed the national security environment and the regional situation, particularly in the wake of Pahalgam attack in the Anantnag District of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) on 22 April 2025. Expressing concern over the loss of tourists' lives, the Committee reviewed the Indian measures announced on 23 April 2025 and termed them unilateral, unjust, politically motivated, extremely irresponsible and devoid of legal merit. The National Security Committee made the following observations: Kashmir remains an unresolved dispute between Pakistan and India as recognized through multiple UN resolutions. Pakistan continues to support the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people. The continued Indian state oppression, abrogation of statehood, political and demographic gerrymandering, has persistently led to an organic backlash from the people of IIOJK, which perpetuates cycles of violence. India's systemic persecution of minorities, particularly Muslims, has become more pervasive. Attempts at forced passage of Waqf Bill is the latest effort to marginalize Muslims across India. India must resist the temptation to exploit such tragic incidents to its advantage and take full responsibility for its failure to provide security to the people Pakistan unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. As the world's front-line state against terrorism, Pakistan has suffered immense human and economic losses. Indian attempts to inject volatility in the environment along Pakistan's

Continued on Page 06

Pak has evidence that foreigners arrived in Srinagar with weapons

Dar urges India to share evidence of Pakistan's alleged involvement in Pahalgam attack

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar urged India on Thursday to share evidence with the global community if Pakistan was involved in the Pahalgam attack. Addressing a press conference alongside Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and other ministers, Dar said Pakistan has evidence and intelligence that some foreigners arrived in Srinagar with weapons. "Indian intelligence agencies have kept these people in Srinagar," he added. The foreign minister said the Indian spy agencies were supporting the foreigners who "are trying to export IEDs (improvised explosive devices)". The FM added Pakistan's armed forces were ready to respond to any Indian aggression. The presser came shortly after the top civil-military body — National Security Committee (NSC) — warned that any move

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting of the national Security Committee. — DNA

Indian soldier arrested on Pakistani soil

BSF soldiers reportedly strayed across international border, reports Indian media

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan Rangers on Thursday captured a soldier of the Indian Border Security Force in Punjab, according to reports on Indian media. The Indian soldier reportedly strayed into Pakistani territory when he was arrested. According to Indian media, the trooper was captured in the Ferozepur area and was identified as Constable P K Singh of the 182nd battalion of the BSF. "During the routine movement, Singh inadvertently moved beyond the Indian border fence and entered Pakistani territory, where the Pakistan Rangers detained him across the Ferozepur border," said India Today.

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Dar holds call with Uzbek counterpart

Framework agreement on Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan rail project soon: Dar

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday expressed the hope that the respective three countries would soon sign the framework agreement for Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Line Project. The project was discussed during a telephonic discussion between Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Saidov Bakhtiyor Odilovich, according to a Foreign Office press release.

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PM meets Bilawal
Govt agrees to halt construction of canals until CCI consensus

Breakthrough comes as both sides held critical talks amid escalating political tensions and widespread unrest in Sindh

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday confirmed that no new canals will be constructed unless a consensus is reached in the Council of Common Interests (CCI). "The next CCI meeting, scheduled for Friday, May 2, will officially endorse the agreement reached between the PPP and PML-N on the matter," he said, addressing a joint presser with Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in Islamabad after a key meeting. Bilawal was joined by senior PPP leaders, including Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. The meeting came against a backdrop of political turmoil and street protests. Earlier, sources said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) accepted all of the PPP's demands on the canals project during high-stakes talks between PM Shehbaz and the PPP leadership. The breakthrough came as both sides held critical talks amid escalating political tensions and widespread

Continued on Page 06

ADB announces US\$ 330 million assistance to Pak

Conditional cash transfers will be provided to support the education of children and youth, report said

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) in its annual report on Thursday announced additional assistance of US\$ 330 million for Pakistan. The funding is expected to benefit around 9.3 million people in the country. The aid will be utilized across various social security programs. Conditional cash transfers will be provided to support the education of children and youth, report said. The aim of this assistance is to ensure access to better nutrition. The initiative will benefit women,

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Zimbabwe's air chief calls on CJCSC

The visiting dignitary appreciated the high professional standards of Pakistan Armed Forces

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Air Marshal John Jacob Nzvede, Commander Air Force, Zimbabwe, who is on an official visit to Pakistan called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) at Joint Staff Headquarters Rawalpindi. During the meeting, both military leaders reaffirmed their dedication to strengthening bilateral cooperation in security and defense. CJCSC emphasized Pakistan's appreciation for its longstanding relationship with Zimbabwe, underscoring a mutual commitment to further deepening existing defence ties.

More terror attacks expected in Balochistan

Commenting on India's actions after Pahalgam, Basit says the Indus Water Treaty cancellation is largely 'symbolic'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Abdul Basit, Pakistan's former high commissioner to India (2014-2017) and ex ambassador to Germany (2012-2014), has warned that New Delhi could launch a military action against Pakistan within days after the recent attack in Pahalgam. Speaking with a Pakistani newspaper, Basit cited India's past actions after the 2016 Uri and 2019 Pulwama attacks as precedence. He said the tone of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent speech in Bihar indicated a potential cross-border strike or other tangible measures.

No legal justification

Tarar blasts India over suspension of water treaty

He said the entire world knew that India did sponsor terrorism in Pakistan and had been this tactics for its political gain. He emphasized that Pakistan was a front-line state in the fight against terrorism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday said the unilateral action of India to suspend the Indus Water Treaty had no legal justification, which denotes its disregard and ignorance of trans-boundary accord. "The statement from India about the suspension of Indus Water Treaty is childish and highly non-serious, which shows that they neither read the Indus Water Treaty nor ever tried to fathom its legal standing," the minister said while addressing a news conference along with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, and the Attorney General of Pakistan. He said Pakistan had given an appropriate response to India's hollow and shaky threats. He said bilateral trade with India was out of the question, and through any third country, it has also been suspended today, which will inflict losses on the Indian economy.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan summons Indian diplomat, hands over demarche

Pakistan warns India that its airspace now off-limits for Indian commercial flights.

DNA


ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has summoned India's acting High Commissioner Gitika Srivastava and handed over a strongly worded demarche, informing her in writing about a series of bold retaliatory decisions taken by Pakistan's National Security Committee. According to diplomatic sources, India was told that its Defence, Naval and Air Attaches have been declared persona non grata and must pack their bags and leave the country. Pakistan also decided to scale down the diplomatic ties,

Continued on Page 06

NATIONAL DAY OF BANGLADESH




ISLAMABAD: Federal Defence Minister Khwaja Muhammad Asif, High Commissioner of Bangladesh Mr Md. Iqbal Hussain Khan, Heads of Missions of the SAARC countries and others cutting cake to celebrate the 54th Independence and National Day of Bangladesh. — DNA



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Vaccination key to healthy future: CM

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has stressed the crucial role of vaccination in preventing life-threatening diseases and securing a healthy future for the province's children.

In her message on Thursday, on the occasion of World Immunization Week, she urged citizens, particularly parents, to fulfill their responsibility by ensuring their children are vaccinated on time.

"The most effective weapon to combat diseases is adopting caution, awareness, and ensuring timely vaccination," she stated. She highlighted that a vigorous and comprehensive vaccination campaign is currently underway across Punjab, targeting polio, measles, tuberculosis, hepatitis, tetanus, pneumonia, and other potentially fatal illnesses.

CM Maryam Nawaz praised the dedication of health workers, vaccinators, and vaccination teams who are reaching out to the public at their doorsteps to provide immunization services. She appealed to the public to cooperate fully with these teams for the betterment of the society.

"Vaccines are a basic need of every child and the responsibility of every parent," she stressed. "Our immunization drive is not just for individuals, but for the safety and wellbeing of families and the entire community." The Chief Minister reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to eradicating polio and ensuring that Punjab becomes a disease-free region. "Only a healthy child can grow into an educated, talented, and self-confident citizen," she concluded.—APP

Call for strategic resource uplift for economic growth

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervez Malik on Thursday visited the Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP) to review its operations and discuss strategies to enhance the country's mineral and hydrocarbon exploration potential. During the visit, senior GSP officials briefed the minister on ongoing geological surveys, mineral mapping initiatives, and mineral hunt programs aimed at identifying new reserves across Pakistan. The minister praised the organisation's recent efforts in uncovering untapped natural resources and emphasised the need to modernise exploration techniques to strengthen Pakistan's oil, gas, and mineral sectors, which are crucial to meeting the country's economic demands.

He highlighted the global shift toward critical minerals and said mining and mineral development offer opportunities beyond political lines. "This sector should be viewed through the lens of national interest to ensure that local communities and the nation as a whole benefit," he said. "The Geological Survey of Pakistan plays a pivotal role in national development by providing vital data to kick-start resource exploration," the minister said.—APP

Japan hands over sewerage upgrade project to Multan

To address these pressing issues, the Government of Japan, through JICA, has provided WASA Multan with advanced equipment under the Grant Aid project

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Akamatsu Shuichi, on Thursday formally handed over a major Grant Aid project worth 1.236 billion yen for the upgrading of sewerage and drainage services in Multan, a critical initiative for improving the city's deteriorating sanitation infrastructure. According to the Japanese embassy, the official handover ceremony was attended by Chief Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Naoaki Miyata and Managing Director of the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Multan, Khalid Raza Khan.

Multan has been grappling with frequent urban flooding and sanitation-related challenges, largely due to overburdened sewer systems caused by rapid population growth and increased waste discharge. Overflowing sewage has become a common occurrence on city roads, often leading to closures and posing serious health risks, including the spread of the polio virus, which has been detected in the city's waste water. To address these pressing issues, the Government of Japan, through JICA,



has provided WASA Multan with advanced equipment under the Grant Aid project. This includes high-pressure cleaning vehicles, sludge suction units, and drainage pumps essential for the maintenance of sewer pipes and drainage channels. WASA Multan has already begun utilizing the equipment to clean clogged sewer lines and improve the overall efficiency

of the city's drainage system. Officials say the intervention is significantly reducing sewage overflows and helping to restore hygienic conditions for local residents. Speaking at the event, Ambassador Akamatsu expressed confidence in the sustainable use of the provided resources, stating, "I hope that all the equipment installed under Japan's pro-

ject will be fully utilized in a sustainable manner and that the expertise and experience gained will benefit the people in Multan." JICA Pakistan Chief Representative Mr. Miyata added, "We hope that this project will improve the living environment for the people of Multan and contribute meaningfully to public health." The project also aligns with the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6, which will "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all." The Government of Japan and JICA reaffirmed their continued commitment to supporting Pakistan in strengthening its urban sanitation systems, especially in areas facing heightened health and environmental.

Punjab launches major initiative to monitor criminals

LAHORE: In a groundbreaking move to enhance public safety and monitor criminal elements, the Punjab Home Department decided to equip habitual offenders and individuals listed under the Fourth Schedule with electronic tracking devices. The initiative was finalized during a high-level meeting chaired by Punjab Home Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mengal. The meeting was attended by Special Secretary Interior Fazal-ur-Rehman, Additional IG Crime Control Department Sohail Zafar Chattha, DIG Operations Punjab Waqas Nazir, Additional Secretary Police Dr. Zeeshan Hanif and representatives from the law and finance departments. Under the new plan, 1,500 tracking bands will initially be distributed among three key departments: Crime Control Department (500 bands), Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) (900 bands), Parole Department (100 bands). These GPS-enabled bands will allow 24/7 surveillance of the movements of the individuals wearing them. The devices aim to ensure closer monitoring of those with a history of criminal activity, particularly those deemed a threat to public safety or national security.—APP

CM, U.S envoy discuss mutual cooperation

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah met with U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker to discuss mutual cooperation between the United States and the Sindh government, emphasising climate change and its impact. The meeting was held here at CM House and attended by U.S. Consul General Scott Oberum, Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Haider Shah, Principal Secretary Agha Wasif and other senior officials.

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and Natalie Baker exchanged views on various bilateral matters, including agricultural development and the use of modern farming technologies. They also explored collaboration in education, healthcare, and investment, with both sides underscoring the need for

joint measures to address environmental challenges.

The rehabilitation of flood-affected communities and the reconstruction of homes were key points of discussion. Murad Ali Shah stated that his government is building 2.1 million homes for flood victims and has granted them ownership rights.

Natalie Baker expressed satisfaction with the developmental efforts of the Sindh government and assured continued U.S. support and cooperation. Murad Shah thanked the U.S. government for its assistance and reiterated his commitment to further strengthening bilateral ties. The meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, with both sides agreeing to enhance mutual relations. Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah held a meeting with a high-level delegation from

the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), led by Regional Director Dr. Walid Abdelwahab and the discussion focused on two key projects: the Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project (SFEHRP) and the Sindh Integrated Health and Women Empowerment Project, both of which involve collaboration with the World Bank.

The meeting took place at CM House and included Chief Secretary Asif Haider Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, and CEO SPHF Khalid Shaikh. The IsDB delegation included Country Manager Ishfaq Akbar and IsDB Pakistan Representative Muhammad Alio Yazdai, among others. The Chief Minister welcomed Dr. Abdelwahab and expressed gratitude for the IsDB's support in

rebuilding homes for the flood-affected population. The IsDB is financing \$200 million for the reconstruction of houses for those affected by the flooding. The Chief Minister stated that Sindh government, in partnership with international collaborators and NGOs, is actively implementing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) projects in various districts to improve public health, particularly in flood-affected and underserved communities. In response to the Chief Minister's request, the IsDB agreed to provide additional support for the WASH project.

Murad Shah emphasised that the SFEHRP and WASH projects have been designed to enable owner-driven, multi-hazard resilient reconstruction of core housing units following the 2022 floods.

Govt to support provinces in tackling climate change

DNA

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Climate Change Musaddiq Malik said on Thursday that the federal government will support provinces in their efforts to address environmental and climate challenges. Speaking to the media after a meeting with Sindh's Climate Change Minister Dost Ali Rahimoon at his office, Musaddiq Malik explained that climate change is a devolved subject, so the provinces will lead while the federal government will help coordinate and build their capacity.

He noted that the world's top ten polluting countries are responsible for most of the carbon emissions, while countries like Pakistan suffer the consequences. Musaddiq Malik pointed out that large portions of global green funds are going to countries that are major carbon emitters themselves. He added that during the meeting, it was decided to highlight Sindh's urgent climate-related projects at the international level. Musaddiq Malik also mentioned that Pakistan emitted 40% less carbon than the allowed limit, and the Prime Minister has instructed him

to work closely with all provinces and provide full support for climate resilience.

He stressed that although Pakistan is affected by others' emissions, the country won't just focus on the problem but also work on solutions. He said that environmental projects will be organized into clusters, and the youth's skills will be used effectively. Sindh Minister Dost Ali Rahimoon also expressed gratitude to the federal government for its coordination and agreed that Pakistan is among the worst affected by climate change due to emissions from other nations.

8th Mpox case confirmed in KP

PESHAWAR: The Public Health Section of the KP Health Department has confirmed the 8th case of Mpox in the province. According to the department, a 31-year-old male was screened at Peshawar Airport while departing for Dubai. Upon suspicion, his samples were sent to the Public Health Reference Lab at Khyber Medical University (KMU), where the presence of the Mpox virus was confirmed. The patient reportedly arrived in Pakistan on April 16. Following the confirmation, the Health Department has issued an official directive to the District Health Officer (DHO) Khyber for immediate surveillance and contact tracing. The patient has been shifted to the isolation ward at Police Services Hospital, Peshawar, to prevent further transmission.—DNA

UNICEF assures support for Pakistan's health sector

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to deepen cooperation between the Government of Pakistan and UNICEF, aiming to build a more resilient and inclusive healthcare system for all

ISLAMABAD: UNICEF Representative Abdullah Fadiel on Thursday assured to further strengthen collaboration with Pakistan in health sector. During meeting with Federal Minister for Health, different options were discussed to enhance collaborative efforts in key health areas across the country. Fadiel briefed the minister on UNICEF's ongoing initiatives in Pakistan, particularly in the fields of immunization, nutrition, and digital health. They discussed avenues to further strengthen cooperation in these areas, especially in enhancing preparedness for health emergencies. Minister Kamal highlighted the significant burden on tertiary hospitals due to the lack of functional referral systems and insufficient primary healthcare centers. He emphasized that tele-medicine was the only viable solution to reduce this load, enabling timely medical advice and services to reach remote communities. "The day is not far when every citizen will have access to doctors and essential medicines at their doorstep," the Minister said. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services across the country. The minister also shared updates on the government's work toward a comprehensive national policy for securing patients' medical records. In collaboration with NADRA, the new system will link each citizen's Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) with a unique Medical Record (MR) number, streamlining health data management nationwide. "Our mission is rooted in compassion," said Minister Kamal. "We are dealing with Allah's beloved creation. When people are in pain, they turn to us—and we are doing everything possible to ease their suffering." The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to deepen cooperation between the Government of Pakistan and UNICEF, aiming to build a more resilient and inclusive healthcare system for all.—DNA

Pahalgam attack, subsequent Indian actions part of recurring strategy, not isolated incident

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pahalgam incident and India's subsequent unilateral measures did not happen in isolation but as part of a deliberate and recurring strategy to reshape regional dynamics to Pakistan's detriment. The timing of the incident, its historical parallels, and the swift, coordinated media campaign that followed signal a calculated move by India. This intent is further reflected in actions taken without evidence or identified perpetrators, such as suspending the Indus Waters Treaty and closing the Attari border. To respond effectively, Pakistan must pursue a strategic, measured, and resolute approach, reaffirming its principled stance, countering disinformation with facts, exposing the underlying motives behind such orchestrated violence, and engaging international partners. This was observed by a

panel of strategy analysts, defense experts, and policy scholars during a session, 'The Pahalgam Attack: Dissecting the Motives and Strategic Fallout,' organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session was addressed by Dr Asma Shakir Khawaja, executive director Center for International Strategic Studies, AJK, Sheikh Waleed Rasool,

director Institute of Multi-Track Dialogue Development & Diplomatic Studies, Dr Nauman Sattar, visiting faculty, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies (DSS), Quaid e Azam University, Said Nazir, defense and strategy expert, veteran journalist Iftekhar Gilani, Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, and Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman

IPS. Dr Asma Khawaja stated that the incident was not accidental but a "calculated move aimed at giving a communal color to the Kashmir issue." She further noted that such incidents often coincide with high-profile foreign visits in India to deflect global attention. She emphasized the need to recognize the role of hyper-nationalism under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, warning that such acts are part of a broader strategy to exploit Islamophobia and destabilize Pakistan's regional standing. Endorsing this, Sheikh Waleed pointed to the historical sensitivity of Pahalgam and drew attention to the Ajit Doval doctrine, which emphasizes targeting state actors. He highlighted the repetition of timing, motive, and beneficiary in such episodes. "This is not an isolated incident. It is a multidimensional strategy, part of a larger pattern, and must be seen through the lens of global and regional dynamics," he said.





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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
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- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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- Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
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- RGH.....9290301-7
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- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Progress without full gender inclusion impossible: Shaza

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, she said, distributed 1.2 million laptops among the youth during his various tenures, she said adding the IT Ministry provided online freelancing training to 4.5 million people through DG Skills Programs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said that technological advancement and national progress cannot be achieved without full gender inclusion. "The role of the Universal Service Fund (USF) in promoting Pakistan's IT industry is significant. By connecting remote areas to the digital world, USF has empowered women, startups, freelancers, and social media influencers to tap into new opportunities, driving economic growth and innovation" she expressed these views while addressing an event "Girls in ICT for Inclusive Digital Transformation," organized by USF in collaboration with Jazz in connection with International Girls in ICT Day 2025. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, she said, distributed 1.2 million laptops among the youth during his various tenures, she said adding the IT Ministry provided online freelancing training to 4.5 million people through DG Skills Programs. The ceremony was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of IT & Telecom, Parliamentary Secretary for IT



& Telecom Sabeen Ghori, MNA Sharmila Faruqi, CEO USF Ch. Mudassar Naveed along with other officials, CEO Mobilink Microfinance Bank Haaris Mahmood, GSMA Country Lead Saira Faisal, representatives from academia, and prominent women entrepreneurs from the telecom and IT sectors. Shaza said that, as a Pakistani woman, she has witnessed firsthand the transformative power technology can have in a young woman's life. She was of the view that over the past years, empowering women in technology has moved from aspiration to action in Pakistan. She has been

support, safeguards, and scales the ambitions of women in tech. From broadband expansion and safe online spaces to startup incubation and digital skills, every initiative is designed with inclusion in mind. Highlighting the National Broadband Initiatives, she said that since its inception, USF has awarded 161 projects, deployed broadband in over 21,600 mauzas, served a population base of 37.1 million people, and contracted over 4,400 telecom sites—of which more than 4,100 are already deployed. Across the country, 17,200 kilometres of Fiber Optic Cable (OFC) now run through previously unserved districts, touching more than 1,000 towns and Union Councils—connecting them to the national grid of opportunity. Women and girls in many of these areas are going online for the first time—to study, work, and lead. "This year, the Prime Minister has provided funds of Rs. 23 billion to the USF. The Ministry IT will continue to lead this journey with inclusivity at its core. "However, we need all of you—as mentors, investors, role models, and allies—to accelerate this momentum," Shaza said. Earlier, in his welcome address, CEO Universal Service

Fund, Ch. Mudassar Naveed, said it is an honour to join in celebrating International Girls in ICT Day 2025—a day marked globally under the auspices of the ITU since 2011, dedicated to encouraging girls and young women to explore careers in technology and STEM. This occasion reminds us of that inclusive digital transformation is not just a vision but a necessity. CEO Mudassar Naveed added that as an organization, USF is committed to connecting the unconnected. The mandate is simple yet powerful: to expand high-speed telecom infrastructure to the farthest and most underserved regions of Pakistan. When a new village comes online through a USF-funded OFC network or mobile tower, a girl gains access to the world. She can now stream a tutorial, join an online class, or connect to a global community. This is where transformation begins. Universal Service Fund (USF) Upcoming Initiatives, Chief Executive Chaudhry Mudassar said that USF had not started any new project for the last 2 years, which was because, on one hand, our focus was on timely completion of ongoing projects, while on the other hand, our goal was to complete field and technical work for new projects as per the directions of the Federal Minister for IT and the Board of Directors.

Pahalgam incident exposes India badly before world: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD: Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik's wife Mushaal Mulick here on Thursday said that after the false flag incident by Indian security forces in Pahalgam badly exposed at international level Addressing at a press conference, she said that India is committing terrorism on the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) and it has unilaterally broken it, suspending the Indus Waters Treaty is condemnable, India has prepared a terrible plan for the Pahalgam false flag operation, said a press release. Mushaal Mulick said that Pahalgam incident was carried out by the Indian intelligence agency 'RAW', the Modi government wants to start a war using an excuse, the Indian initiative threatens the peace of the region, minorities including Muslims and Sikhs are not safe in India, the worst human rights violations are continuing in occupied Kashmir, the United Nations and the international community should raise their voice against Indian bigotry. Mushaal Mulick further said that the Pahalgam incident was carried out by the Indian agency 'RAW', before that, Pathankot and other incidents were also carried out by Indian agencies as in the past including Jaffer Express and Gujarat incidents, India has been involved in all of them.—APP

Islamabad IT Park to boost tech industry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Information Technology Park is set to be inaugurated on August 14, offering purpose-built facilities for tech startups, freelancers, and export-oriented software companies, an official from the Ministry of IT said. Spanning 66,893 square meters, the state-of-the-art park will comprise two basements, a ground floor, and nine

upper floors. It is designed to accommodate 120 office spaces for IT and IT-enabled service (ITeS) companies, as well as a startup incubation center with 15 dedicated offices. The official added that the park will feature a business support center providing legal, marketing, and financial advisory services. It will also host an industry-academia linkage center to promote collaboration between educational institutions and the IT sector, and a Tier III Data Center—Pakistan's first of its kind—to ensure

uninterrupted power and data security. "This will be one of the highest standard data centers in the country and a significant milestone for Pakistan's IT infrastructure," the official said. He said that the park would serve as a platform for fostering cooperation among local and international academia, researchers, industry professionals, and policymakers. In addition to the Islamabad facility, a similar IT park is planned near Karachi airport. The initiative aims to improve workspace availability and

supporting infrastructure for IT and ITeS firms, while also boosting the industry's growth. According to the ministry official, both parks will help bridge the infrastructure gap in the IT sector, promote technology transfer, facilitate research and development, support the commercialization of innovation, and strengthen links between higher education and the production sector. These developments are also expected to enhance Pakistan's IT exports and global competitiveness.

CDA dismisses rumours of water shortage

He urged residents to ignore rumors and avoid water wastage, particularly for car or floor washing, with warnings of "strict action and heavy fines" for violations

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad's water reserves are sufficient until July, and monsoon rains are expected to replenish supplies further, Director General Water CDA Sardar Khan Zimri confirmed on Thursday. Talking to APP, Zimri dismissed rumours circulating in some sections of social media platforms of shortages as "false and baseless," assuring residents of continued chlorinated water supply. "Alhamdulillah, water reservoirs are currently stocked, and chlorine supplies are ample under the existing contract for the next six months," the DG stated. Laboratory staff conduct daily water quality tests to ensure safety. Of the city's 200 tube wells, 180-185 are operational, with repairs underway for the remaining. "Tube well maintenance is routine, and contractors have already begun restoration work," he said. Meanwhile, 15-18 of Islamabad's 30 water tankers remain active daily, though staff shortages are being addressed. The water management CDA receives 200-250 complaints daily, which are "resolved promptly." Zimri noted, stating most sectors receive normal supply, low pressure occasionally occurs due to pipeline repairs. He urged residents to ignore rumors and avoid water wastage, particularly for car or floor washing, with warnings of "strict action and heavy fines" for violations.—DNA

ANF arrests 9 smugglers with 45 kg of drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting eight operations across the country, recovered as many as 45 kg of hashish worth more than Rs 10 million and arrested nine suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday. He informed that 14 kg and 400 grams of hashish were recovered from a resident of Charsadda near Hayatabad Chowk, phase 3, Peshawar, tactfully hidden in the secret compartment of a Suzuki pickup. As much as 100 grams of ice was recovered from a suspect around a private university area, near Kakpul Sihala Road, Islamabad. In another operation, 2 kg of ice, 2 kg of hashish and 1 kg of heroin were recovered from a rickshaw during an operation near Sangjani Toll Plaza, Islamabad. Similarly, 18 grams of weed were recovered from a parcel sent from Birmingham to Kotli at the Rawalpindi Courier Office, and two suspects were arrested, residents of Peshawar and Khyber areas. During an operation at Karachi International Airport, 976 grams of heroin were recovered from the trolley bag of a passenger going to Bahrain. As much as 12 kg of hashish was recovered from two suspects, residents of Quetta, on a tip-off near Gadani RCD Road. During an operation near Chaman Chaman-Pak-Afghan border, 530 grams of heroin and 610 grams of ice were recovered from a suspect, resident of Chaman. As much as 11 kg of ice was recovered from a suspect, a resident of Jacobabad, during an operation near Quetta Baleli Road. The aforementioned drugs were recovered from the fuel tank of the car. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and an investigation has been initiated.—DNA

Cinema's decline Audiences flock to LEDs, mobiles for movie magic

ISLAMABAD: The traditional cinema experience was losing its charm, with audiences increasingly turning to LEDs and mobile screens to catch their favorite films. Gone were the days of crowded theaters and the big screen's mesmerizing appeal. This shift in viewer preferences had sparked concerns about the future of cinema in the country, with the industry facing a significant challenge as audiences turn away from traditional cinema halls. At the heart of this change was the rise of affordable smartphones and LEDs, which has dramatically altered the way people consume entertainment. With the ability to stream movies and TV shows at their convenience, audiences were no longer bound by the constraints of cinema schedules. This newfound flexibility has made home viewing a more attractive option, contributing to the decline of traditional cinema's appeal. Film Enthusiast Sohail Khan said people prefer watching movies on their own terms, without the hassle of theater timings and crowds. He said "I prefer watching movies on my mobile; it's convenient and cozy. He said the rise of affordable smartphones and LEDs has dramatically altered the way people consume entertainment. "With the ability to stream movies and TV shows at their convenience, audiences are no longer bound by the constraints of cinema schedules," he stated. Another film buff Ihsan Sikander said LEDs offer a better viewing experience but cinemas are still overpriced. "Why would I want to spend money on expensive cinema tickets when I can watch the same movie from the comfort of my home", he added He said "Cinema halls need to revamp their offerings to compete with home entertainment". Cinema owner Mukhtar Baig said "The decline of traditional cinemas is linked to the rise of streaming services and affordable smartphones adding that theaters must adapt to changing viewer habits and offer unique experiences." He said this shift in viewer preferences has sparked concerns about the future of cinema in the country.—DNA

VC AIOU stresses for early childhood education

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has underscored the importance of a balanced approach to early childhood education, highlighting that learning should not be confined to academic assessments alone. He stressed that equal attention must be paid to children's social, emotional, and psychological development to build a solid foundation for their future. He made these remarks during the closing session of a seminar titled "Foundational Learning Assessment in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities" held at AIOU. Dr. Mahmood advocated for the creation of an "enabling environment" in schools, stating that educational reforms must go beyond academics to help nurture well-rounded, responsible citizens. "Today's children are tomorrow's architects," he said, "and their holistic development is essential for a brighter national future." The seminar was jointly organized by Allama Iqbal Open University and the Pakistan Institute of Education. The event aimed to evaluate the current landscape of foundational learning in Pakistan, identify key challenges, and explore avenues for improvement. During the opening session, Director General of the Pakistan Institute of Education, Dr. Muhammad Shahid Surayya, presented the National Education Assessment Report.—APP

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Briefs

Police nab PO in triple murder case

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Sihala Police Station team on Thursday apprehended a proclaimed offender wanted by Jhelum Police in connection with a triple murder case. An official told media that the wanted criminal, Ehtesham-ul-Haq, was arrested during a targeted operation conducted by SHO Sihala Police Station along with his team. He said the accused was found in possession of one SMG, a .30 bore pistol, a large quantity of ammunition, cash, and a dagger at the time of arrest. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police, Muhammad Jawad Tariq, appreciated SP Sawan Zone Peri Gul Tareen and the entire police team for their successful operation in capturing the high-profile fugitive. He said the accused would be challenged in court based on solid evidence and brought to justice accordingly.—APP

IRSA releases 107,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 107,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 131,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1431.77 feet which was 29.77 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 38,500 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1126.70 feet, which was 76.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.—APP

Pakistan, Türkiye boost Economic, strategic ties

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, expressed on Thursday that the economic and strategic ties between Pakistan and Türkiye are becoming increasingly robust. He commended the current government for fostering improved relations between the two countries, stating that this benefits both nations. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan and Türkiye have a long-standing bond based on shared history, culture, and religion. The partnership is expanding globally as they work together more closely in international matters. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is eager to boost trade with Türkiye. He aims to increase the current trade volume to \$5 billion in the coming years, and the business community unconditionally supports this goal.

Palestine envoy praises business community for supporting Gazans

RCCI organizes solidarity walk for Gaza

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) held a powerful Solidarity Walk to express unwavering support for the people of Gaza and Palestine amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The walk was graced by the presence of His Excellency Dr. Zuhair Zaid, Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, and Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi. Starting from the RCCI building and concluding at the Gymkhana Club, the walk saw a large turnout of members of the business community, civil society, chamber officials, and the general public. Participants carried Palestinian flags, banners, symbolic coffins, and chanted slogans condemning Israeli aggression. Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi echoed strong sentiments for Palestine and people of Gaza, emphasizing Pakistan's Government firm stance on the issue and supporting the business community's efforts in raising awareness and aid. In his address, Dr. Zuhair Zaid



praised the overwhelming support from Pakistan and the business community, saying, "Thousands of Palestinians

have been martyred by Israeli brutality. Pakistan's unwavering solidarity is commendable." He called for urgent

Muslim unity, urging the Islamic world to "become the voice of the oppressed." RCCI President Usman Shaukat extended a heart-

felt welcome to the dignitaries and expressed deep concern over the atrocities being committed in Gaza. "We strongly condemn the ongoing violence and demand immediate international intervention," he said. Group Leader Sohail Altaf emphasized the collective responsibility of the Muslim Ummah and lauded the generous contributions to the RCCI Palestine Fund. "It is time to act – not just with words but with meaningful efforts to help our Palestinian brothers and sisters." Speakers including former presidents reiterated the call for unity. "The Muslim Ummah is like one body – when one part suffers, the entire body feels the pain. We must rise together against this brutality." Trade representatives also announced a nationwide strike by Pakistani traders on April 26 to show solidarity with Palestine and urged a complete boycott of Israeli products, calling it a religious duty for all Muslims. The event was attended by MPA and Parliamentary Secretary Punjab Ms Rizwana Shahid, women entrepreneurs, trader representatives, and civil society leaders – all united in a shared message of peace, justice, and solidarity.

Pakistan shines on global stage

ISLAMABAD: The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has officially announced the election of Sahibzad Khan as the Vice President of Regional Association II (Asia) during its 18th Session. This prestigious appointment was made during the recent session of the WMO Regional Association II, reflecting the international community's recognition of Sahibzad Khan's leadership, technical expertise, and commitment to advancing meteorological services across the Asian region. His election is a testament to the global recognition of Pakistan's contributions to regional meteorological cooperation and its dedication to addressing climate vulnerabilities in Asia. Sahibzad Khan, Permanent Representative of Pakistan with the WMO, brings to the role a wealth of experience in meteorology, climate science, and disaster risk reduction. Under his leadership, Pakistan has significantly advanced its early warning systems, integrated climate services, and regional collaborations aimed at enhancing resilience to extreme weather and climate-related hazards.—APP

Pakistan earns \$2.482b from IT services

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$2.482 billion by exporting different Information Technology (IT) services in various countries during the first eight months of the current fiscal year 2024-25. This shows a growth of 25.51 percent as compared with the US \$ 1.977 billion earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2023-24, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the computer services grew by 30.47 percent as it surged from US \$1.616 billion last year to US \$2.109 billion during July-February 2024-25. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 33.91 percent, from US \$544.445 million to US \$729.065 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services witnessed a decrease of 20.74 percent, from US \$4.809 million to US \$3.812 million. The export and imports of computer software services decreased by 4.98 percent, from \$407.963 million to \$387.658 million whereas the exports of other computer services witnessed a growth of 50.11 percent from US \$657.986 million to US \$987.677 million.—DNA

Pahalgam attack is Indian conspiracy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, on Thursday strongly condemned the recent terrorist attack in the Pahalgam region of Indian-occupied Kashmir, calling it a part of India's malicious strategy. He stated that India's attempt to blame Pakistan for the incident would not succeed and emphasized that the country's business community firmly

stands behind its armed forces. During an emergency meeting with traders, Shahid Rasheed Butt accused India of orchestrating the attack to deflect attention from its internal turmoil. He noted that blaming Pakistan without evidence is a recurring tactic used by Indian authorities. "India has a history of staging attacks on its own soil and pointing fingers at Pakistan," he said. "The timing of the Pahalgam incident seems deliberately chosen to gain maximum impact and isolate Pakistan on the global stage." He also criticized India for unilaterally suspending

the Indus Waters Treaty, calling it "water terrorism" and a violation of international agreements. Mr. Butt warned that any adventurous missteps by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi would come at a heavy price. "Our armed forces are fully prepared to handle any situation, and the people of Pakistan are united in their support," he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt highlighted that the BJP-led Indian government is playing the religious card to further marginalize Muslims in India. "Using terrorism as a tool to strengthen nationalist propaganda not only endangers regional

peace but worsens the plight of Indian minorities," he stated. He further accused India of carrying out assassinations of Sikh leaders in countries like Canada and the U.S. while directly supporting terrorism within Pakistan. "This is not the first time India has staged an attack during high-profile foreign visits, the latest being during the U.S. Vice President's trip," he pointed out. In conclusion, Butt said Modi is trying to cover up his government's failures and atrocities in Kashmir through baseless propaganda, but these efforts will ultimately fail.

Leghari annoyed over unsatisfactory progress of NTDC

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari, has expressed serious concern over the unsatisfactory progress of ongoing projects undertaken by the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC). He expressed his annoyance during a high-level performance review meeting convened to assess the current status and challenges facing the organization, said a press release issued on Thursday. As a direct consequence of the minister's queries and dissatisfaction, the NTDC Board has relieved several senior officials from their positions due to undue delays in projects execution. Those removed from their respective roles and made Officers on Special Duty (OSD) include a Deputy Managing Director, two General Managers, the Chief Financial Officer, and three Chief Engineers, it further said. Earlier this week, the federal minister had chaired a comprehensive review session on NTDC's ongoing and upcoming projects, where he voiced deep concerns regarding inefficiencies and persistent delays. He directed the NTDC Board to immediately launch a thorough inquiry to ascertain the root causes of the setbacks and to identify those responsible. The Minister reiterated the government's zero-tolerance policy towards delays in critical infrastructure and development projects, highlighting the substantial financial losses incurred due to inefficiencies – estimated in billions of rupees. He emphasized the imperative of timely project delivery to ensure the integrity and reliability of the national transmission network. During the review meeting, the NTDC Board also deliberated on organizational performance, identifying systemic weaknesses in project planning and execution. As a result, the Planning Wing – under the leadership of the Deputy Managing Director, the concerned General Managers, and the Chief Financial Officer – was held directly accountable and action was taken accordingly. Furthermore, three Chief Engineers have also been relieved of their responsibilities on grounds of dereliction of duty. The Managing Director has been directed to finalize within two weeks the assignment of accountability among the remaining relevant officers and staff and to initiate appropriate disciplinary proceedings.—DNA

HEC holds 3rd national workshop

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) successfully conducted the 3rd Editors Orientation Capacity Building Workshop on Journal Recognition at King Edward Medical University (KEMU), Lahore. According to HEC on Thursday, over 60 editors, researchers, and faculty from across Punjab participated to align local journal practices with international publishing standards. Key topics included COPE guidelines, peer review mechanisms, editorial policies, and best practices in academic publishing. Prof. Dr. Saira Afzal, a distinguished academic at KEMU, led the workshop. She has held leadership roles in public health, community medicine, quality enhancement, and more. She also serves on several national and international ethics and research committees. KEMU Vice Chancellor Prof. Mahmood Ayyaz emphasized the importance of continuous capacity-building to improve the credibility and impact of Pakistani research journals.—APP

ICT admin speeds up public complaint redressal

This move is part of broader steps taken by the administration to improve governance and strengthen communication with citizens

ISLAMABAD: In a push to improve public services, the Islamabad district administration has reinforced its open-door policy, allowing citizens direct access to senior officials for resolution of everyday issues. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, the authority is actively working to address public complaints under its open-door policy, with Deputy Commissioner (DC) Irfan Nawaz Memon leading efforts to ensure citizens' concerns are heard and resolved without delay. DC Islamabad, accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General), held separate meetings with residents at the district office. The meetings were part of a routine designed to give people a chance to speak directly to senior officials about their concerns related to municipal and civic

matters. During the meetings, the DC listened to various complaints and issued immediate instructions to the ADC(G) for on-the-spot resolution. These included problems related to municipal services, encroachments, licensing delays, and basic facilities in different neighborhoods. The DC directed all district departments to keep their offices accessible for the public at all times. He also instructed officers to maintain daily logs of meetings with citizens and submit reports on their interactions. DC Memon emphasized the importance of follow-ups, asking officials to personally inform citizens through phone calls about the status of their complaints. The aim, he said, is to keep the process transparent and assure people that their issues are being taken seriously. Speak-

ing about the ongoing effort, Irfan Nawaz Memon said that resolving public complaints remains a top priority of the district administration. He assured that these sessions would continue regularly, allowing residents to play a role in identifying gaps in service delivery and suggesting practical solutions. The Islamabad administration is also focusing on building trust between the public and government departments by ensuring timely responses. Officials have been asked to coordinate across departments where necessary and avoid unnecessary delays in forwarding requests and approvals. This move is part of broader steps taken by the administration to improve governance and strengthen communication with citizens.—DNA

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MoU signed to train 10,000 youth workforce in Pakistan

We are committed to working with BRISD to support the growth of skilled talent, which is essential for the success of the Belt and Road Initiative and the sustainable development of both nations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step toward fostering cooperation between Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) countries, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed to strengthen collaboration in workforce training, vocational education, and capacity building. The agreement, signed here by Qaiser Nawab, Chairman of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development (BRISD), and Duan Xiaofei, General Manager of CIIC International Education Technology (Beijing) Co., Ltd., marks a major step toward

addressing youth unemployment and skill gaps in the region. Speaking to Gwadar Pro, the Chairman BRISD stated that CIIC International Education Technology will fund the workforce training project, which will begin in Pakistan in July 2025 with an initial batch of 10,000 youth, eventually expanding to 100,000. "While the pilot phase starts in Pakistan, the initiative aims to extend across all Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) countries to support youth employment and skills development. The MOU highlights collaboration in vocational training, skills certification, and industry-academia partnerships, particularly to

support CPEC and regional knowledge sharing," he said. Nawab further highlighted that the sustainability of this initiative is ensured due to the significant demand for young human resources (HR), especially in Pakistan and the broader Global South, including BRI countries. Pakistan, with its vibrant and growing youth population, provides an ideal foundation for such a program. The key challenge he mentioned is not the availability of young talent but rather providing them with the right training and skills. "This is where our partnership with CIIC in China becomes vital. CIIC has the expertise

and resources to deliver high-quality vocational training that meets industry standards," he added. Regarding the mechanisms in place to ensure long-term impact he stated, "we are not only focusing on training but also creating job placement opportunities. After completing the training, participants will have access to employment opportunities in BRI projects, particularly with Chinese companies operating across BRI countries, including those involved in the CPEC projects." "This dual approach of training and employment placement ensures that the program has a lasting, positive

impact on the youth, helping them secure sustainable livelihoods and contributing to economic growth in the region," he added. Duan Xiaofei, General Manager of CIIC International Education Technology, expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration, stating, "This partnership is a crucial step in advancing technical education and fostering stronger cultural and professional ties between China and Pakistan. We are committed to working with BRISD to support the growth of skilled talent, which is essential for the success of the Belt and Road Initiative and the sustainable development of both nations."

New cold war & UK, China ties

A DECADE ago, Sino-British relations enjoyed a "golden era" of cooperation. Eight years and four prime ministers later, relations had deteriorated so rapidly China was labelled a "threat" to the British way of life. The 2023 UK Defence Review identified Beijing's "coercive behaviour" and efforts to "rewrite the international order" as the "epoch-defining global challenge to British interests". In turn, Beijing claimed the British establishment suffered from a "colonial mindset". A China Daily editorial called the attempt to project a "global Britain" desperate and urged the UK to stop "fanning the flames of confrontation". Since winning last year's election however, Keir Starmer's Labour government has made reversing this downward trend a central foreign policy objective. Launching a charm offensive, high-ranking British officials and politicians have made their way east. Last October, Foreign Secretary David Lammy became only the second British foreign minister to visit China in six years. In January, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves travelled to Beijing and Shanghai to normalise relations and secure economic investment, referring to her trip as a "re-engagement" in a sign of how far Sino-British relations had deteriorated. This month, Admiral Tony Radakin, the head of Britain's armed forces, also made the trip to China, the first by a chief of defence staff since the UK-China "golden era". Radakin discussed military-to-military communications and joint security concerns with the Chinese military leadership and even gave a speech to students at the People's Liberation Army's National Defence University. This is remarkable: Britain's defence chief visiting to discuss security concerns with Beijing when just two years ago China was identified as the epoch-defining security concern. Only last July, Britain's army chief, General Roland Walker, listed China among the key reasons Britain had three years to prepare for war. London's motivation for re-engagement is undoubtedly economic: the struggling British economy needs investment, including from China. Still, this normalisation has been made possible by – and is representative of – a larger geopolitical shift: the thawing of the new cold war. The years of increasing Sino-British enmity occurred as part of a larger geopolitical trend. Contemporary international relations, at least in the eyes of Western leaders, were increasingly perceived as a Manichean divide between two ideological blocs: the US-led liberal democratic order including Britain, and the authoritarian challengers spearheaded by Russia, inclusive of North Korea and Iran, with China behind them. This was evident in former prime minister Rishi Sunak's view of China as a threat to the democratic way of life, a world view shared by US politicians as diverse as Nancy Pelosi and Mike Pompeo. It was, furthermore, the forming of this authoritarian bloc – whereby China was seen as not challenging the world order alone but in alignment with Russia, Iran and North Korea – that so greatly concerned UK defence. Beijing, meanwhile, accused Britain of being part of a coordinated attack, a "new cold war" on China" by "Western countries headed by the United States". But the election of Donald Trump as US president thawed this new cold war before the ice truly set, as his actions contribute towards bringing about the end of American exceptionalism and spreading disunity in the so-called liberal bloc of nations.



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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 306

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Liquidity crisis in Gaza

AS the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip enters its nineteenth month, living conditions continue to worsen amid a total economic collapse. At the forefront of this collapse is a severe liquidity crisis that has overwhelmed residents' daily lives, turning their routines into an exhausting struggle for survival. Exorbitant prices, cash shortages, and skyrocketing cash-out fees have made life nearly unbearable. In a destroyed alleyway east of Gaza City, Haj Abu Mustafa stands outside his small shop, organizing the few remaining goods on its shelves, his eyes tired as he watches people enter. He says in a low voice: "I used to sell through the app to ease the cash crisis for people, but unfortunately, we can now only buy from wholesalers with cash. So, I had to go back to cash-only sales." He adds: "People don't have cash, and those who want to withdraw from the app pay a fortune in fees. The situation is unbearable. Even the suppliers now sell us at high prices with harsh conditions." The fee for obtaining cash—locally known as "cash-out" or "takeyeesh"—has become a daily burden that exhausts citizens. Economic expert Mohammad Abu Jayyab explained in a special interview with the Palestinian Information Center: "We are facing an unprecedented liquidity crisis in the Strip due to the ongoing siege and Israel's refusal to allow the entry of cash. There's also a lack of any serious intervention from financial authorities in either the West Bank or Gaza to address the crisis." He continued: "Cash-out fees have reached irrational levels, ranging between 25% and 35% of the total amount. That means people are losing almost a third of their money just to get it in cash. These rates are an economic crime against the population." Abu Jayyab believes the biggest beneficiary of this situation is the black market, which thrives in the absence of banking oversight and the paralysis of official institutions. "With the collapse of the official monetary role, citizens have become prey to crisis traders who control liquidity and payment methods." Since the war began, Israeli forces have stopped the flow of cash into Gaza's banks, most of which have closed their branches and now provide only limited services, mainly through banking apps. Mohammad, a government employee in Gaza, describes how life has become "a daily search for cash," no less difficult than facing airstrikes. He says: "I used to buy from shops via apps, but over time they started closing down, and I was forced to withdraw cash with high fees and buy from the market at higher prices." Umm Yazan, a mother of three, says: "I have no choice but to go around looking for stores that still sell through the app, but they've become rare. I can't even give my kids an allowance anymore, because if you don't have cash, you can't even buy bread." Abu Jayyab points out that the problem has worsened with the spread of damaged currency, which merchants refuse to accept—further straining the situation. "The circulation of damaged bills has turned them into a burden, increasing pressure on usable cash and shrinking the amount of available liquidity far below actual needs." He added: "We need urgent solutions, the most important of which include pressuring the occupation to allow regular cash entry, actively supporting digital payment systems, raising public awareness about digital transformation, and serious intervention by the Palestinian Monetary Authority to restructure and regulate the market."

The Pahalgam attack and its geopolitical fallout

Qamar Bashir



On Indian social media platforms, there has been an outpouring of grief, anger, and calls for justice. Many citizens pointed fingers at Pakistan, reflecting a long-held belief among Indians that cross-border terrorism is often facilitated or tolerated by elements within Pakistan's establishment. The perception that Pakistan is a "terrorist state" is increasingly gaining ground internationally, especially when such incidents follow provocative statements by senior Pakistani officials. In this case, the attack followed a strong statement by Pakistan's Army Chief General Asim Munir...

THE recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, has sent shockwaves through the region and beyond. The attack resulted in the loss of innocent lives, left many injured, and disrupted the fragile peace that had prevailed along the Line of Control in recent years. India, in response, has taken an unprecedented series of diplomatic, economic, and military decisions, signaling a major shift in its regional policy toward Pakistan. Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired an urgent meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, to assess the situation and decide on the country's response. The decisions taken were swift and uncompromising. The international border, including the crucial Atari crossing, is to be sealed. All Pakistani nationals currently in India have been given 48 hours to leave. The Indus Waters Treaty—one of the longest-standing water-sharing agreements between the two nations—has been cancelled. The Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi is being shut down, and Indian forces have been given a free hand to respond. These decisions have been taken at a time when India is enhancing its diplomatic and economic influence globally. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Saudi Arabia marked a new chapter in Indo-Gulf relations, culminating in the signing of a \$100 billion strategic partnership covering petrochemicals, green energy, defense cooperation, technology, infrastructure, and cultural exchange. This was more than a symbolic gesture; it was structural, showcasing India's rising global stature. The timing of the Pahalgam attack is significant. It coincided with multiple high-profile diplomatic events. The Indian Prime Minister was in Jeddah engaging with Saudi leaders and cementing an economic alliance that could reshape the Gulf-India axis. At the same time, U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance was visiting India with his family, reinforcing the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership. These visits were public affirmations of India's growing economic and geopolitical influence. In contrast, the attack appeared to be an attempt to destabilize India's narrative of progress, harmony, and international leadership. Global reaction has been overwhelmingly supportive of India. Countries including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Nepal, Sweden, and Russia condemned the attack in

the strongest terms. The Saudi Foreign Ministry called it a violation of all humanitarian norms. Iran reiterated its principled stance against all forms of terrorism. Russia's President Vladimir Putin extended his condolences and reaffirmed solidarity with India. These statements demonstrate a global consensus that terrorism has no justification and that targeting innocent lives for political or ideological objectives is inexcusable. On Indian social media platforms, there has been an outpouring of grief, anger, and calls for justice. Many citizens pointed fingers at Pakistan, reflecting a long-held belief among Indians that cross-border terrorism is often facilitated or tolerated by elements within Pakistan's establishment. The perception that Pakistan is a "terrorist state" is increasingly gaining ground internationally, especially when such incidents follow provocative statements by senior Pakistani officials. In this case, the attack followed a strong statement by Pakistan's Army Chief General Asim Munir, reiterating Pakistan's claim over Kashmir and pledging continued resistance. In response, India took diplomatic measures that are likely to have lasting consequences. The expulsion of Pakistani military attachés, withdrawal of Indian officials from Islamabad, and the suspension of diplomatic channels signal the freezing of bilateral relations. The cancellation of the Indus Waters Treaty is particularly significant. Signed in 1960, the treaty has withstood wars and crises. By setting it aside, India has not only struck at Pakistan's vital water lifeline but also sent a message that it will no longer adhere to outdated obligations when its national security is under threat. The non-kinetic actions, such as border sealing and diplomatic disengagement, have been paired with military readiness. While there has been no official announcement of kinetic retaliation, parallels are being drawn with Israel's response to the October 7 Hamas attack. A surgical strike or targeted retaliation is within India's options, although the scale may be limited given Pakistan's status as a nuclear power. The potential reactivation of skirmishes along the Line of Control cannot be ruled out. In recent years, the border had seen relative calm due to backchannel diplomacy and ceasefire agreements. But this latest attack may bring back regular cross-border firing, endangering civilians

and further straining relations. India, due to its robust economy and strong diplomatic alliances, is in a position to withstand prolonged conflict—military or otherwise. Pakistan, with its fragile economy and political instability, is in a much weaker position. This asymmetry may deter Islamabad from escalating the situation but also puts pressure on it to recalibrate its internal and external policies. Pakistan, in these circumstances, must act decisively and wisely. It should unequivocally condemn the attack, offer full cooperation in any investigation, and take concrete steps to reassure the international community that its territory is not being used to launch attacks on civilians in neighboring countries. Silence or deflection will only add to its diplomatic isolation. Additionally, it is critical for Pakistan to restrain its military and political leaders from making inflammatory statements. A war of words can escalate into unintended consequences. Instead, Islamabad should focus on economic recovery and institutional reform. Only a strong, stable Pakistan can meaningfully advocate its case on Kashmir and engage in constructive dialogue with India and the international community. At the same time, India must ensure that the domestic discourse does not descend into communalism. Violence begets violence, and any targeting of individuals based on religion will only serve to deepen internal divisions. This is a time for unity, not hatred. Both Hindus and Muslims in India have suffered from terrorism, and it is essential that the government lead by example in fostering communal harmony. In conclusion, the Pahalgam attack is not just a tragedy—it is a test. A test for India's democratic resilience, for Pakistan's credibility, and for the world's commitment to combating terrorism. In such trying times, restraint, justice, and diplomacy must prevail. If both nations choose the path of de-escalation and cooperation, the region may yet emerge stronger from this crisis. But if sabers continue to rattle, it is the ordinary people on both sides who will pay the price.

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

False flags and fabrications: India's dangerous game against Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Fast forward to 2016, the so-called "surgical strike" claimed by India following the Uri attack was another attempt to shape a narrative of military prowess and domestic strength. Despite international skepticism and Pakistan's denial of any such cross-border incursion, Indian media celebrated it as a great triumph, largely for political mileage. The lack of evidence, neutral...

INDIA'S history of crafting elaborate narratives to malign Pakistan and justify its aggressive postures has been an ongoing concern for regional stability. The recent tragic incident in Pahalgam, Kashmir, where tourists came under fire, is yet another episode in a long series of orchestrated events that serve as pretexts for provocations against Pakistan. Indian media and political leadership wasted no time in launching a disinformation campaign, hastily blaming Pakistan without any credible investigation or evidence. This false flag operation, thinly veiled as a terrorist attack, is now being used to whip up nationalist sentiment and prepare grounds for a so-called "surgical strike"—a tactic that India has previously employed to distract its public from internal unrest and international embarrassment. Pakistan has consistently condemned terrorism in all forms and has made monumental sacrifices in its fight against extremism. Any attempt to link Pakistan to the Pahalgam attack is not only irresponsible but deeply provocative. It reflects a pattern of behavior where India stages incidents or manipulates events, only to then act as judge, jury, and executioner, often at the cost of peace in South Asia. This is not the first time India has resorted to such theatrics. One of the earliest and most glaring examples was the infamous Ganga plane hijacking of 1971. The Indian Airlines flight was reportedly hijacked by two Kashmiri separatists and taken to Lahore. The hijackers later surrendered to Pakistani authorities, but India promptly used the incident to ban Pakistani overflights, effectively choking off West Pakistan from East Pakistan and strategically aiding its campaign in what became the secession of Bangladesh. Years later, Indian intelligence and former officials admitted the possibility of the hijacking being an inside job designed to serve a larger political purpose. This deceitful episode cast a long shadow on India's credibil-

ity and highlighted its willingness to use civilians and fabricated incidents for strategic gains. Fast forward to 2016, the so-called "surgical strike" claimed by India following the Uri attack was another attempt to shape a narrative of military prowess and domestic strength. Despite international skepticism and Pakistan's denial of any such cross-border incursion, Indian media celebrated it as a great triumph, largely for political mileage. The lack of evidence, neutral verification, or independent reports do not deter the Indian government from exploiting the event for political gain, especially in the context of upcoming elections. In 2019, the Pulwama attack that killed dozens of Indian paramilitary personnel was once again swiftly blamed on Pakistan. India responded with an airstrike in Balakot, claiming to have destroyed a terrorist training camp. However, satellite imagery and ground reports contradicted these claims, showing nothing but a few uprooted trees and a damaged structure. Pakistan's swift and measured response, including the capture and subsequent release of an Indian Air Force pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan, exposed the hollowness of India's aggression and reinforced Pakistan's commitment to peace and responsible state behavior. The timing of the Pahalgam incident and the subsequent threats of surgical strikes is also significant in the broader geopolitical context. The region is already tense due to Israel's ongoing hostile actions in Gaza and the rising civilian death toll in Palestine. The Muslim world, including Pakistan, is raising its voice against the atrocities. At such a time, India's military rhetoric and anti-Pakistan agenda may be aimed at diverting attention from global condemnation of its allies and shifting focus onto a manufactured security threat. Additionally, the recent visit of a high-level American delegation to India underscores Washington's strategic interests in the region. While the United States contin-

ues to build its Indo-Pacific alliance, it must be careful not to embolden India's aggressive behavior against its neighbors, especially Pakistan, which has consistently advocated for peace, dialogue, and regional cooperation. Adding to this complex scenario is Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, where economic and strategic partnerships were emphasized. While strengthening bilateral ties is every nation's right, using such engagements as diplomatic leverage to isolate Pakistan or justify hostile intent would be a dangerous miscalculation. Pakistan enjoys deep-rooted and time-tested relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the broader Muslim world, and any attempt to sow discord in this brotherly relationship will not succeed. The international community must view India's latest allegations and the threat of a surgical strike with critical scrutiny. Such actions risk not only bilateral escalation but also broader regional instability. False flag operations and unverified claims only serve to inflame tensions and erode trust. It is essential for global powers and multilateral institutions to urge restraint, demand independent investigations, and hold accountable those who deliberately fan the flames of conflict. Peace between two nuclear-armed neighbors cannot be held hostage to propaganda, fake narratives, and political opportunism. The region has already suffered from decades of hostility, wars, and missed opportunities for cooperation. Repeating the same dangerous script of deceit and blame games will only further isolate India diplomatically and deepen mistrust. Pakistan remains firm in its resolve to defend its sovereignty while advocating for peace. Any aggression based on lies will be met with full diplomatic, moral, and, if necessary, military response. The responsibility lies with India to choose facts over fiction, diplomacy over destruction, and peace over propaganda. The world is watching—and history, as always, will be the ultimate judge.

Briefs

Trade, ties and flights off-limits as Pak...

FROM PAGE 01 Eastern borders is aimed at distracting Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts. In the absence of any credible investigation and verifiable evidence, attempts to link the Pahalgam attack with Pakistan are frivolous, devoid of rationality and defeat logic India's worn-out narrative of victimhood cannot obfuscate its own culpability in fomenting terrorism on Pakistan's soil, nor can it distract attention from its systematic and state sponsored oppression and human rights violations in IOJK. Contrary to Indian claims, Pakistan has in its custody incontrovertible proof of Indian-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan, including the confession of a serving Indian Navy officer, Commander Kulbushan Jadhav, who remains a living testament to India's state-sponsored terrorist activities. The National Security Committee deplored the implicit threat contained in the Indian statement of 23 April 2025. The international community ought to remain mindful of India's state sponsored extraterritorial assassinations or attempts on foreign soil. These heinous acts were carried out in blatant violation of international law as recently exposed by Pakistan along with various other states with undeniable evidence.

Pak has evidence that foreigner...

FROM PAGE 01 by India to divert the flow of water lawfully belonging to Pakistan will be "considered an act of war". The move comes in response to India's unilateral decision to suspend the six-decade-old Indus Water Treaty and also taking other steps against Pakistan in the aftermath of an attack on tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). The attack on Tuesday claimed the lives of 26 people, including one Nepali national. The Indian government blames Pakistan for the attack, a claim that Islamabad vehemently denied and also termed as a "false flag operation". Recalling the capture of an Indian pilot by Pakistan in 2019, Dar said India will be given a befitting response if it resorts to any misadventure.

Tarar blasts India over suspension...

FROM PAGE 01 He said that Pakistan's airspace had been closed to India, which would eventually cause millions of dollars in losses to Indian airlines. The Minister remarked that India could only resort to hurling hollow threats, and it was all just from their side. Attaullah Tarar paid tribute to Pakistani journalists who effectively pleaded country's case in the Indian media. He said the entire world knew that India did sponsor terrorism in Pakistan and had been this tactics for its political gain. He emphasized that Pakistan was a frontline state in the fight against terrorism. He said the Pakistani narrative had prevailed against India, which churned out distorted narrative to divert global attention from its actions of sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan.

Pakistan summons...

FROM PAGE 01 limiting Indian High Commission staff to just 30 members. All Indian citizens, except Sikh pilgrims, have been asked to leave the country within 48 hours, and Wagha Border crossing will be closed. Additionally, Pakistan warned India that its airspace is now off-limits for Indian commercial flights. Pakistan also said it could suspend bilateral agreements, including Simla Accord, in response to India's move on the Indus Water Treaty. Trade, both direct and indirect, will also be put on hold.

Pak, Ethiopia to boost coop in trade, IT, and tourism

Ambassador Dr. Jemal Calls on Chief Minister Punjab to Discuss Bilateral Cooperation



DNA

LAHORE: H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia called on H.E. Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Honorable Chief Minister of Punjab, Pakistan to discuss bilateral and

multilateral cooperation between the two countries. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest including the entire gamut of the bilateral relations, and various ways to further strengthen cooperation in various areas such as trade, investment, agriculture, information technology, culture and tourism. On the occasion, the Ambassador briefed the CM Punjab about

the growth in bilateral relations of Ethiopia and Pakistan including an increase in delegations' exchange with the opening of the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad, and commencement of the Ethiopian Airlines Operations in Pakistan. He said the FDR Ethiopia attached great importance to Pakistan, reiterating the desire of the Government of the FDR Ethiopia to

further strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the two countries. The FDR Ethiopia is all set to host Pakistan's Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa from May 15 to May 17, 2025, which would be a game changer for the bilateral relations of the two countries, he noted. He also briefed the CM Punjab about the homegrown economic reforms undertaken by the visionary leader H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the FDR Ethiopia, in two phases which have created a conducive environment for investors as well as generated extraordinary business, trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia. He appreciated the people-centric initiative taken by H.E. Maryam Nawaz Sharif in Punjab to transform the living standards of the residents of Punjab. On the other hand, the Chief Minister welcomed the launch of the Ethiopian Airlines in Pakistan which has added a new chapter in the bilateral relations of Pakistan and Ethiopia. She expressed Pakistan's strong commitment to strengthening its relations with Africa including Ethiopia which has achieved great economic progress under the leadership of H.E. PM Dr. Abiy Ahmed. The CM Punjab also appreciated the Green Legacy Initiative undertaken by H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed for climate restoration and food security through reforestation and afforestation efforts. She assured the Ambassador of all possible support for further strengthening the bilateral relations of Ethiopia and Pakistan.

ADB announces US\$ 330 mln.

FROM PAGE 01 adolescent girls and children living in disaster-affected areas. Additionally, the provision of healthcare services is also part of the aid program. The services will target marginalized segments of the population who are generally overlooked. The Central and West Asia region have serious development and social welfare challenges. "Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan have poverty and social security related issues," according to the ADB report. The ADB report said that the poverty rates remain high in these countries. The Asian Development Bank emphasized that people in these countries have limited access to essential services, thus the Bank supports initiatives that promote social welfare. Pakistan was provided US\$ 2.99 billion financing in Year 2024 including over US\$ 2.31 billion in loans and grants. The country was provided over US\$ 666.7 million in co-financing while US\$ 500 million provided to tackle the impact of climate change, according to report. Moreover, US\$ 400 million provided for Sindh Emergency Housing Project, US\$ 400 million given to enhance efficiency for the power distribution companies.

Indian soldier arrested...

FROM PAGE 01 The incident comes amid increased tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours following an attack on tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IOJK). Pakistan suspends trade, closes airspace to Indian aircraft in a tit-for-tat move in the backdrop of the escalatory measures taken by New Delhi, the National Security Committee (NSC) has warned that any move by India to divert the flow of water lawfully belonging to Pakistan will be "considered an act of war". The move comes in response to India's unilateral decision to suspend the six-decade-old Indus Water Treaty and also taking other steps against Pakistan in the aftermath of an attack on tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

Dar holds call with Uzbek...

FROM PAGE 01 The deputy prime minister shared with him his recent discussions in Kabul regarding the project and hoped that the three countries would soon sign the framework agreement for this important regional connectivity project. Both leaders also discussed strengthening bilateral relations, enhancing economic and trade connectivity, promoting people-to-people ties, and exchanged views on current regional and international issues.

Govt agrees to halt construction...

FROM PAGE 01 unrest in Sindh over the federal government's "controversial" plan to divert six new canals from the Indus River. The prime minister said he had fully briefed Bilawal on India's latest statements and developments. "The issue of the canals was discussed seriously and constructively, with both sides agreeing that such matters between provinces must be resolved through dialogue and with good intentions," the premier said. Touching on the controversial Kalabagh Dam project, PM Shehbaz said if Sindh has objections, those concerns must be respected in the national interest. "If the dam goes against the spirit of federal harmony, we should avoid it," he added. Bilawal thanked the prime minister for listening to PPP's concerns and making decisions accordingly. The PPP chairman reiterated that no canal would be built without mutual agreement and expressed confidence that this cooperation would help address public grievances. "Three provinces have opposed Kalabagh Dam, and we've also reached a consensus on that," he said.

NZ pens historic deal with Major League Cricket

New Zealand become first full member of ICC to launch a franchise in overseas league

SPORTS DESK

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Cricket (NZC), announced to launch a franchise in the United States of America's (USA) Major League Cricket (MLC). According to the details, the new franchise make its debut

in the 2027 edition of the league. The development came after the NZC reached terms with a US-based True North Sports Ventures (TNS), which promotes the sport in North America. As per the deal, NZC will deliver high-performance and operational support, covering coaching, management,

and support staff, besides integrating the franchise into its domestic high-performance ecosystem. NZC chief executive Scott Weenink said the partnership would place the organization at the leading edge of cricket's global evolution, while also enhancing its footprint in the world's

most lucrative sports market. "This agreement marks a unique and exciting milestone for NZC," he said. "As franchise cricket grows globally, NZC needs to adapt to seize strategic opportunities that ensure the sustainability of our cricket network. This helps diversify our revenue streams, expands our global brand and fan base, and creates new talent development and retention pathways for both our players and coaches." The TNS also expressed its excitement for working with the NZC in a bid to ensure that they achieve their ambitions and goals. "The potential for cricket in North America is immense, and we look forward to working with NZC to deliver on both our ambitions and theirs, including broader strategic and corporate opportunities globally," a statement from TNS mentioned.



Brecel fights at World Championship

Former world champion Luca Brecel fought back from 5-1 down to beat Ryan Day 10-7 and move into the last 16 of the 2025 World Championship at the Crucible in Sheffield

WEB DESK

BELGIUM'S Brecel had won the last three frames of Wednesday's first session to trail 5-4, only for Welshman Day, ranked 36th in the world, to make a break of 101 in the opening frame on Thursday to move 6-4 ahead. But 2023 world champion Brecel took six of the next seven frames in a scrappy encounter with both players making unexpected errors. One of those mistakes from Day proved crucial when he potted the cue ball when on the black to hand Brecel the 16th frame. Brecel will face 10th seed Ding Junhui in the next round, with the match starting on Saturday evening before the second session on Sunday and the conclusion on Monday. Before his success two years ago Brecel had not won a match at the Crucible, but an epic run saw him defeat Ricky Walden, Mark Williams, Ronnie O'Sullivan, Si Jiahui and finally Mark Selby 18-15 in the final to become the first world champion from mainland Europe. The 'Crucible Curse', which has not seen a first-time winner repeat their success the following year, struck again in 2024 with Brecel suffering a first-day opening-round loss to David Gilbert.

What has made this NFL Draft so intriguing?

WISCONSIN: This year, though, it seems Cam Ward has barely had a mention. The 'unicorn' Travis Hunter and 'nepo baby' Shedeur Sanders have been the main talking points leading into this weekend's event in Green Bay. The pair have been team-mates for the past three years, becoming two of the biggest stars in US college sport. Now the uncertainty over their next step has helped make this one of the most intriguing drafts in years. It is difficult to talk about Sanders without mentioning his father. Deion Sanders was a Hall of Fame player in the NFL, winning two Super Bowls as a two-way player - he played on both defence and offence. Nicknamed 'Prime Time', he also played in Major League Baseball and remains one of the most recognisable, charismatic figures in US sport. He went on to work in the media and became head coach at Jackson State University in 2020, with youngest son Shedeur becoming their quarterback in 2021. The following year Deion managed to lure two-way player Travis Hunter - 2022's highest-rated college recruit - before the trio left for Colorado in 2023. Their three seasons together feature in the Amazon series Coach Prime, which helped thrust Colorado into national prominence in the US while the two players became household names. Shedeur Sanders earned about \$6.5m (£4.9m) through NIL deals in college and Hunter about \$5.7m (£4.3m). Sanders was the initial favourite to be the first overall pick in this year's draft. Now he is its most polarising prospect. The 23-year-old helped Colorado turn around their record last season, posting

the best pass completion rate in college football (74%). He also won one of the annual quarterback awards, but some feel he holds on to the ball too long and have questioned his arm strength and athleticism. Shedeur, who has been branded a 'nepo baby', says having Deion as his dad has been advantageous to his football career as he has learned to deal with expectation and pressure from a young age. But in March, some NFL staff said Shedeur came across as "brash and arrogant" as well as "unprofessional and disinterested" during his interviews at the Scouting Combine - a week-long event where college players are evaluated by NFL teams before the draft. He is already wealthy and has a bigger profile than any previous draft prospect. Some teams have been put off by the 'circus' - including his outspoken father - that surrounds Sanders, so some analysts fear he could slide out of the top-five picks, perhaps into the second round. The NFL has not had a genuine two-way player since Deion Sanders in the 1990s. In 1997, Charles Woodson won the Heisman Trophy for best college player after playing significant time as both a cornerback and wide receiver but he went on to play solely on defence in the NFL. Hunter has also been playing as a cornerback and wide receiver, and won not just last year's awards for best defensive player and best receiver - he clinched the Heisman too. Speaking at the Combine in February, the 21-year-old said his role in the NFL was "up to the organisation" that drafts him, with teams having different ideas on what his best position is. - Agencies

Pak women cricketers move up in ODI ranking

Pakistan captain Fatima surged in both bowling and all-rounders' rankings

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's dominant run at the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 Qualifiers has not only secured their place in this year's main event but also propelled several of their players up in ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings. Remaining unbeaten throughout the tournament, hosts Pakistan capped off their campaign with a convincing seven-wicket victory over Bangladesh in Lahore last week, finishing at the top of the table. Their standout performances have now been recognised in the latest ODI rankings, with multiple top performers making significant gains in both batting and bowling departments. Pakistan captain Fatima Sana, who was their leading wicket-taker in the tournament with 12 scalps, jumped five places to secure joint 27th position in the bowling rankings. She also scored 103 runs in four innings at an average of 34.33 and

thus also experienced a notable jump in the all-rounders' rankings, leaping 10 spots to clinch the joint-15th spot. Pakistan's left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal was also rewarded for taking nine wickets in the

qualifying event as she improved five spots to 17th in the ODI bowling rankings. Nashra Sandhu also experienced a significant improvement in her ranking as she has been promoted to the 13th position,



moving one place up. On the other hand, top-order batter Sidra Amin, who finished as Pakistan's top scorer in the Qualifier with 225 runs in five innings at an average of 45 and with the help of three half-centuries, jumped five places to secure 18th position in the ODI batting rankings. Meanwhile, her fellow top-order batter Muneeba Ali achieved a career-best ranking of 30th. Bangladesh, who qualified for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in India, alongside hosts Pakistan, saw their players being rewarded in the rankings update. Left-arm spinner Nahida Akter climbed two places to register a career-high ranking of 10th for taking six wickets during the Qualifier. Bangladesh's Sharmin Akhter also reached her career-high position of 21st. West Indies captain Hayley Matthews, who finished as the leading wicket-taker of the event with 13 scalps, maintained her place inside the top 10 of the ODI bowling rankings in ninth. Matthews also improved two spots in the batting rankings, securing the fifth position.

Briefs

PSX loses
2,206 more
points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Thursday, losing 2,206.33 more points on Thursday, a negative change of 1.88 percent, closing at 115,019.82 points as compared to 117,226.15 points on the last trading day. A total of 506,702,532 shares were traded during the day as compared to 605,175,574 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs24.488 billion against Rs27.762 billion on the last trading day. As many as 456 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 83 of them recorded gains and 339 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 34 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Power Cement with 37,316,356 shares at Rs 14.45 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 31,229,796 shares at Rs 1.31 per share and Sui South Gas with 23,402,994 shares at Rs 41.05 per share.—APP

Gold price
remains
unchanged

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold remained constant at Rs.352,000 on Thursday, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 gram 22 Karat also witnessed no change and were traded at Rs.301,783 and Rs.9,195 respectively. The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs.3,457 and Rs.2,963 respectively. The price of gold in the international market remained stable at \$3,338 whereas silver was also traded at existing rates of \$32.93, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds
10 paise
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 281.06 against the previous day's closing of Rs 280.96. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 281.10 and Rs 282.60, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 15 paise to close at Rs 320.06 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.91, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.97, whereas a decrease of 07 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 373.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 373.89. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 02 paise each to close at Rs 76.52 and 74.92 respectively.—APP

Govt focuses
on export-
oriented
manufacturing

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday emphasized that export-oriented manufacturing was the government's primary focus, reviving sick industrial units in line with the vision of the Prime Minister. "No country can progress without industrial development, and Pakistan's manufacturing sector holds immense potential. It is imperative to make non-functional units operational again," he said while chairing a high-level committee meeting on "Revival of Sick Industrial Units" on the directive of the Prime Minister. The committee reviewed the key challenges faced by sick units, including expensive financing, high utility costs, and excessive taxation, which were identified as the major obstacles to their revival, said a news release. Haroon Akhtar stressed the importance of not just reviving these units but ensuring sustained performance.—APP

'Allama Iqbal visiting fellowship' to be setup at Cambridge varsity

Dr. Faisal said that this MOU marked a significant milestone in our efforts to promote Pakistan's rich culture, literature, and intellectual heritage

DNA

CAMBRIDGE: High Commissioner of Pakistan to UK, Dr. Mohammad Faisal and Professor Shailaja Fennel, signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Government of Pakistan's Ministry of Education and Professional Training and the Centre for South Asian Studies - University of Cambridge, to establish the "Allama Iqbal Visiting Fellowship", at Cambridge University. The ceremony was attended by Prof. Kamal Munir, Pro Vice Chancellor, Prof. Jude Browne, Head of Department of Politics, Cambridge University and officers of the Pakistan High Commission, London. In his remarks, the High Commissioner stated that Allama Iqbal's contributions to Pakistan's history, literature, and philosophy are enormous and hidden to none. His poetry, philosophy and vision played a crucial role in inspiring the movement for the creation of Pakistan. Known as the "architect of the idea of Pakistan" in Pakistan's history, Allama Iqbal is considered the intellectual father of Pakistan. His vision laid the ideological foundation for the



Pakistan Movement, influencing leaders like Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Dr. Faisal said that this MOU marked a significant milestone in our efforts to promote Pakistan's rich culture, literature, and intellectual heritage. He expressed the hope that this partnership

had a huge potential to strengthen educational and cultural ties between the University of Cambridge and the Pakistani academic community, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. Under the "Allama Iqbal Visiting Fellowship", Government of Pa-

kistan will nominate prominent academics, one of whom will be selected by the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge University as a fellow. The visiting fellow will engage with students and scholars on Pakistan's history, culture, people, national and re-

gional languages, eminent literary figures, geography and regional, economic and political environment. The visiting fellow will also undertake teaching of Urdu, Pakistan Studies, Pakistani literature, history, society and culture at the University of Cambridge.

Pakistan Embassy in Beijing Facilitates Record Chinese Participation at HEMS 2025 in Lahore

The Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing, working closely with Pakistan Consulates General in Shanghai, Chengdu, and Guangzhou, successfully facilitated the participation of 200 Chinese companies, a 100% increase from 2024, at the 4th Health, Engineering, and Minerals Show (HEMS) held in Lahore from 17-19 April 2025. Led by Ambassador of Pakistan to China Khalil Hashmi, the high-profile delegation reflected Pakistan's strong commitment to deepening economic, trade and investment cooperation with China at Business-to-business (B2B) and company-to-company (C2C) levels. Representatives from more than 150 Chinese companies engaged in a series of B2B meetings across healthcare, engineering, minerals and mining, resulting in the signing of 37 MoUs, LOIs, and contracts worth over \$435 million. Key agreements included a \$60 million quartz stone export deal (with a \$10 million investment component), a \$50 million interest by Chinese company to invest in developing mineral resources, a \$45 million joint venture in medical device manufacturing, and an \$80 million technology transfer contract in electric vehicles. Chinese interest also expanded into salt, copper, fluorite, gemstones, IT, real estate, and branding of Pakistani products. The Embassy and Consulates continue to actively support follow-up on these business leads. A dinner hosted by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif brought together over 800 delegates from 50 countries. The active participation by Chinese delegation, the largest foreign contingent, was widely acknowledged. The Prime Minister commended the Ambassador and his team for facilitating the largest-ever Chinese business delegation to Pakistan. On the sidelines, the Ambassador met the Chinese Consul General in Lahore, and senior officials of Punjab Government, including the Chief Secretary and Additional Secretary of the BOI. At the Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT), he led a roundtable with senior provincial officials across agriculture, industry, healthcare, and investment, briefing them on Embassy's facilitation efforts for Chinese investors and more targeted B2B engagements. The Embassy also partnered with Habib Rafiq (Pvt.) Ltd. to host an exclusive networking lunch, bringing together key Chinese and Pakistani business leaders to explore opportunities in the minerals, construction, and auto sectors. Aligned with the Prime Minister's vision, this successful engagement has generated strong momentum for bilateral trade and investment. The Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing and Pakistan Consulates-General in China remain committed to promoting investment-led initiatives to further strengthen Pakistan-China economic cooperation in priority sectors.—DNA

Jam, Zehri discuss
agriculture uplift in
Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan's Minister for Agriculture and Cooperative, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri met with Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan here on Thursday to discuss areas of mutual interest, particularly in the agriculture and trade sectors. During the meeting, both ministers exchanged views on enhancing agricultural development in Balochistan, improving market access, and promoting interprovincial and international trade of agricultural commodities. According to press release issued by commerce ministry, Minister Zehri briefed the federal minister on the potential and challenges of the agricultural sector in Balochistan. Jam Kamal Khan assured full support from the federal government and emphasized the need for a coordinated strategy to link Balochistan's agricultural output with national and international markets, aiming to benefit local farmers. The two ministers also stressed the importance of strengthening institutional collaboration between federal and provincial departments and working together on joint initiatives for sustainable agricultural growth.—DNA

UK ends
sanctions on
Syria defense,
interior
ministries

LONDON: The UK government announced on Thursday it was lifting sanctions that were imposed on Syria's interior and defense ministries during the rule of the now-deposed Bashar Assad. "The following entities have been removed from the Consolidated List and are no longer subject to an asset freeze - Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense," the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation said in a notice. Sanctions against various media groups and intelligence agencies were also lifted, although Syria's new rulers dissolved the Assad-era spy bodies in January. Those targeted by the sanctions were "involved in repressing the civilian population in Syria" or had been "involved in supporting or benefiting from the Syrian regime," said the notice. The new Syrian government is aiming to persuade Western capitals that the militant origins of the rebels who toppled Assad in December, after 14 years in charge, are confined to the past, and that crippling international sanctions should be lifted.—APP

Istanbul
residents
spend night
outdoors after
earthquake

ISTANBUL: Many Istanbul residents spent the night outdoors, too fearful to return to their homes, following a strong earthquake and over 180 aftershocks. The magnitude 6.2 quake tremor that struck Wednesday deeply impacted the city of 16 million residents, leaving many inhabitants shaken and wary of a possible more destructive tremor. There were no reports of serious damage but the tremor, the strongest felt in Istanbul in recent years, prompted widespread panic and scores of injuries. The earthquake had a shallow depth of 10 kilometers, according to the United States Geological Survey, with its epicenter about 40 kilometers southwest of Istanbul, in the Sea of Marmara. It was felt in several neighboring provinces. At least 236 people were treated for injuries they suffered while trying to jump from buildings or for panic attacks. Most of the injuries were in Istanbul, where residents remain on edge because the city is considered at high risk for a major quake. In fear of a stronger earthquake that could demolish homes, residents sought refuge by sleeping in their cars or setting up tents in parks and other open spaces. Many lit campfires to keep warm after the temperature dipped. Turkey is crossed by two major fault lines, and earthquakes are frequent.—DNA

Amnesty
denounces
Algeria over
'alarming'
crackdown

TUNIS: Amnesty International on Thursday denounced what it called a "crackdown on peaceful dissent" in Algeria in response to an online protest campaign. "Algerian authorities have intensified their relentless clampdown on peaceful dissent through arbitrary arrests and unjust prosecutions leading to lengthy prison sentences," the rights group said in a statement. It said the authorities have arrested and sentenced at least 23 activists and journalists over their purported support for an online protest movement dubbed Manich Radi (which loosely translates as "I do not agree"). The campaign, Amnesty said, was launched in December 2024 "to denounce restrictions on human rights and difficult socioeconomic conditions in the country." Amnesty said the 23 were detained "solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights." Its regional director for the Middle East and North Africa Heba Morayef said: "The trajectory of suffocating online activism pursued by the Algerian authorities is alarming and must be reversed.—APP

France says
Tunisian political
dissidents did not
receive fair trial

TUNIS: France on Wednesday criticized the lengthy sentences handed down by a Tunisian court against opposition leaders and businessmen on conspiracy charges on the weekend, saying the conditions for a fair trial were not met. The comments by France, the first country to speak out on the trial, came amid growing criticism of the government of President Kais Saied over its crackdown on dissent. Rights groups said the mass conviction of dissidents is a disturbing indication of the authorities' willingness to go ahead with its crackdown on peaceful dissent. Tunisia's opposition has said the trial was fabricated and aimed at silencing critical voices and consolidating the authoritarian rule. "We learned with concern of the harsh sentences... against several individuals accused of conspiring against state security, including French nationals," the French Foreign Ministry said. "We regret the failure to respect fair trial conditions," it added. Journalists, diplomats, and civil society were barred from attending the trial. The trial highlights Saied's full control over the judiciary since he dissolved parliament in 2021 and began ruling by decree. He also dissolved the independent Supreme Judicial Council and sacked dozens of judges in 2022. Forty people were prosecuted in the trial, which started in March. More than 20 have fled abroad since being charged. Lawyers said the maximum sentence was 66 years for businessman Kamel Ltaif, while opposition politician Khyam Turki received a 48-year sentence.—DNA

Bangladesh
observes
three days of
mourning for
Pope Francis

DHAKA: National flags flew at half-mast in Bangladesh on Thursday as the Muslim-majority nation began three days of state mourning for Pope Francis. The Argentine pontiff, leader of the Catholic Church since March 2013, died at his residence, Casa Santa Marta, in the Vatican on Monday. He was 88 years old. Bangladesh's interim administration issued a notification on Wednesday night, announcing that the government had decided to hold special prayers in memory of the pope and lower national flags to half-staff on buildings across the country, as well as at its missions abroad. Bangladesh's Christians account for less than 0.5 percent of its population. Most of them, about 400,000, are Catholic. It is the first time Bangladesh is observing three days of remembrance for a Catholic leader.—APP

Saudi exhibition takes
Indonesians on virtual
tour of Islamic heritage
"We are showing the world that religion and
culture are not just legacies of the past, but a
strategic foundation to build future civilization"

JAKARTA: A week-long Saudi exhibition opened in Jakarta on Thursday, offering Indonesian visitors virtual tours of the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, as well as a display of the features of the Holy Kaaba. Organized by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs, the display, titled "Jusoor" or bridges, is being held at the Istiqlal Mosque complex in Jakarta. The event is free to the public and will run until May 3. It was inaugurated by Indonesia's Religious Affairs Minister Nasaruddin Umar and Saudi Arabia's Islamic Affairs Undersecretary Dr. Awwad bin Sabti Al-Anzi. "This exhibition symbolizes the strengthening of cultural and diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, while also serving as a platform to introduce the rich history and civilization of Islam to the general public," Umar said on social media. "Through the collection of artifacts, ancient manuscripts, and interactive multimedia installations, (it) invites visitors to explore the Islamic world's contribution to science, art and culture across time." Aside from the virtual tours of the two holy mosques, the Saudi exhibition in Jakarta features their scale models and photos of the Kaaba. Designed to be educational and child-friendly, it also invites visitors to explore the printing of the Qur'an, view rare manuscripts, learn about Arabic calligraphy, and to taste qahwa - the traditional Arabic coffee. Organizers are aiming to attract 1 million visitors. "The exhibition, which aims to attract 1 million visitors, embodies the Kingdom's efforts to spread moderation, serve the Holy Qur'an, and strengthen bridges of cultural and human communication between peoples," the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs said in a statement on X. According to Ahmad Zayadi, information director of Islamic affairs at Indonesia's Religious Affairs Ministry, the event showcases Saudi Arabia's role in world culture and history. "The Kingdom's standing in the Islamic world makes it a center of civilization that is inseparable from mankind's history and cultural development," Zayadi said. "We are showing the world that religion and culture are not just legacies of the past, but a strategic foundation to build future civilizations.—APP

PRGMEA urges action on EFS reforms, US tariff impact

PRGMEA says EFS changes, tax shift, US tariffs threaten exports

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, and Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, have pledged to raise the critical concerns of exporters at the highest levels of government. Speaking at a high-level Exporters' Convention hosted by the Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PRGMEA) in Sialkot, both ministers assured the industry of their unwavering support. The event was attended by representatives from PHMA, PSGMEA, PGMEA, SIMAP, PLGMEA, and the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). Prof. Ahsan Iqbal acknowledged that Pakistan's exports, which currently stand at around \$32

billion, are lagging behind regional competitors like Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam. "We need a unified, export-led growth strategy. Cities like Sialkot—with their entrepreneurial spirit and globally recognized products—must take the lead," he said. He emphasized that economic revival hinges on building a stable, business-friendly environment and reducing the cost of doing business to restore Pakistan's competitive edge. Khawaja

Muhammad Asif reaffirmed that the concerns of Sialkot's exporters would be prioritized. He noted that abrupt policy changes and increasing tax burdens are harming productivity. "Sialkot's SMEs form the backbone of Pakistan's export economy. We will not allow them to collapse under bureaucratic pressure," he said. He also assured that refund claims and other tax-related issues would be addressed at the highest level to create a stable

and supportive environment for exporters. Ijaz A. Khokhar, former Central Chairman of PRGMEA, voiced serious concern over the recent amendments to the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS), especially regarding temporary imports for re-export. He warned that reduced utilization periods and new bank guarantee requirements will disproportionately affect SMEs, which already operate on tight margins. "Such policy shifts jeopardize not only our competitiveness but the very foundation of Pakistan's export engine," he stressed. Adding to this, Mr. Ansar Aziz, Executive Member of PRGMEA, highlighted the urgent need for targeted SME support mechanisms and low-cost financing to help exporters navigate mounting economic pressures. "Our SMEs are the lifeblood of innovation and job cre-

ation. Without tangible support, we risk losing this backbone," he said. Sohail A. Sheikh, also a former PRGMEA Chairman, criticized the sudden shift from the Final Tax Regime (FTR) to the Normal Tax Regime (NTR). He said the new model introduces unpredictability in tax liabilities and increases compliance burdens. "This transition was implemented without stakeholder consultation. It has shaken industry confidence and harmed planning and cash flow certainty," he noted. Both PRGMEA leaders expressed alarm over the newly imposed 29% reciprocal U.S. tariffs on Pakistani exports. They reported growing buyer hesitancy, delayed shipments, and increasing order cancellations—diverting business to regional rivals like Bangladesh, India and Vietnam. "Restoring buyer confidence in the U.S. is essential," said Sheikh.



Briefs

Trukish envoy calls on Minister

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye Dr. Irfan Neziroglu called on Federal Minister for Defence Production, Muhammad Raza Hayat Harraj here on Thursday. They discussed matters of mutual interest and expressed satisfaction on brotherly relations between two countries, said a press release. The Federal Minister appreciated defence cooperation between Pakistan and Turkiye and expressed Pakistan's strong desire to broaden its partnership with Turkiye in all fields. Both sides stressed on joint ventures in emerging technologies and investment by private sector companies in these areas would be useful. The Minister was impressed with the progress of Turkish Defence Industry. He also mentioned the high quality of Pakistan's Defence Industrial Products. He expressed his gratitude for Defence collaboration and support Turkiye has been extending to Pakistan for provision and modernization of various defence systems. He also emphasized on importance of defence industrial/technical cooperation as integral part of Pak-Turkey strategic relationship.

LHC upholds civil judge's removal

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has upheld the dismissal of Civil Judge Sheikh Ali Jafar, who acted as a Returning Officer (RO) and was found guilty of tempering with election results. A three-member bench led by Justice Sajid Mehmood Sethi ruled that the judges crossed the line by changing official results nearly a month after they were issued. The court found that winning candidate Asghar Ali Asghar's votes were unfairly slashed and handed over to losing rival Maqbool Ajmed Javed. One witness testified that the judges even begged for forgiveness once the matter came under scrutiny. Instead of following the rulebook, judges sent the altered results directly to the Provincial Election Commission, bypassing the DRO. No notice was served to the opposing side and the changes were made behind closed doors. Despite earlier relief from the Service Tribunal, the judge's appeal hit a dead end after a through inquiry found him guilty of misconduct. The court said the judge had no business altering results post-declaration and his sacking was fully justified.

China supports Iran-US indirect nuclear talks

BEIJING: The Chinese foreign minister has expressed support for indirect talks between Iran and the United States, recognizing the Islamic Republic's right to use peaceful nuclear program. Wang Yi made the remarks during a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi in Beijing on Wednesday, ahead of the third round of Tehran-Washington nuclear discussions and after the US imposed new sanctions on Iran's energy sector. Wang said Beijing opposes the use of force and "illegal" sanctions to try to resolve Iran's nuclear issue, according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement. "The Chinese side commends Iran's promise not to develop nuclear weapons and respects Iran's right to utilize nuclear energy peacefully," he added. The top diplomat also noted that China is willing to deepen coordination and cooperation with Iran on international and regional affairs. Araghchi, for his part, hailed China as a friendly country, saying it played a very important and positive role in previous nuclear negotiations. - Agencies

Moroccan film "Mica" screened at Francophone Film Mela in Islamabad

The screening was graced by the presence of H.E. Mohamed Karmoune, Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan, who introduced the film and shared its significance with the audience



MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Moroccan film "Mica, Poor Child" captivated audiences in Islamabad this week as part of the ongoing Francophone Film Mela, a cultural showcase celebrating French-speaking countries and their cinematic contributions. The screening was graced by the presence of H.E. Mohamed Karmoune, Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan, who introduced the film and shared its significance with the audience. In his opening remarks, the Ambassador described the film as a

poignant reflection of childhood struggle, societal inequality, and resilience—themes that resonate far beyond the borders of Morocco.

"This film tells a story that is both deeply Moroccan and universally human," the Ambassador noted. "It sheds light on the challenges faced by children from underprivileged backgrounds, while also highlighting their courage, their dreams, and their capacity to overcome hardship." Abel Monem, CEO of Aour du Cinéma, also addressed the gathering. He revealed that his organization is set to host a major event this November, aimed at reinventing and revitalizing the cinema culture in Pakistan. Marc Piton,



Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs, Embassy of France also attended the event. Directed by a rising talent in Moroccan cinema, "Mica, follows the life of Mica, a young boy from an impoverished neighborhood, navigating the complexities of daily survival. With minimal resources but a heart full of hope, Mica's journey portrays both the beauty and the harshness of growing up in a marginalized community. The film was well-received by the audience, who praised its powerful storytelling, emotional depth, and compelling performances. It offered a rare glimpse into the socio-economic realities of Morocco, brought to life through a

lens of empathy and artistic sensitivity. The Francophone Film Mela, organized by the embassies of French-speaking countries in Pakistan in collaboration with local cultural institutions, aims to promote diversity, dialogue, and mutual understanding through cinema. The inclusion of Mica highlights Morocco's growing influence in the global film industry and its commitment to sharing stories that matter. As the Mela continues to bring films from around the Francophone world to Islamabad, "Mica" stands out as a moving example of how cinema can transcend borders and connect people through shared human experiences.

Pakistan calls for resolving issues through dialogue

NEWS DESK

New York: Pakistan has called for reforming the multilateral trading system to ensure that it works for all and reflects the needs of developing countries at a UN Security Council Arria-formula meeting on "the impact of unilateralism and bullying practices on international relations." "Trade should be a bridge, not a barrier – a vehicle for peace and shared prosperity, not domination or isolation; We must resolve our differences through dialogue, not dictate terms through pressure," Ambassador Asim Fikr Ahmad, told the meeting held under the format named after a former Venezuelan Ambassador to the UN, Diego Arriva. "Only then can we build genuine trust in the rules-based order," the Pakistani envoy said, while underscoring the need for reviving faith in multilateralism and collective action. Arria Formula meetings are informal that enable Security Council members to have a frank and private exchange of views on relevant subjects. At the outset, China, which convened the 15-member Council meeting, accused the U.S. of using tariffs to bully other countries. "Under the guise of reciprocity and fairness, the U.S. is

playing a zero-sum game, which is essentially about subverting the existing international economic and trade order by means of tariffs, putting U.S. interests above the common good of the international community and advancing hegemonic ambitions of the U.S. at the cost of the legitimate interest of all countries," China's U.N. Ambassador Fu Cong said in his opening remarks.

Ambassador Fu also defended China for its "decisive countermeasures" after facing what he described as "U.S. abuse of tariffs." The United States dismissed China's meeting as a "performative maneuver" lacking substance or credibility. U.S. diplomat Ting Wu accused China of using unilateral unfair trade practices that hurt market economies around the world. In his comments, the Pakistani envoy called for promoting dialogue and diplomacy, discarding zero-sum approaches, shunning confrontation, and advancing mutually beneficial cooperation. "We must revive faith in multilateralism and collective action," Ambassador Asim added. The world today, he said, stands at a crossroads with wars, inequality, economic instability, and climate catastrophe threatening peace and security. "We are also witnessing the unraveling of hard-won norms that have underpinned global peace and cooperation for decades".

Trump demands Putin to 'stop' as Kyiv hit by Russian attack

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump has demanded that Russian President Vladimir Putin "stop" attacks on Ukraine as Kyiv reeled from the biggest Russian attack in months on Thursday. In a post on his social media platform Truth Social, Trump wrote, "I am not happy with the Russian strikes on Kyiv. Not necessary, and very bad timing. 'Vladimir, stop! 5000 soldiers a week are dying. Let's get the peace deal done!' Officials said at least eight people were killed in the attack and that Moscow had launched 70 missiles and 145 drones at Ukraine. As Russian missiles rained on Kyiv overnight in Moscow's biggest attack on Ukraine's capital in months, Anna Balamutova grabbed her children and ran to a shelter, saying they were saved by a "miracle". Outside their home in Kyiv's Sviatshynsky district, rescuers worked through the rubble of heavily destroyed buildings. A woman sat on a stool, caress-

ing a body covered in a blue sheet that lay on the grass. Balamutova, who left the city of Pavlograd further east earlier in the war as it increasingly came under attack, said her family was lucky to have made it to a nearby shelter. "If I lived further, I would not have been able to physically manage with two children... To pick them up in the middle of the night and run from ballistic missiles," the 36-year-old said. "It was just a miracle that we were saved by the fact that the alarm was raised and we came down immediately." She ran with her five-year-old and 14-year-old during a wave of explosions. "People ran in blood, some were carried, screaming, children, it was very terrible... I don't have any explanation [for] how this can happen in the modern world," she said. Ukraine has been pounded incessantly by Russia since Moscow invaded in February 2022, with Thursday's attack the latest in a spate of deadly strikes on civilian areas over recent weeks. It came hours after Trump criticised Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for not ceding Crimea – annexed by Russia in 2014 – to Moscow as part of a peace deal. Olena Davydiuk, who was woken up by explosions and ran outside as "windows and doors started falling out", said she had no doubt about Russia's aims. "Why is Russia doing this? Well, it wants to destroy us, that's all," the 33-year-old lawyer said, with rubble in the street behind her. "It wants to destroy the boys at the front, and us in the rear." Moscow said it had fired on military targets and that the "objectives of the strike have been achieved". As rescuers worked through the rubble of Soviet-era blocks of flats, residents – mostly elderly people and many families with children – sat on benches outside, some holding their belongings.

United States, envoy meets Gohar, discusses 'political situation'

Both sides engaged in an open exchange of views on matters of mutual interest and expressed their commitment to maintaining communication in the future.

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: US Political Counsellor of the American Embassy, Zachary V. Harkenrider, called on Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Thursday, and held detailed discussion on a wide range of issues. The US envoy visited the residence of the PTI chairman, where they discussed the political, economic, and security landscape of Pakistan, according to a PTI spokesperson. Both sides engaged in an open exchange of views on matters of mutual interest and expressed their commitment to maintaining communication in the future. Former PTI Information Secretary, Rauf Hasan, also attended the meeting. Earlier, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUIF) leaders "opposed" political alliance with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for anti-government movement, ARY News reported on Monday, citing sources. Maulana Fazlur Rehman chaired JUIF Central General Council meeting in which party leaders opposed the alliance with PTI and suggested initiating anti-government moment on its own, the sources said. The meeting decided to establish contacts with all political parties. The meeting also opposed the KP Mines and Minerals Bil. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) leader Hafiz Hamdullah also ruled out any alliance with the PTI. Hafiz Hamdullah in his interview on a private TV, said more than three months had passed, but the PTI did not address JUI concerns, adding the PTI leaders lacked trust with regard to walk with JUI.

Govt invites bids for majority stake in PIA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has officially invited expressions of interest (EOIs) from potential investors for the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), marking a major development in its bid to offload a controlling stake in the national flag carrier. According to the Privatisation Commission, the decision has been made to sell between 51% and 100% of PIA shares, along with management control, to the prospective buyer. Interested parties have until June 3, 2025 to submit their EOIs. As part of the process, the government has announced a number of incentives for investors. These include relief from 18% general sales tax (GST) on the purchase or lease of new aircraft. Additionally, protection and coverage will be provided in certain tax and legal cases, the commission stated. The move also involves the transfer of specific liabilities listed on PIA's balance sheet, aimed at making the offer more attractive to potential buyers. This privatisation effort is a central component of the government's broader economic reform agenda, as it seeks to ease the financial burden of state-owned enterprises while attracting foreign and local investment into the aviation sector. - DNA

KP cabinet vows to give befitting response to India

He further assured that any adventurism from India would not go unanswered

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet has strongly condemned India's hostile stance towards Pakistan after Pahalgam incident and vowed to respond with full force to any act of aggression by India. KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, while addressing the cabinet meeting, asserted that India would have to face serious consequences if it attempted any aggression, using Pahalgam incident as a reason, towards Pakistan. He stressed that the nation stood united on any matter of national security and would not hesitate sacrificing their lives for the cause. He also emphasised the hostility of India in the region, stating that Indian government had always been a threat to the region's peace. He stated that the response of the Indian government after the incident was unfortunate. The Chief Minister further said that the Modi government was trying to misuse the unfortunate incident to display hostility and aggression towards Pakistan. 'Pahalgam incident is a clear evidence of failure of Indian government' he stated. He also expressed condolences over the loss of lives in the incident. Gandapur noted that the Indian government was playing a blame-game in front of the world to hide their own state's failures. He further assured that any adventurism from India would not go unanswered.

Ayub moves SC after IHC rejects his appeal

According to Ayub, the High Court rejected his petition even after he had provided all the proofs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Opposition leader Omar Ayub has moved Supreme Court of Pakistan after Islamabad High Court rejected his appeal in NA-18 Haripur election rigging case. Omar Ayub requested the Supreme Court to declare the Islamabad High Court's decision, made on April 9, as null and void. He said the High Court did not properly investigate the facts mentioned in his application. According to Ayub, the High Court rejected his petition even after he had provided all the proofs. He also claimed that the decision of the Election Commission was not based on merit and was therefore illegal.



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