



Islamabad POST

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Trump wants 'free' transit for US ships in Panama, Suez canals

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Naqvi blames foreign hands for terror plot

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Afridi slams Modi, India's allegations

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Briefs

PM praises security forces for foiling timely action

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif lauded the security forces for successfully foiling an infiltration attempt by terrorists of Fitnah al-Khawarij from Afghanistan into the Hasan Khel area of North Waziristan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a statement issued here, the Prime Minister paid rich tribute to the security forces for eliminating all 54 Khawarij terrorists during the operation. He commended the forces for their outstanding professionalism and timely response, which thwarted the terrorists' plans. "The security forces have once again demonstrated excellent professional skills by intercepting the terrorists in a timely manner," the Prime Minister said.

'Indian Army not to be allowed to pass through Punjab'

ISLAMABAD: Khalistan Movement leader Gurbhag Singh Pannun, while expressing solidarity with Pakistan, said that they would not allow the Indian Army to pass through Punjab to attack Pakistan. "We will not allow the Indian Army to pass through Punjab to attack Pakistan," Gurbhag Singh Pannun categorically said. He said that India does not have the courage to attack Pakistan. Pannun emphasized that they stand firmly with the people of Pakistan. "We, twenty million Sikhs, stand with Pakistan like a brick wall," he asserted. He further said that the oppression of minorities, especially Sikhs, in India is evident to all.

Pakistan's first bullet train to connect Lahore and Rawalpindi

DNA

RAWALPINDI: In another historic move to revolutionize travel in Punjab, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved the launch of the country's first ever bullet train between Lahore and Rawalpindi. The project will not only reduce the travel time between the two cities to just two and a half hours, but will also standardize the travel through modernizing the railway infrastructure. The announcement came after a high-level meeting chaired by Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb and Federal Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi, following the directives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. According to the details, a working group has been formed to finalize the feasibility and implementation timeline, which includes Provincial Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan, CM's Advisor Shahid Tarar, and senior railway officials. The recommendations will be presented to the Chief Minister next week. During the meeting, railway officials provided a detailed briefing on the existing rail network and proposed upgradation. Marriyum Aurangzeb underscored that the bullet train initiative reflects the vision of Maryam Nawaz Sharif and the CM Maryam Nawaz to fulfillment of the commitment to the people.

Highest-ever

54 terrorists killed as infiltration bid foiled

ISPR says this was highest-ever number of terrorists killed in single engagement during campaign against terrorism

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Security forces foiled an attempt to infiltrate the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and killed at least 54 terrorists in the Hassan Khel area of North Waziristan district, the military's media wing said on Sunday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the security forces picked up movement of a group of militants, who were trying to infiltrate through the Pak-Afghanistan border in the general area of Hassan Khel, North Waziristan district, on the night between April 25, 26 and 27. "Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. As a result of precise and skillful engagement, all 54 khawarij have been sent to hell," it said. Fitna Al Khawarij is a term the state uses to refer to the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The security forces also recovered a large cache of weapons, ammunition and explosives from the killed terrorists. "Intelligence reports indicate that this group of khawarij was specifically

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To monitor operations

Iran's president visits site of port blast that killed 40

Residents urged to avoid going outside as fires still blaze more than 24 hours after explosion

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's president visited on Sunday the scene of a massive port blast that killed at least 40 people and injured more than 1,000, as fires still blazed more than 24 hours after the explosion. The blast occurred on Saturday at Shahid Rajaei Port in southern Iran, near the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of world oil output passes. With choking smoke and air pollution spreading throughout the area, all schools and offices in Bandar Abbas, the nearby capital of Hormozgan province, were ordered closed on Sunday to allow authorities to focus on the emergency effort, state TV said. The health ministry urged residents to avoid going outside "until further notice" and to use protective masks. Arriving in Bandar Abbas, President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed his appreciation to first responders, adding "we have come to see first-hand if there is anything or any issue that the government can follow up on". "We will try to take care of the families who lost their loved ones, and we will definitely

Continued on Page 06

Military ill-preparedness exposes Modi's challenge

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Experts caution that despite acquiring new weapons and making defence alliances, India's troops are still ill-prepared for a possible confrontation in the face of escalating tensions, despite the country's rapid military upgrade since its 2019 fight with Pakistan, The News reported. According to reporters Mujib Mashal and Suhassini Raj's article for The New York Times, Indian officials had to face an uncomfortable truth the last time the tensions between India and Pakistan turned into a face-off. It showed

Continued on Page 06

Pezeshkian to visit Baku today

WEB DESK

TEHRAN: President Masoud Pezeshkian will head to Baku on Monday for an official visit at the invitation of his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, opening a new chapter of expanding cooperation between two brotherly countries with deep historical ties. The trip, taking place in line with Iran's efforts in recent years to revive relations between the two countries, is by far the most important hallmark of the Pezeshkian administration's neighborhood policy. Iran's neighborhood policy, a legacy of late President Ebrahim Raisi, is motivated by the overarching objective of creating a new regional order where countries make sovereign choices in their partnerships,

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Donald Trump cabinet members clash on tariff talks with China

"I don't know if President Trump has spoken with President Xi," says treasury secretary

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: Members of Donald Trump's cabinet gave conflicting messages on Sunday about whether negotiations with China over tariffs are taking place, as the Republican president has asserted. The Trump administration signalled openness last week to de-escalating a trade war between the world's two largest economies that has raised fears of recession. Trump said talks were under way with China on tariffs and that he and Chinese President Xi Jinping have spoken. Yet Beijing has denied that any trade talks are occurring. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, a key player in US trade talks with multiple countries, said on Sunday that he had interactions with his Chinese counterparts last week during International Monetary Fund meetings in Washington, but did not discuss the tariff standoff. In a separate television interview, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said the United States was holding daily conversations with China over tariffs. "Every day we are in conversation with

China, along with those other 99, 100 countries that have come to the table," Rollins said on CNN's "State of the Union." Asked on ABC's "This Week" whether the United States and China were holding talks on tariffs, Bessent did not address the question. "I had interaction with my Chinese counterpart, but it was more on the traditional things like financial stability, global economic early warnings. I don't know if President Trump has spoken with President Xi (Jinping)," he said. Bessent, who said last week that tariff negotiations with Beijing would be a "slog," did not give a timetable for any potential agreement with China. He said a trade deal can take months, but a de-escalation and an agreement in principle can be achieved sooner and would keep tariffs from ratcheting back to the maximum level. Trump's erratic, and often confusing, rollout of tariffs has hit countries ranging from the largest US trading partners, like Canada, Mexico and China. The result has been almost unprecedented market volatility and serious damage to investor trust in US assets.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the American financing company World Liberty Financial called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad. – DNA

UK calls for de-escalating situation

Dar highlighted India's false accusations

WEB DESK

LONDON: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Sunday spoke with the UK's Foreign Secretary David Lammy and him on the current regional situation, the Foreign Office said in a statement. Dar highlighted India's false accusations, baseless propaganda, and unilateral measures including illegal decision to put Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance – a clear violation of India's international obligations.

'Navruz' a symbol of rebirth, says Ambassador

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir has said that 'Navruz' is a symbol of rebirth, unity, love and happiness in Tajikistan and other regional countries, which have been celebrating this festival for centuries in welcoming spring. Navruz has been celebrated with enthusiasm for centuries in regional countries including Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and others Iraq, Mongolia, Bangladesh and China, which shows the mutual cultural unity between these countries, the Ambassador said.

Pahalgam attack

Pakistan slams India for seeking hydro war: Asif

Asif says India would gain nothing by violating WB-brokered treaty; Tarar terms treaty suspension "immature and childish"

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has castigated India for exploiting the Pahalgam attack, which claimed lives of 26 tourists, to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty for domestic political gains, warning that New Delhi is attempting to "unleash a hydro war" without any evidence or investigation. New Delhi has linked Islamabad to the attack without offering any evidence and took a flurry of punitive measures to downgrade ties including suspending Indus Waters Treaty, revoking visas of Pakistanis, closing Wagah-Attari border crossing among others. Pakistan has responded in kind to India's measures and warned of suspending Simla Agreement, besides closing its

Continued on Page 06

Islamabad, Beijing oppose hegemonic policies

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Amid ongoing tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi after Pahalgam attack, Pakistan and China on Sunday reiterated their firm resolve to uphold regional peace and stability. The development came as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and

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Crackdown launched on illegal occupation on Railway land

“Not even an inch of railway land will be allowed to be encroached upon,” Hanif Abbasi said while launching a major operation against Encroachments in Rawalpindi Railway Division

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Sunday said the government will not allow anyone to occupy railway land. “Not even an inch of railway land will be allowed to be encroached upon,” he said while launching a major operation against Encroachments in Rawalpindi Railway Division. The operation is the result of the Minister’s guidance and firm commitment, and the collective efforts of government institutions have made the fight against encroach-

ments effective. The operation, led by Divisional Superintendent Rawalpindi Nooruddin Dawood aimed to recover the valuable railway land.

The operation has been supported by Railway Police, Anti-Encroachment staff, and the civil administration, which has significantly contributed to its success. During the operation, illegal wooden structures, which had been present near the Murid Railway Bridge for the last two decades and had transformed from temporary shelters of nomadic people into permanent buildings, were demolished during this operation. Before the

operation, approximately 14 kanal of land was illegally occupied, with an estimated worth in millions of rupees. Hanif Abbasi said that this operation is being conducted solely for the rule of law, the improvement of the railway system and the benefit of the public. He also mentioned that this operation would be carried out across the entire country to recover all railway lands and send a strong message against encroachments nationwide. The minister said this initiative of the government will not only protect the railway system but also serve the public interest.

2-day China Film Festival opens

LAHORE: The 2-day China Film Festival commenced with pomp and show at Universal Cinema, Emporium Mall, offering a pungent taste of Chinese films, culture, and societal vibes. The China Film Festival (April 26-27) is the first initiative rolled out in Punjab – the hub of cinemas in Pakistan – in collaboration with the Chinese Consulate Lahore, the Institute of International Relations & Media Research, the China National Film Administration, the China Film Archive, and the Information & Culture Department, Government of Punjab, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. Speaking at the China Film Festival’s launch ceremony, Chinese Consul General in Lahore Zhao Shiren said that the China Film Festival in Lahore comes at the right time and at the right venue. Like food and language, he added, film – through the universal language of cinema – has a unique power and strong appeal to bridge gaps, break barriers, and bring hearts together, fostering mutual understanding and dialogue among people by connecting cultures and civilizations. The consulate selected five Chinese films in the original Chinese language with English subtitles to entertain Lahorites and Punjabis: The Wandering Earth and its sequel; The Battle of Lake Changjin, a historical war movie related to the Korean Peninsula; My People, My Country, a Chinese anthology film chronicling pivotal historical moments from 1949 to 2019; and Great Love Dunhuang, a biographical drama depicting the extraordinary life of a female archaeologist who preserved the Mogao Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northwest China.—DNA

Ducky charged for motorway stunts & speeding

ISLAMABAD:The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Saturday initiated legal action against popular You tuber Saadur Rehman – popularly known as Ducky Bhai – for performing dangerous stunts while driving on the motorway. The charges followed a video he posted online, showing him exceeding speed limits and driving without holding the steering wheel. The video quickly went viral on social media, drawing heavy criticism from users who condemned the reckless behavior. Many people expressed concern over the potential dangers of such actions. In response to the incident, the motorway police registered a case against Ducky Bhai for violating traffic laws. In an official statement, the motorway police confirmed the registration of a case, reiterating their commitment to ensuring safety on national highways. A spokesperson for the NHMP said: “The video in question clearly shows a driver violating traffic rules and endangering not only his own life but also that of others. We have taken serious notice of this violation and are proceeding with legal action.” The spokesperson further added that the video had been geo-located and verified, and that appropriate sections of the law were being invoked in the FIR. The Motorway Police have also released a video message on their social media platforms to raise awareness about the dangers of such stunts and to warn others against imitating similar behaviour. The authorities have appealed to the public to follow traffic rules and cooperate with law enforcement in maintaining road safety. They emphasized the importance of safe driving to protect lives.—APP

Pivotal role of private sector in economic future discussed

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) commends the recent economic dialogue hosted by the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington DC, where global financial institutions, corporate representatives, and Pakistan’s economic leadership came together to discuss the country’s economic turnaround. The dialogue highlighted the crucial role of the private sector in driving Pakistan’s economic future, as emphasized by Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb during his keynote address. The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood agrees with the Finance Minister’s statement that the government’s role is to provide policy frameworks that ensure continuity, while the private sector leads the way in innovation and growth. This shift, likened to the transformative impact of artificial intelligence, highlights the evolving role of businesses in shaping Pakistan’s economic landscape. He said that the

APBF believes that the government must prioritize dialogue with the private sector and industry stakeholders when formulating policies. This collaborative approach is essential for creating an environment conducive to sustainable business growth and attracting global investment. APBF President, Mr. Ibrahim Qureshi, applauds the Finance Minister’s acknowledgment of the private sector’s potential and urges the government to establish a more structured process for regular consultations with businessmen and business forums such as the APBF. He stresses that only through active engagement with the business community can the government develop policies that are both practical and aligned with the needs of the market. “The private sector is the engine of growth for any economy. Pakistan’s businesses, especially in the IT, manufacturing, and services sectors, have the potential to drive the country’s economic

transformation. However, to unlock this potential, it is crucial that policymakers consult with industry leaders and business forums, ensuring that business-friendly policies are developed that support growth and job creation,” Mr. Qureshi stated. The private sector’s role is particularly important in the context of Pakistan’s growth in sectors such as IT, manufacturing, and services, all of which hold significant potential to boost the economy. To realize this potential, the APBF urges the government to prioritize regular dialogues with business leaders to address concerns such as ease of doing business, regulatory reforms, and access to finance. The APBF also calls for a renewed focus on infrastructure development, particularly in sectors like technology and digital services, which are vital for long-term growth. A predictable and stable business environment, supported by comprehensive regulatory frameworks.—APP

Govt urged to pass oil price relief to consumers

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) Chairman Shahbaz Aslam has strongly urged the government to pass on the benefits of the recent international oil price cuts to local consumers, stressing that the government has failed to do so for the last two consecutive price revisions. Shahbaz Aslam expressed his concerns regarding the discrepancy between global oil price reductions and the prices at which petroleum products are being sold in Pakistan. Despite a significant decrease in international oil prices, the government has not adjusted domestic prices accordingly, which has placed an additional financial burden on businesses and consumers alike. “Global oil prices have decreased substantially in recent weeks, but local consumers have not felt the benefits of these price cuts. The government’s failure to adjust domestic oil prices accordingly is causing unnecessary strain on businesses, especially in the manufacturing and industrial sectors,” said Shahbaz Aslam. He highlighted that the rising cost of energy, including fuel, has been one of the key factors contributing to increased production costs in industries across Pakistan. This, in turn, affects the prices of goods and services, making local products less competitive in the global market. The FRIA Chairman emphasized that if the government were to pass on the benefits of the oil price cuts, it would help lower production costs, boost industrial output, and improve the overall business environment. “The government must act in the best interest of the public and the business community by passing on these savings from oil price reductions to local consumers. Doing so will not only ease the financial burden on families and businesses but also enhance Pakistan’s competitiveness in international markets,” added Aslam. The FRIA Chairman also pointed out that businesses are already facing numerous challenges, including rising energy costs, inflation, and unpredictable supply chains. The failure to adjust domestic oil prices in line with global trends exacerbates these issues and further hampers economic recovery and growth. He urged the government to take immediate action by revising fuel prices in accordance with the global oil market, ensuring that the benefits of price reductions are directly passed on to consumers. He also called for transparent pricing mechanisms that reflect international market conditions and help foster an environment of trust between the government, businesses, and consumers.—DNA

Drone technology vital to boost sugarcane yield, cut costs

MULTAN: The introduction of drone technology has the potential to revolutionize the sugarcane sector in Pakistan by reducing costs, increasing productivity, and promoting environmental safety, said agricultural scientists and sugarcane experts Dr. Asif Tanveer and Dr. Shahid Afghan while talking to APP. They emphasized that urgent adoption of this precision agriculture tool could help Pakistan achieve its goal of becoming one of the world’s leading sugarcane producers while doubling farmers’ income. According to Dr. Asif Tanveer, the sugarcane sector faces serious structural challenges, including low productivity of around 750

maunds per acre, uneconomic landholding size of less than five acres, poor input use efficiency, high pest losses, and minimal mechanization. He said drone technology offers a way out by ensuring precise and need-based application of fertilizers and pesticides, boosting input use efficiency, lowering production costs, and protecting farmer health. Dr. Tanveer highlighted that drones, once seen as hobbyist tools, are now extensively used in agriculture, especially for crop scouting and spraying operations. He noted that commercial production of spray drones has made it feasible for farmers to adopt this technology at reasonable costs. “There is

a labor shortage for timely fertilizer and pesticide application in sugarcane fields. Drone spraying can address this gap, while also reducing environmental pollution and health risks associated with conventional pesticide use,” he stated. Dr. Shahid Afghan added that conventional spraying methods expose farm workers and their families to dangerous chemicals, leading to serious health problems like cancer, asthma, and neurological disorders. He stressed that drones offer a safer, environmentally friendly alternative, capable of protecting both the crop and human health. Dr. Asif Tanveer informed that currently, farmers spend about Rs. 1000 per

acre for manual spraying, using about 120 liters of water. Drone spraying reduces the water requirement to just 10 liters per acre, a 90 percent saving, while lowering the spray cost to around Rs. 800 per acre compared to Rs. 1500 by tractor sprayers. Drones can spray during the day or night and complete one acre of spraying in just 5-10 minutes, compared to 4-5 hours manually. He further explained that when spreading fertilizer manually, one person needs a full day to cover eight acres, but with a drone, the same task can be completed in an hour, and the liquid fertilizer is distributed more evenly. The operational cost of using liquid fertilizer is also

lower than that of solid fertilizer, helping farmers maximize economic benefits at minimal cost. Dr. Tanveer revealed that the absorption rate of traditional dry nitrogen fertilizer is only about 30 percent, while nano urea, which can be sprayed through drones, is absorbed up to 86 percent by crops. “Drone spraying has reduced the use of fertilizers and pesticides by 25 to 50 percent, saving up to 40 percent of total input costs while boosting yield by 10 to 30 percent,” he added. Sharing findings from recent studies, he stated that drone spraying results in 75 to 90 percent savings in insecticide use compared to hand and tractor spraying, respectively. APP



GUJRAT: Female entrepreneur from Türkiye visited Gujrat Chamber of Commerce and Industry. She had fruitful meetings with the President and other office bearers. Both sides determined to enhance business relations. —DNA

Nation united with forces, will give befitting response: Asif

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Asif stated on Sunday that entire Pakistan is united with its armed forces and will give a strong response to Modi government just like we responded in Pulwama incident. In an exclusive conversation with a private news channel, Khawaja Asif emphasized that the nation is united with its armed forces and will take a firm stance against any aggression. He cautioned that a conflict between two nuclear powers would pose a significant threat to regional and global peace. Khawaja Asif further said that this matter has been brought to the attention of the world community, which can conduct an inquiry and launch an investigation. However, “if things escalate, no one can stop us, he warned, adding, if Modi chooses to escalate tensions, we will chase him all the way home.” He said that Modi is known for spreading false propaganda, repeating the same tactics used during Pulwama. However, Pakistan is strong enough to respond effectively. Responding to a query, he categorically stated that Pakistan’s nation and armed forces are ready to defend the country’s sovereignty, and no compromise will be made on this principle. He also extended his appreciation to the Pakistani media for effectively countering the Indian media’s misinformation campaigns and bringing the truth to light.—APP

CCI meeting helps to resolve water disputes: Kundi

LAHORE: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday emphasized the significance of the recent Council of Common Interests (CCI) meeting, saying it as a vital step toward resolving the longstanding water dispute among provinces. The Governor held an interactive session with senior journalists at the Governor House Lahore, where he addressed a range of critical issues facing the province and the country. Former Member of the Punjab Provincial Assembly and Pakistan Peoples Party leader, Sania Kamran, was also present during the discussion. Governor Kundi said that the CCI meeting

had created a path toward the solution of the water dispute. Furthermore, he emphasized that with the already sensitive situations in two provinces, we must ensure that no additional grievances arise in Sindh. Discussing the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Governor Kundi expressed serious concern over deteriorating infrastructure and security conditions. He highlighted the case of a 25-kilometer road in Kurram district that remains closed due to presence of troubling elements in the province. He said that the provincial government’s inability to manage even such a small stretch of road is proof of its lacklustre

administration. He raised serious concerns about the prevalent lawlessness and unrest and called for a thorough investigation by the relevant authorities. He further pointed out that even South KP and the merged tribal districts continue to face alarming law and order challenges, calling for immediate attention and intervention to restore stability and development in these regions. Governor Kundi reaffirmed his commitment to raising these concerns at the highest forums and working collaboratively across political and provincial lines to ensure peace and progress for all citizens.—DNA

Bahria university convocation held at Karachi

DNA

LAHORE: The 11th Convocation Ceremony of Bahria University Health Sciences Campus (BUHSC) Karachi was held at the Ibn-e-Sina Auditorium. The event was conducted in two sessions: the morning session, presided over by Chief Guest Professor Dr. Mohammad Shoaib Shafi, President College of Physicians & Surgeons of Pakistan (CPS) and afternoon session by Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC). Director General Bahria University Health Sciences Campus, Vice Admiral (R) Ather Mukhtar HI(M), delivered a welcome address, and extended heartfelt congratulations to the gradu-

ates for their unwavering commitment, dedication, and hard work in reaching this significant milestone. He further advised students to practice integrity, compassion, collaboration, and strive for innovation to meet the health challenges of our time. Following the welcome address in both sessions, degrees were conferred by the respective Chief Guests, after which the Oath Taking Ceremony was conducted by Major General (R) Shehla M. Baqai HI(M), Dean Health Sciences and Principal, Bahria University Medical College. Certificates of merit and medals were awarded to outstanding students, recognizing their academic excellence. In total, 285 graduates received degrees across various dis-

ciplines, including MPhil, MBBS, BDS, BS Nursing, Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), and BS Medical Lab Technology (MLT). In his address, Chief Guest Professor Dr. Mohammad Shoaib Shafi, President College of Physicians & Surgeons of Pakistan (CPS) congratulated all graduates, especially gold and silver medalists. He appreciated their hard work, along with their parents’ support, that brought them this proud moment. During the afternoon session, the Chief Guest, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, appreciated the graduates, expressing his unwavering confidence in their potential to become capable and visionary leaders of tomorrow.



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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	
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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov visiting different stalls along with others during National Sovereignty and Children's Day at the Turkish Embassy.

Pakistan united against India's malicious narratives: Kohistani

Kheal Das also alleged that India is perpetrating terrorism against Pakistan, citing the recent attack on the Jaffar Express as a glaring example of such state-sponsored aggression.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The State Minister for Religious Affairs Kheal Das Kohistani Sunday declared that Pakistan stands united and strong, unwavering in its determination to counter India's false narratives and protect its sovereignty at all costs. Pakistan will take all necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and dignity, and will not be intimidated by India's false propaganda and hostile actions, he said while speaking to PTV news channel.

Kheal Das Kohistani, credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with successfully exposing India's false narratives, showcasing Pakistan's resilience in the face of external pressure. Kohistani highlighted that Pakistan has been the most affected country by terrorism globally and the international community acknowledges the immense sacrifices made by the nation in the war against terror. Kheal Das also alleged that India is perpetrating terrorism against Pakistan, citing the recent attack on the Jaffar Express as a glaring example of such state-sponsored aggression. He further stated that Pakistan had already communicated to India that any changes to the Indus Water Treaty were not feasible, prompting India to orchestrate the Pahalgam issue as a means to exert pressure.

He warned that if India were to disrupt the water flow to Pakistan, it would have disastrous consequences for South Asia. Pakistan stands resolute, ready to counter any threat with unwavering determination and strength, he mentioned.

Minister emphasized that while Pakistan desires peace and wishes to coexist harmoniously, its pursuit of peace should not be misconstrued as a sign of weakness.

CDA chief inspects uplift work in E-12, C-14

The chairman also ordered the removal of encroachments and illegal constructions, emphasizing strict legal action

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa conducted inspections in Sectors E-12 and C-14 on Sunday, directing the officials to expedite development work and take strict action against illegal constructions and encroachments. During his visit, Randhawa emphasized zero tolerance for compromised construction quality and ordered the immediate removal of encroachments on CDA land. "There will be no compromise on standards," he stated, instructing the installation of main gates in E-12 and modern LED lighting on roads. He also called for completing infrastructure in E-12's sub-sectors to facilitate plot handovers. In Sector C-14, where 65% of development work is complete, Randhawa directed the release of funds to ensure timely project completion. He also mandated LED lighting for the area's roads. Additionally, the chairman ordered a crackdown on illegal constructions near Margalla National Park and Margalla Road, including utility disconnections and public awareness campaigns. "CDA land will be cleared of illegal occupants," he warned, urging the public to avoid investing in unauthorized properties. Randhawa reiterated CDA's commitment to planned development, vowing to utilize all resources to safeguard public land. The visit was attended by senior CDA and Islamabad Administration officials. It is pertinent to mention that Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa conducted a surprise visit to Park Enclave I, II, and III on Saturday to review ongoing development projects. Senior CDA officials, including members of administration, finance and planning, accompanied him. During the inspection, Randhawa assessed road infrastructure, water supply, sewerage systems, and beautification efforts. He directed immediate upgrading the main gate, road networks, parks and street lighting to enhance the area's aesthetics. "Park Enclave is a landmark project and all resources will be utilized to ensure its success," he stated. The chairman also ordered the removal of encroachments and illegal constructions, emphasizing strict legal action. Residents appreciated his visit, with Randhawa pledging regular follow-ups to address issues. Officials briefed him on progress, noting that 75% of plots in Phase II have been allotted, while electrical work in Phase III is nearing completion. Tenders for streetlights will soon be advertised. Randhawa instructed the Finance Wing to release funds promptly and prioritized boundary wall construction in Phase III. Additionally, he announced plans to allocate school and amenity plots in line with CDA regulations to meet residents' needs.

QAU once again crowned Pakistan's top university

ISLAMABAD: Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) has once again solidified its standing as Pakistan's premier institution, earning the distinction of being ranked #1 in the country and securing an impressive 137th position in Asia in the Times Higher Education (THE) Asia University Rankings 2025. According to QAU, this latest achievement continues QAU's tradition of excellence, with the university consistently recognized as Pakistan's best by all major global ranking agencies. Adding to its list of accolades, QAU was ranked 315th globally in the QS World University Rankings 2025, 86th in the QS Asia University Rankings 2025, and an outstanding 58th for Citations per Faculty – a testament to the impactful research produced by its scholars. The success of QAU is a collective triumph, made possible by the relentless dedication of its brilliant faculty, committed staff, talented students, and accomplished alumni. Together, they have propelled QAU to new heights, reinforcing the university's reputation as a beacon of knowledge, innovation, and academic excellence, an official of the university told APP. He said that despite facing significant financial constraints and budgetary challenges, QAU continues to shine brightly on the global academic stage. However, to sustain and build upon this legacy of excellence, urgent and sustained government support is essential. Investing in institutions like QAU is an investment in Pakistan's future – one that promises continued innovation, discovery, and global recognition. He also congratulated to the entire QAU family on this remarkable milestone.—APP

44m kids vaccinated during Polio campaign

ISLAMABAD: The government has successfully administered anti-polio drops to over 44 million children across Pakistan in five days during ongoing vaccination drive. According to the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC), the ongoing polio vaccination campaign is being conducted simultaneously in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The vaccination coverage has reached 97 percent in Punjab and Sindh, and 99 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. In the federal capital Islamabad, 99 percent of the target has been achieved, while Azad Jammu and Kashmir reported 100 percent coverage, and Gilgit-Baltistan achieved 99 percent. The NEOC further stated that an additional one million children are expected to be vaccinated over the next two days. Parents have been urged to fully cooperate with polio workers and ensure that all children under the age of five receive polio drops during every campaign.—APP

Govt allows Potassium Sulphate export from Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has finally permitted the export of potassium sulphate from Gwadar Port after issuing a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO), Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. The federal government has allowed two companies to export potassium sulphate from Gwadar Port, along with strict monitoring of quantitative restrictions to be implemented through the customs WeBOC system in order to check export data on a real-time basis. According to SRO 705(1)/2025, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Imports and Exports (Control) Act, 1950 (XXXIX of 1950), the federal government has directed that a further amendment be made to the Export Policy Order, 2022. In the SRO, in Schedule-I, in column (1), against Sr. No. 12, in column (4), after the word and full stop "agencies," the following shall be inserted: "export of potassium sulphate (K₂SO₄) (HS Code: 3104.3000) from Gwadar Port by companies manufacturing in the Gwadar Free Zone." Two major industries, namely, Agven Private Limited (fertilizer) and Hangeng Trade Company Private Limited (meat and agriculture processing) – are fully established and operational in the Gwadar North Free Zone. The overall consumption of potassium sulphate fertilizer in Pakistan is 50,000 tons per annum (average, according to National Fertilizer Development Center data).—DNA

Open courts held

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Muhammad Jawad Tariq and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan held open courts at their offices. A public relations officer told APP on Sunday that on this occasion, DIG Tariq and SSP Shoaib listened to the complaints and issues of the public as well as police officials. Senior police officers were also present on this occasion. During the open courts, they addressed the complaints of the citizens and marked their applications to the concerned officers for timely action on merit. They also directed them to send reports to their offices within the given time frame. They further stated that strict action would be taken against officials involved in bribery or corruption, and a zero-tolerance policy would be adopted in this regard. They also emphasized that Islamabad Police would leave no stone unturned in securing the lives and property of citizens. Such interactions will continue in the future to provide maximum relief to the citizens, DIG added. They mentioned that interactions during open courts would help promote friendly policing, ensure self-accountability and lead to the immediate resolution of citizens' problem. The protection of life, property and the self-respect of citizens comes first.—APP

Road safety workshop for children

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) Police organized a road safety workshop aimed at raising awareness among schoolchildren about traffic laws and safe road practices. A public relations officer told APP on Sunday that the event took place at Spirit School, Soan Garden Campus, and saw the participation of over 200 students in used. He said that officers from the education wing of ITP conducted the workshop in an engaging manner, focusing on critical topics such as cautious driving, the dangers of using mobile phones while driving, and the importance of seatbelt usage. The students were also educated on the risks of riding motorcycles without helmets, respecting other road users' rights, and using pedestrian bridges and zebra crossings. The session further highlighted the dangers of speeding, traffic signals, lane discipline, road crossing rules, and safe walking practices. Through interactive Q&A sessions and practical demonstrations, the workshop captured the students' interest and familiarized them with key traffic regulations. The primary goal of the workshop was to instill early awareness of traffic rules, road safety, and responsible citizenship, encouraging students to follow the law and promote safe travel among others. During the event, the education wing emphasized that creating awareness among children is an investment in the future, as they are the next generation of traffic discipline and road safety advocates. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (retd) Syed Zeeshan Haider praised the initiative.—APP

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Briefs

MoU to facilitate scholarships for Palestinian students

ISLAMABAD: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC) and Abbottabad University of Science and Technology (AUST) on Sunday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to offer scholarships to Palestinian students for the academic year 2025-2026.

The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, OIC-COMSTEC, and Prof. D. Mujaddad ur Rehman Vice Chancellor of Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, at a ceremony attended by senior officials from both COMSTEC and AUST. Under this collaboration, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology has committed to providing higher education opportunities to Palestinian students through both online and on-campus learning modes. This initiative is aimed at ensuring flexibility and promoting academic excellence among Palestinian youth. The UST Abbottabad will offer 40 scholarships in various undergraduate programs including Doctor of Physiotherapy, Doctor of Pharmacy, BS Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT), BS Microbiology, BS Food Sciences, BS Computer Science, and BS Software Engineering. Furthermore, a dedicated Freelancing Program in Computer Science and Software Engineering is also available online, offering as many as 2,000 placements to equip students with essential digital skills. This MoU is part of the broader "COMSTEC Scholarships and Research Fellowships for Palestinian Nationals" program, reflecting the commitment of Pakistan's higher education institutions towards supporting the academic pursuits of Palestinian youth. The ceremony marked a significant step towards strengthening international cooperation in higher education and fostering the empowerment of Palestinian students through quality education and skill development.—APP

ITP collects 121m in revenue

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has successfully facilitated over 42,000 citizens and collected more than Rs 121 million in licensing revenue during the first quarter of 2025. This achievement was made possible through the ITP's dedicated Khidmat Markaz network, mobile vans, and document collection counters. An ITP official told that six fully equipped centers operated at Shakarparian, F-6, Cascade Plaza, Swan Garden, G-14, and the Central Police Office (CPO), while mobile vans served remote and priority applicants. From January to March, the Shakarparian center emerged as the leader in performance with 12,532 learner permits and 1,127 renewals. The F-6 center followed with 4,166 learner permits and 543 renewals, while other centers also showed strong results: Cascade Plaza processed 163 learner permits and 95 renewals, Swan Garden recorded 350 learner permits and 185 renewals, G-14 handled 127 learner permits and 74 renewals, and the CPO issued 103 learner permits and 67 renewals. Mobile vans processed 681 learner permits and 329 renewals.—APP

MoU signed to promote Chinese medicines in Pak

The agreement was signed between the Belt & Road Medical Association (BRMA), an initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development (BRISD), and Guan'ai Future Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinics Project

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An MOU was signed last week in Zhengzhou, China, to set up a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) clinic in Islamabad, aimed at integrating TCM practices into modern healthcare systems. The clinic will provide treatments for chronic and stress-related conditions, including coronary artery disease, thyroid and breast nodules, vertigo, varicose veins, insomnia, and anxiety disorders. Additionally, it will promote TCM training and certification programs, facilitate cross-border health-

care exchanges, and encourage academic communication. The agreement was signed between the Belt & Road Medical Association (BRMA), an initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development (BRISD), and Guan'ai Future Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinics Project. This landmark agreement lays the foundation for future expansions into other major cities of Pakistan, with full funding provided by the Guan'ai Future TCM Clinics Project. "The BRMA is dedicated to promote the exchange of medical knowledge, best practices, and holistic healthcare solutions to foster a shared future among Belt

and Road countries, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. Through this collaboration, we seek to expand the global reach of TCM," said Dr. Shahbaz, Director General of BRMA. Peter Du, Director of the Guan'ai Future TCM Clinics Project, described the partnership as a historic milestone in strengthening China-Pakistan health cooperation. "With the support of Guan'ai Future, we see TCM not only as a tool for healing but also as a bridge connecting diverse cultures," he said. The partnership will be further spotlighted during the First Annual Conference on Future Traditional Chinese Medicine, to be held in

Changsha at the end of June 2025, where global experts and stakeholders will convene to discuss future innovations in TCM. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Qaiser Nawab, Chairman of BRISD said that the legal procedures to open a TCM clinic in Pakistan are as simple as other regular clinics which includes the registration with Healthcare Commission of the province where the clinic is located. The clinic should meet the minimum healthcare standards including facilities, hygiene and qualified practitioners. He further said such clinic could be registered as a company with the Securities

and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) or as a sole proprietorship with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). A healthcare license should be obtained from the relevant Provincial Healthcare Commission and all TCM practitioners should be properly registered with the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) or the National Council for Tibb. "For imports or sales of TCM products, approval is necessary from the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP). Additionally, a trade license should be applied from the local municipal authority," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Sweet Homes Zamurd Khan, along with Chancellor of Hamdard University Sadia Rashid, presents degrees to students during annual convocation at Pak China Friendship Center

Daducha dam construction to boost Pindi's water supply

RAWALPINDI: Punjab's Parliamentary Secretary Housing, Urban Development and Public Health Engineering Department Sultan Bajwa on the special instructions of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz visited the WASA Rawalpindi to review preparations for the monsoon season. During a meeting with Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi Muhammad Saleem Ashraf, Bajwa directed that preparations for the monsoon season should be completed on an emergency basis. He said obstacles to the flow of water in drains and drains across the city should be removed so that any kind of flood situation could be dealt with during the rains. All institutions would have to work together in that regard. He urged the relevant institutions to take steps to prevent encroachments on drains and dumping of building materials. Earlier, the WASA MD, in his briefing on the monsoon preparations, informed the parliamentary secretary that the Agency had completed 80 percent of the cleaning of sewer lines like every year, while the remaining work would be completed before May 15. The machinery used for drainage from low-lying areas during the rains had also been repaired, while all jetting, suction and dewatering machines were in working condition, he added. Saleem Ashraf further said funds had been sought from the Punjab Government for cleaning of the Leh Nullah and 15 major drains of the city. He said WASA was trying to provide basic facilities like clean drinking water and sewage to the citizens of Rawalpindi. He said several steps were being taken to further strengthen the active role of WASA. Professional engineers had been hired through the Punjab Public Source, who were playing their role for the betterment of the institution, he added. The WASA MD said they had tightened the noose around defaulters and for the first time in Agency's history, more than Rs 2 billion had been recovered lessening the financial problems. As regards the water situation, the MD said that the water requirements had increased with the onset of summer. Currently WASA was supplying 51 million gallons of water against the demand of 70 million gallons per day from three sources, including Rawal Dam, Khanpur Dam and tube-wells. He said to meet the shortage, WASA was working on mega projects, including under DREAMS which 12 million gallons of water would be obtained from Chahan Dam, an additional five million gallons from Rawal Dam, and eight million gallons from Khanpur Dam. The completion of the projects would help in removing the water shortage. Moreover, he said, work was being started on the feasibility project of Daducha Dam, while its construction work was also in full swing. The dam would be able to provide 35 million gallons of water per day. Parliamentary Secretary Bajwa appreciated the efforts of WASA Rawalpindi and said that according to the vision of the Chief Minister of Punjab, providing water and sewerage facilities to every citizen was the top priority and all resources should be utilized for that.—DNA

Crowded yet calm Capital's parks need more than visitors

ISLAMABAD: After a week-long hassle, every weekend thousands of Islamabad Capital Territory residents throng different parks across the city to spend some leisure time close to nature. Grassy tracts, blooming flowers and chirping birds soothe these visitors and recharge their spirits for another busy week ahead. Commonly the minors who have more attraction for these parks enjoy much here on weekly holidays. Not only

for locals, Islamabad's parks are also a favorite spot for people coming from other cities to enjoy these green spaces offering much-needed breathing room in a fast-paced life. However, the increasing footfall at its known recreational spots like Lake View Park, Rose and Jasmine Garden, Daman-e-Koh, Shah Allah Ditta Caves and Saidpur Village is putting pressure on their upkeep. Since, Islamabad is known for its clean air, serene

environment and wide stretches of greenery, its bustling parks where children enjoy swings and slides and families relish picnic parties, need more attention due to visitors' pressure. If students come here for studies and group discussion, other people have their own reasons like enjoying leisure time, sports, walks or simply to spend a peaceful afternoon. But as the number of visitors grows, so does the pressure on the parks them-

selves. These places were not designed to handle such large crowds on a daily basis. While the city continues to expand and tourism rises, the maintenance of these parks is becoming tedious in view of irresponsible attitude of visitors. "People who come from different areas and many among them are to careless and litter these parks with wrappers, empty tins, tissue papers and sometimes by throwing edibles brought for picnic.—APP

IIUI secures trademark registration

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to protect its institutional integrity and brand identity, the International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) has officially secured the registration of its name and abbreviation under the Trade Marks Ordinance 2001. The certification, issued by the Government of Pakistan's Trade Marks Registry, confirms IIUI's legal ownership of its identity under Trade Mark No. 667973 in class 41, covering education, training, cultural and entertainment services, said a press release. This milestone comes at a critical time, as the university sought to address growing concerns over the use of similar acronyms by other institutions, which risked creating confusion in the academic community and public discourse. The trademark registration marks a definitive step in asserting IIUI's rightful identity and setting a legal precedent for brand protection in the education sector. The achievement, which is the result of a dedicated three-year effort by the legal team, including Muhammad Ramzan Khan, Legal Advisor, IIUI, and Naseer Ahmad, In-House Lawyer, IIUI, stands as a testament to their commendable work. Their persistent and strategic handling of the case ensured the university's claim was effectively recognized and ratified by the Intellectual Property Organization (IPO) of Pakistan. Their sustained engagement not only culminated in success but also reinforced the university's commitment to safeguarding its legacy and academic credibility. As IIUI has been using its name, abbreviation, and logo since its inception, the unauthorized use of these identifiers by outside elements in recent years had raised serious concerns. With this landmark registration, the university now holds the exclusive legal right to its identity and is positioned to take appropriate legal action against any infringement, ensuring that its name and reputation are fully protected moving forward.—DNA

PMYP makes significant strides in youth empowerment

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP) has made significant strides in empowering the country's youth. According to an available official document, the program's core focus was empowering youth through a comprehensive 4E framework, built on four key pillars: Education, Employment, Engagement, and Environment. The document claimed that this comprehensive strategy aims to cultivate a versatile and skilled youth demographic, empowered to spearhead positive transformation and advancement. These initiatives included, launching of the Digital Youth Hub, attracting over one million downloads, with 1,022,424 young individuals registering interest through the app.—APP

2000 Kashmiris detained in valley

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indian forces have arrested more than 175 Kashmiri youth during continued massive operations in different areas of Islamabad district of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

According to Kashmir Media Service, the extensive cordon and search operations and house raids launched by Indian Army, CRPF and other forces have been underway since April 22. Pahalgam tragic incident Indian police spokesperson in a statement issued in Srinagar said that numerous raids have been carried out at various locations throughout the district, with day and night searches continuing unabated. So far, around 175 persons have been detained to crush the activities supporting the right to self-determination, he said, adding additional Mobile Vehicle Check Points (MVCPs) have also been established across the district to monitor movement of the public. The police statement further said ambushes and intensified patrolling have also been launched, particularly in high-density forest areas.

India faces int'l isolation over Pahalgam drama

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Sunday that India had faced a significant diplomatic setback over the Pahalgam drama. He said that despite best efforts by India, not a single country has stepped forward to condemn Pakistan for the false flag operation, leaving Modi profoundly disappointed. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that considering Pakistan's internal political situation as our weakness and trying to take advantage of it might prove to be a grave mistake for India, for which it will have to pay a heavy price. Talking to the business community, the business leader said that the popularity of the Bharatiya Janata Party is rapidly decreasing, so Modi is resorting to drama and will never give up his anti-Pakistan madness. He said that in the current dangerous situation in South Asia, the frivolous behaviour of some global powers is condemnable and disappointing. Disregarding India's aggressive actions against Pakistan is tantamount to encouraging war, which is equivalent to destroying world peace.—APP

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‘Dogville’:The weak consistently tortured by the persecutor

NAIRA ESHAAL

RECENTLY I happened to watch a movie named "Dogville". Although it made me somewhat sad, the message was profound and I thought it to share with the readers. Especially for the weaker ones who just go on bearing the brutality of the cruel people and go on having a heart burning. Being resourceless they feel isolated and unfortunately society is also with the powerful despite knowing that these powerful are totally wrong. But seldom anyone is with the weak and this is the harsh reality, though not the absolute truth. Same is the central

theme of this movie released in 2003. This movie has a deep philosophy. When some evil is happening to somebody by the so called socially powerful then sometimes people even seeing this nastiness and meanness behave in a way to make it unseen. Whatever bad is happening to the bereaved in all this tragic case, the people who are watching this are equally the accomplice. The movie has a powerful message for all to establish boundaries. By forgiving without limits, one is unknowingly allowing evil to flourish. True fairness lies in holding people accountable for their actions and an attempt to act like a kinder figure only causes harm to the innocent and gives more freedom to the cru-

el. It thus reinforces instances how the silence of people in stopping the evil, in fact, serves to breed it. When evil begins its roots in spreading, there must be a force to stop its momentum, otherwise the consequences will be unpredictable and this force sometimes comes from the law, sometimes from morality and sometimes from ordinary people like us who stand up against injustice. Other key themes in Dogville are moral blindness and complicity and accountability vs. blind forgiveness. Movie is highly symbolic and delivers its message effectively. The theme reflects that the common people should have courage to stand against cruelty of the

powerful. Another important aspect is that silence in the face of evil does not denote a neutrality, it is complicity as discussed earlier. Evil finds its growth in neglect and in case of the absence of retaliation. Then, it also teaches that forgiveness should follow some element of accountability as well. This thought reverberates with Islamic ethics when we know: "Help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and transgression." Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:2) Hence the movie gives an important lesson to stand up when the people around turn away. In short it gives us an opportunity to blend moral insight with real human experience.

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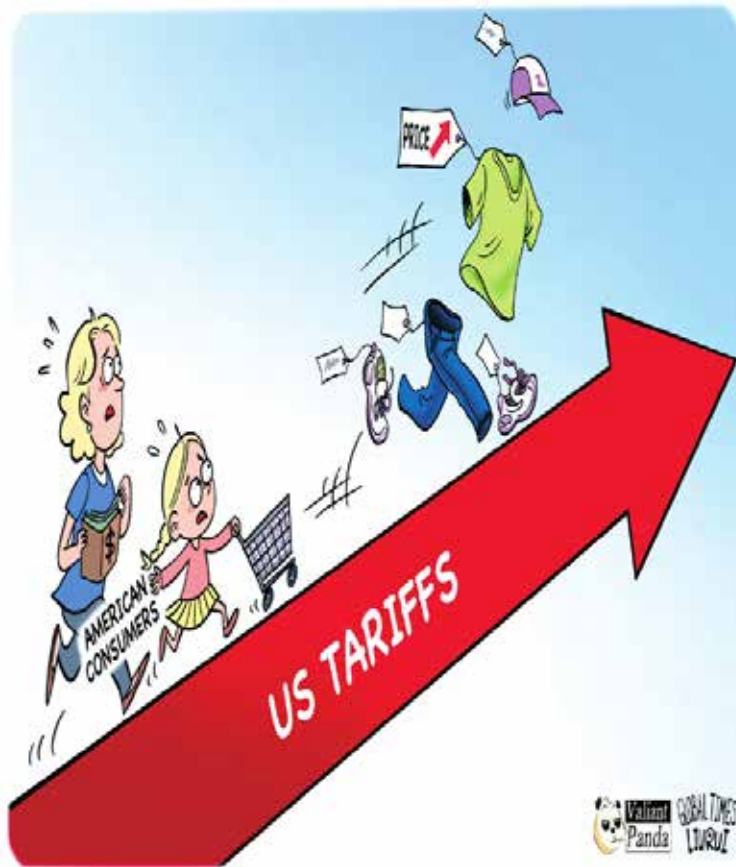
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Saudi Arabia's vision 2030

SAUDI Arabia has undertaken several reforms over the last decade, most of which are the byproduct of Vision 2030, which have transformed the financial sector and businesses, as well as society as a whole. A key driver of this transformation was the implementation of the Financial Sector Development Program and the emergence of the Saudi Exchange, or Tadawul, as a global market. The FSDP was introduced in 2017 as a part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 to boost the capital market. The plan aims to transform the stock exchange into a robust international investment platform. It also aims to improve trading infrastructure, settlement processes, and market capitalization to over \$3 trillion. This has led to increased online platforms, fintech capabilities, and transparency. Tadawul's inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index in 2019 further solidified its global position. Another major reform was starting fintech innovation. Since the launch of the Fintech Saudi initiative in 2018, Saudi Arabia has been a leading fintech hub in the Middle East, fostering innovation and widespread digital payments. The Saudi Central Bank has facilitated this growth through progressive laws. This includes a regulatory sandbox for supervised testing of advanced technologies, specialist licenses for fintech businesses, and the availability of banking infrastructure and Application Programming Interfaces. Moving to green finance, Saudi Arabia is focusing on financial sector innovation and sustainability, implementing green financing programs as a part of its Vision 2030 objectives. Since 2022, the country has promoted environmentally friendly investment and finance green projects through sustainable laws and by issuing green bonds. These proactive initiatives have made Saudi Arabia a key player in the global transition to a more environmentally responsible economic model. Saudi Arabia has also increased its accessibility and appeal to foreign investors by connecting the market to the global financial system. This strategic policy change has led to a significant increase in foreign capital inflow, indicating global trust in the stability of the Kingdom's financial system. When it comes to developing the Saudi debt-financing market, the Kingdom established the Debt Management Office to manage its debt while balancing financial policies and risks. The DMO was restructured into the independent National Debt Management Center, which collects data, negotiates arrangements, implements hedging measures, manages investor relations for public debt, and ensures good credit ratings. This specialized body has improved public financial controls and maintained a sound fiscal position, thereby enhancing Saudi Arabia's financial standing. Since the launch of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has been leading the fintech revolution with over 226 fintech enterprises, thanks to its well-functioning telecommunications sector and heavy investment in infrastructure. STC Bank, the Saudi Digital Bank, and SARIE are leading the way in consumer digital banking and payment systems. Digital banking helps customers save time, reduce transaction costs, and promotes competition, leading to increased economic activity and growth.



USAID and Palestine's pacification

LIKE other forms of US assistance, USAID was all about normalising the colonisation of Palestine through cash for compliance. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) opened its office in Palestine back in 1994. Its website, which is no longer available, used to boast that since then, it has "helped four million Palestinians lead healthier and more productive lives". Now that the agency has been shuttered by US President Donald Trump's administration, it is pertinent to evaluate the claim that USAID was a force for good in the occupied Palestinian territories. Undoubtedly, the shutdown of the agency has affected Palestinians, especially those benefiting from its funding for education and healthcare institutions. Humanitarian provision was also affected, with the World Food Programme, one of the main humanitarian actors in the occupied Palestinian territories, facing major disruptions. While the short-term negative impact is apparent, the utility of USAID and other US funding becomes questionable when put in the larger political context of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. As a researcher, I have been directly and indirectly involved in assessing USAID-funded programmes for years, and I have seen first-hand how they have contributed to maintaining Israeli occupation and colonisation. The US agency was far from "helping" Palestinians lead better lives, as it claimed. USAID opened its West Bank and Gaza Strip office as part of the broader American effort to lead and shape the political settlement between Palestinians and Israelis initiated by the Oslo Accords of 1994. The so-called "peace process" promised Palestinians an independent state on the lands occupied by Israel in 1967, with a final agreement supposed to be signed by 1999. Needless to say, such an agreement was never signed, as Israel never intended to conclude peace with the Palestinians and recognise their right to self-determination. Instead, Oslo was used to cover up Israel's relentless colonisation of the occupied Palestinian territories in the rhetoric of peace negotiations. The creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a local governing body tasked with managing civil affairs for Palestinians in designated areas was part of this strategy. While the official Palestinian leadership envisioned the PA as a transitional polity that would administer daily life until an independent state was established, it was ultimately designed and closely overseen by the US to function as a client regime, managing and controlling the occupied population. To that end, the PA was obliged to engage in close coordination with Israeli security forces to suppress any form of resistance in the territories it managed. Its two main security bodies – the Intelligence Service and the Preventive Security – were set up to fulfil this duty. While US intelligence agencies were tasked with supporting and training the Palestinian security apparatus – funnelling millions of dollars to it every year – USAID was tasked with supporting the civilian functions of the PA. Between 1994 and 2018, USAID provided more than \$5.2bn in aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It funded infrastructure, health, and education initiatives, with the aim of winning public support for the peace negotiations.

Strategic Independence or Global Disengagement

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



In spite of its assertiveness, American unilateralism faced structural and normative constraints. International law, global public opinion and the rise of multipolarity posed challenges to the sustained application of unilateralist policies. As emerging powers like China, Russia and regional blocs in Asia, Africa and Latin America asserted their agency, the U.S. found it increasingly difficult to act without consequence or opposition. Moreover, the costs of unilateral actions militarily, economically and diplomatically often proved unsustainable. The protracted conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan...

AMERICAN unilateralism emerged as a defining characteristic of U.S. foreign policy, particularly after the end of the Cold War, as the United States increasingly pursued its strategic interests independently of international consensus or multilateral institutions. This approach was evident in various military, political and economic decisions that underscored the primacy of American national interests over global cooperation. Unilateralism became most pronounced during the presidency of George W. Bush, especially after the 9/11 attacks, when the United States adopted a preemptive strategy of self-defense, bypassing international forums like the United Nations to justify interventions such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Advocates of unilateralism within the U.S. administration justified this approach by asserting that America's unparalleled military and economic strength placed upon it a unique responsibility to lead global affairs and shape world order. They argued that the inefficiencies and political compromises inherent in multilateralism could hinder swift and decisive action, particularly in combating terrorism and rogue states. However, critics contended that such an approach undermined international norms, marginalized global institutions and fostered resentment and instability, particularly in the Global South. Unilateralist tendencies were not confined to the military realm but were extended to economic and environmental policies as well. For instance, the U.S. withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change in 2001 signaled Washington's reluctance to accept binding commitments perceived as detrimental to its domestic economy. Similarly, under the Trump administration, the decision to exit the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017

further reinforced perceptions of American disengagement from collective global efforts. Economically, the imposition of tariffs and trade restrictions without international consultation, particularly in the context of the U.S.-China trade war, exemplified the prioritization of national economic interests over global economic stability. Such actions, while sometimes yielding short-term strategic advantages, risked eroding the international legitimacy of the U.S. and alienating traditional allies. In spite of its assertiveness, American unilateralism faced structural and normative constraints. International law, global public opinion and the rise of multipolarity posed challenges to the sustained application of unilateralist policies. As emerging powers like China, Russia and regional blocs in Asia, Africa and Latin America asserted their agency, the U.S. found it increasingly difficult to act without consequence or opposition. Moreover, the costs of unilateral actions militarily, economically and diplomatically often proved unsustainable. The protracted conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, drained American resources and exposed the limits of power projection without broad international support. Furthermore, unilateral actions strained the U.S.'s relationships with key allies in Europe and Asia, leading to a reevaluation of their strategic alignments and, in some cases, efforts to enhance regional autonomy. The consequences of American unilateralism extended beyond immediate geopolitical calculations. It challenged the foundational principles of the liberal international order, which emphasized rule-based multilateralism, cooperation and shared sovereignty. As the U.S. in-

creasingly acted outside these parameters, questions arose about the future of global governance and the credibility of international institutions. While some nations sought to fill the vacuum left by U.S. retrenchment, others feared a descent into strategic uncertainty and competitive anarchy. American unilateralism also had significant implications for global perceptions of democracy and human rights. Actions perceived as self-serving or inconsistent with democratic ideals weakened the moral authority of the U.S. and provided authoritarian regimes with rhetorical ammunition to justify their own unilateral behaviors. On the other hand, American unilateralism is not monolithic but it has fluctuated depending on domestic political leadership, global circumstances and evolving strategic priorities. Periods of unilateral assertiveness have often been followed by phases of multilateral engagement and strategic recalibration. For instance, the Obama administration's emphasis on diplomacy, alliances and soft power contrasted sharply with the assertive unilateralism of its predecessor. Yet even during such phases, elements of unilateralism persisted, reflecting the enduring tension in U.S. foreign policy between exceptionalism and internationalism. In conclusion, while American unilateralism has enabled the U.S. to assert its dominance in international affairs, it has also exposed the contradictions and limitations of power exercised without broader legitimacy or cooperation. As the global landscape continues to evolve, the sustainability and effectiveness of unilateralism remain contested, demanding a nuanced recalibration of American foreign policy that balances national interests with international responsibilities.

Analyzing the Pahalgam attack & Its strategic implications

Izmi Herlani



In light of the current standoff, PAF remains prepared and vigilant, equipped with advanced training and operational strategies. The commitment to excellence, combined with the brave resolve of the personnel, ensures that if war is imposed on Pakistan, Pakistan Air Force will once again rise to the occasion, defending the homeland with extreme prowess

IN recent weeks, the Indo-Pakistani relationship has once again been thrust into the spotlight following the Pahalgam attack, which many analysts and observers have labeled a false flag operation. This incident appears to follow a troubling pattern, reminiscent of previous strategies employed to malign Pakistan. Not only does this current situation highlight the delicate geopolitical environment of South Asia, but it also raises important questions about the motives behind such orchestrations. The strategic objectives of the Pahalgam attack seem multifaceted, but a primary aim appears to be upholding the declining popularity of the current BJP government in India. With mounting pressure from various segments of the Indian society regarding economic issues and handling of internal disputes, the BJP could be seeking to re-establish a narrative through an external enemy. By invoking nationalist sentiments, the fascist government aims rally support and deflect attention from domestic turmoil. Another important context for this standoff is the international scrutiny faced by India concerning Human Rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The ongoing plight of the Kashmiri people has drawn international condemnation and the Pahalgam incident serves as a distraction from these human rights issues. By alleging Pakistan's involvement in such attacks, India aims to divert global attention and regain the upper hand in the court of public opinion. Moreover, the purported objectives of this irrational plot could also include seeking leverage from the Trump administration regarding trade tariffs and create economic pressure on Pakistan. The geopolitical dynamics have shifted significantly in

recent years, and any incident that portrays Pakistan negatively could be used to enhance India's negotiating position with respect to U.S. policy initiatives. India's historical efforts to paint itself as a victim in the regional geopolitical arena allow it to seek favorable outcomes in trade discussions while simultaneously strangling Pakistan economically by stopping the flow of rivers. At this juncture, it is imperative to recognize the role of the Pakistan Armed Forces, specifically the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), which has a longstanding history of defending the motherland. The brave Shaheens of the PAF have demonstrated unwavering commitment, pledging to protect Pakistan at all costs. The spirit of dedication among the armed forces runs deep, and the rich legacy of sacrifice and valor continues to inspire future generations. PAF's operational readiness has been the hallmark of the force which was exhibited in 1965 & 1971 wars and once again came to the fore in February 2019, when India launched a unilateral irrational aggressive military campaign across the LoC. Responding to this unprovoked aggression, PAF displayed remarkable professionalism and heroism, executing precise strikes, downing IAF fighter jets and effectively safeguarding national sovereignty. The outcome of this confrontation demonstrated PAF's capability to respond strongly to acts of aggression, a message that resonates with its adversaries even today. In light of the current standoff, PAF remains prepared and vigilant, equipped with advanced training and operational strategies. The commitment to excellence, combined with the brave resolve of the personnel, ensures that if war is imposed on Pakistan, Pakistan Air Force will once again rise to the occasion, defending the homeland with extreme

prowess. Further evidence of the PAF's strong position lies in its recent military acquisitions and indigenization efforts. Under the current leadership, there has been a significant push towards modernizing the Air Force, with notable advancements reflected in cutting-edge technologies and indigenized production capabilities. Projects such as the JF-17 Thunder program, the leaps in space, cyber, artificial intelligence and unmanned aerial systems domains have significantly enhanced Pakistan's air defence capabilities, putting the PAF steps ahead of its adversary in terms of operational effectiveness. The PAF's narrative is not one of mere preparedness; it is backed by tangible accomplishments that affirm its superior capability and capacity. There is a collective resolve among military leaders and personnel that any foolish act of aggression will be met with full force. The message is clear: not only can Pakistan defend itself, but it also has the ability to counter-act any threats that may threaten its sovereignty. The standoff between India and Pakistan, exacerbated by the Pahalgam attack, underscores a complex web of strategic objectives and historical context. While India may attempt to leverage this incident for political gains, the international community must remain vigilant and discerning about the implications of such actions, especially regarding human rights concerns in the region. Pakistan Armed Force stands resolute, armed with a legacy of patriotism and unparalleled professionalism, ready to defend the nation against any aggression. It is imperative that Pakistan continues to strengthen its defence capabilities while also advocating for peace and stability in South Asia. The sacrifices of our brave Shaheens have paved the way for a robust defence posture that will ensure Pakistan remains secure in the face of adversity.

Briefs

54 terrorists killed as infiltration...

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infiltrating on behalf of their 'foreign masters' to undertake high-profile terrorist activities inside Pakistan," the ISPR said. It added that such actions by terrorists, at a time when India is levelling baseless accusations against Pakistan, clearly imply on whose cues they are operating. "Such actions amount to treason and betrayal against the state and its citizens." Referring to the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security, the ISPR said it underscored the fact that distracting Pakistan's security forces from their focus on the war against terror seems to be the strategic intent of India to allow a breathing space to terrorists "which is reeling from the onslaught of our armed forces resolute offensive against them". "The security forces demonstrated exceptional professionalism, vigilance and preparedness and prevented a potential catastrophe," it added. The statement noted that this was the highest-ever number of terrorists killed by the security forces in a single engagement during entire campaign against terrorism. "Security forces remain resolute and unwavering in their commitment to defend the nation's frontiers and to eradicate the menace of terrorism," it said, adding such bold and decisive actions further strengthen collective resolve and underscore that Pakistan is winning the war against terrorism. The two nations share a porous border spanning around 2,500 kilometres with several crossing points which hold significance as a key element of regional trade and relations between the people across both sides of the fence. However, the issue of terrorism remains a key issue for Pakistan which has urged Afghanistan to prevent its soil from being used by groups such as the TTP to carry out attacks inside the former's territory. Islamabad's reservations have also been confirmed by a report submitted to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, which has revealed a nexus between Kabul and the TTP with the former providing logistical, operational and financial support to the latter. Earlier this month, at least eight terrorists were neutralised as security forces successfully thwarted their bid to infiltrate through the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in North Waziristan district.

Islamabad, Beijing...

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briefed him on the current regional situation. The two top diplomats also called for promoting mutual respect and understanding, and opposed unilateralism and hegemonic policies. Besides China, Pakistan has reached out to friendly countries including Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt to brief them on the situation arising out of deadly attack in IJIOJK that left 26 tourists dead. New Delhi has linked Islamabad to the attack without offering any evidence and took a flurry of punitive measures to downgrade ties including suspending Indus Waters Treaty, revoking visas of Pakistanis, closing Wagah-Attari border crossing among others. Pakistan has responded in kind to India's measures and warned of suspending Simla Agreement, besides closing its airspace for Indian flights. Islamabad has denied involvement in the attack and offered to take part in a credible and transparent investigation. The FO statement, issued today, said Islamabad and Beijing agreed to maintain close communication and coordination at all levels to advance their shared objectives of peace, security, and sustainable development in the region and beyond.

Military...

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that the massive military of India was bloated, outdated, and ill-equipped to handle any threats that might arise at its borders.

Rising Stars Hockey League 2025

R.S aviators and R.S titans soar into final

In the gripping semi-finals, the Aviators clinched a hard-fought victory over the R.S Warriors. The team was bolstered by standout performances from Neil Hawkins, the Australian High Commissioner, who has been a passionate supporter and player throughout the tournament



R.S Aviators spearheaded by the Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins



R.S Warriors spearheaded by the High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmad



R.S Titans spearheaded by Asif Bhatti



R.S Thunders spearheaded by Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Romania Eduard Preda

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The stage is set for an electrifying final at the Shehnaz Sheikh Hockey Stadium, as the R.S Aviators and R.S Titans have secured their spots in the grand finale of the Rising Stars Hockey League 2025. The prestigious youth tournament, organized annually by the Rising Stars Hockey Club, continues to spotlight emerging talent

and provide a vital platform for future stars of Pakistani hockey. In the gripping semi-finals, the Aviators clinched a hard-fought victory over the R.S Warriors. The team was bolstered by standout performances from Neil Hawkins, the Australian High Commissioner, who has been a passionate supporter and player throughout the tournament. Young talents Anas and Osama also dazzled the crowd with their skillful play and tactical brilliance, playing a pivotal role in their

team's success. Meanwhile, the R.S Titans emerged triumphant over the R.S Thunders in a tense and competitive match. The Thunders, who fought valiantly, were mentored by two esteemed diplomats—Romanian Deputy Head of Mission Eduard Preda and Brunei's High Commissioner Kamal Ahmed—adding an international flair to the league's spirit of unity and sportsmanship. Now a staple in the youth hockey calendar, the Rising Stars Hockey League is organized each year by the Rising Stars Hockey Club with the mission to nurture and promote young talent across the country. The league has earned a strong reputation for producing exceptional players, many of whom have gone on to represent Pakistan at both junior and senior levels. With the final just around the corner, all eyes will be on the Aviators and Titans as they battle for supremacy in what promises to be a thrilling conclusion to an inspiring tournament.

Women's football in Egypt on the rise

TV matches, institutional investment and shifting perceptions fuel unprecedented interest in the women's game in Egypt

DNA

CAIRO: Head coach of Egypt's women's national team, Abdel Fattah Abbas, the game has made significant strides, despite many roadblocks. "Much of the momentum [goes] to Sahar el-Hawary, a former Egyptian Football Association member and longtime champion of the women's game," he said. "She was instrumental in persuading FIFA to withhold professional licensing from major clubs unless they field women's teams." The burgeoning movement also saw Egyptian players like Eman Hassan and Laila El Behery sign professional contracts with international clubs, turning what was once seen as a hobby into a viable career path. Some parents are even now enrolling their daughters in residential football academies. Initiatives such as "1,000 Girls, 1,000 Dreams", a collaboration between the British Council and Egypt's Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Dutch-funded KNVB WorldCoaches programme, are empowering women in local communities. "Every coach returns to their hometown, spreading the game and opening doors for girls," says Basant Tarek, a veteran player and trainer with KNVB. Though some of these programmes have concluded, their impact lingers. Girls' football teams are now emerging in schools and youth centres across the country. For years, however, the progress of women in football was held back by societal stigma. Many parents refused to support their daughters' ambitions, seeing football as a sport for boys. Families often feared for their daughters' reputations, believing that playing a traditionally masculine sport would be a violation of traditional gender roles. Aya Abdel Hady, a trailblazing coach with roots in Upper Egypt, knows firsthand the cultural resistance female footballers often face. "It was hard to get full support at first," she said. "There were so many obstacles: society, family, and even the clubs themselves. People just didn't see the value in women's football." But her love for the game never wavered. Injuries eventually curtailed her playing career, but they could not end her football journey. "If anything, they [the injuries] pushed me into coaching," she added. "It was a new challenge, and I embraced it." That transition led her from local academies to elite roles, including head coach at Al Ahly's Sheikh Zayed Academy and technical director of City Club's women's division. Today, Abdel Hady coaches futsal – a type of football that is played indoors with five players on each side – in Saudi Arabia.

Afridi slams India's baseless allegations over Pahalgam attack

Dialogue, not conflict, is key to resolving Pakistan-India tensions,

DNA

DUBAI: Pakistan cricket team's former captain, Shahid Afridi, has voiced concern over India's premature and unsubstantiated accusations against Pakistan following the recent Pahalgam attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Speaking to the media in Dubai, Afridicriticised New Delhi for blaming Pakistan without any evidence, calling the act both "unfortunate and unjustified." He said India was too quick to hold Pakistan responsible for the incident, which resulted in the loss of lives in the occupied territory. Afridi further expressed sorrow over the loss of human lives in Kashmir and condemned the increasing wave of terrorist attacks within Pakistan. He called for diplomacy to be the path forward between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, stating, "Dialogue is the only solution to our issues; conflict brings no benefit." Emphasising the need to keep sports separate from political tensions, the former skipper urged both nations to ensure cricket is not dragged into geopolitical disputes.

Barcelona edge Real Madrid in extra-time to win Copa del Rey

Catalans won first major trophy of Hansi Flick's reign as coach and a record-extending 32nd Spanish cup



WEB DESK

SEVILLE: Barcelona defender Jules Kouunde struck deep in extra-time to decide a gripping Copa del Rey Clasico final on Saturday in Seville, earning his side a 3-2 win over rivals Real Madrid. The Catalans, aiming for a quadruple this season, won the first major trophy of Hansi Flick's reign as coach and a record-extending 32nd Spanish cup in dramatic fashion. Pedri sent Barcelona ahead at La Cartuja but two Real Madrid goals in seven second-half minutes, from Kylian Mbappe and Aurelien Tchouameni, pulled the Spanish and European champions level. However, Ferran Torres struck in the 84th minute to take the game to extra-time and Kouunde drilled home to win it for the La Liga leaders. Substituted Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger was sent off in the final seconds for appearing to throw an object onto the pitch towards the referee. Madrid, who started with top scorer Mbappe on the bench after an ankle injury, suffered an early setback when left-back Ferland Mendy, playing his first game for six weeks, suffered a thigh injury. Carlo Ancelotti sent on Fran Garcia in his place, with the job of shackling Barcelona's dazzling teenage winger Lamine Yamal. The 17-year-old Spain star, who dyed his hair blond for the game, burst past him with ease as Barca threatened Thibaut Courtois' goal increasingly. The Catalans, who won the first two Clasicos this season in La Liga and the Spanish Super Cup, scoring nine goals in the process, controlled the ball. They took the lead after 28 minutes, Pedri placing the ball into the top corner with precision and power from the edge of the box. It was a sensational goal, starting with a smart Pau Cubarsi interception in his own half. Pedri spread the play out to Yamal on the right, who cut inside and held the ball up until the Canary Islander reached the box and had a sight of goal. Madrid had been focused on defending but Barcelona's opener brought them out of their shell – and also brought Mbappe off the bench to warm up.

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Ons Jabeur returns from injury seeking elusive top form

MADRID: There is a quote from the animated movie "Ratatouille" that Tunisian tennis player Ons Jabeur loves. The character, chef Auguste Gusteau, says: "You must be imaginative, strong-hearted. You must try things that may not work. And you must not let anyone define your limits because of where you come from. Your only limit is your soul." As the highest-ranked African and Arab player in tennis history, Jabeur has certainly never let where she comes from define her limits. "I love that quote because it connects believing with not giving up. "The only limit is your soul," that's what he says. And honestly that touched me. I love it," the three-time Grand Slam finalist told Arab News on the sidelines of the ongoing Madrid Open. Jabeur is a former champion in Madrid. When she clinched the title in 2022, she became the first Arab and African woman to win a WTA 1000 title. In the weeks that followed, she reached the final in Rome, won Berlin, rose to a career-high ranking of No. 2 in the world and made it to the Wimbledon final. The 30-year-old's journey is a series of history-making feats. And as someone who has inspired millions across the globe, it was particularly meaningful to her when she met another Arab icon on the eve of the Madrid Open this week. At the players' restaurant at the Caja Magica, Jabeur and members of her team were spotted dining with none other than Morocco's Nawal El Moutawakel. The Moroccan athlete won the 400-meter hurdles at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, to become the first African



and Arab woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Jabeur was thrilled to meet El Moutawakel for the first time. "She's amazing," said Jabeur, who is a three-time Olympian. "It was such an honor for me to know her personally and to know her stories. She's so fun, her energy is amazing. And honestly, it makes me feel like a proud Arab woman to meet an Arab icon like that." Jabeur has spent the past month on the sidelines recovering from a calf injury she sustained during her third-round clash with Jasmine Paolini at the Miami Open. She returns to action on Friday in the Spanish capital, where she is due to face Japan's Moyuka Uchijima in the second round. "I'm feeling much better. I took my time. I'm glad I took some time off. I took a lot of time to do rehab. And now I'm feeling, let's put it, 90 percent good," the Tunisian said ahead of her Madrid opener. "I spent two weeks (at home in Tunis). I also went to travel a little bit to just enjoy time in France and see my family. But yeah, it's been so good to be home. I'm starting to like it, which is not a good sign," she added with a laugh. "But yeah, really, this year, I just want to listen to my body. I'm done forcing my body to play any tournaments that I don't feel like playing and just try to enjoy my time as much as I can." Jabeur has had bad luck with injuries as of late. She had to shut down her season in early August last year, missing the US Open, due to a shoulder problem, and came back at the start of 2025 in Australia ranked 42 in the world. – Agencies

Pezeshkian to visit Baku today

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rather than aligning with any one major power. Efforts at improving Iran's relations with its neighbors are not new, having featured prominently in the administrations of former presidents. However, it was during President Raesi that Iran adopted the good neighbor policy as a formal doctrine. This deliberate pursuit of good relations with neighboring states bore significant results, most importantly with Saudi Arabia which is key to relations with the rest of the Arab world, given its financial prowess and stature as the custodian of the birthplace of Islam. On a poignant note, President Raesi's last moments were the highlight of his staunch dedication to the new proactive doctrine of good neighborly relations, and his complementary "Look East" policy. The former president was killed in May 2024 after inaugurating two joint dams and a joint hydroelectric power project with Azerbaijan on the Aras river. He was joined at the ceremony by President Aliyev, who said he had bid a "friendly farewell" before the helicopter Raesi and seven other people were travelling in departed the dam area and crashed in a mountainous region amid poor weather conditions on the way to the city of Tabriz. The visit by Pezeshkian, ethnically an Iranian Azerbaijani on both paternal and maternal lines, to Baku comes after his high-profile trips to Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, and previously Iraq, reflecting his administration's commitment to the new architecture in regional and neighborhood relations. Under this policy, the Islamic Republic has always adhered to the principle of advancing its relations with its neighbors based on common interests and free from influence from third parties. As regards Azerbaijan, Iran's foreign policy is anchored by the principles of rationality, respect for the territorial integrity of the former Soviet nation, and support for lasting peace in the South Caucasus - a fault zone between East and West.

Pakistan slams India for seeking hydro war...

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airspace for Indian flights. Islamabad has denied involvement in the attack and offered to take part in a credible and transparent investigation. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, while condemning the unfortunate attack, has offered to participate in any neutral, transparent and credible investigation into the incident. Speaking to Geo News on Sunday, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said he believed that India would gain nothing by violating the Indus Waters Treaty since it has international guarantees. The World Bank negotiated the Indus Waters Treaty, which India and Pakistan signed in 1960. By suspending the treaty, India could at some point restrict the flow of rivers into Pakistan, cutting off the country's source of water for irrigation and human consumption, it was pointed out. "Where will India take the water, it can neither turn it nor stop it," he added. The defence minister noted that India has not responded to Pakistan's offer to hold an international probe into the Pahalgam incident, saying that Islamabad is ready to participate in the transparent probe. He said entire Pakistan is united with its armed forces and will give a strong response to Modi government just like we responded in Pulwama incident.

Iran's president visits site of port blast that killed 40

FROM PAGE 01

take care of the dear people who got injured," he said. Pezeshkian had previously ordered an investigation into the cause of the blast. Russia's embassy said Moscow was sending multiple "aircraft carrying specialists" to help fight the blaze.

Briefs

KSA tourism revenue soars by 148%

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's tourism sector achieved a historic milestone in 2024, with international tourism revenue surging 148 percent compared to 2019 – the highest growth rate among G20 nations. This achievement reflects the success of Vision 2030, which has firmly positioned the Kingdom as a global leader in tourism, entertainment, and innovation. The 2024 annual performance report highlighted record-breaking pilgrim numbers, cultural milestones, and major international events, all driven by strategic investments, regulatory reforms, and transformative mega-projects. Vision 2030 unlocked Saudi Arabia's vast tourism potential, establishing it as one of the fastest-growing global destinations. In 2024, international tourist arrivals surged to 29.7 million, up from 18.04 million in 2016, while domestic travelers nearly doubled to 86.2 million during the same period. Surpassing its target of 100 million visitors seven years ahead of schedule, the Kingdom has now set a bold new goal of attracting 150 million annual tourists by 2030. Saudi Arabia's tourism strategy is driven by mega-projects aiming to transform the travel and hospitality industry. —APP

South Punjab expects good mango yield as fruiting appears promising

MULTAN: Mango orchards across South Punjab are showing promising signs of a good harvest this year, with experts and farmers optimistic due to healthy fruiting observed in the trees. Although the fruit is not yet fully matured, early indicators suggest that the region could witness a strong yield in the coming weeks. Scientific Research Officer Abid Hameed shared the overall condition of the mango crop was satisfactory. "Fruiting looks good this season, and if weather conditions remain stable, we can expect a better yield compared to previous years," he noted. He mentioned while hopper attacks had been reported in some areas, they were under control and manageable with timely action. Hameed advised farmers to strictly follow the recommended guidelines to protect the crop and improve quality. "Applying potassium at this stage is crucial. It enhances fruit size, strengthens quality, and supports overall production," he explained.

According to mango farmer Arif Kalro, the orchards are progressing well and expectations are high. "There's still time for the fruit to mature, but the current stage of development is encouraging. We are hopeful for a good season," he said. Kalro urged the government to facilitate exporters. "Pakistan's mangoes have a global reputation. The authorities must act now to ensure smooth export channels and maximize foreign exchange," he added. —APP

China leads 2024 global wind installations

BEIJING, Apr 26 (APP): The world's wind industry installed a record 117 GW of new capacity in 2024, and China led the world in new installations both onshore and offshore, ahead of the US, Germany, India and Brazil respectively rounding out the top 5, the Global Wind Report 2025 released by Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC) said. According to the report, in 2024, newly grid-connected wind power in China reached nearly 80 GW, surpassing the previous installation record set in 2023. Cumulative wind power installed capacity was over 520 GW, accounting for almost half of the world's total. By the year-end, the installed capacity of wind power and solar PV power generation reached 1,400 GW, exceeding thermal power capacity for the first time in China's history, CEN reported on Saturday. The reports also mentioned that the clean energy sector, including renewables, nuclear power, electricity grids, energy storage. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Children performing tableau during Int'l Nowruz Holiday celebration organized by Tajikistan Embassy.

Pak, Kyrgyzstan vital role in regional eco integration

Kyrgyz envoy said that Kyrgyzstan was an emerging economy that was not only connected with regional economies but also with China, Kyrgyzstan's bilateral trade through \$ 23 billion

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan, Avazbek Atakhanov has said that Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan have a significant role in regional economic and trade integration due to their geo-strategic importance. Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan not only have importance in regional economic integration but also have huge significance in extra-regional connectivity in the future, the Ambassador said during a visit to Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) Head Office the other day. The Ambassador said that Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan's role in regional economic and trade integration is Pivotal and Pakistan's geostrategic position also has great significance to connect global manor markets. He said that Kyrgyzstan is an open and liberal economy which is always striving to promote investment and trade liberalization with global and regional markets. The Ambassador said that Pakistan business and investors should invest

in the Kyrgyz market, Kyrgyzstan is becoming a hub of global trade in the future, from which Pakistani traders and investors can benefit. Kyrgyz envoy said that Kyrgyzstan can connect Pakistan with the Euro Economic Zone, in terms of economic and trade sphere, which will increase Pakistan's trade. He said that Kyrgyzstan was an emerging economy that was not only connected with regional economies but also with China, Kyrgyzstan's bilateral trade through \$ 23 billion. The Ambassador said that Kyrgyzstan's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth had been increasing continuously year on year. Kyrgyzstan's annual per capita income is 3000 per capita, which has been growing continuously for the past few years, and along with this, the poverty rate in Kyrgyzstan is continuously decreasing and the standard of living of the people has been increasing, he said. The envoy said that Renewable

energy, mining, gold, tourism, and agriculture are important sectors of the national economy in Kyrgyzstan, due to which the annual GDP has increased by 30 percent in the past years. He said that the Deputy Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan is visiting Pakistan from May 15 of the coming month, which will promote economic cooperation between the two countries. He said that Kyrgyzstan is a country with democratic traditions where civil society is very strong and vibrant. Responding to a question, the Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan said that CASA-1000 is an important and beneficial project for cooperation in the energy sector between the two countries. He said that work was underway on CASA-1000 and after its completion, Pakistan's energy needs would be met to a large extent. The role of youth is very important in the present era and both countries should enlighten the youth about their historical heritage and mutu-

al relations and should make them aware about each other's culture, he said. Kyrgyz envoy said that the role of youth is significant in accelerating the relations between the two countries and "we should transfer our friendly relations and historical heritage to the next generation." He said that Kyrgyzstan is an important country for tourism and the Kyrgyz government is constantly striving for modern facilities to promote tourism. He said that Kyrgyzstan is a country adorned with natural landscapes and there are vast possibilities for mutual cooperation in the tourism sector between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan. The role of the media of both countries is important to highlight the tourism sector and there is a need for mutual awareness between the two countries in this regard, he said. Meanwhile, Kyrgyz Ambassador and Managing Director, Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) Muhammad Asim Khichi has agreed to

promote assistance for technical support and bilateral media cooperation between the official news agencies of the two countries. On this occasion, the Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan gave suggestions regarding bilateral news exchange, technical support, training and capacity, information exchange and date sharing to highlight different potential sectors of the two countries and stressed on promoting mutual cooperation between the two news institutions in line with modern trends. He said that APP and Kyrgyz national news Agency, 'KABAR' play a significant role in promoting bilateral relations between the two countries, which needs to be further improved in the future. The Ambassador said that the role of the media is very important for highlighting the culture of Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan and each other's countries, and in this regard, APP and the Kyrgyz national news Agency, 'KABAR' should work to promote bilateral culture.

Salik meets Joe Biden to discuss bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Husain on Sunday held an important meeting with former United States President Joe Biden at Vatican City and discussed to further robust bilateral relations between Pakistan and US. Both emphasized on providing employment opportunities to Pakistanis in the US, said a press release issued here. Furthermore, the federal minister visited the Pakistani Embassy in Italy and was briefed on the provision of facilities to overseas Pakistanis living in Italy. Pakistani embassies could play a key role in providing employment to Pakistanis at abroad. Chaudhry Salik Husain also met with the head of the interim government of Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus and discussed on further strengthening relations between two countries. During the meeting, Pakistan and Bangladesh agreed to work together to improve the quality of labor and their skills. Muhammad Yunus said that there were vast opportunities in Bangladesh for Pakistani traders and businessmen. The minister also met with FIFA President Gianni Infantino in Vatican City, who praised the quality of world-class football in Pakistan. The minister held meetings with ministers from UAE, Russia, Malaysia, and Singapore. —DNA

Indonesia joins BRICS foreign ministers meeting as member

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono will attend a meeting with his counterparts of the BRICS bloc of emerging economies in Rio de Janeiro on Monday, the country's first ministerial participation since becoming a full member of the geopolitical forum earlier this year. Initially comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the group has expanded with the accession of Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia and the UAE last year, and Indonesia in January. Morphing into the most powerful geopolitical forum outside the Western world, BRICS now accounts for about 48 percent of the world's population and more than 37 percent of the global economy. "The Indonesian foreign minister will encourage BRICS to play a more constructive role in maintaining peace and upholding global norms that have been mutually agreed upon," Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. "(He) will also emphasize the importance of reforming various multilateral institutions to be more inclusive, transparent, and responsive in facing various challenges in the world." Brazil holds the BRICS presidency this year under the theme "Enhancing Global South Cooperation for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance." The two-day meeting of the group's foreign ministers in Rio de Janeiro will also cover preparations for the upcoming annual leaders' summit, which Brazil will host in July. The ministerial-level meeting comes amid the US' 90-day pause on sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs, while it has raised tariffs on Chinese imports to an effective rate of 145 percent. Beijing has responded with retaliatory hikes on US exports. The Trump administration has imposed a 47 percent tariff on Indonesian imports, raising concerns about its billions of dollars-worth exports to the US. The intensifying trade war with the US and the impacts of Washington's tariffs around the world will be high on the agenda of the BRICS meeting, said Dinna Prapto Raharja, founder of Jakarta-based think-tank Synergy Policies. "It will be a big part of the agenda, how BRICS countries will respond to the US tariffs," Raharja told Arab News on Sunday. Alternative payment methods in international trade and the role of the New Development Bank – a multilateral bank developed by BRICS member nations – are also likely to be discussed. She noted that the BRICS meeting is taking place as China urges a unified response in Southeast Asia, following Chinese President Xi Jinping's tour to the region earlier this month. "Indonesia must be able to choose and talk about extremely strategic matters in these negotiation processes," Raharja said. Jakarta must decide on which aspects it is willing to work with the US and in which areas it is open to create alternatives with BRICS countries. She added: "This must be decided, so that in the case of China coming into the forums with offers or even a little push for BRICS member countries to choose a certain path, Indonesia is ready. —DNA

All eyes turn to conclave after Pope Francis's funeral

VATICAN CITY: With Pope Francis laid to rest, all eyes turn now to the conclave, the secretive meeting of cardinals set to convene within days to elect a new head of the Catholic Church. Alongside world leaders and reigning monarchs, an estimated 400,000 people turned out on Saturday for the Argentine pontiff's funeral at the Vatican and burial in Rome. The crowds were a testament to the popularity of Francis, an energetic reformer who championed the poorest and most vulnerable. Many of those mourning the late pope, who died on Monday aged 88, expressed anxiety about who would succeed him. "He ended up transforming the Church into something more normal, more human," said Romina Cacciatore, 48, an Argentinian translator living in Italy. "I'm worried

about what's coming." On Monday morning, at 9:00 am (0700 GMT), cardinals will hold their fifth general meeting since the pope's death, at which they are expected to pick a date for the conclave. Held behind locked doors in the frescoed Sistine Chapel, the election of a pope has been a subject of public fascination for centuries. Cardinal-electors will cast four votes per day until one candidate secures a two-thirds majority, a result broadcast to the waiting world by burning papers that emit white smoke. Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich said last week he expected the conclave to take place on May 5 or 6 – shortly after the nine days of papal mourning, which ends on May 4. German Cardinal Reinhard Marx told reporters on Saturday the conclave

would last just "a few days". Francis's funeral was held in St Peter's Square in bright spring sunshine, a mix of solemn ceremony and an outpouring of emotion for the Church's first Latin American pope. More crowds gathered on Sunday for the opening for public viewing of his simple marble tomb at the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, his favourite church in Rome. Francis was buried in an alcove of the church, becoming the first pope in more than a century to be interred outside the Vatican. "It was very emotional" to see his tomb, said 49-year-old Peruvian Tatiana Alva, who wiped away tears after joining hundreds of others filing past the burial place. "He was very kind, humble. He used language young people could understand. I don't

think the next pope can be the same but I hope he will have an open mind and be realistic about the challenges in the world right now." A couple of hours after opening, the large basilica was packed, the crowds periodically shushed over speakers. Among the mourners were pilgrims and Catholic youth groups who had planned to attend the Sunday canonisation of Carlo Acutis, which was postponed after Francis died. Raphael De Mas Latrue, 45, from France, had been bringing his nine-year-old son to the canonisation but they attended the funeral instead, saying they "really appreciated" Francis's defence of the environment. "Today in this material world his message made a lot of sense, particularly to young people," he said. He added that Francis's successor did not have to

be his likeness, for "every pope has a message for the world today. In his homily at the funeral, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re highlighted the Jesuit pope's defence of migrants, relentless calls for peace and belief that the Church was a "home for all". "I hope we get another pope as skilled as Francis at speaking to people's hearts, at being close to every person, no matter who they are," 53-year-old Maria Simoni from Rome said. Many of the mourners expressed hope that the next pope would follow Francis's example, at a time of widespread global conflict and growing hard-right populism. Marx said the debate over the next pope was open, adding: "It's not a question of being conservative or progressive... The new pope must have a universal vision. —Agencies

Qatar PM sees some progress on Gaza truce

DOHA: Gaza mediator Qatar said Sunday there was some progress in talks in Doha this week aimed at securing a new truce in the Israel-Hamas war. Speaking at a news conference, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani reported "a bit of progress," in response to questions about reports of a Thursday meeting in Doha between Israel's Mossad spy agency chief David Barnea and the Qatari prime minister. "We need to find an answer for the ultimate question: how to end this war. That's, that's basically, I think, the key point of the entire negotiations," Sheikh Mohammed added. Qatar, alongside Egypt and the United States, brokered a truce between Israel and Hamas in Gaza which came into effect on January 19 but which did not bring a complete end to the war. The initial phase of the truce ended in early March, with the two sides unable to agree on the next steps. Israel resumed air and ground attacks across the Gaza Strip on March 18 after earlier halting the entry of aid. Sheikh Mohammed met with Barnea in the Qatari capital to discuss a potential hostage deal on Thursday, according to Israeli media. "The meeting that took place on Thursday is part of these efforts where we're trying to find a breakthrough," the Qatari prime minister said without further elaborating on the details of the meeting. —APP

Four dead, 13 injured in Algeria landslide

ALGIERS: Four people have died and 13 others injured in a landslide in Algeria's western coastal city of Oran, authorities said on Sunday. The landslide occurred late Saturday in the city's Hai Essanoub district, the civil defense agency said. It said the four "deceased were between five and 43 years old," and that "13 other victims, aged between 12 and 75, suffered various injuries." Authorities did not comment on the reasons behind the landslide, which the interior ministry said "caused the collapse of five tin houses." With no one still missing from the landslide, the ministry said the death toll was "final. —APP

Putin offers Iran help after blast

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin has offered Iran Russian help in dealing with the aftermath of a blast that rocked the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and expressed his condolences over the loss of life, the state RIA news agency reported on Sunday.

Iranian state media reported that a huge blast probably caused by the explosion of chemical materials killed at least 18 people and injured more than 700 on Saturday at Bandar Abbas, Iran's biggest port. —APP

French police hunt suspected killer of Muslim

MARSEILLE: French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou on Saturday denounced the fatal stabbing of a Muslim worshipper inside a mosque as police hunted the killer, who filmed his victim as he lay dying. The attacker stabbed the worshipper dozens of times then filmed him with a mobile phone while shouting insults at Islam in Friday's attack in the village of La Grand-Combe in the Gard region of southern France. "A worshipper was murdered yesterday," wrote Bayrou in a message posted on X. "The Islamophobic atrocity was displayed in a video," he added. "We stand with the victim's loved ones, with the believers who are so shocked. State resources are mobilized to ensure the killer is apprehended and punished," wrote Bayrou. Earlier Saturday, investigators said they were treating the killing as a possible Islamophobic crime. The suspect was still at large on Saturday, regional prosecutor Abdelkrim Grini told AFP. The footage taken by the killer showed him insulting "Allah," the Arabic term for God, just after he carried out the attack. —APP

Briefs

Pakistan
is safe for
all types of
investment

DNA

LAHORE: A delegation of foreign investor companies called on Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. During the meeting, discussions revolved around the protection of investors and the measures taken to secure their investments. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi noted the delegation's suggestions and assured them of full cooperation. He underscored that Pakistan is a safe country for all kinds of investments, and protecting investors is the government's top priority. He added that The government has taken all necessary measures in this regard. Mohsin Naqvi said that strict notice has been taken of attacks by miscreants, and legal action being taken against the culprits. He highlighted that a strategy has been devised to prevent such incidents in the future. He emphasized that our religion, Islam, teaches the message of peace and harmony, adding that the responsibility to protect investors will be fulfilled at all costs. The delegation thanked Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi for the assurance to resolve their issues.

History to
remember
Pak response,
says Talal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry says history will remember Pakistan's forceful response in case of any Indian misadventurism. In a video message, he said India's false flag operation has exposed New Delhi and the entire world knows the reality now. He said that after the Pahalgam incident, India started demolishing the houses of Muslims and killing Kashmiris in fake encounters. Talal Chaudhry said the Modi regime is not only destroying the properties of Muslims, but Hindus are being facilitated to occupy these properties in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The Minister of State for Interior raised the question as to how Indian authorities came to know the names of perpetrators within ten minutes after the Pahalgam incident. Highlighting the track record of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Talal Chaudhry said Modi's entire politics is based on Muslim enmity and religious extremism. He said Modi's objectives in the backdrop of the Pahalgam false flag operation are to achieve political gains in the upcoming elections in two Indian states. He said each and every word of the two-nation theory is proving its authenticity with the passage of time as Muslims in India are being oppressed and targeted under the Modi regime. Talal Chaudhry appreciated Pakistan's electronic and social media for its responsible and powerful reporting to bring the facts based on reality and ultimately defeat the Indian media's narrative.

Indian
extremists
attack
Pakistani HC

LONDON: Indians attacked and damaged the building of Pakistani High Commission in the British capital London on Sunday a day after a violent protest. The attackers broke the windows of the High Commission building after throwing saffron paint, a symbol of Hindu religion, on the walls which are white and the plaque. Indian nationals have been staging protest rallies in front of Pakistani High Commission for the last two days. On Saturday, the London police arrested two protesters for resorting to violence during a protest. India has been blaming Pakistan for a terrorists attack in its occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam area on Tuesday in which 26 tourists were shot dead. Pakistan denied the charge. — Agencies

Islamabad celebrates Francophone Culture
With “Francophone Talents” Contest Finals

The Moroccan cuisine's use of exotic spices like saffron, cumin, cinnamon, and preserved lemons created an unforgettable sensory experience. Many guests were seen returning for second servings, praising not only the rich tastes but also the authenticity and warmth that Moroccan food brought to the evening



ISLAMABAD: Charge d Affaires of the Romanian embassy Eduard Preda gives a gift to a child attending the Francophone Talents" contest. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Morocco Mohamad Karmoune briefs the guests about various dishes on the occasion of Francophone Talents contest. — DNA

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: A vibrant celebration of art, culture, and language took place in Islamabad as the finals of the “Francophone Talents” contest. The event was a joint initiative of the Embassies of Belgium, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Greece, Morocco, Romania, Switzerland, Tunisia, Vietnam, and the High Commission of Canada, aimed to celebrate the diversity and richness of the Francophone world. The evening featured a lively program starting with the grand finale of the Francophone Talents contest, where talented participants competed for top honors. Awards were presented to the winners in a ceremony highlighting their artistic achievements. The winner was awarded with return air ticket to Paris. Adding to the cultural spectacle, the event featured a special concert by renowned Francophone artists. Soprano Georgiana Costea-Gluga from Romania and musician Clément Visage from France captivated the audience with their performances, bringing an authentic touch of Francophone musical excellence to Islamabad. Guests enjoyed a Francophonie Buffet, showcasing an array of national dishes from Francophone countries, offering a culinary tour of the rich and diverse tastes of the French-speaking world.

The “Francophone Talents” contest and its associated events were a celebration of cultural dialogue, artistic creativity, and the enduring spirit of the Francophonie community across the globe. The guests thoroughly enjoyed a rich array of traditional dishes from various Francophone countries, each offering a unique taste of its cultural heritage. Among the many culinary delights, the Moroccan dishes stood out and attracted huge crowds. Dishes such as Tagine, Couscous, and Pastilla were particularly popular, celebrated for their richness, aromatic spices, and distinctive flavors. The slow-cooked Tagine, with its tender meats and blend of sweet and savory ingredients, captivated many with its depth of flavor. Couscous, often referred to as Morocco's national dish, impressed guests with its light texture and the vibrant mix of vegetables and spices. Meanwhile, the delicate and flaky Pastilla, a savory pie combining layers of meat, almonds, and a hint of sweetness, offered a culinary experience unlike any other. The Moroccan cuisine's use of exotic spices like saffron, cumin, cinnamon, and preserved lemons created an unforgettable sensory experience. Many guests were seen returning for second servings, praising not only the rich tastes but also the authenticity and warmth that Moroccan food brought to the evening.



ISLAMABAD: Francophone artists perform on the occasion of Francophone Talents contest. — DNA

Memon calls for end to
protests after resolution

Sindh transport minister urges reopening roads to ensure smooth goods transport and prevent further economic losses

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Senior Sindh Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has stated that the contentious canal issue has been fully resolved and brought to an end under the leadership of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Express News reported. In his statement on Sunday, Memon praised the “tireless efforts and effective strategy” employed by Bilawal, which he said had successfully resolved the canal dispute. He emphasized that the issue has now been completely addressed. He further announced that the matter would be officially closed after the upcoming meeting of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) on May 2. “This issue will be permanently closed following the official CCI meeting,” he said. He also appealed to all political parties and the legal community to ensure the reopening of roads affected by protests. He stressed the urgency of reopening roads to facilitate the smooth flow of goods transport and prevent further economic losses. “The closure of highways has severely impacted the public, livestock, imports, exports, farmers, and the poor,” Memon stated, urging that steps be taken immediately to restore traffic. His statement comes after at least six people, including a lawyer, were injured in Karachi's Gulshan-i-Hadeed area on Sunday when police clashed with members of the legal fraternity during an attempt to end their five-

day sit-in against the canal project. Earlier this week, the government halted the canals project, which was inaugurated in February by Army Chief General Asim Munir and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The decision followed months of protests, a unanimous Sindh Assembly resolution opposing the project, and growing concerns over India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty. The government confirmed that work on the canals would remain on hold until a consensus is reached at the CCI. However, despite the government's announcement, protests against the issue continued across several towns in Sindh on Saturday, along with a strike called by Jamaati-Islami. Lawyers staged a sit-in at Babarloi in Khairpur district, and the demonstration in Karachi's Gulshan-i-Hadeed entered its fifth day on Sunday. Memon also suggested that if the protests are to continue, the least that can be done is to open the roads for the free movement of traffic. “It would be better if the protests are ended, but at the very least, roads should be cleared to prevent disruption of traffic. Protests should remain peaceful so that public life can return to normal,” he added. The senior minister also mentioned that the Sindh government is in constant contact with the legal community and political parties. “The Sindh government is ready for negotiations with all stakeholders,” he said, calling on political parties and lawyers to keep an eye on disruptive elements.

Israeli jets strike southern
Beirut's suburbs for 3rd time

FOREIGN DESK

BEIRUT: Israeli jets struck Beirut's southern suburbs Sunday after issuing a warning about an hour earlier, marking the third Israeli strike on the area since a ceasefire took effect in late November. A huge plume of smoke billowed over the area after the strike. There were no immediate reports of casualties. In the warning, the Israeli military said that it was targeting Hezbollah facilities in the Hadath area and urged residents to move at least 300 meters from the site before the strike. Two warning strikes followed. Fighter jets were heard over parts of the Lebanese capital before the strike near the Al-Jamouh neighborhood, where gunfire was shot into the air to warn residents and urge them to evacuate, as families fled in panic. During the last Israel-Hezbollah war, Israeli drones and fighter jets regularly pounded the southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has wide influence and support. Israel views the area, where it has assassinated several of Hezbollah's top leaders, including chief Hassan Nasrallah, as a militant stronghold and accuses the group of storing weapons there. Sunday's strike follows two earlier attacks on the capital's southern suburbs, the first taking place on March 28, when Israel also issued a warning, and the second on April 1, when an unannounced strike killed four people, including a Hezbollah official. The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah group, Sheikh Naim Kasseem, has recently warned that if Israel's attacks on Lebanon continued and if Lebanon's government doesn't act to stop them, the group would eventually resort to other alternatives. Kasseem also said that Hezbollah's fighters won't disarm as long as Israeli troops remain in southern Lebanon and the Israeli air force regularly violates Lebanese airspace.

Qatar PM sees some
progress on Gaza truce

DOHA: Gaza mediator Qatar said Sunday there was some progress in talks in Doha this week aimed at securing a new truce in the Israel-Hamas war. Speaking at a news conference, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani reported “a bit of progress,” in response to questions about reports of a Thursday meeting in Doha between Israel's Mossad spy agency chief David Barnea and the Qatari prime minister. “We need to find an answer for the ultimate question: how to end this war. That's, that's basically, I think, the key point of the entire negotiations,” Sheikh Mohammed added. Qatar, alongside Egypt and the United States, brokered a truce between Israel and Hamas in Gaza which came into effect on January 19 but which did not bring a complete end to the war. The initial phase of the truce ended in early March, with the two sides unable to agree on the next steps. Israel resumed air and ground attacks across the Gaza Strip on March 18 after earlier halting the entry of aid. Sheikh Mohammed met with Barnea in the Qatari capital to discuss a potential hostage deal on Thursday, according to Israeli media. “The meeting that took place on Thursday is part of these efforts where we're trying to find a breakthrough,” the Qatari prime minister said without further elaborating on the details of the meeting. — Agencies

Trump wants ‘free’ transit for US ships

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump says the American military and commercial vessels should be allowed to travel free of charge through the Panama and Suez canals. Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social late Saturday that he was tasking his secretary of state, Marco Rubio, with making progress “immediately.” “American Ships, both Military and Commercial, should be allowed to travel, free of charge, through the Panama and Suez Canals. Trump claimed that the two strategic routes for global trade and military operations would “not exist” without the US. American Ships, both Military and Commercial, should be allowed to travel, free of charge, through the Panama and Suez Canals! Those Canals would not exist without the United States of America. I've asked Secretary of State Marco Rubio to immediately take care of, and... Panama's President José Raúl Mulino wrote on X on Saturday, without naming Trump, that the “transits and costs of all vessels through our Canal” are regulated by the Panama Canal Authority (ACP)— an autonomous governing body. “There is no agreement to the contrary,” Mulino said. Since taking office in January, Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire for the US to acquire the Panama Canal. Before returning to the White House, he even refused to rule out using economic pressure or military force to regain control over the canal. — Agencies



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