



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Bangladesh new year celebrations in the Capital draw interest**

Detailed News On Page-08

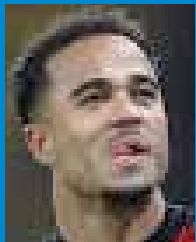
**Australian PM says Battle ahead to win election**

Detailed News On Page-08



**'I need to be in the Guinness World Records'**

Detailed News On Page-06



**PM tells Saudi, UAE envoys**

## Indian govt accusations are baseless

The Saudi Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for sharing his views on this important issue and said that Saudi Arabia wanted to work with Pakistan for peace and security in the region

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, called on the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. During the meeting, the Prime Minister conveyed his warm wishes to The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud as well as to the Crown Prince & Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. He thanked the Saudi leadership and people for always standing in solidarity with Pakistan through thick and thin.

While sharing Pakistan's perspective on recent developments in South Asia after the Pahalgam incident, the Prime Minister said that Pakistan condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It had rendered great sacrifices in its counter-terrorism efforts over the years. This was done not only to protect Pakistan but the entire world. He outrightly rejected baseless Indian accusations linking Pakistan to the Pahalgam incident without any evidence and reiterated his call for a transparent and neutral international investigation into the incident. He urged brotherly countries, including Saudi Arabia to impress upon India to de-escalate and defuse tensions. He reaffirmed Pakistan's desire for peace and stability in South Asia. The Saudi Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for sharing his views on this

Continued on Page 06

**Pak open to receive its stranded citizens through Wagah**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday announced that it was open to receiving its stranded citizens through the Wagah border in case the Indian authorities allow them to cross the point from their side. Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said in a statement that the Wagah border would remain open for Pakistani citizens in the future as well. Responding to the media queries about the availability of the Wagah Border crossing for Pakistani citizens returning from India, he said that the Indian decision to revoke visas of Pakistani citizens was creating serious humanitarian challenges. "Many patients, with fragile health, had to return to Pakistan without completing their treatment. Furthermore, there are reports of families being split and children

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on 2 May 2025. - DNA

**Top military determined to thwart aggression**

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), presided over a Special Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at General Headquarters (GHQ) today. The Forum conducted a comprehensive review of the prevailing geo-strategic environment, with particular emphasis on the current

PICTURE ON PAGE 2

Pakistan-India standoff and the broader regional security calculus. The Forum reaffirmed the unflinching resolve of the Pakistan Armed Forces to uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country against any aggression or misadventure.

Continued on Page 06

**India targets PM and ISPR**

Pakistan has strongly criticised India's decision

DNA

ISLAMABAD: India has blocked the official social media accounts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Pakistan's military media wing. The ISPR had released videos alleging Indian involvement in false flag operations, which reportedly gained traction among Indian audiences before being taken down. "This is not just censorship. It's political targeting of a sovereign country's leader," a senior media advisor told Reuters.

Continued on Page 06

**After confession**

## Court sentences 82 PTI activists in Nov 26 protest case

All accused confessed before judge, submit affidavit stating that PTI leadership incited them to protest

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Rawalpindi on Friday awarded a four-month imprisonment and Rs15,000 fine each to 82 PTI workers, who pleaded guilty to charges in the November 26 violent protest case. The November 26, 2024, protest was aimed at building pressure on the government to release the PTI founder. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was booked in multiple cases ranging from corruption to terrorism since his ouster from power via the opposition's no-trust motion in April 2022. The former ruling party's three-day protests were abruptly ended after fierce clashes erupted between the law enforcers and the protesters, which resulted in the martyrdom of at least three Rangers personnel and a policeman.

Continued on Page 06

## SC approves bail pleas of Ejaz, Farhat

If the case against Ejaz Chaudhry was so strong, it should have been taken to a special court, says SC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday approved the bail pleas of Senator Ejaz Chaudhry and Farhat Abbas in the May 9 cases, directing them to submit surety bonds worth Rs100,000 in the trial court. A three-member bench headed by Justice Naeem Akhtar

Continued on Page 06

### Briefs

**India on path to destruction, warns Liaqat Baloch**

DNA

LAHORE: Deputy Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Liaqat Baloch, has warned that India's current leadership is steering the country down a path of destruction, fuelled by aggressive rhetoric and false propaganda against Pakistan. In a statement issued from Lahore, Baloch emphasised that the people of Pakistan remain resilient despite ongoing provocations. He added that India's attempts to malign Pakistan on false grounds are part of a deliberate disinformation campaign. Baloch called on major regional powers, particularly China and Saudi Arabia, to play a more active role in preventing South Asia from descending into conflict.

**Bulls take charge at the PSX**

DNA

KARACHI: DThe capital market staged a strong comeback on Friday as investor sentiment rebounded on the back of hopes for de-escalating tensions between Pakistan and India, monetary easing, and the upcoming International Monetary Fund's (IMF) board review. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index hit an intraday high of 114,546.87, reflecting a gain of 3,220.3 points, or 2.89%, from the previous close of 111,326.57.

### Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

**Tit-for-tat**

## Water treaty: Pakistan prepares legal response

Officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Water Resources, and Law have reportedly completed the initial groundwork

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Following India's unilateral move to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, Pakistan has launched urgent legal and constitutional consultations to formulate a robust response, according to sources in the Indus Commission. Officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Water Resources, and Law have reportedly completed the initial groundwork. Sources revealed that within the next few days, a formal diplomatic notice will be issued to India, demanding concrete justifications for the treaty's suspension. Pakistan is also weighing options to raise strong objections at global forums, highlighting India's water-related aggression and its implications for regional stability. The Indus Commission sources asserted that Pakistan holds a clear legal advantage in the matter and intends to present its case effectively on the international stage.

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## Dar briefs Panama counterpart on current situation

Foreign Minister Javier Eduardo Martinze-Acha emphasized that both sides should exercise restraint

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday held a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of Panama Javier Eduardo Martinze-Acha Vasquez. The deputy prime minister briefed him on the current regional situation, including India's inflammatory propaganda and its illegal unilateral actions against

Continued on Page 06

## "Pakistan-Japan Human Resources Stakeholders Meeting" in Capital

The forum centered on the growing demands for skilled Pakistani labor in Japan and explored strategies to build stronger linkages that enable the smooth deployment of qualified professionals across multiple sectors, including IT, healthcare, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing

MAHNOOR ANSAR

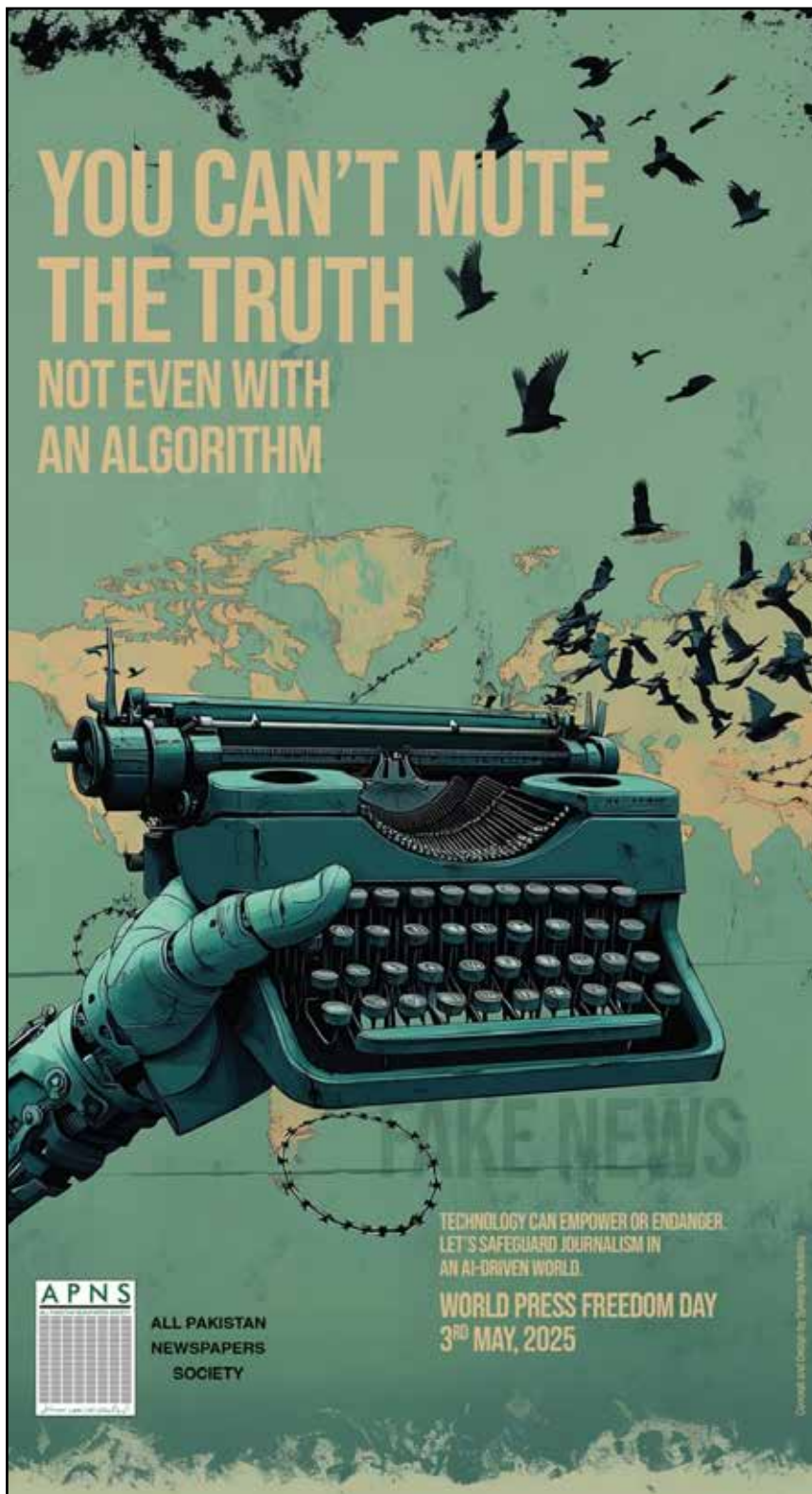
ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shu-



ichi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Pakistan, hosted the "Pakistan-Japan Human Resources Stakeholders Meeting" at the

Ambassador's Residence in Islamabad. The high-level gathering brought together approximately 70 key stakeholders actively engaged in developing and facilitating Pakistani human resources for employment opportunities in Japan. The event witnessed the presence of distinguished figures including H.E. Mr. Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, H.E. Ms. Shaza Fatima, Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Awn Saqlain, Minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, and representatives from leading Japanese and Pakistani organizations. Major participants representatives from Plus W, Proud Partners, Japan Pakistan Innovation Institute (JPIT) and Japan Station.

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## India should refrain from provocation: Tessori

KARACHI:Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori has said that the path to peace in the region is through dialogue, and tension is not in anyone's interest. He said that Pakistan is a peaceful country, and India should refrain from provocation. Tessori said that the international community should take notice of India's war madness. He said that Pakistan's armed forces are fully capable of protecting the motherland, and the enemy will be given a befitting reply. —APP

## Dutch envoy, Olympian visit PU to promote sports uplift

LAHORE:Ambassador of the Netherlands to Pakistan Henny Fokel De Vries, along with Olympian Floris Jan Bovelander, visited the Punjab University (PU) Department of Sports on Friday, where they met Director Dr Muhammad Shabbir Sarwar. The visit was marked by a series of hockey, football and basketball matches, organised in honour of the renowned Dutch athlete. During the event, Bovelander demonstrated his skills by teaching hockey tricks to players while actively participating in the match. Ambassador Henny Fokel praised the performance of female athletes at Punjab University, highlighting their dedication and achievements. Reflecting on his past achievements, Bovelander recalled scoring two goals in the 1990 hockey final held in Lahore and expressed his excitement to return to the city after many years. He extended his gratitude to Punjab University and the Chairman Prime Minister Youth Programme for their hospitality. Dr. Shabbir Sarwar, emphasizing the university's commitment to sports, noted that under the vision of Vice Chancellor Dr. Muhammad Ali, efforts are underway to further promote athletics at Punjab University. At the conclusion of the event, both the Ambassador and Bovelander, upon invitation from Dr. Shabbir Sarwar, expressed their intention to visit Punjab University again in the future. —APP

## DC launches anti-encroachment drive

GUJRAT:Deputy Commissioner Gujrat Safdar Hussain Virk visited various areas of the city, including Chowk Nawab Zada, Tambal Bazaar, Circular Road, and Faisal Gate, to inspect cleanliness and review the status of temporary encroachments. During the visit, the DC directed Chief Officer of the Municipal Committee, Khaleeq Dad Gahra, to ensure the immediate removal of all temporary encroachments. He said the administration is enforcing a zero-tolerance policy to maintain smooth public mobility. The DC reaffirmed the district administration's commitment to keeping the city clean, safe, and organized. He also instructed the preparation of a comprehensive strategy for restoring footpaths and eliminating encroachments permanently. —APP



RAWALPINDI : Army Chief General Asim Munir chairs corps commanders conference. —DNA

# Sindh, WFP to boost nutrition, education & climate resilience

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah appreciated WFP's continued support and stressed the importance of integrated efforts to improve health and nutrition outcomes, particularly for women and children

DNA

KARACHI:Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah met with World Food Programme (WFP) Country Director Coco Ushiyama to discuss avenues for deepening collaboration in nutrition, education, and climate resilience. WFP Provincial Head Hilde Bergsma and Policy Officer Salma Yaqoob also attended the meeting, along with key government officials including Principal Secretary Aga Wasif, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Secretary School Education Zahid Abbasi, and Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, said

a news release on Thursday. Discussions focused on building synergies across ongoing programmes, including the health and nutrition programmes, and the upcoming school meals programme. WFP's support in enhancing community resilience and restoring livelihoods was also highlighted. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah appreciated WFP's continued support and stressed the importance of integrated efforts to improve health and nutrition outcomes, particularly for women and children. The Benazir Nashonuma Programme, implemented under the country's largest social protection

initiative, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), targets pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under two — addressing malnutrition during the crucial first 1,000 days of a child's life. With WFP's support, BNP is delivered through 569 facilitation centres nationwide and has reached over 3 million women and children to date. In Sindh, the programme is active in 30 districts, reaching more than 1 million women and children. In discussions on the school meals initiative, participants agreed on the importance of including basic WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities to create a health-

ier learning environment. The Chief Minister also noted that additional facilities and financial assistance are being provided in flood-affected areas. The partnership between WFP and the Sindh government is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding signed on January 12, 2024. The agreement aims to strengthen Sindh's capacity to address food security and environmental challenges by 2027. It focuses on improving vulnerable communities' access to nutrition, health, and education, while promoting sustainable livelihoods and strengthening food systems against climate shocks. "Ensuring

food and nutrition security, particularly during crises such as climate change, is our priority," said Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. "We are committed to enhancing the resilience of food systems to protect the most vulnerable." Coco Ushiyama reaffirmed WFP's commitment, noting that future projects will continue to be developed in close coordination with the government and based on available resources. Through its strategic partnerships, WFP remains dedicated to promoting sustainable development and ensuring food remains within reach for the people of Sindh.

## EWR system implemented in Punjab

LAHORE:The Electronic Warehouse Receipt (EWR) system has been implemented in Punjab for facility of wheat farmers. Representatives of private banks met Price Control and Commodities Management Secretary Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti here on Friday. The secretary said that under the EWR system, farmers would receive payment of up to 70 per cent of the value of their stored wheat. The Punjab government would give complete rent and markup for storing wheat in warehouse for four months, he said and added that 'first come, first serve' package had been started and the Punjab government was directly giving relief to wheat growers. Ajmal Bhatti said that credit line of Rs 100 billion had been allocated for flour mills and green license holders to purchase wheat from farmers immediately. —APP

## Rescue 1122 organises first aid, heatwave awareness session

LODHRAN:The Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue-1122) organised a first aid and heatwave awareness programme at the Government Special Education School Lodhran. The event was attended by District Emergency Officer Engineer Shakil Ahmed, Special Education department Focal Person Hidayat Fatima Hashmi, Rescue 1122 Media Coordinator Safdar Malik, and Community Instructors Abid Mahmood Bhutta and Wajahat Ali. School teachers and students also participated enthusiastically in the session. During the session, Engineer Shakil Ahmed delivered a lecture highlighting the importance of first aid and precautionary measures during heatwave. —APP

# Women driving engine of economic growth

PESHAWAR :In a rapidly evolving world where social, political and economic landscapes are being reshaped, women are stepping forward to challenge the entrenched norms that once confined them to the margins through education. From classrooms to beauty parlors and civil service to education, Pakistani women are making transformative strides—reshaping not just their destinies but that of their communities and country. Though developing nations like Pakistan have made significant progress toward gender equality, disparities still persist in KP, driven by deeply rooted socio-cultural taboos and structural challenges. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2024, no country has yet achieved full gender parity—but the tide is turning due to mushroom growth of information technology and online education. Sundas Amin, a 34-year-old lecturer of Statistics at Govt College Pabbi Nowshera exemplified the changing narrative and shined in her community. Hailing from a conservative village of Bannu district where educating girls was not a priority due to socio-cultural barriers, she earned an MSc degree in Statistics from the University of Peshawar with distinction despite these odds and contributed positively towards girls education. —APP

# Governor KPK discusses bilateral issues with UAE Counsel General

Governor KPK Faisal Karim Kundi also visited different sections of the Consulate where he inaugurated Business Visa Section of the Consulate

NAZIR SIYAL/DNA

KARACHI: Governor KPK Faisal Karim Kundi was warmly received by UAE Counsel General H.E Bakheet Ateeq Al Romaithi at UAE Consulate in Karachi. Governor KPK Faisal Karim Kundi praised the continued support of UAE and termed it second home for Pakistanis. He also mentioned that there was a significant number of Pashtuns who are working in UAE, therefore he urged UAE Consulate General to open a Consulate in Peshawar as well. The Governor also mentioned about Pakistan Mines and Minerals Conference in Islamabad, aimed at investment in the sector, and urged the UAE business community to explore

the minerals sector of KPK. The Governor was toured to different sections of the Consulate where he inaugurated Business Visa Section of the Consulate. The Governor was informed by UAE CG

H.E Bakheet Ateeq Al Romaithi that the business section will provide opportunities of mutual investments, will create ease of doing business and will be helpful in strengthening the business relations between the two countries.

Moreover, Pakistani citizens are now eligible for getting five years visa program that will further strengthen bilateral ties between the two brotherly countries, he added.



## CDA reviews projects, focuses on water supply, housing regulations

The meeting concluded with the chairman addressing individual citizen complaints and issuing immediate directives

ISLAMABAD:The Capital Development Authority (CDA) held a meeting on Friday to assess progress on infrastructure projects, including road expansions, electric buses, and park upgrades. Chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the session also addressed water supply challenges and stricter oversight of housing societies. Officials reviewed ongoing initiatives such as underpass construction, beautification drives, and the proposed cable car system. Randhawa emphasized third-party audits for all projects, stating, "Special attention must be given to sector development to ensure transparency." To tackle Islamabad's water shortages, the chairman confirmed the Islamabad Water Agency's formation and feasibility studies for long-term solutions. "We're exploring all options, including engagement with national and international donors," he added. In a move to protect investors, the CDA will publish a list of legal and illegal housing societies on its website and in media. "The public must verify a society's legal status before investing," Randhawa stressed. The meeting concluded with the chairman addressing individual citizen complaints and issuing immediate directives. —DNA



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# Our environment is in danger - we need to help

AYESHA KHAN

The environment is everything around us — the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we live on, and the animals and plants we share it with. Right now, our environment is in serious trouble. Many human activities are causing harm to nature, and we need to take action before it is too late. Air pollution is one

of the biggest problems. Smoke from factories, cars, and burning trash makes the air dirty. Breathing polluted air can cause health problems like asthma and lung diseases. Water pollution is another major issue. When we throw waste into rivers and lakes, we not only kill fish and plants but also make the water unsafe for people to use. Another danger is deforestation, which means cutting down

too many trees. Trees are very important because they give us oxygen, help keep the climate cool, and provide shelter for many animals. When forests are destroyed, animals lose their homes and people suffer from changes in weather and air quality. Plastic waste is also a serious threat. Plastic does not break down easily and can stay in the environment for hundreds of years. It harms

sea life and pollutes land. We use plastic in many ways, like bottles and bags, but we often throw it away carelessly. This adds to the growing waste problem. There are many ways we can help. One of the best things we can do is plant more trees. Trees clean the air and bring balance to the environment. We should also reduce the use of plastic and try to recycle things whenever possible. Using cloth bags, metal bot-

tles, and paper packaging can make a big difference. In conclusion, our planet is facing many environmental challenges. But we still have time to fix these problems if we work together. Every small step counts. Let us all take responsibility and make changes in our daily lives to protect and Earth. It is our home, and we must take care of it for ourselves and for the generations to come.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

- MAY
- May 03/Poland National Day
- May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day
- May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day
- May 07/ Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day
- May 08/Czech Republic National Day
- May 09/European Union National Day
- May 17/Norway Constitution Day
- May 21/Hungary Armed Forced Day
- May 22/Yemen Republic Re-unification Day(National Day )
- May 24/Eritrea National Day
- May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
- May 25/Argentina National Day
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# ICT on alert as rain triggers citywide rescue drive

Rescue 1122 officials said they have handled multiple calls since the start of the rainfall, including minor accidents and requests for help from stranded citizens. Their teams remain equipped with emergency gear and transport vehicles to assist wherever needed

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad administration has launched a fast-paced response to tackle flooding, clear roads, and assist residents affected by the weather as the city has entered a high-alert mode to face heavy rain and stormy conditions. On the instructions of Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, operations have been intensified throughout the city. These include drainage work, clearing fallen branches, removing debris, and restoring traffic flow disrupted by the rains. Multiple city departments are working jointly in these efforts. Rescue 1122, Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI), Islamabad Police, CDA, and district administration officials are actively coordinating field operations. Their teams are working around the clock in key areas that saw water accumulation, traffic congestion, and fallen structures. The recent rainfall has caused water to pool on roads and in low-lying areas, slowing down traffic and creating mobility challenges for commuters. Drainage systems have been pushed to capacity, prompting emergency teams to use pumps and other machinery to drain the excess water. Field workers have also been clearing blocked manholes and removing waste to improve the water flow. Large trees and signboards were also affected by the high winds. In several areas, tree branches and boards were seen lying on roads, creating obstacles for traffic and pedestrians. The CDA and MCI teams have focused on removing these obstructions, using cranes and cutting equipment to safely shift broken materials off the streets. Meanwhile, traffic police are deployed to help regulate vehicle movement where congestion has been reported. With power cuts also affecting some parts of the city during the rains, officials have worked with relevant departments to resume services as quickly as possible. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa has been closely monitoring the situation and has appreciated the role of all involved departments. He noted that the cooperation between agencies has been effective in reducing the impact of the rain-related incidents and keeping the city functional. Emergency control rooms have been set up to monitor weather conditions and coordinate responses in real-time. Citizens have also been urged to report any rain-related issues to the control centers or helplines so that teams can respond quickly. The administration has emphasized the need for continued caution as more rain is expected in the coming days. Teams remain on the ground and will continue operations until the weather stabilizes and all affected areas are cleared. Authorities say the early response helped reduce major damage and ensured that traffic, electricity, and public services were restored in a timely manner. They have also called on residents to avoid unnecessary travel during storms and to stay away from open wires and fallen trees. The CDA has also directed its sanitation department to ensure drains are kept clean and no trash is left in areas prone to flooding. Field workers have been checking key drainage points across the city, especially in commercial and residential zones where water levels tend to rise quickly. Rescue 1122 officials said they have handled multiple calls since the start of the rainfall, including minor accidents and requests for help from stranded citizens. Their teams remain equipped with emergency gear and transport vehicles to assist wherever needed.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at PM House.

## Over 300 additional medical seats for Balochistan, former FATA students

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal on Friday announced the allocation of 333 additional medical and dental seats for students from Balochistan and the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The announcement was made during a press conference held at the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) headquarters, where the minister highlighted the government's commitment to inclusive and equitable education, particularly for students from underprivileged and remote regions. "In alignment with the Government's commitment to equitable access and national integration, we have taken bold and deliberate steps to empower students from underprivileged and remote regions of the country," Kamal said. "Today, we have taken a strong decision to offer educational opportunities to our deprived students from FATA and Balochistan." The 333 seats have been allocated over and above existing quotas, based on recommendations from the Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services. These additional seats will be available for Higher Education Commission (HEC) scholars from Balochistan and FATA for the 2024-25 academic session. Minister Kamal emphasized that the initiative is not merely about increasing numbers, but about addressing long-standing regional disparities and fostering a healthcare system that reflects the diversity of Pakistan. He expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his leadership, and praised the PM&DC, particularly its President, for swiftly implementing the decision. A formal notification has already been issued, and public medical and dental colleges in Balochistan and FATA have been instructed to apply for seat enhancements through the PM&DC, in accordance with established criteria. To ensure smooth implementation, provincial governments have been urged to expedite the seat allocation process. The PM&DC will monitor the rollout to maintain transparency, merit, and fairness. "This initiative is about more than education—it's about nation-building, integration, and ensuring that no capable student is left behind due to their socio-economic or geographic background," Kamal concluded.—DNA

## REEDS marks World Immunization Week with community outreach in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: The Rural Education and Economic Development Society (REEDS) Pakistan has partnered with the District Health Authority Rawalpindi and the World Health Organization (WHO) to mark the World Immunization Week by launching a series of community engagement initiatives to raise awareness on the vital role of immunization in safeguarding public health. "A range of activities, including educational sessions and awareness walks, were held at the School of Midwifery and St. Catherine's High School and College, with a particular focus on sensitizing students and female health workers about vaccine-preventable diseases and the significance of timely immunization," a REEDS news release said on Friday. At the School of Midwifery, Dr Mishal of REEDS delivered a comprehensive session outlining the protective benefits of vaccines, with a special focus on the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. The event was attended by Waqar Satti, District Vaccination Superintendent as chief guest, while Dr. Asif Shahzad, Divisional Coordinator WHO, shared updates on Pakistan's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and strategies for enhancing public outreach with the participants. At St. Catherine's High School and College, students engaged enthusiastically in an interactive session co-hosted by Principal Sister Nadia Aishaq and WHO's District Coordinator.—APP

## CDNS achieves Rs 1150b savings target by 10 months

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has attained a target of Rs 1150 billion in fresh bonds and attained 69.7 percent of the annual target for the ongoing first month of last 10 months of the current fiscal year, from July 1 to April 30th, 2025. The senior official of CDNS told APP on Friday that the CDNS has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which will promote the country's saving culture. Similarly, the CDNS has set a target of Rs170 billion in investments in Islamic finance for the Current Fiscal Year, which will lead to the growth of the Islamic economy in the country. Replying to a question, he said that the CDNS has realized a target of Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and exceeded 100 per cent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from July 1 to June 30. National Savings has set an annual target of Rs1.7 trillion for the year 2023-24; it is encouraging that this year, "We surpassed the 100 per cent of the annual target." The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the previous fiscal year 2022-23, he said. He said it was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22. The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the financial year (2021-22) which will promote a savings culture in the country, he said, adding that given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to further improve the savings culture. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. At this time, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS, which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added. The official said that the directorate had set a target of Rs 75 billion for the new financial year 2023-24 for Islamic finance bonds. Replying to a question, he said the CDNS aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector.

## Call for stronger academia-industry collaboration

Engr. Nazir said these reforms are aimed at enhancing the technical and professional competencies of engineering graduates

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Engr. Waseem Nazir Friday emphasized the critical need for robust partnerships between academia and industry. He was speaking at the GIKI Annual Industrial Open House and Career Fair 2025 as the chief guest. Highlighting GIKI's leadership in Artificial Intelligence, Clean Energy, and Quantum Computing, he said these areas represent the future of engineering in Pakistan. "These student projects reflect the practical thinking our industries need. PEC fully supports collaboration to produce globally competitive engineers," he stated. The event showcased 155 Final Year Design Projects (FYDPs) developed by 471 students, addressing real-world challenges through innovation and creativity. President GIK Board of Governors, Engr. Salim Saifullah Khan, commended the students' efforts and quality of work. Acting Rector Prof. Dr. S. M. Hasan Zaidi reiterated the Institute's focus on solution-driven education and encouraged industry leaders to share real-life problem statements with students for future projects. In his address, the PEC chairman also shed light on ongoing reforms in the engineering education sector. A nationwide consultation process is underway, involving universities, students, alumni, and the private sector. Sessions have already been conducted in Peshawar, Lahore, Multan, and Quetta, with more planned in other cities. The goal is to align engineering education with global benchmarks and the evolving demands of the job market. The PEC has recently launched several key initiatives, including the establishment of PEC Desks under the Pathway to Practice program, Artificial Intelligence training for engineers, and the approval for forming the Young Engineers National Forum. Engr. Nazir said these reforms are aimed at enhancing the technical and professional competencies of engineering graduates and ensuring their readiness to contribute meaningfully to national development.—DNA

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## easypaisa Facilitates PKR 107M in Donations During Ramadan 2025

ISLAMABAD: easypaisa digital bank was at the forefront of creating meaningful impact during Ramadan, processing over PKR 107 million in donations through its dedicated campaign, marking an 18% year-on-year increase from 2024. To amplify the impact of each contribution, easypaisa pledged to donate PKR 1 for every PKR 20 contributed via the app, amounting to PKR 5.3 million. This initiative not only encouraged greater participation but also made a tangible difference in the lives of those who needed it most. Donations were disbursed through several reputable charitable organizations, including Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital, Edhi Foundation, Al Khidmat Foundation, Maulana Tariq Jameel Foundation, and the Indus Hospital. With over 50 listed donation partners on the platform, easypaisa's initiative aimed to foster a spirit of compassion and generosity throughout Ramadan. The campaign saw more than 360,000 transactions, and a 34% YoY increase in total donation-related transactions.—APP

## SC approves bail pleas of Ejaz, Farhat

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday approved the bail pleas of Senator Ejaz Chaudhry and Farhat Abbas in the May 9 cases, directing them to submit surety bonds worth Rs100,000 in the trial court. A three-member bench headed by Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan heard the bail petitions of the accused involved in the May 9 incidents. During the hearing, the special prosecutor argued that Senator Ejaz Chaudhry was part of a conspiracy to incite people. However, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan remarked that if the case against Ejaz Chaudhry was so strong, it should have been taken to a special court. He further stated that bail cannot be used as a form of punishment. The court subsequently granted bail to Senator Ejaz Chaudhry, ordering the submission of Rs100,000 surety bonds in the trial court.—APP



## Briefs

IRSA releases  
154,200  
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 154,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 192,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1433.61 feet which was 31.61 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 76,900 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.70 feet, which was 83.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 48,500 cusecs and 32,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 95,700, 48,100, 39,500 and 9,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 35,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 23,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala. —APP

2 murder cases  
proclaimed  
offenders  
nabbed

RAWALPINDI: The Gujran Khan Police on Friday arrested two proclaimed offenders involved in separate murder cases of 2023 and a month ago. According to the Rawalpindi Police, the accused Jamil, who had been declared a proclaimed offender, had killed Muhammad Amir along with his accomplices in December 2023 on dispute over marriage proposal. The accused had thrown the victim into a dam with his hands and feet tied and face covered with a cloth. The police had then registered a murder case against unknown suspects. However, the police used all means including human intelligence to trace and arrest one of the accomplices of the accused earlier and now succeeded in nabbing himself. —APP

Religious Affairs  
Secretary  
ensures hassle-free hajj services

ISLAMABAD: Secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony, Dr. Syed Ata Ur Rehman Friday assured that under the 'Makkah Route' initiative, government is providing seamless services to pilgrims by streamlining procedures, including biometric data collection, electronic Hajj visa issuance, and passport formalities at departure airports. In an exclusive interview with Radio Pakistan's current affairs program, Syed Ata Ur Rehman highlighted the government's efforts to provide the best services for pilgrims, stating that the 'Makkah Route' initiative is a testament to this commitment, offering seamless experiences through streamlined procedures. He emphasized that the 'Makkah Route' program revolutionizes the pilgrimage experience, enabling prospective pilgrims to breeze through their journey with Saudi immigration officers stationed at Pakistani airports, allowing them to complete formalities before departing for Hajj. —APP

Awareness programs crucial in  
reducing maternal newborn mortality

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: A health expert on Friday underscored the importance of targeted nutrition and care awareness programs in reducing maternal and newborn mortality, urging global and local partners to invest in impactful interventions. Sara Aslam, Assistant Professor and Nutrition Diet Expert, in a conversation with a private news channel stressed that comprehensive awareness initiatives on nutrition and care are crucial to tackling maternal and newborn mortality, and urged stakeholders to invest swiftly in effective solutions. According to UN and WHO reports, Pakistan witnesses approximately 190,000 newborn deaths annually, with a daily maternal mortality rate of 27



ISLAMABAD: Renowned pianist Karol Msternak performs on the piano to entertain the audience during an event titled "Harmony of Melodies", organized by the Serena Hotels and the Embassy of Poland in the Federal Capital. — Online

Turkiye and Iran must join hands  
against Israel', Turkish Professor

Dr Hasan Unal, Professor at Başkent University, observed that Turkiye had become increasingly vocal against Israeli actions in both Syria and Gaza. Dr Unal noted that in order to reinforce its stance, Turkiye needed to strengthen its ties with Iran, which had been downgraded since December 2024

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In his inaugural remarks at an event held by Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, noted that there were increased airstrikes in Syria in defiance of the international law. Ambassador Jauhar highlighted that this escalation could result in the growing confrontation between Israel and Turkiye over

Syria as the incumbent Syrian administration shared strong ties with Turkiye. He also pointed out that the weakening of Iran-backed militias in the Middle East had changed the balance of power in the region. Dr Hasan Unal, Professor at Başkent University, observed that Turkiye had become increasingly vocal against Israeli actions in both Syria and Gaza. Dr Unal noted that in order to reinforce its stance, Turkiye needed to strengthen its ties with Iran,

which had been downgraded since December 2024. Dr Unal highlighted that Syria would remain a factor in Turkiye-Iran bilateral relations. Nonetheless, the issue of Kurdish separatism and statehood rendered these two countries natural allies. He felt that Turkiye need a balanced policy in the Middle East as it had exercised during the Ukraine crisis. Dr Merve Suna, Vice Chair of the International Relations Department at K r k kale University,

focused on the broader military and strategic landscape, particularly highlighting Israel's regional objectives. She pointed out that since 1948, Israel had consistently worked on its expansionist agenda by extending its military footprints and targeting potential threats through preemptive strikes. Israel aimed to dismantle the military strength of Hezbollah and Iranian-linked militias by targeting weapon depots and military installations, she added.

Dr Merve also elaborated that Israel viewed Turkiye as a growing regional threat, especially in the context of Turkiye's military bases in Syria. Therefore, Israeli airstrikes in Syria were indirectly aimed at curbing Turkiye's influence. Mr Fraz Naqvi, Head of Iran Program at IRS, argued that since October 2023, Middle East had entered into a new phase of conflict with Israel expanding beyond its territory into Gaza, Southern Lebanon and now Syria.

Economy is at a turning  
point; effective measures  
are needed for rapid growth

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Friday that the national economy is currently at a critical juncture. He said immediate and effective measures are needed for rapid development; therefore, the State Bank of Pakistan should significantly reduce the interest rate. Mian Zahid Hussain said that reducing the interest rate would boost business activity, increase the growth rate, create employment opportunities for the public, and benefit the government while reducing the burden of public debt. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that high interest rates adversely affect the economy. They make access to loans difficult for businesses and limit investment opportunities. The industrial sector suffers

when interest rates are high and consumers' purchasing power declines. Pakistan's GDP growth has remained below expectations in recent years, mainly due to high interest rates that increase business costs. He said that if the State Bank reduces the interest rate, the private sector will gain access to cheaper loans, and new investment opportunities will open up, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are the backbone of Pakistan's economy and are in dire need of affordable financing. The business leader said the current interest rate is unbearable for SMEs, preventing them from enhancing their production capacity or investing in new projects. Mian Zahid Hussain suggested that the central bank cut the interest rate by at least three percent to stimulate economic activity, support businesses, create new employment opportunities, and increase the public's purchasing power, thereby reducing inflationary pressure. —APP

## Pakistan's sovereignty non-negotiable: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD: Former Ambassador & PPP Senator Sherry Rehman Friday issued a stern warning to India, stating that Pakistan will unleash its full fury and deliver a crushing response to any aggression, particularly over the disputed Indus water territory, where Pakistan's sovereignty will not be compromised. In an exclusive conversation, Sherry Rehman stated, "Pakistan's sovereignty is non-negotiable, and we will not back down on the Indus water issue. Any aggression will be met with a resolute response". Sherry Rehman said that India has been threatening Pakistan over the Indus water issue since the beginning and is also engaging in baseless propaganda against Pakistan. She alleged that Modi's government has a pattern of weaponizing water and leveling accusations against Pakistan. "India's evidence-free allegations against Pakistan are nothing but a desperate attempt to deflect attention," she added. She further commended America for its balanced stance, showing restraint in the matter. The entire nation stands united and will not compromise on Pakistan's sovereignty, she added. Responding to a query, she stressed that water is a matter of national security for Pakistan, warning that any threat to its water resources would be met with unwavering resolve and unrelenting action. "Pakistan will not tolerate any hostile intentions and those who dare to threaten its interests will face a robust and resolute response, more potent than ever," she added. —APP

5 drug suppliers nabbed  
with 6 kg charas

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police continued the crackdown against drug suppliers and arrested five more accused with more than 6 kilograms of charas on Friday. According to the police spokesman, the New Town Police recovered 2.5 kg charas from accused Tauseef. Likewise, the Taxila Police nabbed three accused Zohaib Akhtar, Tayyab Saeed and Samiullah with 1.26 kg, 1.12 kg and 600 grams of the contraband item respectively. Similarly, the Wah Saddar also netted accused Shaukat recovering 800 grams charas from his possession. —APP

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One  
Commercial  
Market food  
outlet closed

RAWALPINDI: The Additional Director General of Punjab Food Authority on Friday paid a surprise visit to the Commercial Market here and closed down a food outlet due to extremely poor arrangements. According to a PFA spokesperson, the high official carried out detailed checking of four food points. Besides closing one of them, the other three were imposed a total fine of Rs 450,000. The fines were imposed on the outlets due to extremely poor cleaning arrangements and use of rancid oil, the spokesman said. Some 70 litres of rancid oil were destroyed. The Additional Director General issued strict instructions to the food points for maintaining hygienic conditions. —APP

“Pakistan  
won’t  
hesitate to  
retaliate’

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Adviser on Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah Friday warned that Pakistan will unleash its full might and respond with unyielding resolve if India launches any aggression against its soil. Talking to a private news channel, Rana Sanaullah said, "We are prepared for an unbiased investigation into Phalgama, pending concrete evidence from India." He criticized India's policies, stating that the country has consistently engaged in hate-based politics and harbored animosity towards minorities and Muslims. He alleged that India's actions are driven by a deep-seated bias, resulting in widespread persecution and marginalization of vulnerable communities. He emphasized that such behavior is not only unacceptable but also poses a significant threat to regional stability and global peace. Rana also criticized Modi's approach, stating that his allegations are often made without evidence and seem to be part of a pre-planned strategy. —APP



The time to end the Gaza war is now – OIC and Muslim organizations must step up

THE ongoing war in Gaza has become a stain on the conscience of the international community. As the death toll rises and the humanitarian situation worsens, the silence – or at best, the insufficient response – from many quarters is becoming intolerable. It is time for the bloodshed to stop. And in this moment of grave crisis, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other Muslim organizations must rise to the occasion. Gaza is not just a geopolitical issue; it is a human tragedy. Thousands of civilians, including children, have been killed. Basic infrastructure has been decimated. Hospitals are overwhelmed, food and water are scarce, and hope is vanishing. This is not a “conflict” between equals – it is a lopsided war where one side bears the brunt of destruction. So far, international efforts to halt the violence have faltered. Vetoes in the UN Security Council, double standards in human rights discourse, and the prioritization of political alliances over moral responsibility have left Gaza abandoned. In this vacuum of global leadership, the OIC and Muslim civil society organizations must act decisively. The OIC, representing 57 member states and over 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide, has both the moral and strategic obligation to intervene meaningfully. While statements of condemnation are important, they are no longer sufficient. The OIC must coordinate urgent diplomatic efforts to pressure for an immediate ceasefire, facilitate humanitarian access, and push for accountability for war crimes committed against civilians. Furthermore, Muslim-majority countries should use their economic and diplomatic leverage – including energy exports, trade ties, and strategic partnerships – to demand a halt to hostilities. Financial aid and reconstruction pledges are valuable, but they cannot substitute for political action that aims to stop the violence in the first place. Muslim civil society also has a powerful role to play. NGOs, student unions, faith leaders, and diaspora communities must amplify the voices of Gazans, mobilize global public opinion, and hold their own governments accountable. Boycotts, peaceful protests, and coordinated advocacy campaigns can challenge apathy and force attention on Gaza’s plight. Importantly, this is not a call for division, but for principled unity. Ending the war in Gaza should not be viewed through the lens of religious solidarity alone, but as a moral imperative that transcends borders. Innocent lives – Muslim, Christian, and otherwise – are at stake. The longer this war drags on, the deeper the wounds, the greater the risk of regional escalation, and the harder it will be to build any future peace. The OIC and Muslim organizations must remember that their silence – or their inaction – will not be forgotten by history. The world is watching. Gaza is bleeding. This war must end. Let the Islamic world lead with courage, compassion, and conviction. Will the OIC answer the call – or will it remain on the sidelines of one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time?

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Energy and infrastructure:  
The backbone of AI’s future

THE explosive rise of artificial intelligence is reshaping the global economy, and at the core of this transformation lies infrastructure. As AI applications grow more sophisticated and data-hungry, the demand for powerful data centers and reliable energy sources has reached unprecedented levels. However, a shortage of scalable, sustainable power is emerging as a critical bottleneck – one that is driving a global surge in energy and digital infrastructure investment. AI is no longer a novelty or a passing technological trend. It is increasingly regarded as an essential utility, on par with electricity and the internet. Reflecting this shift, private capital markets are pouring money into the sector. Though AI-related deals make up only about 3 percent of all transactions, they account for a staggering 15 percent of total capital invested. Venture capitalists are especially bullish. Investment in AI application platforms has skyrocketed to 10 times previous levels, with valuations reaching five times the norm for similar startups. The median funding multiple for AI firms now stands at 25 times revenue, while top-performing companies are being valued at 40 times their revenue – a sign of soaring expectations for future growth and profitability. Technology giants have also grown more deeply entwined with the global economy, representing approximately \$15 trillion – or 15 percent – of global GDP. If current momentum continues, this figure could rise to \$35 trillion, and potentially to \$50 trillion if AI continues to expand its reach, accounting for up to 35 percent of global GDP. Yet realizing this growth demands a massive expansion of infrastructure. During the dot-com boom, the U.S. added about 2 gigawatts of data center capacity over 16 years. The cloud computing era pushed that to 6 gigawatts. In contrast, the AI era will require far more – and far faster – development. The Middle East is particularly well-positioned to take advantage of this demand. With access to abundant and affordable energy, the region is attracting substantial investment. Global investment firm KKR recently committed \$5 billion to UAE-based Gulf Data Hub, which is building 300 megawatts of new capacity to support AI growth across the Gulf Cooperation Council, including major expansions in Saudi Arabia announced at the LEAP tech summit. AI’s appetite for computing power is also driving massive growth in graphics processing units (GPUs). In just six to eight years, the scale of processor clusters used for AI model training has increased 20 to 40 times, leading to the emergence of enormous “giga campuses” housing up to a million processors. But two critical questions remain: Can the capital keep flowing, and can infrastructure scale quickly enough? KKR highlights two megatrends shaping this future: an estimated \$100 trillion needed for infrastructure development over the next 15 years, and an additional \$200 trillion required to meet global net-zero targets by 2050. The bottom line: The AI revolution presents extraordinary opportunities – but building the energy and infrastructure to support it will be one of the greatest challenges of our time.

Strategic communication in the hyper  
connected age: building trust from the top

Imran Ghaznavi



The currency of trust, once earned over decades, can be squandered in seconds. In this volatile environment, the relationship between the Chief Executive and the Chief Reputation Officer (often embodied in the head of communications or public affairs) has become a defining factor in an organization’s long-term sustainability With over 25 years of hands-on

IN today’s hyper-connected world, where a single tweet can cascade into a global headline and opinions are formed and reshaped in hours, reputation management is no longer an optional function – it is a strategic imperative. The currency of trust, once earned over decades, can be squandered in seconds. In this volatile environment, the relationship between the Chief Executive and the Chief Reputation Officer (often embodied in the head of communications or public affairs) has become a defining factor in an organization’s long-term sustainability With over 25 years of hands-on experience in both the public and private sectors, I have witnessed firsthand how strategic communication—when elevated to the top echelons of decision-making – can safeguard institutions in moments of crisis and amplify their credibility in times of opportunity. The organizations that endure are not those that merely react, but those that anticipate, plan, and communicate with authenticity and agility. Reputation today is shaped by multiple stakeholders – media, regulators, investors, customers, employees, and activists. Each has access to digital platforms that allow instantaneous feedback. This democratization of voice means narratives can spiral out of control in hours. In such a landscape, traditional PR or reactive media handling is insufficient. What is needed is a robust strategic and tactical communication framework that enables both proactive reputation building and agile crisis response. To achieve this, the communications function must be embedded into the strategic core of the organization. This means giving communication leaders not just a seat at the table but a voice in the boardroom. Far too often, communication is seen as a support function – called in to “fix” problems after the fact. That model is outdated and dangerous. Trust Begins at the Top, a strong, credible relationship between the Chief Executive and the Chief Reputation Officer is foundational. The CEO must not only understand the

power of narrative but also trust the insights of their communications head as a strategic advisor. This trust creates an environment where reputation issues are addressed early, messaging is aligned with corporate values, and the organization can respond swiftly to external threats or misinformation. A good CEO leads with purpose, but a great CEO understands that purpose must be communicated clearly, consistently, and courageously. This calls for transparency, empathy, and decisiveness – all hallmarks of effective leadership communication. In my experience, where this relationship has worked well, the results have been remarkable – enhanced stakeholder confidence, improved employee morale, and resilient reputations that weather storms. Where it has faltered, reputational damage has often followed swiftly and painfully. Effective communication operates on two planes: the strategic and the tactical. Strategically, it defines the organization’s voice, aligns internal and external messaging, manages stakeholder expectations, and ensures reputational risks are identified and mitigated. Tactically, it ensures that the right message reaches the right audience at the right time – whether through media, social platforms, internal channels, or direct engagement. A mature communication framework enables both functions to operate seamlessly. For example, during a crisis, strategic thinking ensures alignment with long-term organizational values and goals, while tactical execution ensures timely information is disseminated to defuse misinformation and provide clarity. In the public sector, the stakes are even higher. Government institutions face relentless scrutiny, high public expectations, and an often cynical media landscape. Here, communication is not just about optics – it is about legitimacy, trust, and public confidence. Communication professionals must navigate complex political, bureaucratic, and social landscapes while maintaining the integrity of the public message. Unfortunately, in many public sector

institutions, the communications role is under-resourced and undervalued. Changing this requires structural reform, starting with leadership recognition of its importance. Chief Executives in public service must embrace the communications function as an extension of governance and transparency – not as a public relations tool, but as a bridge to the citizens they serve. A few recommendations for institutionalizing communication as a strategic lever: Board-Level Access: The head of communications must report directly to the CEO and be part of key board deliberations. This ensures alignment and early warning on reputational risks. Integrated Frameworks: Develop and maintain communication playbooks that cover both proactive and reactive strategies, updated regularly to reflect emerging trends and vulnerabilities. Scenario Planning: Communication teams must participate in enterprise risk assessments and scenario planning exercises. Crisis simulations should be conducted regularly. Culture of Openness: Foster a culture where communication is not feared but embraced. Encourage departments to share information early so it can be addressed strategically. Digital First: Invest in digital monitoring tools, data analytics, and rapid-response capabilities. Reputation is shaped in real-time, and insights must guide action. Reputation is no longer a static asset; it is a dynamic, fragile, and constantly evolving ecosystem. In this environment, the Chief Executive must lead with integrity and communicate with intention. But just as importantly, they must empower their Chief Reputation Officer to act with independence, foresight, and authority. The most successful organizations are those where the communication function is not reactive or peripheral, but central to governance, strategy, and execution. It is time to treat reputation management not as an art of persuasion, but as a discipline of trust, built from the top, sustained through systems, and delivered with sincerity.

Trump’s 100-day failures

Qamar Bashi



Trump, ever the political showman, projected strength—but his words betrayed a leadership style increasingly detached from facts, norms, and national priorities President Trump claimed that under his leadership, the U.S. economy was “booming,” citing Apple’s \$500 million investment and \$7 to \$8 trillion in foreign investments within just two months. However, these boasts lacked corroboration and overlooked the damage caused by his aggressive

ON the 100th day of his second term, President Donald J. Trump delivered a defiant and self-congratulatory Oval Office interview. Yet beneath the polished setting and forceful rhetoric, the exchange revealed glaring contradictions, unfulfilled promises, and deepening public unease. Trump, ever the political showman, projected strength—but his words betrayed a leadership style increasingly detached from facts, norms, and national priorities President Trump claimed that under his leadership, the U.S. economy was “booming,” citing Apple’s \$500 million investment and \$7 to \$8 trillion in foreign investments within just two months. However, these boasts lacked corroboration and overlooked the damage caused by his aggressive tariff policies. Trump touted a 145% tariff on Chinese goods, likening it to an “embargo,” and insisted that “China will eat the tariffs.” But analysts disagree. Moody’s and multiple economic think tanks estimate that these tariffs could cost American households thousands annually. Instead of lowering inflation as promised, Trump’s protectionist measures have worsened supply chain costs and raised prices for consumer goods like clothing, electronics, and housing materials. Yet Trump dismissed these concerns, saying, “Everything’s going to be just fine,” and shifted blame entirely to his predecessor, Joe Biden. His assurance that “people did sign up for this” rings hollow as working-class families and small businesses bear the brunt of his economic experiments. Trump boasted of dramatic price reductions—like eggs being “down 87%” and gas prices hitting “\$1.98”—without citing sources. These figures appear to be cherry-picked or unverified. Economists argue that his tariffs and abrupt economic policies have contributed more to instability than recovery. His promise to “bring prices down on day one” remains largely unmet, and when challenged with facts, Trump brushed them aside with: “You don’t know that.” Trump’s trade war rhetoric ignored the plight of small businesses that rely on affordable imports. These businesses, once thriving on a global supply model, now face extinction due to rising costs. When pressed about their concerns, Trump doubled down: “I could’ve had an easy time, but then the country would have imploded.” Despite his claim that the trade deficit has shrunk rapidly, he offered no supporting data. Nor did he acknowledge how tariffs have disrupted

long-term commercial planning and manufacturing. His handling of the economy continues to prioritize short-term populist applause over sustainable economic strategy. On immigration, Trump claimed illegal crossings had “plummeted 99.9%.” He painted a picture of a country overrun by criminals, asserting that 21 million undocumented people had entered the U.S. Again, no data was provided to support this number. When asked if deportees were given legal hearings, Trump vacillated. He questioned the feasibility of 21 million hearings, brushing aside due process rights guaranteed under U.S. law. His administration even deported Kilmar Brego Garcia—a Salvadoran man under legal protection—prompting a Supreme Court ruling to return him. Trump dismissed the judgment as a mistake by an “incompetent” judge and refused to commit to complying with the order. He further defended mass deportations to El Salvador despite many deportees lacking criminal records. When reminded of Joe Rogan’s criticism—that the U.S. risks becoming monstrous while fighting monsters—Trump nodded but quickly returned to his narrative of criminal invasions. Due process, to him, seems secondary to political theater. Trump referred to the war in Ukraine as “Biden’s war,” repeatedly claiming that it would never have happened under his watch. He described a symbolic meeting with President Zelensky at Saint Peter’s Basilica, suggesting it offered hope. Yet in the same breath, he speculated that Putin “might be tapping me along,” contradicting his earlier assertion that Putin wanted peace. He refused to confirm whether the U.S. would continue military aid to Ukraine, calling it “a big fat secret.” This ambiguity risks U.S. credibility and complicates alliance diplomacy. Asked whether he trusts Putin, Trump deflected: “I don’t trust a lot of people. I don’t trust you.” His praise of Putin’s respect for him raises further doubts about Trump’s geopolitical judgment. Trump was also asked about Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who was under scrutiny for discussing classified operations on Signal. Trump described him as “smart” and “highly educated,” but when asked if he had full confidence in him, replied, “I don’t have 100% confidence in anything.” This hedging adds to growing concerns about the competence and cohesion of Trump’s second-term cabinet. He continued to defend DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency), which has cut billions in what Trump

calls wasteful spending. Yet these cuts affected critical institutions such as the NIH, global health programs, and foreign aid. Trump celebrated saving \$150 billion but ignored the humanitarian and research setbacks. He even admitted that some programs might be reinstated due to oversight. One of the most troubling aspects of Trump’s first 100 days is his use of presidential power for apparent personal retribution. He revoked security clearances and targeted law firms that represented his political opponents. He openly admitted that these firms “paid hundreds of millions” to avoid his wrath and declared, “They just signed whatever I put in front of them.” When asked whether this behavior resembled authoritarianism, Trump deflected by framing himself as the victim. “There has never been a president persecuted like I was,” he insisted. He justified his actions by portraying others as “crooked” and “dishonest,” refusing to recognize any overreach on his part. Trump’s off-hand remarks about Canada becoming the 51st U.S. state during a Canadian election stirred backlash. When asked if this harmed America’s global reputation, he countered, “We’re respected again.” He mocked President Biden’s physical stumbles and doubled down on claims of a stolen 2020 election, further eroding faith in democratic norms. He dismissed concerns about growing executive power, saying, “I’m making America great again,” and suggested that his return was a national resurgence. Yet this self-narrative—built on grievance, inflated claims, and unchecked power—has done little to heal the institutional and civic wounds of the last four years. Trump’s 100-day report card is less a record of accomplishment and more a litany of distortions, deflections, and power plays. His reliance on anecdotal victories, exaggerated claims, and loyalty tests reflect an administration prioritizing optics over outcomes. While Trump insists he’s fixing what was broken, his approach is breaking the very mechanisms of law, diplomacy, and accountability that sustain democratic governance. Rather than restoring greatness, Trump’s early second-term agenda has exposed the fragility of the nation’s institutions under his grip. His promises remain largely unfulfilled, his economic strategies deeply polarizing, and his leadership style increasingly authoritarian. For a nation yearning for progress, these 100 days have offered little more than déj vu laced with danger.



## Briefs

Indian govt  
accusations  
are baseless

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important issue and said that Saudi Arabia wanted to work with Pakistan for peace and security in the region. Meanwhile, . Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), called on the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House today. During the meeting, the Prime Minister conveyed his warm wishes to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, President of the UAE and thanked the UAE for its unwavering support to Pakistan, which bore testament to the historic, deep-rooted, fraternal ties between the two countries. The Prime Minister categorically rejected the baseless accusations leveled by India in its desperate attempts to link Pakistan to the Pahal-gam incident, without any evidence. He said Pakistan had nothing to do with this and emphasized that he had offered to have a credible, transparent and neutral international investigation into the incident. He shared that Pakistan was reaching out to other friendly countries to present its position on the current crisis.

Pak open to  
receive its  
stranded...

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being separated from one of their parents," he added. The spokesperson said that the last date to cross over through the Wagah-Attari border was April 30, 2025. In that context, we are aware of the media reports indicating that some Pakistani nationals are stranded at Attari. "We are open to receiving our citizens in case the Indian authorities allow them to cross the border from their side. The Wagah border will remain open for Pakistani citizens in the future as well," the spokesperson added.

Water treaty:  
Pakistan  
prepares...

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Any official steps will be taken only after securing approval from the federal government and cabinet. There is hope, sources added, that India may soon be compelled to reconsider its decision under diplomatic pressure.

Dar briefs  
Panama  
counterpart  
on current...

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Pakistan, including holding in abeyance the Indus Waters Treaty in a clear violation of international law, according to a foreign ministry press release. Foreign Minister Javier Eduardo Martinez-Acha emphasized that both sides should exercise restraint. Being non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to international peace and security.

“Pakistan-  
Japan  
Human...

FROM PAGE 01  
Also, representatives from key institutions such as Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) presented. The forum centered on the growing demands for skilled Pakistani labor in Japan and explored strategies to build stronger linkages that enable the smooth deployment of qualified professionals across multiple sectors, including IT, healthcare, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing. Ambassador Akamatsu stated in his welcome remarks as follows: "I am confident that the success of Pakistani professionals in Japan is becoming one of the key pillars of the bilateral relations. Both Japanese and Pakistani Embassies remains committed to making contributions.

Rain washes out Gladiators  
Qalandars encounter in Lahore

Qalandars and Gladiators remain second and third respectively with nine points each

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10 clash between Quetta Gladiators and Lahore Qalandars was called off on Thursday due to heavy rain and windstorm at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. Qalandars and Gladiators, placed second and third respectively, had the opportunity to end defending champions Islamabad United's stronghold at the top of the standings but the two former champions had to settle down for a point apiece. As a result, Qalandars and Gladiators remained second and third respectively with nine points each. Qalandars next face Karachi Kings on Sunday, while Gladiators' next match is scheduled against holders United on Saturday. Put into bat first, the Qalandars could accumulate 111/3 in their 11.3 overs as a severe dust storm hit the Gaddafi Stadium here, causing the action to stop. The dust storm was followed by light yet steady rain which eventually resulted in the match being called off. The Qalandars, batting first, had an unwanted start to their innings as Khurram Shahzad cleaned up their experienced opener Fakhar Zaman for



a duck on just the third delivery of the innings. Following the early hiccup, Abdullah Shafique joined Mohammad Naeem and together they raised an astounding recovery by putting together a centu-

ry-plus stand. The duo added 102 runs for the second wicket until Naeem eventually fell victim to Abrar Ahmed. He scored 50 off 30 deliveries, laced with three fours and four sixes.

Abrar struck again in his next over, dismissing Daryl Mitchell on three and had consequently reduced the Qalandars to 111/3 in 11.3 overs until a dust storm intervened in the action. Abdul-

lah Shafique remained unbeaten with a 32-ball 53, studded with three fours and as many sixes. For Gladiators, Abrar picked up two wickets, while Shahzad made one strike.

‘I need to be in the Guinness World  
Records’ - how Kluivert found home

DNA

LONDON: Justin Kluivert says he feels at home at Bournemouth after a career that has taken him through the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, France, Spain and now England. But while the Dutch forward is enjoying laying down some roots after jet-setting around the continent - he would jump at the chance of exploring Europe with the Cherries next season. As many as 10 Premier League clubs could qualify for European competitions, external in 2025-26. And with Andoni Iraola's side sitting 10th - one point behind eighth-placed Fulham - Bournemouth remain in the hunt with four games to go

Kluivert, who turns 26 on Monday, has played - and scored - in the top-flight of each of the six countries he has played in. A feat he



believes is unique. "I need to be in the book of Guinness World Records," the son of Dutch legend Patrick Kluivert tells Football Focus in an interview to

be shown on BBC One on Saturday from 12:00 BST. "I think I am the first player to score in the top six competitions - if Holland

is the sixth." Romanian striker Florin Raducioiu and Montenegro's Stevan Jovetic are the only other players to score in the top five leagues of Italy,

Germany, France, Spain and England. Since making his debut for Ajax aged 17, Kluivert has scored goals for Roma, RB Leipzig (loan), Nice (loan) and Valencia (loan). The forward joined Bournemouth from Roma in a £9.6m deal in June 2023. Since then the Cherries have set a club record Premier League points tally in back-to-back seasons, are challenging for a place in Europe, and have just opened a state-of-the-art £32m training facility, where this interview is taking place. "We speak every day about it," Kluivert says about Bournemouth's target of playing in Europe for the first time. "We believe in it and we will go for it 100%."—DNA

Saudia Sweeps Top  
Awards at 2025 Expo

Karachi, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, earned multiple honors at the 2025 TravelPlus Airline Amenity Awards and Onboard Hospitality Awards during the World Travel Catering & Onboard Services Expo in Hamburg. These accolades highlight Saudia's commitment to exceptional onboard hospitality, offering world-class service and amenities—especially enhancing the travel experience for passengers flying to and from Pakistan. Saudia's exclusive ELIE SAAB amenity kits won Gold for First and Business Class at the TravelPlus Awards, both regionally and globally. Offered on flights to and from Pakistan, these stylish kits bring a new level of luxury and comfort to Pakistani travelers. Saudia's Saudi Coffee Cup initiative won a Gold Award for First Class Glassware at the TravelPlus Airline Amenity Awards. In collaboration with the Culinary Arts Commission under Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Culture, the handcrafted cups represent the Kingdom's diverse regions. This initiative blends cultural heritage with world-class service, now offering passengers traveling to and from Pakistan a unique taste of Saudi tradition onboard. Further reinforcing its status as a leader in guest comfort and innovation, Saudia was also awarded the prestigious TravelPlus Passenger Amenities Five Star Rating 2025, an honor shared by only five airlines globally this year. The Onboard Hospitality Awards also acknowledged Saudia's innovative approach by awarding a Highly Commended recognition in the Best Service Equipment: Crew category for the airline's new cabin crew uniforms. This award reflects style as well as functionality designed to enhance service delivery onboard.—APP

Jason Ritter reveals one  
wife Melanie Lynskey  
never tells him

LONDON: Jason Ritter recently made a candid admission about his wife Melanie Lynskey. In the couple's latest chat with E!, Jason claimed that he has been unable to get spoilers about the show Poker Face from wife Melanie Lynskey till date "I do ask," Jason began and shared, "but she just doesn't tell me." For those unversed, Jason Ritter has a guest-starring role in the second season of Poker Face along with wife Melanie. However, he maintained that his wife of five years firmly refuses to disclose any secrets about the show, even to him. "Even though I will forget all spoilers by the time I'm watching," he joked and added about his forgetfulness, "so it doesn't ever bother me. But I still don't get any spoilers." Explaining why she gatekeeps details about her character, Melanie said, "I won't ruin it." In conclusion, she reasoned that she is also choosing to remain in the dark about Jason's appearance on the show in reciprocation as she "hasn't seen" his episode either.

HEC Leads 4th  
National Capacity-  
Building Workshop

This workshop is part of HEC's broader strategy to reinforce Pakistan's research infrastructure and promote integration with the international academic community

ISLAMABAD : To elevate the quality and international visibility of academic research in Pakistan, Higher Education Commission (HEC) successfully organised the 4th Editors Orientation Capacity-Building Workshop on Journal Recognition at Government College University, Faisalabad. The workshop drew more than 90 participants, including journal editors, researchers, and faculty members from across South Punjab. Designed to enhance editorial practices and align local journals with global publishing standards, the event marked a significant step towards strengthening the academic publishing landscape in Pakistan. Dean Faculty of Management, Virtual University of Pakistan, Dr. Ather Azim delivered the keynote address. With over three decades of experience in both academia and corporate sector, Dr. Azim has held leadership roles at several institutions and served in senior financial positions. His address offered participants practical insights into editorial management and institutional development. The workshop featured interactive sessions focused on key areas such as: Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) & Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines, Peer review Mechanisms Editorial policies and procedures and best practices in academic publishing. Addressing the closing ceremony, Vice Chancellor Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF) Dr. Rauf e Azam emphasised the vital need for continuous professional development to boost the quality, credibility, and global reach of Pakistani research journals. This workshop is part of HEC's broader strategy to reinforce Pakistan's research infrastructure and promote integration with the international academic community.—DNA

Asian stocks gain after  
China teases US tariff talks

The Bank of Japan warned earlier that tariffs were fuelling global economic uncertainty and revised down its growth forecasts while keeping its key interest rate steady. Traders are looking ahead Friday to US jobs data for April for indications of the US central bank's path for interest rates

DNA

HONG KONG: Asian markets largely rose Friday, tracking Wall Street gains, as China said it was considering a US offer to negotiate steep tariffs. US markets had forged higher Thursday following strong results from tech giants Microsoft and Meta that helped offset lingering economic worries. President Donald Trump's levies reached 145 percent on many Chinese products in April, while Beijing has responded

with fresh 125 percent duties on imports from the United States. On Friday, China's commerce ministry said it was evaluating a US offer for negotiations on tariffs, but wanted Washington to show "sincerity" and be ready to scrap levies that have roiled global markets and supply chains. Trump has repeatedly claimed that China has reached out for talks on the tariffs, and this week said he believed there was a "very good chance we're going to make a deal". Dozens of countries face a 90-day deadline expiring in July to strike an agreement with Washington and

avoid higher, country-specific rates. Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said Beijing and Washington were now "waving detente flags" in their spiralling trade war. Beijing's demand for sincerity was an apparent call to ditch the 145 percent rate, before holding serious talks, Innes said in a note Friday. "But dig a layer deeper, and the path is still littered with landmines," he added. In Asia on Friday, Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index was up more than 1.7 percent at the close, while

Tokyo's main Nikkei index closed up 1.04 percent. Taipei gained 2.7 percent and Sydney closed up 1.1 percent, while Seoul edged up 0.1 percent and New Zealand was flat. Mainland Chinese markets were closed for a holiday. In Europe, London was up in early trading while Paris and Frankfurt both rose more than one percent in trade after public holidays. Japan's envoy for US tariff talks said in Washington on Thursday that a second round of negotiations between the two countries had

been "frank and constructive". Japan, a key US ally and its biggest investor, is subject to the same 10 percent baseline tariffs imposed on most nations plus steeper levies on cars, steel and aluminium. The Bank of Japan warned earlier that tariffs were fuelling global economic uncertainty and revised down its growth forecasts while keeping its key interest rate steady. Traders are looking ahead Friday to US jobs data for April for indications of the US central bank's path for interest rates.

Court  
sentences  
82 PTI  
activists...

FROM PAGE 01

The 82 accused confessed to the crime before the judge and submitted an affidavit stating that the PTI leadership incited them to protest. Seeking leniency, the PTI workers apprised the court that they were poor labourers and stated that the local and central leadership of the former ruling party provoked them to stage violent protests. In a written statement, the accused assured the court that they would not participate in any future protests. It is pertinent to mention here that during the hearings, out of 1,609 defendants who appeared in court, 560 were indicted.

SC approves  
bail pleas of  
Ejaz, Farhat

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Afghan heard the bail petitions of the accused involved in the May 9 incidents. During the hearing, the special prosecutor argued that Senator Ejaz Chaudhry was part of a conspiracy to incite people. However, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan remarked that if the case against Ejaz Chaudhry was so strong, it should have been taken to a special court. He further stated that bail cannot be used as a form of punishment. The court subsequently granted bail to Senator Ejaz Chaudhry, ordering the submission of Rs100,000 surety bonds in the trial court. In a separate hearing on Farhat Abbas's bail plea, the special prosecutor told the court that Abbas was also accused of being involved in the May 9 conspiracy and had been declared an absconder by the trial court. Justice Afghan responded that whether or not Abbas was an absconder was a matter for the relevant court to decide. He added that since the investigation had been completed and the charge sheet submitted, there was no longer a justification for arrest. The prosecutor assured the court that the trial could be completed within four months, to which Justice Afghan remarked, "Then complete the trial in four months."

Top military  
determined  
to thwart...

FROM PAGE 01

The COAS lauded the unwavering professionalism, steadfast morale, and operational preparedness of the Armed Forces, standing in unity with the people of Pakistan to defend the homeland at all costs. He underscored the critical importance of heightened vigilance and proactive readiness across all fronts. The Forum expressed grave concern over the intensification of Indian atrocities in IIOJK, particularly in the aftermath of the recent Pahal-gam incident, as well as the continued targeting of innocent civilians along the Line of Control (LoC) by Indian occupation forces. It was reiterated that such inhumane and unprovoked acts serve only to escalate regional tensions and will be met with a resolute and proportionate response. The Forum noted, with serious concern, India's consistent pattern of exploitation of crises to achieve political and military objectives. They have been following a predictable template - whereby internal governance failures are externalised.

India targets  
PM and ISPR

FROM PAGE 01

In a parallel move, Pakistan has strongly criticised India's decision to block the official YouTube channel of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, calling the move an "extreme and undemocratic" attempt to suppress free speech amid escalating tensions between the two countries. The clampdown has extended to sports and entertainment as well. Pakistan Super League franchise Lahore Qalandars said Indian authorities have blocked its Facebook and Instagram pages for users in India, further tightening digital restrictions.



## Briefs

**Exports increase by 6.25% to \$26.859b**

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country increased by 6.25 percent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year. Exports during July-April (2024-25) were recorded at \$26.859 billion against \$25.278 billion during July-April (2023-24), according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) data. On the other hand, imports into the country went up by 7.37 percent by growing from \$44.900 billion last year to \$48.210 billion during the first ten months of the current year. Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the period under review was recorded at \$21.351 billion against the deficit of \$19.622 billion last year, showing an increase of 8.81 percent. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports in April 2025 decreased by 8.93 percent to \$2.141 billion from \$2.351 billion in April 2024. On the other hand, the imports went up by 14.09 percent by increasing from \$4.846 billion to \$5.529 billion, according to PBS data.—APP

**Gold price dips by Rs.1,300 per tola**

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs.1,300 and was sold at Rs.344,500 on Friday against its sale at Rs.345,800 on the last trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.1,114 to Rs.295,353 from Rs. 296,467 whereas that of 10 gram 22 Karat went down to Rs.270,740 from Rs. 271,771. The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,427 and Rs.2,938 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$13 to \$3,263 from \$3,276 whereas silver rates were recorded at \$32.45, the Association reported.—APP

**Rupee sheds 08 paisa against US Dollar**

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday depreciated by 08 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 281.05 against the previous day's closing of Rs 280.97. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 281.35 and Rs 282.85, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.64 to close at Rs 318.17 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.81, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 03 paisa and closed at Rs 1.93, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.56 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 373.52 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 376.08. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 and 04 paisa to close at Rs 76.51 and Rs 74.94 respectively.—APP

**Kyrgyzstan's foreign trade reaches \$6b**

Bishkek: The Kyrgyz Republic continues to demonstrate stable growth in foreign trade with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, First Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic Daniyar Amangeldiev told during a meeting of the CIS Economic Council, held in Tashkent. According to him, over the past four years, the volume of foreign trade turnover of Kyrgyzstan with the CIS countries has increased by 2.1 times, including a 2.4-fold increase in exports and almost 2-fold increase in imports. In 2024 alone, trade turnover with the Commonwealth countries reached 6 billion US dollars, which is 10.1% higher than in 2023.—APP

## Ethiopia, South Africa review preparations for single country exhibition

Ambassador Dr. Jemal extended formal invitation to Ambassador Hamid to participate in a High-Level Business Forum “Invest In Ethiopia”, scheduled for May 12th to 13th, 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), called on Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa), in his office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Both sides reviewed the arrangements for the Pak-Africa Trade Development Conference and the Single Country Exhibition of Pakistan, scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The two officials expressed satisfaction over preparatory arrangements, and appreciated the overwhelming response from Pakistani traders and investors for participation in the Single Country Exhibition following a joint mobilization campaign by the Ethiopian Embassy and the Government of Pakistan. Ambassador Dr. Jemal extended formal invitation to Ambassador Hamid to participate in



a High-Level Business Forum “Invest In Ethiopia”, scheduled for

May 12th to 13th, 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He noted that the

Single Country Exhibition would open a new chapter in the bilater-

al relations of the two countries. “The Government of Ethiopia and business community are all set to host the Pakistani delegation,” he said while highlighting the opportunities the Single Country Exhibition presents for forging lasting trade and commerce relations between the two brotherly nations. He said the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad has brought the Ethiopian Airlines to Pakistan, which has become a perfect instrument for successful implementation of the “Look Africa and Engage Africa” policy of Pakistan. Ambassador Hamid Asghar lauded the proactive and leading role played by Ambassador Dr. Jemal in mobilizing the business community of Pakistan for the Single Country Exhibition. He said the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is committed to the Look Africa and Engage Africa policy under which the FDR Ethiopia has been honored to host this year single country Exhibition in Addis Ababa.

## Ahsan shares Uraan Pakistan objectives with PBC delegation

ABU DHABI :Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday met with a delegation of the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) Dubai, urging them to play their due role in making Pakistan a \$1 trillion economy by 2025 under the ‘Uraan Pakistan’ initiative with increased exports and foreign investment. The meeting was also attended by Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Consul General Hussain Muhammadad, besides senior officials of the Pakistan Diplomatic Mission in the UAE, a news release said. Recalling his long-standing association with the PBC since 1998, Ahsan Iqbal urged the Pakistani business community in the UAE to actively contribute to enhancing Pakistan’s exports and attracting foreign investment to support the country’s economic growth. The minister emphasized that peace and harmony, political stability, continuity of policies, and commitment to reforms are critical for Pakistan’s long-term development. He also elaborated the government’s economic vision, “Uraan Pakistan” aiming to achieve \$1 Trillion economy by 2025, which focused on five key pillars including export-led growth, transition to a technology-driven economy, environmental sustainability and climate action, energy and infrastructure development, and inclusive growth rooted in equity, ethics, and empowerment. Recognizing the valuable contributions of overseas Pakistanis through remittances, the minister stressed the need for improving the quality and facilities of community schools in the UAE to ensure provision of quality education. He also underscored the government’s commitment to enhancing consular services and assured that necessary steps would be taken to expand the premises of the Consulate General in Dubai. Chairman of PBC Dubai Shabbir Merchant expressed his deep appreciation for the opportunity to engage directly with the government. He commended the Pakistan government for organizing the recent Overseas Convention in Islamabad, which saw active participation from the UAE-based business delegation. Ambassador Tirmizi briefed the gathering on the Federal Minister’s recent high-level engagements in the UAE, including his meetings with Ahmed Tamim Hisham Al Kuttab, Chairman of the Department of Government Enablement, Abu Dhabi, and Abdullah Mohammed Al Basti, Secretary General of the Executive Council of Dubai. He also thanked the minister for visiting community school in Abu Dhabi and gracing the Pakistan Day Reception hosted by the Consulate General in Dubai. The meeting concluded with an open and interactive dialogue, during which Ahsan Iqbal invited suggestions from the business community to incorporate in future policies and strengthen Pakistan-UAE economic ties.—DNA

## Palestinian girls arrive UK for treatment

LONDON: Two young Palestinian girls have arrived in the UK for medical treatment of serious health conditions. The girls, named by the BBC as Ghena, aged 5, and Rama, 12, are the first Gazans to be given temporary UK visas since Oct. 7, 2023. They flew from Egypt, where they have been living with complex conditions after Gaza’s healthcare system collapsed during Israel’s invasion. Rama, who has a serious bowel condition, previously lived in Khan Younis and told the BBC: “We were so scared. We were living in tents and shrapnel from airstrikes used to fall on us.” “Mum used to suffer so much going to hospitals while bombs were falling and would stand in long queues just to get me a strip of pills. Here I’ll get treatment and get better and be just like any other girl.” Her mother told the BBC: “I’m very happy for Rama because she’ll get treatment here. As a mother, I felt so sorry in Gaza because I couldn’t do anything to help her.” “To see your daughter dying in front of your eyes, day by day, watching her weaken and get sicker – it pained me.” Ghena has fluid pressing against her optic nerve, which could cause blindness if left untreated. Her mother Haneen told the BBC: “Before the war, Ghena was having medical treatment in Gaza, in a specialised hospital. She was getting tests done every six months there and treatment was available.” Haneen said the hospital was destroyed in the first week of Israel’s invasion, leaving the family with little choice but to seek help elsewhere. “She began complaining about the pain,” Haneen said. “She would wake up screaming in pain at night.” Haneen added: “I hope she gets better here. In Gaza there are thousands of injured and sick children who need medical treatment. I hope they get a chance like Ghena.” The girls were assisted by Project Pure Hope and the Palestinian Children’s Relief Fund, which worked with the World Health Organization to get them to the UK for treatment. PCRF Chairwoman Vivian Khalaf told the BBC: “We came across these cases through an ongoing list that is getting longer and longer of children who need urgent medical treatment outside of Gaza. “The current physicians and hospitals that continue to be operating to whatever extent have determined that the treatment isn’t available within Gaza.—DNA

## ‘Deadly blockade’ leaves Gaza aid work on verge of collapse

Cherevko slammed decision makers who “have watched in silence the endless scenes of bloodied children, of severed limbs, of grieving parents move swiftly across their screens, month, after month, after month.” “How much more blood must be spilled before enough become enough?

GENEVA: Two months into Israel’s full blockade on aid into Gaza, humanitarianists described Friday horrific scenes of starving, bloodied children and people fighting over water, with aid operations on the “verge of total collapse.” The United Nations and the Red Cross sounded the alarm at the dire situation in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory, demanding international action. “The humanitarian response in Gaza is on the verge of total collapse,” the International Committee of the Red Cross warned in a statement. “Without immediate action, Gaza will descend further into chaos that humanitarian efforts will not be able to mitigate.” Israel strictly controls all inflows of international aid vital for the 2.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. It halted aid deliveries to Gaza on March 2, days before the collapse of a ceasefire that had significantly reduced hostilities after 15 months of war. Since the start of the blockade, the United Nations has repeatedly warned of the humanitarian catastrophe on the ground, with famine again looming. The UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) said a week ago that it had sent out its “last remaining food stocks” to kitchens. “Food stocks have now mainly run out,” Olga Cherevko, a spokeswoman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told reporters in Geneva Friday via video link from Gaza City. “Community kitchens have begun to shut down (and) more people are going hungry,” she said, pointing to reports of children and other very vulnerable people who have died from malnutrition and ... from the lack of food.” “The blockade is deadly. Water access was also ‘becoming impossible,’ she warned. “In fact, as I speak to you, just downstairs from this building people are fighting for water. There’s a water truck that has just arrived, and people are killing each other over water,” she said. The situation is so bad, she said that a friend had described to her a few days ago seeing “people burning ... because of the explosions and there was no water to save them.” At the same time, Cherevko lamented that “hospitals report running out of blood units as mass casualties continue to arrive.” “Gaza lies in ruins. Rubble fills the streets... Many nights, blood-curdling screams of the injured pierce the skies following the deafening sound of another explosion.” She also decried the mass displacement, with nearly the entire Gaza population being forced to shift multiple times prior to the brief ceasefire. Since the resumption of hostilities, she said “over 420,000 people have been once again forced to flee, many with only the clothes on their backs, shot at along the way, arriving in overcrowded shelters, as tents and other facilities where people search safety, are being bombed.” Pascal Hundt, the ICRC’s deputy head of operations, also cautioned that “civilians in Gaza are facing an overwhelming daily struggle to survive the dangers of hostilities, cope with relentless displacement, and endure the consequences of being deprived of urgent humanitarian assistance.” The World Health Organization’s emergencies director Mike Ryan said the situation was an “abomination.” “We are breaking the bodies and the minds of the children of Gaza. We are starving the children of Gaza,” he told reporters on Thursday. Cherevko slammed decision makers who “have watched in silence the endless scenes of bloodied children, of severed limbs, of grieving parents move swiftly across their screens, month, after month, after month.—Agencies

## Tunisia activist wins award over waste scandal

TUNIS: Tunisian environmentalist Semia Labidi Gharbi, awarded a global prize for her role exposing a major waste scandal, has a message for wealthy nations: developing countries are “no dumping ground.” Gharbi was among the first to speak out when Italy shipped more than 280 containers of waste to the North African country in 2020. The cargo was initially labelled as recyclable plastic scrap, but customs officials found hazardous household waste – banned under Tunisian law. “It’s true, we are developing countries,” Gharbi said in an interview with AFP. “But we are not a dumping ground.—APP

## Lebanon warns Hamas not to carry out any attacks from its territories

BEIRUT: Lebanese authorities warned the Hamas group Friday that it would face the “harsh measures” if it carried out any attacks from Lebanon. The warning by the Higher Defense Council, Lebanon’s top military body, came weeks after several Lebanese and Palestinians were detained on suspicion of firing rockets from Lebanon into northern Israel. “Hamas and other factions will not be allowed to endanger national stability,” the council said. “The safety of Lebanon’s territories is above all.” “The harshest measures will be taken to put a complete end to any act that infringes on Lebanon’s sovereignty,” according to a statement that was read by Brig. Gen. Mohammed Al-Mustafa. Hamas officials did not immediately respond to requests by The Associated Press for comment. Since the Israel-Hamas war began in October 2023, the Palestinian militant group has carried out several attacks against Israel from Lebanon, where it has an armed presence. Israel has since carried out airstrikes that killed Hamas officials including one of its top military chiefs, Saleh Arouri, in Beirut. Lebanese authorities are seeking to establish their authority throughout the country, mainly in the south near the border with Israel after the 14-month Israel-Hezbollah war that ended in late November with the US-brokered ceasefire.—APP

## Firefighting planes sent to Israel to tackle major wildfire

JERUSALEM: Several countries were sending firefighting aircraft to Israel on Thursday as crews battled for a second day to extinguish a wildfire that had shut down a major highway linking Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and sent drivers scrambling from their cars. The fire broke out around midday on Wednesday, fueled by hot, dry conditions and fanned by strong winds that quickly whipped up the flames, burning through a pine forest. Several communities were evacuated as a precaution as the smoke turned the skies over Jerusalem gray. The fire has burned about 20 sq. km and is the most significant fire Israel has had in the past decade, according to Tal Volovitch, a spokesperson for Israel’s fire and rescue authority. She said the fire has “miraculously” not damaged any homes. Israel’s fire and rescue authority warned the public to stay away from parks or forests, and to be exceptionally careful while lighting barbecues. Thursday is Israel’s Independence Day, which is typically marked with large family cookouts in parks and forests. At least 12 people were treated in hospitals on Wednesday, mainly due to smoke inhalation, while another 10 people were treated in the field, Magen David Adom Ambulance services said. Italy, Croatia, Spain, France, Ukraine, and Romania were sending planes to help battle the flames, while several other countries, including North Macedonia and Cyprus, were also sending water-dropping aircraft.—APP

## Uniform taxation for all medicines urged in upcoming budget

Nisar says present tax structure obstacle growth of healthcare industry

DNA

LAHORE: As the federal government enters the final phase of preparing the federal budget for 2025–26, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry’s (FPCCI) Businessmen Panel (BMP) has strongly urged the government to eliminate tax discrimination between different categories of medicines. The panel called for applying a uniform 1% sales tax rate on all medicines—whether allopathic, homeopathic, or herbal—to ensure fairness, accessibility, and consistency in healthcare taxation. The issue was discussed in detail during the meeting between Mian Anjum Nisar and a delegation from the Homeopathic Pharmaceutical

and Chemist Association Pakistan (HPCAP), who met him in the lead of Dr. Amanullah Bismil, Patron-in-Chief of the HPCAP. The delegation included Dr. Ahsan Waris, Dr. Iqbal Hanif, Dr. Kashif Masood, and Saifurrahman Safi. The representatives shared their concerns regarding the unequal taxation structure, highlighting how it discourages the growth of the alternative medicine industry and limits consumer access to affordable treatment options. Chairman of the Businessmen Panel and former FPCCI president Mian Anjum Nisar pointed out that a significant disparity currently exists in the taxation system governing pharmaceutical and health-related products. Allopathic medicines—conventional pharmaceutical drugs—are taxed

at a concessional rate of 1%, while homeopathic and herbal medicines are subject to a hefty 18% general sales tax (GST). This difference, he argued, is unjust and harmful, creating a disproportionate burden on consumers and manufacturers of non-allopathic medicines. “The current tax system promotes inequality within the healthcare sector,” Anjum Nisar said. “On the one hand, the government claims to prioritize public health and affordability; on the other hand, it penalizes manufacturers and users of homeopathic and herbal medicines with an unjustifiable tax rate. This contradictory policy undermines equitable healthcare access.” Dr. Bismil explained that the issue stems from outdated provisions in the Eighth Schedule of the Sales Tax Act, 1990, particu-

larly Entry No. 81, which only refers to drugs registered under the now-repealed Drugs Act of 1976. That Act has since been replaced by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) Act, 2012, which regulates all therapeutic goods—allopathic, homeopathic, herbal, and nutraceutical. According to Section 32 of the DRAP Act, its provisions take precedence over earlier or conflicting laws. However, the sales tax framework has not been updated to reflect this change, resulting in a legal loophole that excludes non-allopathic medicines from receiving the same tax relief as allopathic drugs. Dr. Bismil urged the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to address this gap by amending

the Eighth Schedule so that all DRAP-registered medicines are treated equally under the tax regime. He stressed that the amendment should be included in the Finance Bill 2025–26 and take effect from July 1, 2025. “This is the ideal time to correct this policy anomaly,” said Dr. Bismil. “As budget preparations are underway, the government must take this opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to inclusive healthcare, fair taxation, and support for local industries.” Anjum Nisar supported the delegation’s demands and assured them he would take the issue to the highest level to seek a resolution. He emphasized that millions of Pakistanis—especially those in rural areas and low-income groups—rely on homeopathic and herbal treatments.



## Briefs

Afghanistan's  
socio-  
economic  
crisis deepens

UNITED NATIONS: Seventy-five per cent of Afghanistan's population struggles to meet their daily needs; with female-headed households, rural communities and internally displaced persons being most affected, the UN development agency (UNDP) has noted in a new report. As the Afghan economy faces stalled local production and weak job creation, Afghanistan continues to heavily rely on imports and international assistance. "UNDP's current analysis and new data indicate the continuation of a deeply troubling trajectory for the Afghan people, who have been grappling with extreme vulnerability over the past decade," Kanani Wignaraja, UN Assistant Secretary-General and head of UNDP for the Asia-Pacific region, said. In the past year, political uncertainty, an ongoing economic crisis, shrinking international aid and climate disruptions have compounded existing vulnerabilities, limiting the economy's ability to regain momentum.—APP

Finance  
Minister  
briefs S&P  
on reform  
progress

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, along with his team, held a Zoom meeting today with representatives of Standard and Poor (S&P) Global Ratings as part of the ongoing Pakistan Sovereign Ratings Review. During the session, the Finance Minister presented a detailed overview of the government's macroeconomic reform agenda and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth by enhancing productivity and promoting exports. He emphasized the continuity of reforms across key sectors including taxation, energy, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), privatization, public finance management, rightsizing of government functions, and more active debt management strategies. The Finance Minister noted that inflation and the current account deficit (CAD) had remained a good story throughout the year, contributing positively to overall economic stability. He also highlighted the achievement of surpluses in both the primary balance and the current account as major milestones, underscoring the improving fundamentals of Pakistan's economy. He stated that the country's external portfolio was well-managed, with foreign exchange reserves projected to reach \$14 billion by the end of June, supported by upcoming institutional and trade inflows, strong remittances, and easing oil prices, all of which are helping reduce pressure on the external account.

Workers install chimney  
atop Sistine  
Chapel FO

VATICAN City :Firefighters at the Vatican installed a chimney on top of the Sistine Chapel to be used during the conclave that begins May 7, an AFP reporter witnessed Friday. Cardinals vote in secret in the chapel for a new pope and reveal to the waiting world the outcome by burning the ballots in a special stove, with the chimney emitting black smoke if no one has been elected, or white smoke if there is a new pope. Cardinals from around the world have been called back to Rome following the death of Pope Francis, the Argentine who led the Catholic Church for 12 years until his death on April 21 aged 88. The 133 cardinals who are under 80 years old and therefore eligible to elect his successor will gather on May 7 to begin voting in secret, in a process expected to take several days.—APP

Bangladesh High Commission celebrates  
Bengali New Year with cultural fervor

The event was graced by the presence of Ms. Anbreen Jan, Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, who attended as the chief guest. Ms. Jan shared her personal connection to Bangladesh, having served there for six years during her diplomatic tenure

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad hosted a vibrant celebration of the Bengali New Year, known as Pohela Boishakh, bringing together diplomats, cultural enthusiasts, and members of the Bangladeshi community in Pakistan for a colorful and meaningful event. Held at the Sir Syed Memorial Society premises, the festivities reflected the deep-rooted cultural traditions of Bangladesh and underscored the growing warmth in Pakistan-Bangladesh bilateral relations. Iqbal Hussain, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan, inaugurated the event with an address highlighting the cultural significance of Pohela Boishakh—a day that marks the beginning of the Bengali calendar and is celebrated across Bangladesh with music, dance, and traditional attire. In his speech, High



Commissioner Hussain emphasized that the Bengali New Year is not just a celebration of cultural identity, but also a symbol of unity and renewal. "Pohela Boishakh is a time to reflect on our shared heritage and to look forward to new beginnings," he said. He also noted a positive shift in the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, stating, "Our ties are entering

a new phase after a revolution of reform and progress in Bangladesh. The new government in Dhaka is committed to strengthening its diplomatic and cultural relations with Islamabad." The event was graced by the presence of Ms. Anbreen Jan, Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, who attended as the chief guest. Ms. Jan shared her personal connection to Bangladesh, having served there for six years during her diplomatic tenure. "I hold very fond memories of my time in Bangladesh. I have witnessed the richness of its culture, the warmth of its people, and the vibrant spirit of Pohela Boishakh. It is a festival that unites people regardless of boundaries," she said. The celebration featured a variety of cultural per-

formances by members of the Bangladeshi community living in Pakistan. Traditional songs, dances, and poetry in Bengali captivated the audience, offering a taste of home to expatriates and a window into Bangladeshi culture for local attendees. The performers, dressed in colorful saris and punjabis, brought the energy and joy of Dhaka's New Year celebrations to Islamabad. Guests were also treated to



an array of authentic Bangladeshi cuisine. From flavorful biryani to traditional sweets like roshogolla and pitha, the food stalls added a festive aroma to the event and allowed guests to experience the culinary richness of Bangladesh. The celebration served as a cultural bridge between the two nations, promoting understanding and goodwill. It highlighted how shared cultural events can foster closer people-to-people ties and

support diplomatic engagement. With growing enthusiasm for strengthening bilateral ties, the Bengali New Year celebration in Islamabad was not just a festivity—it was a step forward in building deeper connections between Bangladesh and Pakistan. As both countries look toward the future, such events offer a promising reminder of the harmony that can be achieved through cultural exchange.

XFinance Minister  
underscores  
macroeconomic stability

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a Zoom meeting today with the office bearers and members of the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce & Industry (OICCI). During the meeting, the Minister outlined the government's broader macroeconomic reform agenda and its ongoing commitment to fostering stability, sustainability, and inclusive growth. He highlighted the government's focus on improving the overall economic framework through structural reforms aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability in key sectors such as taxation, energy, public finance,

and state-owned enterprises. The Minister underscored that progress had been made in stabilizing the economy through disciplined fiscal management, improved coordination between federal and provincial governments, and strengthened institutional mechanisms. These measures, he noted, are central to building a more resilient economic foundation capable of withstanding internal and external pressures. The Finance Minister reiterated that the government is committed to a policy direction that not only sustains macroeconomic stability but also encourages long-term private sector-led growth. He assured the OICCI leadership that their input remains valuable and that all constructive recommendations would be considered in the budget formulation process. OICCI acknowledged the gov-

ernment's efforts in engaging international partners and welcomed the sustained policy focus on structural reforms and investor confidence. The Chamber shared its perspective on expanding the tax base, strengthening enforcement through technology and inter-agency coordination, and deepening institutional engagement with the private sector to support more effective policy development and implementation. It also noted early signs of improved investor sentiment and reaffirmed its willingness to work with the government to reinforce economic progress. The Chamber also noted that its Business Confidence Survey showed improved sentiment over the past year and expressed hope that recent macroeconomic gains would further boost investor optimism in the coming months.

Australian PM  
says battle ahead  
to win election

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese says he has a "mountain to climb" in elections Saturday, despite leading the opinion polls, in a contest swayed by living costs and Trump tariffs. Surveys give Albanese's left-leaning Labour Party a narrow lead over the conservative opposition on a two-party preferred basis. If they are right, Albanese, 62, could lead his party to a majority in the 150-seat parliament. "On polls there's a lot of undecided voters. We have a mountain to climb," Albanese said Friday. "My job is to maximize Labor's vote in the next 48 hours. That's what I'm intending to do." Albanese has promised to embrace renewable energy, tackle a worsening housing crisis and pour money into a creaking health care system. He warned of "cuts and chaos" under a right-leaning coalition led by former police officer Peter Dutton, 54, who wants to slash immigration, crack down on crime and ditch a longstanding ban on nuclear power. Dutton, leader of the Liberal Party, has predicted "a lot of surprises, seat by seat" on Saturday night. "I haven't met an Australian on this campaign who said that they're better off today than they were three years ago," he said. A result could come as soon as Saturday night, unless the vote is very tight. A total 18.1 million voters have enrolled for the election. More than a third of them have cast an early ballot, the election authority says. Voting is compulsory, enforced with fines of Aus\$20 (\$13), leading to turnouts that top 90 percent. Sizzling snags (sausages) cooked by local fundraisers also entice voters at more than 1,000 polling sites, searchable at [democracysausage.org](https://democracysausage.org).—DNA

Amazon  
revenue  
climbs 9%

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon reported a nine percent rise in first-quarter revenue on Thursday, but its outlook fell below expectations, sending its share price lower. The online retail behemoth said sales hit \$155.7 billion in the January-to-March period, but its share price dropped as much as four percent in after-hours trading on Wall Street. Amazon Web Services, the company's hugely successful cloud business, saw sales jump 17 percent to \$29.3 billion, with operating profit reaching \$11.5 billion as companies increasingly turn to AWS for AI infrastructure. "We're pleased with the start to 2025, especially our pace of innovation and progress in continuing to improve customer experiences," CEO Andy Jassy said, highlighting new AI offerings including the next-generation Alexa+ virtual assistant.—APP

Why the US May Lose  
the trade war again

BEIJING: An increasingly vocal consensus among economists and analysts suggests that the United States may once again lose its trade war with China. Despite the renewed wave of tariffs, sanctions, and investment restrictions under the guise of defending national interests, the American strategy appears outdated, ineffective, and increasingly isolated. The latest escalation began on April 2, 2025, when Washington slapped broad tariffs on global imports, eventually exempting all countries except China. The intent was clear: pressure China into economic concessions. But Beijing swiftly retaliated, raising its own tariffs, and made it clear that it would not yield to unilateral coercion. According to Warwick Powell, adjunct professor at Queensland University of Technology, the US failed to account for the dramatic transformation of China's economy. The China of 2025 is not the export-dependent economy of the past. Today, its growth is largely driven by domestic consumption and investments in high-tech sectors. Over 50 percent of its trade is now with Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partners, further reducing dependence on the US. Powell argues that rather than wilting under pressure, China is expanding its global trade networks and rapidly developing its own technology base—especially in areas the US sought to restrict, like semiconductors and AI. In essence, American sanctions have spurred greater self-reliance and innovation within China. Professor Radhika Desai of the University of Manitoba points out that the US tariffs were never likely to boost domestic jobs or industries. Instead, they increased inflation, hurt supply chains, and eroded consumer purchasing power.—DNA

Air India sees Pak airspace ban  
costing it \$600 million over a year

Air India on April 27 asked the Indian government for a "subsidy model" proportionate to the economic hit, estimating a loss of more than 50 billion Indian rupees (\$591 million) for each year the ban lasts, according to a letter sent by the airline to the Civil Aviation Ministry

NEW DELHI: Air India expects to face around \$600 million in additional costs if a ban from Pakistan's airspace lasts for a year, and has asked the federal government to compensate it for the hit, a company letter seen by Reuters shows. Indian airlines are bracing for higher fuel costs and longer journey times after Pakistan shut its airspace to the country's carriers in a tit-for-tat retaliation following an attack on tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) last week. Air India on April 27 asked the Indian government for a "subsidy model" proportionate to the economic hit, estimating a loss of more than 50 billion Indian rupees (\$591 million) for each year the ban lasts, according to a letter sent by the airline to the Civil Aviation Ministry. "Subsidy for affected international flights is a good, verifiable and fair option ... the subsidy can be removed when the situation improves," the

letter said. "The impact on Air India is maximum due to airspace closure, due to additional fuel burn...additional crew." Air India declined to comment. India's Civil Aviation Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Air India's letter was sent after the government asked its executives to assess the impact of the airspace ban on Indian carriers, said a source with direct knowledge of the matter. The Tata Group-owned airline is in the midst of a multibillion-dollar turnaround after a period of government ownership, and growth is already constrained by jet delivery delays from Boeing and Airbus. It reported a net loss of \$520 million in fiscal 2023-2024, on sales of \$4.6 billion. Air India, which has a 26.5% market share in India, flies to Europe, the United States and Canada, often crossing Pakistan's airspace. It operates many more long-haul routes than its bigger domestic rival IndiGo. Data from Cirium As-

cend shows IndiGo, Air India and its budget unit Air India Express had roughly 1,200 flights combined from New Delhi scheduled for Europe, the Middle East and North America in April. The Indian government is considering options to reduce the hit to the airline industry from the closure of Pakistan's airspace, three other people familiar with the matter said. One of the sources said Indian carriers met with the Civil Aviation Ministry to work on possible solutions, including flying over difficult terrain closer to China, and some tax exemptions. In its letter, Air India asked the government to liaise with Chinese authorities for certain overflight clearances, without elaborating. It also asked the government to approve the carrying of extra pilots on flights to the United States and Canada to account for longer travel times.—Agencies

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