



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Fed sees rising risks to economy as rates unchanged**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Indian supports terrorists, says Barrister Saif**

Detailed News On Page-02



**Saud Shakil lauds team performance**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Shehbaz talks to Secretary Rubio**

## PM reaffirms Pakistan's right to self defense

During the call, the Prime Minister strongly condemned the missile and drone strikes carried out by India, which resulted in the deaths of 31 civilians, injuries to 57 others, and extensive damage to civilian infrastructure

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call this evening from U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, amid heightened tensions in South Asia following recent Indian military actions. During the call, the Prime Minister strongly condemned the missile and drone strikes carried out by India, which resulted in the deaths of 31 civilians, injuries to 57 others, and extensive damage to civilian infrastructure. He emphasized that the attacks constituted a blatant violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and posed a serious threat to regional peace and stability. Prime Minister Sharif underscored Pakistan's unwavering resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, stating that the nation reserved the right to act in self-defense in line with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. He also conveyed the deep anger and concern among the Pakistani public over what he described as India's unprovoked acts of war.

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan rejects allegations of targeting civilian population

DPM Dar says Pak, India NSAs made contact

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that national security advisers (NSAs) of Pakistan and India have spoken following New Delhi's unprovoked missile strikes. "There has been contact between the two, yes," he told TRT World in response to a question whether the NSAs made contact after India's overnight strikes against Pakistan. India launched strikes on Pakistan and AJK early Wednesday morning — an assault that Islamabad called a "blatant act of war" — as tensions spiral between the nuclear-armed rivals after a deadly attack on tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kash-

mir (IIOJK) last month. Islamabad said six Pakistani locations, from mosques to hydropower projects, were targeted. At least 31 civilians, including children, were martyred and 57 sustained injuries after India launched unprovoked and devious attack on Pakistan last night. In retaliation, the Pakistan armed forces shot down five Indian Air Force (IAF) jets, seven drones, destroyed a brigade headquarters and a number of checkpoints along the Line of Control (LoC). Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has said that the country has not targeted any civilian population in India, especially Amritsar. Addressing A press conference along with

Continued on Page 06

## Regular SC bench to hear case against Imran Khan

Advocate Salman Akram Raja, representing the PTI founder, responded that the matter did not involve any constitutional questions

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench has referred the contempt of court case against the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to a regular bench. The case was heard on Thursday by a five-member constitutional bench headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan. During the hearing, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail questioned whether the case should be handled by their bench or if it falls under the jurisdiction of a regular bench. Advocate Salman Akram Raja, representing the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder, responded that the matter did not involve any constitutional questions and therefore should be referred to a regular bench. The Additional Attorney General supported this stance, noting that in a previous case involving reserved seats, the court had similarly sent the contempt matter to a regular bench. Subsequently, the constitutional bench accepted the arguments and formally referred the contempt of court case against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder to a regular bench for further proceedings.



ISLAMABAD: The students of Pakistan Sweet Homes participating in a candle light vigil at the D Chowk to pay homage to martyred children in the Indian firing. — APP

## India fears retaliation

## Pak army downs 29 Israeli-made Harop drones

The escalation follows India's cowardly assault on May 6/7, which resulted in the destruction of five advanced aircraft, drones, multiple military posts, and reported casualties among Indian troops, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Armed Forces have so far shot down 29 Israeli-manufactured Harop drones using both soft-kill (technical) and hard-kill (weapons-based) systems, following a series of provocative attacks by India. The escalation follows India's cowardly assault on May 6/7, which resulted in the destruction of five advanced

Continued on Page 06

## 'Pakistan fully prepared to defend sovereignty'

APP

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif Thursday warned that Pakistan

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Aurat march postponed in Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The organisers of Aurat March Karachi announced on Thursday the postponement of this year's march, originally scheduled for May 11, Mother's Day, citing the "war-like situation between India and Pakistan." On Wednesday night, India attacked several sites in Pakistan as part of its 'Operation Sindoor'. Thirty-one Pakistani civilians have been killed and another 57 injured. In retaliation, Pakistan's military downed five Indian jets, and destroyed an Indian brigade headquarters and check posts along the Line of Control. On Thursday, the DG ISPR said 25 Indian drones had been downed since last night. Amid the escalation, flight operations at the Karachi, Lahore and Sialkot airports have been temporarily suspended.

### US MPs for providing aid to Gaza people

DNA

WASHINGTON: At least 94 US House Democrats have signed a letter urging Israel to immediately allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, saying it is "strategically counterproductive," Middle East Eye reports. In a letter addressed to Israeli Ambassador Yechiel Leiter and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, they said: "As supporters of a strong US-Israel relationship, we write to express our opposition to the current Israeli government policy to block all humanitarian aid from entering the Gaza Strip." The statement further added, "In addition to the harm imposed on Palestinian civilians, it is strategically counterproductive and will only hurt Israel's international standing and long-term security."

## Jammu attack news fake

## At least 40-50 Indian soldiers killed: Tarar

Information Minister says Pakistan's response to Indian aggression will come soon, and it will be a powerful one

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Atta Tarar said on Thursday that Pakistan's retaliation across the Line of Control (LoC), following the Indian missile strikes, had killed between 40 and 50 Indian troops. Speaking on a motion in the National Assembly, he mentioned that the National Security Committee (NSC) had authorised the country's highly-prepared armed forces to respond at a time and place of their choosing. "Forces have been given full authority to deliver an effective and strong response. Now, it is up to us to decide where this matter goes from here. "Our response will come, and it will come soon. It will be a powerful response, one that the world will remember." The minister slammed India for cowardly attacking Pakistan under the cover of darkness, using its advanced Rafale jets. "India's arrogance has been shattered, and while it thought it was invincible, it has now been humbled," he said, adding, "Pakistan always unites as one powerful force in the face of such challenges."

Continued on Page 06

## Punjab govt issues emergency SOPs

Guidelines urge calm, preparedness and neighbourly assistance during emergency situations

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab government has issued standard operating procedures (SOPs) for residents in the event of imminent armed conflict or aerial attack with India, urging citizens to remain calm and follow specific safety and evacuation measures. According to the Welfare Wing of the Services and General Administration Department, the advisory is intended to prepare households across the province for any emergency, with emphasis on secure sheltering, emergency supplies,

Continued on Page 06

## Baku slams mily attack on Pakistan

DNA

BAKU: The Republic of Azerbaijan expresses its concern over the further escalation of tension between the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. We condemn military attacks against the Islamic Republic of Pakistan that killed and injured several civilians. Being in solidarity with the people of Pakistan, we express condolences to the families of the innocent victims and wish a speedy recovery to those who were injured. We call on all parties to exercise restraint and to resolve the conflict through diplomatic means.

## Donald Trump offers to help resolve conflict between India and Pakistan

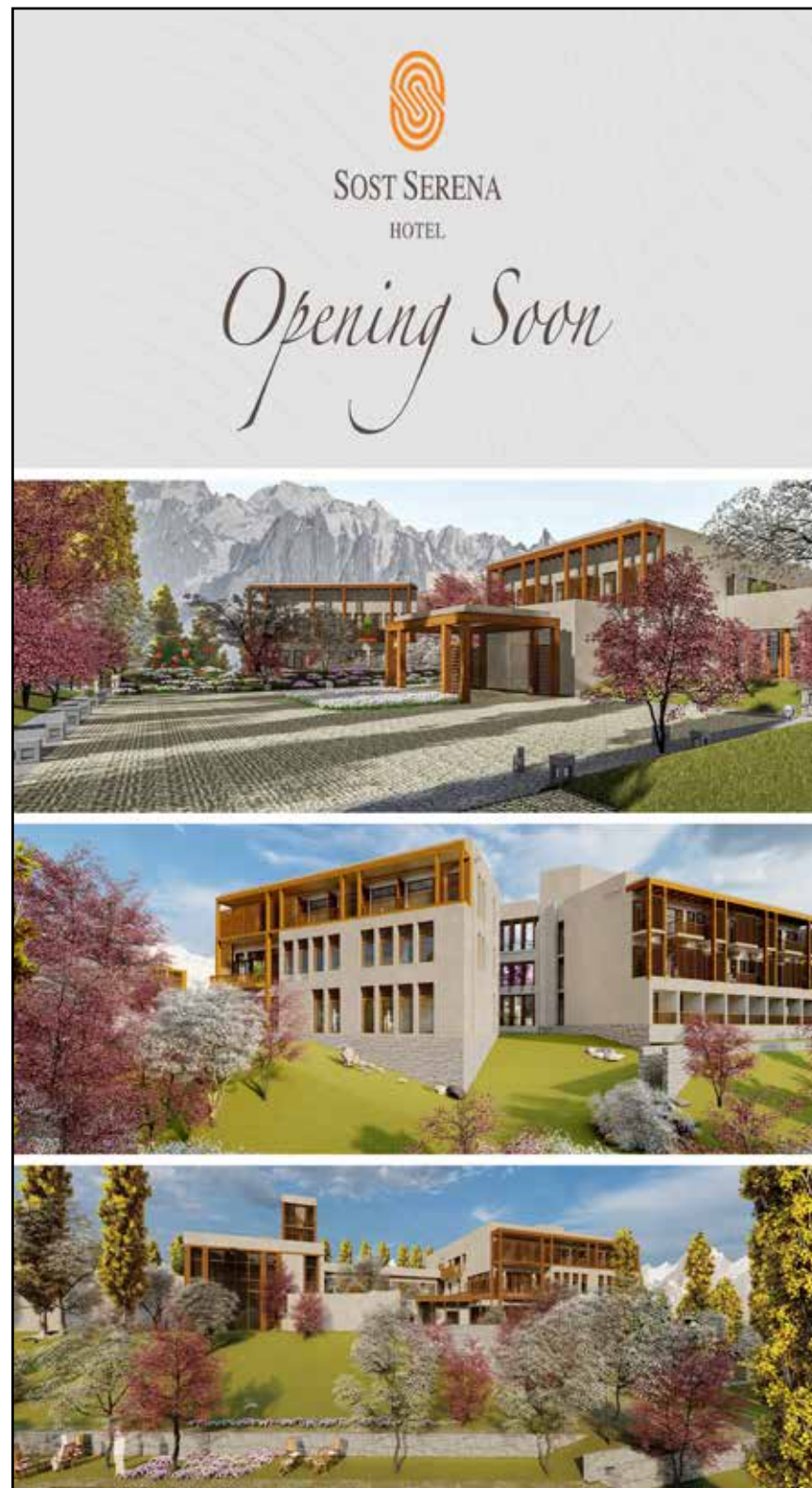
"It's so terrible," President Trump said at the White House on Wednesday. "I get along with both, I know both very well, and I want to see them work it out. I want to see them stop

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump urged India and Pakistan to cease fighting, saying he is open to helping both countries broker a peace agreement, following early Wednesday's swift Pakistani military re-



sponse to Indian strikes. "It's so terrible," President Trump said at the White House on Wednesday. "I get along with both, I know both very well, and I want to see them work it out. I want to see them stop. "I know both very well, and I want to see them work it out. I want to see them stop. And hopefully they can stop now," he said. "They've got a tit-for-tat, so hopefully they can stop now. But I know both. We get along with both countries very well. Good relationships with both. And I want to see it stop. And if I can do anything to help I will. I will be there as well." Trump initially played down the crisis as part of old tensions between India and Pakistan But his administration has scrambled into action in the last 24 hours since the Indian strikes in parts of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke to his counterparts from India and Pakistan on Friday, encouraging them to reopen dialogue to "defuse" the situation, the White House said. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif told The New York Times that he would welcome further U.S. efforts to help defuse his country's crisis with India and praised President Trump.





# CDA opens first-ever robotic bariatric surgery at Capital Hospital

Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that CDA is committed to provide best of the best health facilities to the citizens of Islamabad as well as employees of CDA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Hospital CDA organised the 2nd Pakistan Obesity Week, marking a significant milestone with the first-ever Robotic Bariatric Surgery Workshop in the country. This landmark event was inaugurated by Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Member Administration Talat Mahmood and Member Estate Asfandiyar Baloch. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa addressing as chief guest said that CDA is committed to provide best of the best health facilities to the citizens of Islamabad as well as employees of CDA. The day Dr. Naeem Taj has Joined CDA Hospital as ED, I assured him all out support which he required even the financial, technical. He said that I congratulate CDA for innovation through Robotic Bariatric Surgery which is first in Pakistan. He said that in the technological input CDA has brought to CDA hospital which will going to be a most important achievement and milestone in the history of CDA Hospital specially in the era of the competition where we have got lot of government and private hospitals around us. CDA hospital is not only maintaining its quality and patients care health services but also has raised the standard of Medicare. He said that there is always room for improvements, we will continue to

have professional and the most important that dedicated team to work around the clock to provide maximum modern and state of the art health facilities to CDA employees as well as citizens of Islamabad. He appreciated the effort of ED and his team of CDA Hospital for introducing first ever Robotics Bariatric Surgery in CDA Hospital. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa also visited various wards of CDA Hospital including CCU, ICU and inquired about the health of the patients. The Patients appreciated Muhammad Ali Randhawa Chairman CDA for personally visiting them and inquiring their health. The patients lauded the services of CDA Hospital under the supervision of Member Administration Talat Mahmood. Earlier Dr. Naeem Taj, Executive Director of CDA Hospital in his welcome address, appreciated Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa and emphasised the transformative role of robotic surgery in the future of minimally invasive procedures. He highlighted that robotic-assisted surgery offers superior precision, enhanced dexterity, and improved ergonomics for the surgeon, while patients benefit from smaller incisions, reduced blood loss, minimal postoperative pain, shorter hospital stays, and faster recovery times. Dr. Tanseer Asghar, the Organiser of Obesity Week, provided an overview of the week-long program, which included live surgical demonstrations, hands-on

workshops, academic sessions, and interactive case discussions. He shared insights into the variety of bariatric procedures performed, emphasizing the program's role in skill-building and international collaboration. Dr. Sartaj Ali presented a comprehensive review of the 1st Obesity Week, outlining the significant progress made over the past year in bariatric services at Capital Hospital. The event was further honored by the presence of Prof. Dr. Shoaib Shafi, President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPS), who commended the initiative and reassured continued support for postgraduate training programs at Capital Hospital, underlining CPS's commitment to advancing surgical education and capacity building. Renowned bariatric surgeons from Pakistan, UAE, Taiwan, and Turkey participated in the event, performing live surgeries and contributing to knowledge exchange and international collaboration. In his closing remarks, Chairman CDA, Mr. Muhammad Ali Randhawa, reaffirmed his commitment to supporting academic excellence and research in healthcare, announcing plans to expand such initiatives at Capital Hospital CDA to promote cutting-edge, patient-centered care. This event stands as a major leap forward in positioning Capital Hospital as a national hub for advanced bariatric and robotic surgery and reflects Pakistan's growing prominence in the global surgical community.



ISLAMABAD: Governor KPK Faisal Karim Kundi meeting with Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik.

## India supports terrorists' activities in KP: Saif

PESHAWAR: The spokesperson for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, Muhammad Ali Saif on Thursday accused India of supporting terrorist activities in the province by backing militant groups operating along Pakistan's western border. In an official statement issued here, Saif, stated that India was actively arming and funding terrorists near the western frontier in an attempt to destabilize the region. "India is involved in provocative actions on both the eastern and western borders of Pakistan. It is providing weapons and financial support to terrorists near our western border to carry out sabotage operations inside KP," he said. Despite these hostile acts, both the Pakistan Army and the nation were standing firm and resisting Indian aggression on every front, Saif added. The spokesperson further said that a strong and effective response to these recent provocations by India was now unavoidable. The cowardly enemy even targeted mosques under the cover of darkness. Saif praised the Pakistan Army for its robust retaliation and said that the brave armed forces had compelled the enemy to retreat by raising the white flag. "Let the cowardly enemy wait — our response will be decisive and unforgettable," he warned. —APP

## Joint strategy stressed to eliminate malaria

PESHAWAR: Malaria Day was observed at Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar with the objective to create awareness about the deadly but treatable and preventable disease and to promote joint efforts to eliminate it. The event was held in collaboration with the Institute of Public Health and Social Sciences (IPH&SS), Frontier Primary Healthcare (FPHC), Indus Hospital and Health Network (IHNN) and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department. A large number of national and international partner organizations, public health experts, faculty members and students participated in the event. Dr. Aimal Khan from Frontier Primary

Healthcare and Dr. Irshad Rouhani from Indus Hospital Health Network shared their experiences and suggestions regarding malaria prevention. Director IPH&SS Dr. Khalid Rehman highlighted the impact of malaria globally and emphasized that it is a life-threatening disease, but it is also completely treatable and preventable. Dr. Humaira Atta (FPHC) provided details about the malaria burden in Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the ongoing malaria control activities supported by the Global Fund. The participants were informed at the event that this year's theme for World Malaria Day is "Malaria Ends with Us: Reinvest, Reunite, and Re-manage". The theme

aims to promote partnerships, improved financial resources, innovations and renewed commitment to eliminate malaria. The Vice Chancellor KMU Professor Dr. Zia ul Haq emphasized the importance of effective strategies and sustainable actions, citing challenges such as the current security situation, climate change and insecticide resistance. He also stressed the need to generate financial resources at the local level and promote operational research in this field. He said that malaria is a treatable and preventable disease that requires joint efforts. This event not only became a source of awareness but also highlighted the commitment to a joint struggle against malaria.

## SCCI organises solidarity rally with Armed forces

DNA

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has expressed full solidarity and unwavering support for the government and Armed Forces of Pakistan in response to the unprovoked Indian military strikes in several parts of the country. Fazal Moqem Khan, president of the chamber while speaking at a solidarity gathering here at the chamber house on Thursday strongly condemned the Indian strikes on civilians in Pakistan and AJK and highly praised the armed forces for counterattacks and knocking down India's five jets. "Today, Pakistan again face with Indian aggression and our utmost duty, being a one nation and Pakistani to show unity, trust and steadfastness in own ranks", The solidarity rally was spearheaded by SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan, Senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, former presidents Haji Muhammad Afzal, Malik Niaz Ahmad, member of the chamber executive committee Aftab Iqbal, Gul Zaman, Shams Rahim, Ishfaq Ahmad, Nadeem Rauf, and Rashid Iqbal Siddique, Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan and others. The chamber members, staff and mediapersons in a large number participated in the rally. The participants were holding placards and banners, yelling slogans in favour of Pakistan Armed forces and against the Indian aggression. The demonstrators raised full-throated voices in support of Pakistan Armed forces, COAS Gen Asim Munir, military and civil leadership of the country.

## DG GDA highlights major uplift projects

GWADAR: The Director General of the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), Mir Saifullah Khetran on Thursday reviewed various ongoing development projects, including the Old Town Rehabilitation Project. During his visit, Khetran emphasized that the visible transformation in the region is a testament to the focused and sustained commitment of the authorities, said a news release. He said that Gwadar lauded the tireless efforts of the GDA and the government's progressive development policies, said that once plagued by neglect and economic stagnation, is now witnessing a revival of both political and commercial activity. Speaking during a detailed inspection tour of various ongoing development projects on Thursday including the Old

Town Rehabilitation Project, Khetran emphasized that the visible transformation in the region is a testament to the focused and sustained commitment of the authorities. DG Khetran reviewed restoration work on the historic British-era Telegraph Office, which is being revived under a broader initiative to preserve the city's cultural and historical heritage. Expressing satisfaction with the quality of work, he directed that all remaining tasks be completed without any further delay. Saifullah Khetran also visit to the city's key commercial and historic hub, Mulla Fazil Chowk, where major development works are currently in progress. GDA Chief Engineer Haji Syed Muhammad briefed the Director General on the pace and progress of various projects. Khetran

noted that infrastructure enhancements in the area, including construction of link roads, installation of decorative tiles, beautification of sidewalks, and implementation of modern sewerage and drainage systems are moving ahead rapidly. He emphasized that these improvements aim not only to enhance the city's aesthetic appeal but also to provide a lasting solution to long-standing sanitation and drainage issues. He also instructed that carpeting of the road from Makki Masjid to Mulla Fazil Chowk, a project that had long been stalled to be initiated immediately. Applauding the engineering team for its high-quality work, the DG reiterated that timely and quality completion of projects remains the authority's top priority.—APP

## FPA holds rally in support of Pakistan Army

DNA

FAISALABAD: A rally was taken out under the leadership of President Faisalabad Photojournalist Association (FPA) Muhammad Tahir Najafi to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army. The purpose of the rally was to condemn India's cowardly aggression last night And to pay tribute to the timely and courageous response of the Pakistan Army. While addressing the rally, General Secretary Bashir Ahmed Taya said that India once again demonstrated its cowardly actions and tried to attack Pakistan in the darkness of the night But from the Pakistani Army India got a befitting reply The falcons of our army crushed



the enemy's intentions Senior Photojournalist Naeem Chaudhry said that we express complete confidence in our army Photojournalists stand with our brave forces And Vice President Liaquat Ali said that if the enemy looks at us with

a dirty eye again, then gouge out our eyes. Joint Secretary Malik Saeed Iqbal expressed his views and said, Pakistan's defense is invincible and we stand shoulder to shoulder with our army on every front. Vice President Taswar Abbas

said that we will not leave our Pakistan Army alone, our lives are also sacrificed for the Pakistan Army. And a large number of photojournalists and journalistic community participated in the rally.

## France embassy's team visits ZTBL

They also lauded the Bank's Mobile Van Service, which brings banking and advisory services to remote and underserved areas, reaching farmers who may be reluctant or unable to visit bank branches

DNA

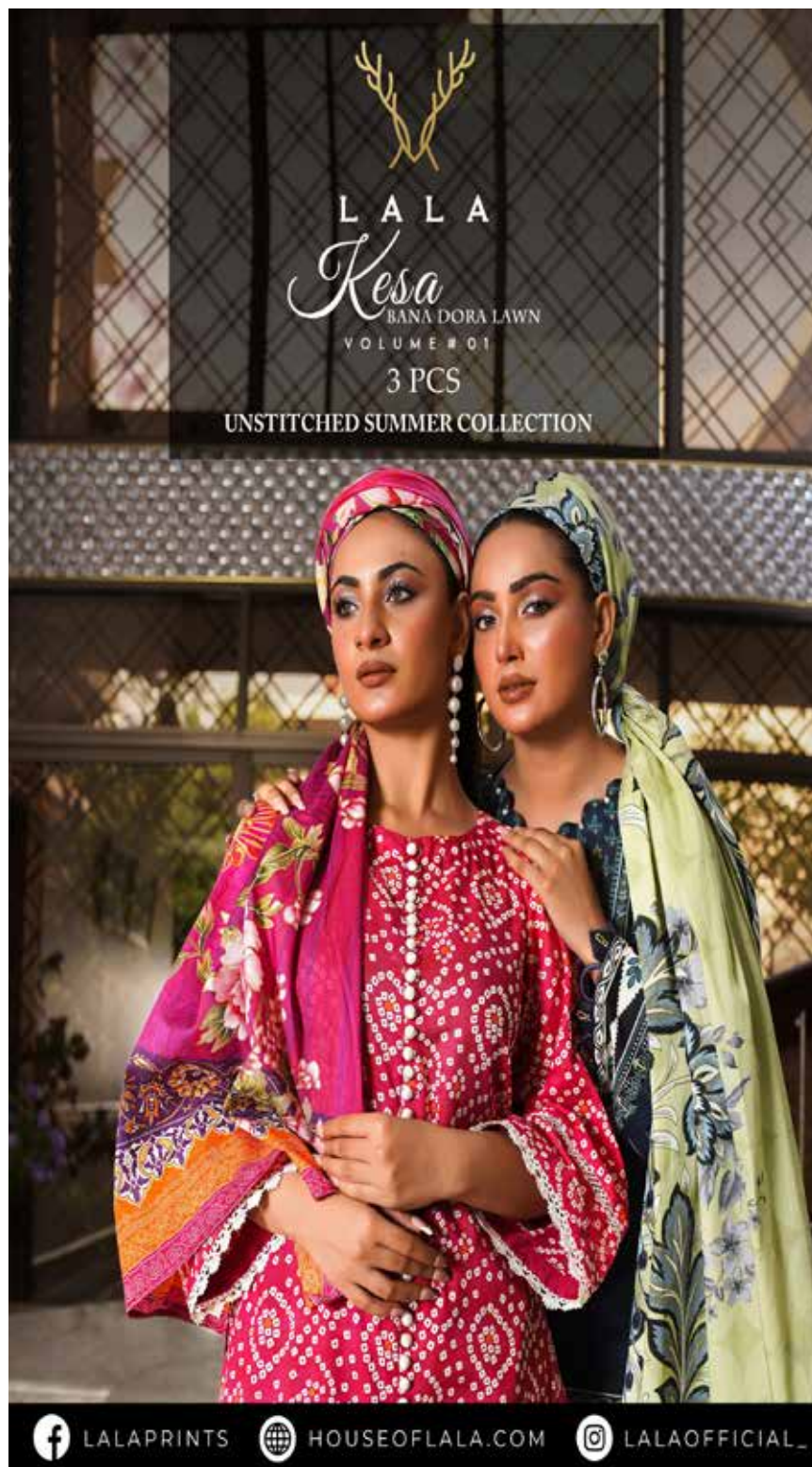
ISLAMABAD: A distinguished delegation from the Embassy of France, led by Dr. François Gary, visited the Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited (ZTBL) Head Office and exchanged expert views on food safety, livestock, and agricultural inputs. The delegation called on Mr. Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti, President/CEO ZTBL. The visiting dignitaries were given a comprehensive overview of the bank's operations through a docu-

mentary presentation, followed by a visit to ZTBL's Farm and Staff College. The French delegation included Dr. François Gary, Managing Partner of PHY-LUM—a globally renowned management consulting and IT-based company in France; Mr. Laurent Chopiton, Head of the Economic Department at the French Embassy; Mr. Luc Boyer, Deputy Economic Counsellor and Ms. Leonora Dalloshi from the French Embassy. ZTBL, the country's largest and premier agricultural financing institution, ex-

tended a warm welcome to the distinguished visitors. The Bank expressed its privilege in hosting Dr. François Gary, a renowned international expert in policy and strategy for food safety, animal health, and welfare. His consultancy work spans collaborations with private firms, national authorities, and global institutions including the World Bank, European Union, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

During his stay in Pakistan, Dr. François Gary is scheduled to visit all provincial headquarters in the country to engage with stakeholders on livestock development and food security. President Bhatti later accompanied the delegation to ZTBL's model agri farm, where they were briefed on the Bank's initiatives such as demonstration plots for various crops, rain water harvesting integrated with drip irrigation project, kitchen gardening units, machinery for value addition of fruits & vege-

tables and fish farming. The French delegation appreciated the steps taken by the bank for facilitating farmers in recent years, including the launch of its Mobile App, WhatsApp and Internet Banking services, and the widespread dissemination of financial literacy through arrangement of Zarai Baithaks across the country. They also lauded the Bank's Mobile Van Service, which brings banking and advisory services to remote and underserved areas, reaching farmers who may be reluctant or unable to visit bank branches.





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

May 25/Jordan Independence Day


May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day

May 28/Ethiopia National Day

May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.1122


& Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114


PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Canth Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4


RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



RAWALPINDI: Security personnel stands alert in front of Food Street gate and cordon off area after Pakistan shot down Indian drone.

# SPARC, SPDC launch cigarette tax simulation model

Other key representatives from the Ministry of Finance, along with members of civil society, public health activists, and journalists, also attended the event and shared their remarks on important tobacco-related issues, including taxation

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), in collaboration with the Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC), launched “The Price of Health: Cigarette Tax Simulation Model 2025–26.” This model provides evidence-based insights into how effective tobacco taxation can improve public health outcomes and generate vital government revenue. According to the model, if the government increases the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cigarettes by Rs. 39 per pack in the upcoming fiscal year, it could generate an additional Rs. 67.4 billion in revenue.

Muhammad Asif Iqbal, Managing Director of the Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC), said while presenting the model “Pakistan needs to take bold steps to unlock billions in potential revenue while tackling the public health dangers linked to tobacco use. A Rs. 39 increase in the FED will generate Rs. 67.4 billion—Rs. 58.2 billion from FED and Rs. 9.2 billion from GST. There has been no change in FED since February 2023, and the decrease in the real price of cigarettes due to high inflation has made them more affordable. He further noted that cigarette prices in Pakistan remain lower than in many parts of the world. “There is clear evidence that higher tobacco taxes result in lower smoking rates and increased government revenue. Without urgent action, Pakistan could see 490,000 new smokers in the coming year. The government must take decisive steps to sustain progress and protect public health,” he urged. Mr. Iqbal also pointed out that multinational companies often exaggerate the size of the illicit market, engage in front loading, and under report sales to evade taxes and pressure the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for tax reductions. He concluded by highlighting that research evidence has shown the tax increase in February 2023 was a win-win policy—it reduced cigarette consumption by over 19%, while revenue from FED and GST increased from Rs. 179 billion in 2022–23 to Rs. 298 billion in 2023–24. Prof. Dr. Matiur Rehman, Dean of Allied Healthcare Sciences at the Health Services Academy (HSA), shared alarming statistics about the health impact of tobacco in Pakistan. He highlighted that over 160,000 deaths annually are linked to tobacco-related diseases. With 31.6 million adult tobacco users and 17.3 million smokers across the country, Pakistan is facing a major public health crisis—further compounded by the fact that nearly 1,200 children aged 10–14 start smoking every day. The economic burden of smoking in Pakistan is estimated at PKR 615.07 billion, which accounts for 1.6% of the country’s GDP. Mr. Syed Ish-tiaq Gillani, Chair of the National Action and Coordinating Group against Violence against Women and Children (NACG) and Chief Executive Officer of the United Global Organization of Development (UGOOD), strongly urged the government to prioritize the proposed tax increase in the 2025–26 budget. He emphasized that raising the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cigarettes would not only support economic growth but also save lives by reducing tobacco use. By implement-

ing this measure, Pakistan can take a significant step toward a healthier and more prosperous future. The health of our future generations is at stake, and this is a challenge we cannot afford to overlook,” he stated. Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager at SPARC, urged all stakeholders to work together to protect children and youth from an industry that causes billions in losses to the national economy. He emphasized that raising tobacco taxes should be a regular and consistent policy measure. He added that the affordability of cigarettes is a key factor driving children and youth to start smoking. Other key representatives from the Ministry of Finance, along with members of civil society, public health activists, and journalists, also attended the event and shared their remarks on important tobacco-related issues, including taxation.

# HEC trains 60 editors, researchers from KP

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan successfully organised the 5th Editors Orientation Capacity-Building Workshop on Journal Recognition at the Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar. Around 60 journal editors, researchers, and faculty members from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa took part in the training. Being part of HEC’s efforts to enhance the quality and international visibility of academic research in Pakistan, the workshop aimed at strengthening editorial practices and aligning local academic journals with international publishing standards. The event marked another key milestone in advancing Pakistan’s scholarly publishing ecosystem. The session was led by Dr. Akhtar Shirin, a distinguished clinician and academic. Dr. Shirin holds an MBBS, FCPS, FRCP (Glasgow), and a Master’s in Health research. He is a Professor of Medicine and Director of the Clinical Trials Unit at Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, as well as the Vice President of the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME). He is also former President of the Pakistan Association of Medical Editors (PAME) and Chief Editor of the Khyber Medical University Journal. The workshop featured interactive sessions on crucial topics, including best practices in academic publishing, editorial policies and procedures, peer review mechanisms and compliance with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines. The event began and concluded with ceremonial remarks by Prof. Dr. Usman Ghani, Director of the Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar. He underscored the importance of ongoing professional development to enhance the quality, credibility, and global impact of Pakistani research journals. This initiative is part of HEC’s broader strategy to strengthen Pakistan’s research infrastructure and foster deeper integration with the international academic community.—DNA

# ISSI Int’l moot on ‘Pakistan and the Region’ concludes

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Pakistan office, hosted a one-day international conference titled “Pakistan and the Region: Enhancing Regional Connectivity, Addressing Non-Traditional Threats, and Countering Terrorism.” Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed was the Chief Guest at the inaugural session. The conference featured three working sessions. The first working session, titled ‘Pakistan-Af-

ghanistan Relations: Challenges and Opportunities’, was moderated by Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan. The speakers of the session included: Ambassador Qazi Humayun, Pakistan’s Former Ambassador to Afghanistan; Mr. Hameed Hakimi, Afghanistan Research and Policy Initiative (ARPI), CHS, Doha; Ambassador Ayaz Wazir, Former Pakistani Ambassador; Mr. Zalmay Nishat, Founder and Executive Chair, Mosaic Foundation, UK; Mr. Tahir Khan, Journalist; and Mr. Muzammil Shinwari, Former Afghan Minister. Speakers discussed key challenges in Pakistan Afghanistan-relations, including the TTP threat, India’s role, the Taliban’s position on cross-border terrorism, and return of refugees. Notwithstanding historical differences, they called for pragmatic, people-centric engagement, emphasizing soft power, and people-to-people ties. Some urged formal recognition of the Taliban to enable peaceful dispute resolution, enhanced trade, and shared resource use. An inclusive Afghan government was seen as essential, alongside a cooperative approach to dealing with the challenge of TTP and equal engagement with the Taliban. Projects like TAPI and CASA-1000 were highlighted as key opportunities for regional connectivity and a comprehensive trade agreement was pro-

posed to unlock bilateral economic potential. The second Working Session, titled “Regional Security and Countering Terrorism: Evolving Threats and Response Strategies”, was moderated by former Ambassador Seema Illahi Baloch. Speakers of the session included: Dr. Rustum Azizi, Research Director at “Tahlil,” Tajikistan; Dr. Foad Izadi, Head of the American Studies Department at the University of Tehran, Iran; Ambassador Riffat Masood, Former Pakistan Ambassador to Iran; Dr. Murat Aslan, Professor at Hasan Kalyoncu University and SETA Senior Researcher, Türkiye; and Mr. Zeeshan Salahuddin, Director Tabadlab.

# District Control Room to enhance capital's security

ISLAMABAD: The office of the District Magistrate has announced the establishment of a round-the-clock District Control Room to enhance security measures in the Islamabad Capital Territory. The notification, issued by the Additional District Magistrate here Thursday, highlights the move as a response to the current security situation in the country. Located at the Safe City Project Building in Police Lines, Sector H-11, the new control room aims to provide immediate response and coordination during emergencies. Three dedicated helpline numbers 051-9001521, 051-9001581 and 051-9001584 have been set up to assist residents. Residents are encouraged to use these helpline numbers for any security-related concerns or emergencies.—APP


# ANF arrests 8 smugglers with 303 kg of drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting eight operations across the country, recovered as many as 303.769 kg of drugs worth more than Rs 29.1 million and arrested eight suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday. He informed that 300 grams of hashish were recovered from an accused near a University area in Attock. In another operation, 1 kg of hashish was recovered from a motorcyclist near a restaurant in Mangopir area, Karachi. The suspects arrested confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions. As many as 100 grams of heroin and 4 kg of ice were recovered from a vehicle on University Road, Peshawar, and the suspect was nabbed. Similarly, 1.144 kg of ice was recovered from the bag of a passenger going to Qatar at Islamabad Airport. As many as 276 kg of hashish and 10 kg of ice were recovered from a vehicle near Shamkot Toll Plaza, Khanewal and two suspects were arrested. One kg of heroin was recovered from a vehicle near the Deputy Wala Interchange, Faisalabad, and the suspect was arrested. As much as 4 kg of ice was recovered from the suspect’s bag near Sarwar Shaheed Toll Plaza, Mianwali.—APP

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## Briefs

## Pakistan's economic rise harsh reality for India

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh Thursday, said that Pakistan's remarkable economic turnaround is a galling truth for India and Pakistan, with its strong armed forces will not be deterred by their malicious propaganda. In an exclusive interview with PTV News Channel, the minister slammed India, asserting that Pakistan's economic resurgence is a bitter pill for its neighbor to swallow, and with its robust military, Pakistan will not be swayed by India's vitriolic rhetoric. The minister warned that India's hate politics and irresponsible media, fuelled by the Modi-controlled government's agenda, will not undermine Pakistan's progress and stability. He emphasized that Pakistan will continue to focus on its economic growth and development, undeterred by India's malicious attempts to destabilize the country. The minister declared that Pakistan is united and strong and will aggressively respond to any further provocations or attempts to undermine its sovereignty. Minister Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh praised the country's armed forces, saying they are the backbone of Pakistan's stability and security.—APP

## Fateha for martyrs of Indian aggression at the SCP held

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, along with all the Judges of the Supreme Court on Thursday held a formal condolence session to express profound grief over the martyrdom of innocent Pakistani citizens in a brutal and unprovoked attack by the Indian Army. The Judges offered Fateha for the departed souls. They extended their heartfelt condolences and deep sympathies to the bereaved families, acknowledging the profound pain and sorrow caused by this inhumane aggression. They prayed to Almighty Allah to shower His infinite mercy upon the martyrs, elevate their ranks in the hereafter, and grant strength and patience to their families to endure this tragic and irreparable loss with courage and dignity. The Supreme Court expressed solidarity with the affected families and the nation, reaffirming its unwavering commitment to justice, human dignity, and protecting innocent lives.—APP

## Seminar held on “How to Write a Story” by Ahmed Saleem Study Circle

ISLAMABAD: A one-day seminar titled “How to Write a Story” was organized here yesterday by the Ahmed Saleem Study Circle under the supervision of the “Idara-e-Farogh-e-Qaumi Zaban” (National Language Promotion Institute) in Islamabad. This literary and intellectual gathering was held to honor the scholarly contributions of the renowned researcher, translator, and intellectual Ahmed Saleem and to pass on his ideas to the new generation. The Director-General of the Institute, Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, attended as the chief guest.—APP

## PIDE syndicate approves bold reform agenda

As PIDE sets its sights on the future, this Syndicate meeting marks a pivotal moment—signaling a renewed commitment to make research more relevant, policy more responsive, and Pakistan more resilient

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a powerful affirmation of its mission to modernize policy research and impact governance, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) convened its 32nd Syndicate Meeting, chaired by Vice Chancellor Dr. Nadeem Javaid. The meeting brought together distinguished members, including Mr. Awais Manzoor Sumra, Secretary, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Dr. Jamil Ahmad, Member IT, Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, and senior officials from PIDE. With the spirit of transformation at its core, the Syndicate endorsed a wide-ranging set of reforms aimed at positioning PIDE as a globally connected, impact-driven think tank aligned with Pakistan's evolving development needs. At the heart of the deliberations was the approval of PIDE's 5-Year Strategic Plan, a visionary roadmap anchored in nine high-impact initiatives. These span academic modernization, cutting-edge research, inclusive growth, digital transformation, and global partnerships—marking the beginning of a bold new chapter for the institute. In a move to deepen its policy relevance, the Syndicate approved the establishment of eight specialized research centers in areas critical to Pakistan's future—trade, digital economy, energy, agriculture, behavioral insights, and sustainability. These centers will serve as knowledge engines,



connecting rigorous research to real-world policy challenges. The Syndicate further greenlit the launch of an Executive Development Centre (EDC) to equip leaders and policy professionals with evidence-backed tools, and a pioneering PhD Work-Study Program, which will embed scholars within ministries and industries—bridging the gap between theory and practice. In a significant

development, the Syndicate also endorsed institutional governance reforms—including an incentive-based performance framework, a structured remote work policy, and the much-anticipated campus expansion through the allotment of 17.55 acres in Islamabad's H-11/2 sector. This will pave the way for a world-class academic and policy innovation hub. “PIDE is no longer

just a research institute. It is evolving into a national resource—where ideas shape policy and innovation drives change,” said Dr. Nadeem Javaid, Vice Chancellor, PIDE.

As PIDE sets its sights on the future, this Syndicate meeting marks a pivotal moment—signaling a renewed commitment to make research more relevant, policy more responsive, and Pakistan more resilient.

## ‘Facts speak louder than fiction’

ISLAMABAD: PPP Vice President Senator Sherry Rehman Thursday emphasized the importance of truth-based evidence from India, rather than fabricated narratives, asserting Pakistan will not be cowed and will defend its sovereignty with all necessary measures. In an exclusive conversation with a Private news channel, PPP Senator urged the media to spotlight the truth and reject fabricated narratives, warning India that Pakistan will fiercely defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Senator Sherry also lauded the unwavering resolve and capabilities of Pakistan's armed forces, expressing full confidence in their ability to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity and warning any aggressor of a resolute response.

Rehman praised Pakistan's armed forces, particularly highlighting the unmatched capabilities of the Pakistan Air Force, while criticizing India's military capabilities, asserting that Pakistan's defense systems are robust and ready to counter any aggression.—APP

## Pak vigilant to safeguard its sovereignty: Aqeel

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik Thursday said that Pakistan would vigilantly safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In an interview with a private news channel, the State Minister said that Pakistani forces successfully downed Indian aircraft and drones following their missile strike inside Pakistan. Barrister Aqeel mentioned the National Security Committee had already announced that Pakistan would respond to India in accordance with international law and take necessary measures to defend itself against any aggression. He emphasized that according to international law, India could not unilaterally suspend water treaties. In case India takes such step, he said, Pakistan would approach all relevant international forums to protect its rights and interests. Barrister Aqeel said despite the challenging geopolitical situation, Pakistan's stock exchange had shown resilience and improvement, demonstrating the country's economic strength and investors' confidence.—APP

## Pak army praised for robust response against India

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPC-ICI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, stated on Thursday that in response to Indian aggression, the Pakistan Army, led by General Asim Munir, took swift and decisive action, leaving India caught off guard. He noted that General Asim Munir has united the nation and thwarted the enemy's malicious plans, leading the world to recognize Pakistan's strong defense capabilities. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader asserted that Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir's extraordinary leadership

and comprehensive strategy have secured victory on the battlefield and uplifted the nation's morale. Meanwhile, India has faced humiliation on the global stage. He mentioned that a cowardly attack by the enemy in the dead of night was met with a robust response. Five Indian fighter jets, one drone, and several helicopters were destroyed, exposing the myth of Indian air superiority. Several key military installations across the Line of Control were also targeted, after which Indian forces, acknowledging their defeat, waved the white flag. Mian Zahid Hussain emphasized that Pakistan's people and armed forces demonstrated unparalleled unity and resolve, making it clear to the world that there can be no compromise on the sovereignty of our beloved homeland. General Asim Munir managed the situation militarily and launched an effective diplomatic offensive. At the

United Nations and other global forums, Pakistani representatives highlighted Indian aggression as a threat to world peace and initiated a vigorous diplomatic campaign. Despite the tension, Pakistan's political and military leadership has intensified efforts for peace in the region. The Foreign Minister has clarified that Pakistan desires peace and does not seek war, but responding to aggression is our responsibility. After facing retaliation, India has been forced to adopt a more cautious tone, indicating a willingness to reduce tensions and pursue diplomatic channels. China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the OIC have urged both countries to exercise restraint and immediately commence negotiations. Mian Zahid Hussain condemned India's attacks on mosques, the martyrdom of 46 innocent civilians, and the targeting of women and children, calling it a reflection

of India's narrow-minded and extremist ideology, something that must be condemned globally. Referring to this conflict as a threat to the region's economy, he demanded that political leaders resolve matters calmly and that global powers play their role in establishing sustainable peace. Through diplomatic channels, we can pave the way for a peaceful and prosperous future. Pakistan has proven its military superiority in these clashes. Still, India remains an untrustworthy and deceitful state that could again push South Asia toward conflict. He warned that this tension could escalate into a broader crisis without timely action. The unity displayed by the people, government, and armed forces was unprecedented, reinforcing the nation's resilience and collective spirit in the face of aggression.

## Senate committee on information technology meets

ISLAMABAD: The meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication was held in Old PIPS Hall, Parliament Lodges Islamabad. The meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication was chaired by Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan and was attended by Senators Nadeem Ahmed Bhutto, Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan, Dr. Muhammad Humayun Mohmand, Anousha Rehman Ahmed Khan, Manzoor Ahmed, and Gurdeep Singh. The Secretary of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, the Chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), and other officials from the relevant ministry were present. In light of the recent Indian attack on Pakistan, which resulted in the tragic loss of innocent civilian lives, the committee decided not to proceed with the pre-scheduled agenda items. Chairperson Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan expressed her concern regarding the threatening messages she had received via phone, Facebook, and Gmail. She referred to a speech she had delivered during a previous session of the Senate, in which she strongly condemned the false accusations made by the Indian government following the Pahalgam attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir that claimed the lives of innocent tourists. Her speech was later cited in an article published by the Hindustan Times. She emphasized that a cyber-war is currently underway, with the Indian government actively attempting to create and disseminate a false narrative through social media. In modern warfare, narratives play a crucial role, and social engineering attacks can inflict more damage than conventional military operations. The chairperson underscored the urgent need to foster national unity and social cohesion to effectively counter this hybrid warfare.—DNA

## The unstoppable PAF has shamed India's air power

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Thursday that Pakistan's Army and Air Force, commanded by their brave and visionary leaders, is a source of national pride and a formidable force that keeps India awake at night.

He emphasized that the Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, and the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, are working diligently to safeguard Pakistan against aggression. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that their leadership, strate-

gic brilliance, and iron resolve make Pakistan's defence forces a nightmare for Modi. He further added that the Pakistan Army, under the guidance of a fearless and resolute Chief, remains the embodiment of honour, sacrifice, and strength. Our soldiers are not just warriors; they are guardians of the homeland. They are highly trained, battle-hardened, and driven by an unshakable love for Pakistan. Citing successful military operations, Butt noted how the Army crushed terrorism and restored peace across the nation. From deserts to mountain peaks, every soldier stands ready, armed with modern technology and a heart filled with the spirit of national defence. The business leader said the message to India is crystal clear:

any misadventure will be met with unmatched strength. Our Army is not just defending borders; it is upholding the pride and dignity of the Pakistani people. He asserted that every wrong move by India will be met with decisive force. Turning to the air domain, Shahid Rasheed Butt praised the Pakistan Air Force for its unmatched professionalism and readiness. Under the dynamic leadership of the Air Chief, the PAF dominates the skies with cutting-edge aircraft and pilots trained to strike with surgical precision. He highlighted the 2019 operation as a shining example of Pakistan's aerial superiority. The PAF not only neutralized Indian targets with pinpoint accuracy but also captured an Indian pilot, sending a message

that Pakistan's skies are off-limits to any aggressor.

He noted that the Air Chief continues modernizing the force with new technologies and rigorous training, keeping the PAF several steps ahead.

On the other hand, buried by internal inefficiencies and outdated doctrine, India's Air Force cannot match our speed, precision, and courage. What truly makes Pakistan's military unbeatable is the deep strategic coordination between the Army and Air Force. They plan and execute as a single fighting unit. In 2019, when India crossed the line in Balakot, our Army secured the ground while our Air Force ruled the skies. That seamless unity is what shattered India's arrogance.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said this integration multiplies military strength and terrifies the enemy. India knows it cannot win against a force that fights like one body with one purpose.

## India loses another war

Nusrat Khan remarked that the recent statement by senior government minister Rana Sanaullah — declaring that Pakistan will not respond to Indian attacks in the near future — seems to be his personal opinion

NUSRAT KHAN

The Indian operation “Sindhoor” against Pakistan failed so badly that it has effectively ended India's influence not only in the region but globally. Responding to the provocative Indian action against Pakistan, political and social leader Nusrat Khan stated

that despite Pakistan's repeated insistence, India's failure to provide concrete evidence regarding the Pahalgam attack had already exposed New Delhi's bad faith. Nusrat Khan said that the destruction of five Indian fighter jets that attacked Pakistani territory last night is something that will

shame New Delhi for years to come. He added that it is on record how the Indian Home Minister enthusiastically broke coconuts on the French Rafale fighter jets, a clear sign of the high hopes he had pinned on those expensive and advanced warplanes. Regrettably, he said, even the minister's rituals

and prayers could not aid India against Pakistan. Another development is that international pressure is now mounting on India to immediately and unconditionally begin dialogue with Pakistan to resolve all outstanding issues, including Kashmir. Nusrat Khan remarked that the recent statement by

senior government minister Rana Sanaullah — declaring that Pakistan will not respond to Indian attacks in the near future — seems to be his personal opinion. In contrast, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the DG ISPR have clearly stated that Pakistan reserves the right to give a prompt and decisive response to Indian aggression.

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## Pakistan needs unity to counter Indian designs

At a time of growing regional tensions and escalating threats from across the eastern border, Pakistan stands at a critical juncture. The nation faces not only external dangers but also internal divisions that threaten to erode its ability to respond with coherence and strength. In this hour of need, unity is not a political choice—it is a national imperative. Recent developments have underscored the need for a robust and unified stance to counter India’s aggressive posture. From its military maneuvers to its disinformation campaigns on international platforms, India’s designs are becoming increasingly clear. To effectively resist these moves, Pakistan must present a consolidated front. That front cannot be built without the inclusion of all major political forces, most notably the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). PTI remains, by all available metrics, the most popular political party in Pakistan. Its exclusion from the national dialogue or any major decision-making forum creates a vacuum that weakens the democratic and strategic resolve of the country. There can be no meaningful or sustainable unity without PTI on board. This calls for political maturity from all sides and a willingness to prioritize national interests over partisan considerations. In this context, the continued incarceration of former Prime Minister Imran Khan serves as a major impediment to building national consensus. While legal processes must be respected, extraordinary times demand extraordinary decisions. In the larger interest of the country, it may be time to consider his release—not as a concession, but as a necessary step towards national cohesion. As long as he remains behind bars, generating broad-based public support for any potential national security response, including a possible war scenario with India, will remain difficult. An All Parties Conference (APC) is the need of the hour. The government should immediately initiate efforts to bring all political leaders to the table. Differences can be set aside for now; the survival and dignity of the nation must come first. The APC should aim not only to formulate a unified domestic response but also to send a clear signal to the international community: Pakistan stands united. On the diplomatic front, recent steps such as Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar’s briefing to foreign envoys are commendable. These efforts must be intensified. Our missions abroad must be activated with renewed urgency and provided with all necessary support to expose India’s aggression and misinformation. From Washington to Brussels, and from Beijing to Riyadh, Pakistan’s case must be presented with clarity, consistency, and resolve. The world needs to see Pakistan not as a fractured polity, but as a determined, united, and responsible nation defending its sovereignty and regional peace. That image can only be achieved if internal harmony is restored. The time to act is now—before it’s too late.

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## Encroachments plague Islamabad’s G-8 sector

Once known for its peaceful environment and spacious roads, Sector G-8 in the federal capital has become a hotbed of encroachments, making life miserable for its residents. The unchecked sprawl of illegal car showrooms, makeshift shops, and unauthorized workshops has overtaken footpaths and roads, leaving pedestrians with no choice but to walk on the streets—often at the risk of their safety. Footpaths, meant for pedestrians, are now occupied by commercial setups, while the streets remain choked with double-parked vehicles. Residents have long complained about the lack of parking space near their homes and the worsening traffic situation, but their appeals have largely fallen on deaf ears. Despite occasional operations conducted by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), illegal structures quickly return. According to local sources and eyewitness accounts, a well-established nexus between encroachers and certain officials within the civic body allows this cycle to continue. Allegations of bribery and deliberate inaction are common, with reports suggesting that some CDA enforcement officers warn businesses ahead of scheduled operations. The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) also faces criticism for turning a blind eye to growing traffic violations and unauthorized vehicle displays by car dealers. The lack of proactive enforcement has emboldened these illegal outfits to expand further. In stark contrast, the Punjab government has carried out effective anti-encroachment operations in cities like Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi. Hundreds of kanals of public land have been reclaimed, and authorities have ensured the encroachments do not reappear. Continuous monitoring, community engagement, and penalties for repeat violators have been key to Punjab’s success—a model that Islamabad has yet to emulate. As the capital city, Islamabad should reflect disciplined urban planning and efficient governance. However, the G-8 sector stands as a glaring example of administrative failure, where short-term financial interests overshadow long-term civic responsibility. Car showrooms and workshops—meant to operate in designated commercial zones—are now occupying residential areas, polluting the environment and endangering public safety. In some places, even main road lanes are reduced to single-lane usage due to rampant double-parking. To address this crisis, residents demand a sustained anti-encroachment drive backed by strong political will and administrative transparency. They call for the formation of a dedicated task force empowered to seal repeat violators and equipped with digital tools for public oversight. Collaboration between CDA, ITP, and local communities is essential to restore civic order. The current state of G-8 is not just a local issue but a reflection of a broader systemic decay in urban governance. If Islamabad is to reclaim its image as a model city, decisive and consistent action against encroachments is urgently needed.

# Now India waits for a befitting attack from Pak

Qamar Bashir



Interestingly—and disturbingly—none of the alleged militant hideouts or religious seminaries (madrasas) were targeted. The missiles struck only mosques—recognized as sacred symbols of worship across the Muslim world. These mosques, by nature of their open public presence and limited capacity, cannot and do not accommodate covert militant training operations. Their location in bustling neighborhoods and association with daily communal prayers makes any such allegation implausible. This choice of targets raises deep concerns

At 8:24 p.m. in Michigan, a dramatic and dangerous shift unfolded in South Asia’s fragile balance. India, in what it called Operation Sindoor, launched 24 long-range missiles targeting eight sites across Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The operation marked a grave escalation, not just militarily but morally and diplomatically. According to Pakistan’s Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), all 24 strikes were carried out using missiles—no aircraft entered Pakistani airspace. Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, Director General ISPR, revealed that the attacks struck six civilian areas, killing eight people and injuring 33 others, including women and children. Among the targets were Bilal Mosque in Muzaffarabad, Abbas Mosque in Kotli, and a mosque in Muridke. A shell hit Kotli Loharaan near Sialkot, and a public dispensary in Shakargarh sustained structural damage. India claims the operation was a response to the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam, where 25 Indian citizens and one Nepali national were killed. It accused Lashkar-e-Taiba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi of masterminding the assault and alleged that the attackers were trained inside Pakistan. Yet to this day, no proof has been provided to any international institution. No forensic evidence, no communication intercepts, no cross-border intelligence sharing—just unilateral claims, swiftly followed by missile strikes. From an analytical viewpoint, India’s use of long-range precision-guided missiles, rather than airstrikes, reflects a shift in military doctrine. Likely drawing lessons from the Balakot operation in 2019—when an Indian pilot was captured and an aircraft downed—New Delhi opted for remote strikes. Observational data suggests that the majority of missiles struck their targets, barring two which missed near Kotri and Sialkot. This suggests India has developed substantial accuracy in its missile capabilities through satellite-guided systems. That said, this is an analytical conclusion based on outcomes—not an admission by Pakistani authorities. Yet even this precision cannot obscure the strategic and moral failure behind India’s actions. Interestingly—and disturbingly—none of the alleged militant hideouts or religious seminaries (madrasas) were targeted. The missiles struck only mosques—recognized as sacred symbols of worship across the Muslim world. These mosques, by nature of their open public presence and limited capacity, cannot and do not accommodate covert militant training

operations. Their location in bustling neighborhoods and association with daily communal prayers makes any such allegation implausible. This choice of targets raises deep concerns. Regardless of India’s stated objectives, the outcome is an unmistakable desecration of Islamic religious sanctuaries. Even if governments of Muslim-majority countries refrain from publicly condemning the act due to geopolitical considerations, the general public—the masses from Cairo to Jakarta, from Istanbul to Rabat—will view this as an unforgivable attack on the sanctity of Islam. India has, knowingly or unknowingly, invited the wrath of a global Muslim conscience, which may manifest in diplomatic pressure, grassroots protests, and deteriorating people-to-people perceptions worldwide. India, as the world’s largest democracy and an aspiring global power, had both the opportunity and responsibility to demonstrate restraint, logic, and leadership. Positioned strongly in diplomatic forums, with growing international trade and military stature, India should have pursued dialogue, reason, and a multilateral investigation. But instead, it opted for arrogance. It acted impulsively, trigger-happily—driven not by logic but by revenge. By doing so, India has not only abandoned its claimed mantle of regional wisdom, but it has also strategically and diplomatically lowered itself to the level of a struggling Pakistan. A state that once claimed the high moral ground now finds itself embroiled in tit-for-tat aggression with a neighbor it routinely derides. In its rush to punish, India has equated itself with Pakistan—an outcome that shatters the very image it seeks to project globally. Pakistan, though cornered politically and economically, is now left with no choice but to retaliate. But retaliation need not be symmetrical or reckless. In fact, Pakistan now holds a unique strategic initiative. Among its potential responses is the targeting of India’s water infrastructure—specifically, the series of dams constructed on the Jhelum, Chenab, and Indus rivers in Indian-administered Kashmir. These dams have long been used by India as political leverage, threatening to reduce or block Pakistan’s water supply. Their destruction would not only neutralize India’s coercive potential, but also cripple decades of infrastructure planning. These towering structures, built over many years, could be destroyed in minutes—at a cost India would struggle to recover from for at least another decade. This would be a response that avoids civilian

casualties while delivering maximum strategic effect. Moreover, Pakistan has also long accused India of sponsoring terrorism within its borders—funding separatist militants in Balochistan and aiding TTP factions from Afghan soil. If Pakistan now chooses to strike what it considers Indian-supported militant facilities, it would be simply adopting the very doctrine India used to justify its initial assault. More broadly, this episode marks the arrival of a new kind of conflict. Gone are the days of cross-border skirmishes and air force dogfights. What we now see is unmanned warfare—missiles, drones, AI-guided weapons, and remote targeting. Both India and Pakistan are equipped with these capabilities. And both are capable of devastating strikes that can paralyze strategic assets within minutes—without a single soldier crossing a border. International reactions to the crisis are measured but clearly concerned. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted on X that he is monitoring the situation closely after being briefed by Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. President Donald Trump, speaking at the White House, described the attack as “a shame,” adding, “I just hope it ends very quickly.” Rubio echoed Trump’s sentiment and pledged to remain in contact with both Indian and Pakistani leadership in hopes of securing a peaceful outcome. However, events on the ground suggest escalation. Indian airlines including Air India, IndiGo, and SpiceJet have cancelled or diverted flights to Kashmir and cities near the border, including Amritsar, Jammu, Srinagar, Leh, and Rajkot. Two international flights were rerouted to Delhi. These moves, while subtle, are indicative of India bracing for an anticipated Pakistani strike. India, for now, waits. Not in triumph, but in growing tension. Pakistan has made it unequivocally clear: a response will come “at a time and place of our choosing.” Whether it targets military facilities, economic infrastructure, or strategic dams, the choice lies with Islamabad—and so does the initiative. The coming days will define whether the region sinks into prolonged hostility or retreats into a renewed balance of deterrence. India, by acting rashly and without justification, has not only triggered a strategic crisis—it has humbled itself before the world. By targeting mosques, by avoiding evidence, and by discarding diplomacy, it has chosen war over wisdom. And now, for all its missiles, all its claims, all its declarations—India waits.

# State behind the gun: India’s growing global terror allegations

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The seriousness of the Canadian allegations was underlined when, on 29 November 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed an indictment against an Indian national named Nikhil Gupta for plotting the assassination of Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, another Sikh separatist and U.S. citizen. According to the indictment, Gupta was allegedly recruited...

INDIA’S involvement in covert operations and alleged terrorism-related activities beyond its borders has increasingly come under global scrutiny. Once considered a regional power primarily concerned with internal security challenges, India now finds itself accused of state-sponsored actions in foreign countries—actions that undermine international norms and threaten diplomatic relations. This growing narrative is no longer confined to adversarial states like Pakistan, but is now echoed by countries such as Canada and even the United States, raising legitimate concerns over the modus operandi of Indian intelligence services. One of the earliest and most consistent accusations against India comes from Pakistan, which has repeatedly highlighted Indian involvement in terrorist activities on its soil. The most striking case was the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian naval officer apprehended by Pakistan’s security forces on 3 March 2016 in Balochistan. Jadhav confessed to being an agent of the Indian intelligence agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) and to orchestrating subversive activities in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan and Karachi. The Indian government initially denied his affiliation with RAW but later acknowledged his identity. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), while staying his execution, did not exonerate him, instead emphasizing the need for consular access and due process, confirming the legitimacy of Pakistan’s concerns. Apart from Jadhav, Pakistan has on multiple occasions submitted dossiers to the United Nations and other international bodies, documenting India’s alleged sponsorship of terrorism. In November 2020, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, alongside the Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), presented a detailed dossier containing audio, video and documentary evidence implicating India in sponsoring banned terrorist outfits such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). The dossier also linked Indian consulates in Afghanistan with financial and logistical support for these groups.

What elevates these accusations to a global dimension is the revelation from Canada. On 18 September 2023, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made an explosive statement in the House of Commons, alleging the involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen and Sikh separatist leader who was shot dead on 18 June 2023 outside a Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia. Trudeau stated that there were “credible allegations” linking Indian government agents to the murder, prompting Canada to expel a senior Indian diplomat. India responded by expelling a Canadian diplomat in retaliation, but the damage to bilateral relations was significant. This marked the first time a Western democracy directly accused India of extrajudicial killings on foreign soil—a practice typically associated with authoritarian regimes. The seriousness of the Canadian allegations was underlined when, on 29 November 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed an indictment against an Indian national named Nikhil Gupta for plotting the assassination of Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, another Sikh separatist and U.S. citizen. According to the indictment, Gupta was allegedly recruited by an Indian government employee to arrange the murder-for-hire of Pannun in New York. The U.S. authorities arrested Gupta in the Czech Republic, and the case provided damning insight into India’s alleged willingness to carry out extrajudicial killings overseas. The indictment cited encrypted communications, financial transactions, and other surveillance evidence indicating a direct link to Indian state actors. These developments have prompted concerns even within India’s traditional allies. A report by The Washington Post on 1 December 2023 stated that multiple Western intelligence agencies were now reassessing India’s covert capabilities and intentions. The Guardian and BBC also reported that Five Eyes intelligence—a cooperation alliance among the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—had shared intelligence backing

Canada’s claims, further legitimizing the accusations. It is also important to highlight that India’s extra-territorial activities have drawn criticism from human rights organizations. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have both raised alarms over India’s pattern of targeting dissidents abroad, citing cases of digital surveillance, threats, and in some instances, mysterious disappearances or killings of expatriate critics of the Indian government. Such actions by a democratic state raise serious questions about India’s adherence to international law and its role as a responsible global actor. They also have broader implications for the international order. If a state engages in the assassination of foreign citizens or dissidents in democratic countries, it sets a dangerous precedent and undermines global norms of sovereignty and the rule of law. In the context of South Asia, these actions fuel instability and erode trust. In Pakistan, Indian-sponsored terrorism has been a long-standing issue. The 13 December 2014 Army Public School attack in Peshawar, where 149 people including 132 children were brutally murdered, was linked by Pakistani officials to groups allegedly supported by India through Afghan territory. While India has denied such involvement, Pakistan has repeatedly sought international inquiry and oversight into these links, including presenting evidence to the UN Secretary-General and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The accumulation of such credible allegations from multiple countries, supported by intelligence sharing and legal indictments, reflects a troubling trend. A democratic state claiming to be the world’s largest democracy cannot afford to be seen as a sponsor of terrorism or extrajudicial killings. These revelations must prompt an international call for accountability and transparency. If substantiated, India must be held to the same standard as any other state violating international laws and norms. The world cannot afford selective justice when it comes to state-sponsored violence.



## Briefs

PM reaffirms  
Pakistan's  
right to self...

FROM PAGE 01  
The Prime Minister acknowledged and appreciated U.S. President Donald Trump's concern regarding the unfolding security situation. Secretary Rubio reiterated that the United States was closely monitoring developments in South Asia and stressed the importance of restraint and dialogue. He emphasized that Washington remains committed to peace in the region and urged both Pakistan and India to take steps to de-escalate the crisis. Both leaders agreed to maintain close contact in the coming days.

Pak army  
downs 29  
Israeli...

FROM PAGE 01  
aircraft, drones, multiple military posts, and reported casualties among Indian troops, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release. In a state of panic and confusion, India has resorted to deploying Israeli-made Harop drones for attacks on Pakistani territory. These unprovoked attacks are a clear reflection of India's desperation and frustration, as it continues to suffer significant losses along the Line of Control (LoC). Debris of the downed Israeli drones is being recovered from various locations across Pakistan. Pakistan's Armed Forces are responding with full force, thwarting all hostile designs and delivering a decisive response to the enemy's aggression. According to the IAI website, the Harop drone is a dual-capacity system that can both hover over a battlefield and strike targets upon command. It is particularly noted for its ability to target enemy air defences and other critical assets. This type of drone blurs the lines between a traditional unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and a missile, possessing self-propelled flight capabilities and the option for autonomous or manual operations. If a target is not engaged, the Harop can return to base and land. Its design allows for launch from land-based canisters or air platforms.

'Pak fully  
prepared  
to defend...

FROM PAGE 01  
seeks peace, but will not back down if provoked as we are fully prepared to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity at all costs. In a candid interview with CNN channel, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif underscored Pakistan's resolve to protect its sovereignty, stating that the country is fully prepared to respond to any threat or provocation. He further alleged that India is overstepping its boundaries and violating international norms, which has become a major source of contention and a catalyst for conflict in the region. He urged the international community to hold India accountable for its actions, emphasizing the need for collective pressure to address the growing tensions in the region. In response to a question, Khawaja Asif pointed out that the Indian media itself has acknowledged the crash of three aircraft in Indian-occupied Kashmir. "The Indian actions were deliberate attacks on civilians, resulting in harm to innocent women and children, which flagrantly violates international humanitarian law," he asserted. Regarding the Pahalgam incident, the Defence Minister renewed Pakistan's demand for a prompt international investigation, calling on the global community to uncover the truth behind the attack in the disputed territory and identify those responsible.

Pakistan  
rejects...

FROM PAGE 01  
DG ISPR Lt. Gen Ahmed Sharif Ishaq Dar further said that armed forces were fully capable of matching any threat. He said nation should not be worried about anything as the armed forces were fully geared to protect the motherland.

# All matches shifted to Karachi

## PSL 10: Rossouw, Hasan power Quetta Gladiators

*United's stand-in captain, Salman Ali Agha's decision to bowl first backfired as Gladiators accumulated 263/3 in their allotted 20 overs, courtesy of a marathon 134-run partnership between centurions Rossouw and Nawaz*

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A commanding all-round display by Quetta Gladiators saw them thrash Islamabad United by a massive 109-run margin in the 26th fixture of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday. Set a mammoth 264-run target, the defending champions crumbled under pressure and were bundled out for 154 in 19.3 overs, succumbing to their fourth consecutive defeat after an impressive five-match winning streak to start the tournament. Islamabad's chase got off to a disastrous start as Mohammad Amir struck twice in the opening over, removing both openers — Kyle Mayers for a duck and Sahibzada Farhan for just one — leaving the side reeling at 1/2. Wicketkeeper-batter Muhammad Shahzad tried to rebuild with brief stands alongside acting captain Salman Ali Agha (6) and Mohammad Nawaz, but Wasim Jr removed Shahzad in the fourth over after a brisk 24 off 13 balls, which included three boundaries and a six. Mohammad Nawaz departed soon after, scoring 10 off four balls before falling to Khurram Shahzad, triggering a rapid collapse that saw United slump to 68/8 inside nine overs. Imad Wasim and Ben Dwarshuis added a glimmer of resistance with a 55-run stand for the ninth wicket. Dwarshuis chipped in with 31 off 24 balls, hitting one four and two sixes, while Imad top-scored with a fighting 56 off 41 balls, striking five



boundaries and two maximums before falling to Wasim Jr in the final over. Amir was the standout bowler for the Gladiators, taking three wickets for just six runs in his two overs. He was supported by Wasim Jr and Abrar Ahmed, who bagged two each, while Faheem Ashraf, Khurram Shahzad and skipper Saud Shakeel chipped in with one scalp apiece. Earlier, Rilee Rossouw and Hasan Nawaz scored swashbuckling centuries and powered Quetta Gladiators to the highest-ever total in the PSL. United's stand-in captain, Salman Ali Agha's decision to bowl first backfired as Gladiators accumulated 263/3 in their allotted 20 overs, courtesy of a marathon 134-run part-

nership between centurions Rossouw and Nawaz. The leaders, however, got off to a shaky start to their innings as their opening pair of Saud Shakeel and Finn Allen (five) put together 24 runs until the latter got run out in the third over. Shakeel then shared a brisk 36-run partnership with Rossouw until falling victim to Naseem Shah in the last over of the batting powerplay. The skipper made 23 off 18 deliveries with the help of three boundaries. Following his dismissal, Rossouw joined forces with Hasan, and together they steered Gladiators into a commanding position by adding 134 runs for the second wicket. Rossouw, who was the core aggressor of the crucial stand, was

eventually dismissed by Imad Wasim in the 16th over when the Gladiators were nearing the 200-run mark. The South African batter top-scored for the Gladiators with a 46-ball 104, studded with 20 boundaries, including six sixes. Nawaz, on the other hand, batted until the end and made a significant contribution with an unbeaten 100 off 45 deliveries, comprising nine fours and four sixes. The middle-order batter was involved in another crucial partnership for the Gladiators when he added 69 runs for the fourth wicket with Mark Chapman, who made 13 not out from eight deliveries. For United, Imad Wasim and Naseem Shah could pick up a wicket apiece. Squads: Islamabad United: Shadab Khan and Naseem Shah (all platinum), Azam Khan, Imad Wasim and Jason Holder (all diamond), Haider Ali, Salman Ali Agha and Ben Dwarshuis (all gold), Colin Munro, Rumman Raees, Andries Gous, Mohammad Nawaz and Salman Irshad (all silver), Hunain Shah and Saad Masood (both emerging), Kyle Mayers, Mohammad Faiq, Sahibzada Farhan, Muhammad Shahzad and Riley Meredith (all supplementary). Quetta Gladiators: Finn Allen, Faheem Ashraf and Mark Chapman (all platinum), Abrar Ahmed, Mohammad Amir and Rilee Rossouw (all diamond), Akeel Hossein, Mohammad Wasim Jr and Saud Shakeel (all gold), Khawaja Nafay, Usman Tariq, Haseebullah Khan and Khurram Shahzad (all silver), Kyle Jamieson and Hasan Nawaz (both emerging), Mohammad Zeeshan, Danish Aziz, Kusal Mendis and Sean Abbott (all supplementary).

## Rising star Rew called up to England squad for Zimbabwe Test

LONDON: Somerset young gun James Rew was drafted into the England squad on Thursday for the upcoming one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Nottingham starting on May 22. The 21-year-old, one of the most promising batsmen in the English game, replaces Jordan Cox, who suffered an abdominal injury while scoring a century in Essex's County Championship defeat by Somerset on Sunday. Cox, 24, appeared to be in England's squad for the four-day Test as a spare bat-

ter, but the injury is the latest unlucky setback in his career. He was set to make his Test debut last November in New Zealand but broke a thumb in practice before the series opener. This is the first senior England call-up for Rew, the youngest Englishman to score 10 first-class hundreds since batting great Denis Compton. Rew has an outstanding domestic record, with his 45 first-class appearances seeing him score more than 2,600 runs at an average of 43.35.

In this season's First Division of the County Championship alone, Rew is currently averaging 54.21 with the bat, including a highest score of 152. The left-hander, who keeps wicket, also made a match-winning 116 against Essex. Rew toured Australia with the second-string England Lions during the northern hemisphere winter and was a member of the England team that reached the ICC Under-19 World Cup final in 2022. Rew will join the Test squad at their pre-se-

ries training camp next week as preparations begin for the game with Zimbabwe at Trent Bridge, the start of England's home international summer that also features a showpiece five-match red-ball series against India. Revised England squad to play Zimbabwe . Ben Stokes (capt), Gus Atkinson, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Sam Cook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Matthew Potts, James Rew, Joe Root, Jamie Smith (wkt), Josh Tongue. — Agencies

## Lebanon state media say series of Israeli strikes hit south

BEIRUT: Lebanese official media said Israel conducted heavy air strikes on the south on Thursday, the latest raids despite a fragile November ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. The state-run NNA said "Israeli warplanes carried out a wide-scale aerial aggression on the Nabatiye region, launching a series of heavy raids in two waves" targeting hills and valleys in the area, located around 12 kilometres (seven miles) from the border. It said "huge explosions... echoed in most areas of Nabatiye and the south", causing "terror and panic" among residents, who rushed to pick up their children from school, as ambulances headed to the targeted areas. An AFP photographer saw smoke rising from hills in the region. "We heard a loud strike, about 10 consecutive blows," said Jamal Sabbagh, a 29-year-old doctor who was giving schoolchildren health checks near the city of Nabatiye. "Some of the children were scared and there was panic, the teachers were also frightened," he told AFP.

## Ishaq Dar talks to EU commission Vice President

*DPM/FM apprised her of deteriorating regional situation due to India's illegal and unprovoked attacks on several cities in Pakistan that resulted in the martyrdom of innocent civilians including women, children and elderly*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar @MishaqDar50 received a telephone call from the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), Kaja Kallas @KajaKallas. DPM/FM apprised her of deteriorating regional situation due to India's illegal and unprovoked attacks on several cities in Pakistan that resulted in the martyrdom of innocent civilians including women, children and elderly. He underscored that Pakistan had shown restraint despite the fact that Indian attacks were in violation of the UN Charter, jeopardizing regional peace and security. He expressed Government's resolve to defend the sovereignty of Pakistan. EU HR/VP @KajaKallas expressed condolences for the loss of civilian lives. She reiterated that both sides should exercise restraint, allowing dialogue and diplomacy to stop further escalation.

## Pakistan refutes baseless Indian Allegations

*Pakistan remains vigilant and firmly committed to peace, but it will not be deterred by attempts to provoke, intimidate, or mislead and reserves the right to respond to acts of aggression. These allegations are rejected in the strongest possible terms*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan categorically rejects the baseless and irresponsible allegations propagated by the Indian media, accusing Pakistan of launching attacks on Pathankot, Jaisalmer, and Srinagar. These claims are entirely unfounded, politically motivated, and part of a reckless propaganda campaign aimed at maligning Pakistan. The repeated pattern of leveling accusations against Pakistan without any credible investigation reflects a deliberate strategy to manufacture a pretext for aggression and to further destabilize the region. Such actions not only further endanger regional peace but also reveal a disturbing willingness to exploit misinformation for political and military ends. We urge the international community to take serious note of this dangerous behavior and to counsel India toward restraint and responsibility. Any escalation based on false pretenses will be met with full resolve and determination to safeguard Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Pakistan remains vigilant and firmly committed to peace, but it will not be deterred by attempts to provoke, intimidate, or mislead and reserves the right to respond to acts of aggression. These allegations are rejected in the strongest possible terms.

## Punjab govt issues emergency SOPs

FROM PAGE 01

and proper evacuation steps. Preparedness guidelines recommend that residents designate a secure, windowless area within their homes, such as a basement or interior room. People are also advised to maintain a basic emergency kit with first-aid items, bottled water, non-perishable food, flashlights, and portable chargers. In the event of an alarm or warning, households must turn off all lights to reduce visibility, move to the designated safe zone, secure all entry points, and shut off gas connections.

## Saud Shakeel praises team's performance after victory

ISLAMABAD: Quetta Gladiators captain Saud Shakeel expressed his satisfaction after his team's win against Islamabad United at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Speaking at a press conference, he highlighted that winning a trophy depends on performing well on the day of the match. He also clarified that his focus is on contributing to his team rather than securing a spot in the national squad. Shakeel emphasized that a player's attitude plays a crucial role in cricket, influencing match outcomes. He specifically praised young batter Hasan Nawaz, who had to adjust his position in the team from opener to No. 3, then No. 4. Despite these changes, Nawaz handled pressure well and showcased his talent. Regarding the team's bowling, Shakeel said that each bowler understands their plan and role. He commended Mohammad



Amir for his experience and impact on the game, noting that even if Amir does not take wickets, his presence is influential. He also appreciated the overall performance of his squad, stating that every player is contributing effectively. — DNA

## Islamabad United coach discusses team challenges after loss

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad United head coach Mike Hesson admitted after their loss to Quetta Gladiators that sudden momentum swings and a slew of absent players cost his side the match. Speak-

ing at a press conference after the match, Mike Hesson pointed out that key all-rounder Shadab Khan and opener Colin Munro were unavailable, and that Dosan, plus around eleven other squad mem-

bers, missed the entire season, an ongoing challenge for the club. "Our performance today wasn't up to the mark," he said. "Our bowlers struggled with both line and length, and we allowed Quetta's batters too much freedom." He reserved special praise for Riley Rossouw, whose fluent innings kept Islamabad United under constant pressure. "Credit must go to Rossouw," Hesson added. "He gave our bowlers almost no chance to settle." — APP

## Senegal MPs to weigh graft cases against ex-ministers

DAKAR: Senegalese lawmakers will weigh on Thursday whether to allow several former ministers to face charges before a special court over accusations they embezzled funds meant for the country's fight against Covid. Senegal's National Assembly last Friday lifted parliamentary immunity for two opposition MPs caught up in the allegations while serving in the nation's last government. Proceedings of this type are rare in the west African country and cases against former ministers in the exercise of their duties must be authorised by lawmakers. Moustapha Diop was industrial development minister while Salimata Diop was the women's affairs minister under former president Macky Sall when the fund to fight the spread of Covid-19 was established in 2020-21. Both have rejected accusations they misappropriated any of the money, which totalled one trillion CFA francs (\$1.7 billion). The

funds were intended to reinforce the healthcare system, support households and the private sector and protect jobs in the west African nation during the pandemic. However, a December 2022 Court of Auditors report revealed ir-

regularities, such as 2.7 billion CFA francs in over-invoicing of rice purchased for disadvantaged households and some 42 million CFA francs for sanitiser. The new national assembly is controlled by the ruling party of President

Bassirou Diomaye Faye, elected in March last year. Faye has made the fight against corruption a policy priority and has launched investigations into the administration of Sall, who was president from 2012 for 12 years. The three

other former ministers accused are Amadou Mansour Faye, also the former president's brother-in-law, Aissatou Sophie Gladima and Ismaila Madior Fall. Several prominent figures, including artists, broadcasters, fashion designers, as well as senior officials, have been questioned during an investigation which the opposition has slammed as a "witch hunt". Parliament lifted immunity for Moustapha Diop and Salimata Diop last Friday as they were elected as lawmakers in November after Sall left office. Lawmakers are set to meet from 1000 GMT to examine the case. A three-fifths majority of the 165 lawmakers is required for the adoption of each draft resolution, with voting by secret ballot. The accused could then face questioning from the High Court's investigative committee, which will decide whether or not to commit them for trial. The court's final decision is not subject to appeal. — Agencies





## Briefs

**Syria believed to make no purchase in 100,000 T wheat tender**

HAMBURG: A Syrian state grains agency is believed to have made no purchase in an international tender seeking 100,000 metric tons of milling wheat which closed in April, European traders said on Thursday. Traders said Syria could issue a new purchase tender soon. Shipment was sought within 45 days from the contract award. Syria had bought about 100,000 tons of wheat in its previous tender reported on March 25, which was believed to be the first large purchase tender since the change of power in Syria late last year.

But the donation by Iraq of 220,000 tons of wheat to Syria was expected to be used for Syria's immediate import requirements, traders said.—APP

**German spy agency pauses 'extremist' classification for AfD party**

BERLIN: Germany's domestic spy agency BfV has paused its classification of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) as an extremist organization in what the AfD on Thursday called a partial victory for its challenge against the decision. The agency would not publicly refer to the AfD as a "confirmed right-wing extremist movement" until an administrative court in the western city of Cologne has ruled on an AfD bid for an injunction, a court statement said. The BfV's move last week to classify the far-right AfD as extremist produced sharp reactions along the fault lines of German politics, with some lawmakers calling for the AfD to be banned and the AfD casting it as an attack on democracy. It also sparked strong criticism from US President Donald Trump's administration, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio calling on the German authorities to reverse their decision. The extremist classification allows the Cologne-based spy agency to step up monitoring of the AfD, for example by recruiting informants and intercepting party communications.—APP

**Gates to give away fortune by 2045, \$200bn for world's poorest**

LONDON: Bill Gates pledged on Thursday to give away almost his entire personal wealth in the next two decades and said the world's poorest would receive some \$200 billion via his foundation at a time when governments worldwide are slashing international aid. The 69-year-old billionaire Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist said he was speeding up plans to divest his fortune and close the Gates Foundation on Dec. 31, 2045. "People will say a lot of things about me when I die, but I am determined that 'he died rich' will not be one of them," Gates wrote in a post on his website. "There are too many urgent problems to solve for me to hold onto resources that could be used to help people." In an implicit rebuke to President Donald Trump's slashing of aid from the world's biggest donor the United States, Gates' statement said he wanted to help stop newborn babies, children and mothers dying of preventable causes, end diseases like polio, malaria and measles, and reduce poverty. "It's unclear whether the world's richest countries will continue to stand up for its poorest people," he added, noting cuts from major donors also including the UK and France. Gates said that despite the foundation's deep pockets, progress would not be possible without government support. He praised the response to aid cuts in Africa, where some governments have reallocated budgets, but said that as an example polio would not be eradicated without US funding.—APP

# SAPM assures KCCI to resolve business community's issues

"The goal is to resolve all the issues that are hindering the growth of our industries," said Haroon. Reaffirming the PM's vision, the SAPM underscored the urgency of boosting industrial growth across Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday held a virtual meeting with the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) to discuss and resolve the city's business issues. The meeting aimed to address several pressing issues concerning Karachi's industrial sector, including electricity supply, water provision, rising gas levies, tax collection problems, and the challenges faced by exporters, said a news release. During the discussion, Haroon Akhtar Khan stressed the formation of committees to tackle these issues, with the KCCI playing a significant role in these initiatives. These committees have substitutes on the Prime Minister's directives to ensure a focused and systematic approach to resolving the concerns of local chambers and industrialists. "The goal is to resolve all the issues that are hindering the growth of our industries," said Haroon. Reaffirming the PM's vision, the SAPM underscored the urgency of boosting industrial growth across Pakistan. He highlighted that the ongoing tariff war presents a unique opportunity for Pakistani industries to compete globally. "The Prime Minister has directed us to revive local industries and significantly enhance exports," he added. A significant update came from the Special Assistant, who



reported that due to the Prime Minister's efforts, the policy rate has been reduced to 11%, a move expected to ease the financial burden on businesses. However, Sha-

wal Malik from KCCI pointed out a critical challenge—the aging and deteriorating electricity infrastructure in Karachi, which is leading to increased production costs for local

businesses. Despite these challenges, Haroon reassured the KCCI that the government is fully committed to resolving these issues and supporting Karachi's

industrial sector. This meeting marks a crucial step toward the government's ongoing efforts to ensure the growth and competitiveness of Pakistani industries.

## Lebanon's tourism hopes rise as ties with Arab Gulf states warm

BEIRUT: At the boutique hotel of Albergo in Achrafieh, Beirut, a large table of Gulf citizens sat having breakfast last week as a waitress attended to them. This once-common sight had become a rarity in recent years, making the moment particularly significant for the staff. "We haven't seen this in years," the waitress told Arab News. "We are expecting more reservations to come through and more Gulf citizens to be staying with us this summer." For the first time in many years, Lebanese hoteliers, restaurant and shop owners and retailers are hoping for a successful tourism comeback. The latest piece of good news came when the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced last Sunday that the ban on Emirati citizens traveling to Lebanon would be lifted from May 7. Once a favored summer destination hub for Gulf and neighboring Arabs, Lebanon had been struck by one misfortune after another since the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war. Despite a relatively calm decade afterward, the 2020 port explosion followed by a devastating economic collapse and the growing power of Iran-backed Hezbollah had left the country in tatters. Rampant corruption and Hezbollah's powerful presence soured the once warm Lebanese-Gulf relations. In 2021, both Saudi and Emirati citizens were banned from traveling to the country after a Lebanese minister criticized Arab Gulf intervention on the side of the UN-backed Yemen government against the Houthis, another Iran-backed militia. The Kingdom also halted all its fruit and vegetable imports from Lebanon in the same year after shipments were found to be carrying the illicit Captagon drug smuggled inside. With the devastating blows suffered by Hezbollah and allied militant groups last year during their war with Israel, the tide appears to be turning. The deaths of Hassan Nasrallah and other important Hezbollah figures and a stunning pager attack, which left thousands of its fighters and supporters immobile if not dead, have significantly weakened the once-powerful militia that had Lebanon in a prolonged chokehold. The new Lebanese government, headed by President Joseph Aoun, seems determined to usher the country into a new era, going as far as removing flags and symbols of the militant group. Although the fate of international aid still hangs in the balance, structural and economic changes are expected of the new Lebanese government, alongside the full disarmament of Hezbollah. According to the World Bank, during the 14-month Israeli-Hezbollah war that started shortly after the events of October 7, 2023, and the war in Gaza, the estimated damage and economic loss in Lebanon stands at \$14 billion, with the country needing \$11 billion for reconstruction. Arab world policies, particularly from the Arab Gulf states, seem to be softening. In March, Saudi Arabia announced it would review "obstacles" to resuming Lebanese imports and ending the ban on its citizens visiting Lebanon. This announcement came after President Aoun met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh on his first trip abroad since taking office in January. The UAE's loosening of restrictions on travel to Lebanon followed a meeting between President Aoun and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi last week. "This decision confirms the return of confidence in Lebanon and opens the door to developing the historical ties that unite the two countries," Laura Al-Khazen Lahoud, Lebanon's minister of tourism, said. She expressed hope that "the remaining Gulf Cooperation Council countries will follow the UAE's step the soonest possible, so that Lebanon can once again become a destination for its Arab brothers and a center for tourism and cultural activity in the region."—DNA

## King Charles leads UK service to mark end of WWII

LONDON: King Charles III on Thursday joined veterans and other members of the royal family at London's Westminster Abbey for a service to mark 80 years since the end of World War II. Arriving at the abbey, Charles and his eldest son Prince William laid wreaths at the church's tomb of the unknown warrior. The King's message on the wreath read simply: "We will never forget" and was signed Charles R. William's message, which was signed "William" and "Catherine," added: "For those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Second World War. We will remember them." This year's commemorations have had an extra poignancy due to the great age of the dwindling numbers of surviving veterans. Wartime prime minister Winston Churchill's 10-year-old great-grandson Alexander lit a candle of peace during the service, which was preceded by a nationwide two-minute silence. "It feels really amazing that I can represent my family and also the younger generation to know and remember everyone involved in World War II," the younger Churchill said. Other younger members of the congregation handed out white roses to veterans. Charles, who is undergoing treatment for an unspecified cancer, was also accompanied by Queen Camilla, William's wife Princess Catherine, also known as Kate, and other senior members of the royal family. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and other politicians and dignitaries also attended. Eighty years ago on May 8, 1945, central London was thronged with huge crowds celebrating the end of the war. In a radio address to the nation Churchill announced that the day would be "Victory in Europe Day." He added: "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing," despite the conflict with Japan not yet having ended. Later that day the crowds even included the late Queen Elizabeth II, then a 19-year-old princess, and her younger sister Margaret, who were allowed to leave Buckingham Palace and join the jubilant crowds incognito.—APP

## Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia hold meeting on defense coop

DHAKA: Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh held the first meeting of their Joint Committee on Defense Cooperation, as Dhaka seeks to strengthen its security ties with the Kingdom. Maj. Gen. Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Khalidi, assistant chief of training and development of the Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia, was in Dhaka to lead a Saudi delegation for the three-day talks, which concluded on Thursday. The Bangladeshi side was led by Lt. Gen. S.M. Kamrul Hassan, principal staff officer of Bangladesh's Armed Forces Division during the discussion. "This is ... the first time that Bangladesh held a Joint Committee Defense Cooperation meeting with Saudi Arabia," Lt. Colonel Sami-Ud-Dowla Chowdhury, director of Bangladeshi military's media wing ISPR, told Arab News. "Both countries have signed a protocol on Thursday aimed at proceeding further with the discussions held on Tuesday in Dhaka." The Saudi-Bangladesh defense cooperation covers several areas, including joint exercises, arms procurement, indigenous production capability and expertise sharing, Chowdhury said. "With this, Bangladesh developed a defense-to-defense relation with one of our very trusted friends, Saudi Arabia. And definitely, it will open up a new horizon for increased defence cooperation.—APP

## Romania contributes 23 percent of agricultural workforce in EU

BUCHAREST: Romania is one of the most important countries in the European agricultural sector, considering that 23% of the total agricultural workforce in the EU, 1.77 million jobs, is concentrated here - the largest share in the Union, according to a recently launched profile report. Romania owns approximately a third of all farms in the EU, although 90% of them are under five hectares, meaning they are subsistence farms. Impact Hub Bucharest (EIT Food representative in Romania), in partnership with Startarium, launched the fourth edition of the report on Romanian AgriFood startups, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the ecosystem: 'Romanian AgriFood Startups Overview Report 2024.' The initiative is part of the series of preparatory events within the Empowering Women in AgriFood (EWA), dedicated to female entrepreneurs and projects created by them in the agrifood field. Empowering Women in AgriFood is an accelerator programme developed by EIT Food, the world's largest food innovation community. EIT Food is supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union. According to the same report, agriculture continues to be a key sector for both the Romanian and European Union economies, despite a constantly decreasing contribution to GDP and an increasingly low profitability. The research shows that Romania is one of the most important countries in the European agricultural sector, considering that 23% of the total agricultural workforce in the EU is concentrated here (1.77 million jobs - the highest share in the Union). Also, 44.3% of farmers are over 65 years old, which highlights an acute problem regarding the aging of the workforce. An interesting fact revealed in the analysis is the percentage of women working in agriculture in Romania, 19% in 2021, the highest in the EU, the abovementioned document states. In 2023, when the available data was collected, there were 73 FoodTech and AgriTech startups in Romania. During 2018-2023, there were 18 rounds of financing attracted, of which 14 million euros for the FoodTech sector and four rounds worth 1.6 million euros for the AgriTech sector. In addition, according to the report, the level of digitalisation in Romanian farms is low, although the use of advanced technologies such as sensors, drones, satellite imaging or artificial intelligence would significantly increase the profitability of the sector.—Agencies

## PM's Coordinator, Kazakh envoy discuss trade, connectivity, regional coop

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, called on Rana Ishaan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce, in Islamabad Thursday to discuss avenues for strengthening economic ties to enhance regional cooperation between the two countries. During the meeting, both sides emphasized the importance of enhancing bilateral trade and regional connectivity, said a press release issued here. Rana Ishaan Afzal Khan underscored Pakistan's commitment to transforming its historically cordial relations with Kazakhstan into a comprehensive economic partnership, for the mutual benefit of both nations. The Ambassador highlighted that total trade between the two countries reached \$172.5 million in 2023-24, with Pakistan's exports to Kazakhstan accounting for \$170.82 million.

He also briefed the Coordinator about the upcoming Kazakhstan Business Forum scheduled for the end of June, and invited Pakistani stakeholders to actively participate. Amba-

sador Kistafin further proposed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and its counterpart agency in

Kazakhstan to institutionalize trade cooperation and facilitate greater interaction between the business communities. Matters related to the finalization of a Transit Trade Agreement and

visa facilitation for business delegates were also discussed. Rana Ishaan Afzal Khan welcomed the initiatives and expressed Pakistan's readiness to advance mutual trade interests and support regional economic integration, especially in the context of Central Asia's access to global markets through Pakistan. He also acknowledged the positive outcomes of recent engagements, including the 13th session of the Pakistan-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) and the Pak-Kazakhstan Business Forum held in Karachi last month, where over 330 companies from both sides participated in B2B meetings and industrial visits. "The government is committed to providing a supportive environment for trade and investment with Kazakhstan and its Central Asian neighbors," he affirmed.



## Re-elected Australian premier's new Cabinet to be sworn in next week

ANKARA: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his Cabinet will be sworn in early next week, following his Labor Party's landslide election victory. In an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Wednesday night, Albanese said he would spend the weekend making decisions on the composition of his Cabinet members and portfolios. The Labor Caucus, which comprises all the party's elected members of the parliament, is set to meet in the capital, Canberra, on Friday to vote on the Cabinet members, after which Albanese will allocate portfolios next Tuesday. The Labor Party has so far won 89 of the 150 seats in the lower house, 13 more than the required 76 seats to form the government with a simple majority. Labor candidates are also leading the vote count in four of the 11 seats still up for grabs. The party is also expected to hold between 27 and 30 of the 76 seats in the upper house of the parliament—the Senate.

## Iran rejects claims of involvement in plot against Israeli embassy in London

TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi rejected on Thursday allegations his government was involved in a plot to target the Israeli embassy in London, following the arrest of seven Iranian nationals. British police said seven Iranian nationals were arrested on suspicion of "terrorism offences" in separate operations — three on Saturday and four on Sunday. Britain's interior minister Yvette Cooper said the arrests came amid heightened concerns about Iranian activities. The Times newspaper reported that the arrests followed an alleged plot to target the Israeli embassy in London, but officials have not commented. "Iran in no uncertain terms categorically rejects any involvement in such actions and confirms that we have not been informed of any allegations via proper diplomatic channels," said Araghchi in a post on X. "Iran has urged the UK to engage so that we may assist any probe into credible allegations," he added, noting that the "timing and lack of engagement suggest that something is amiss," without elaborating. Iran has called for immediate clarification on the arrests and for consular access to the detainees.—APP

## Emirates airline group announces record \$6.2b gross profit

DUBAI: Dubai's Emirates Group, which includes the Middle East's biggest airline, announced on Thursday gross annual profit of \$6.2 billion, its third record in three years. The 18 percent rise in profit, based on strong customer demand, slimmed to \$5.6 billion after the UAE's recently introduced corporate tax, which was applied for a full financial year for the first time. "The Emirates Group has raised the bar to set new records for profit, revenue and cash assets," chairman Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said in a statement. The group invested \$3.8 billion in new aircraft, infrastructure and technology "to support its growth plans", the statement said. Its workforce grew by 9 percent to an unprecedented 121,223 employees. The group declared a \$1.6 billion dividend to its owner, the Investment Corporation of Dubai (ICD). Emirates airline, excluding the group's other businesses, posted a record \$5.8 billion pre-tax profit, up 20 percent from the year before. Its revenue grew by 6 percent, reaching \$34.9 billion. Emirates' ground services arm Dnata also boasted a record pre-tax profit of \$430 million, up 2 percent from last year. State-owned Emirates Group operates the world's largest long-haul carrier.—APWW



## Briefs

## Fed sees rising risks to economy as it leaves rates unchanged

With so much unsettled about what Trump will decide "scope, scale of those effects very uncertain," says Powell



## CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve held interest rates steady on Wednesday but said the risks of higher inflation and unemployment had risen, further clouding the US economic outlook as its policymakers grapple with the impact of President Donald Trump's tariffs. At this point, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said, it isn't clear if the economy will continue its steady pace of growth, or wilt under mounting uncertainty and a possible coming spike in inflation. With so much unsettled about what Trump will ultimately decide and what of that survives possible court and political battles, "the scope, the scale, the persistence of those effects are very, very uncertain," Powell said in a press conference at the end of a two-day policy meeting. "So it's not at all clear what the appropriate response for monetary policy is at this time ... It's really not at all clear what it is we should do." "I don't think we can say which way this will shake out." It was Powell's subtle way of saying the US central bank, a key actor in shaping the economy, was effectively sidelined until Trump's sweeping policy agenda takes full effect.

## Dozens of Columbia University students arrested

## DNA

LONDON: Pro-Palestinian protesters are loaded into NYPD buses after being detained by public safety officers, following a protest at Butler Library on the campus of Columbia University in New York, US May 7, 2025. — Reuters Police arrested dozens of Columbia University students who seized part of the school's main library on Wednesday in one of the biggest pro-Palestinian demonstrations on campus since last year's wave of protests against Israel's war in Gaza. At least 40 to 50 students, their hands cuffed with plastic zip-ties, were seen being loaded into New York Police Department vans and buses outside Butler Library as NYPD officers swept through the six-story building to round up other protesters who refused to leave.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar briefing the heads of missions about the latest Indian escalation. The envoys were told that Pakistan reserves the right to respond at a time and place of its own choosing. — DNA

## Limited war may not be limited when two nuclear powers clash

Ambassador Abdul Basit, the former High Commissioner to India, emphasized that regional connectivity cannot be realized unless conflicting bilateral issues, especially those with India, are addressed. He called for a thorough and honest analysis of Indian strategic thinking to help create realistic and forward-looking policy responses

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: At a Regional Dialogue 2025, hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), former Defence Minister Engr. Khurram Dastgir warned about the potential escalation between the two nuclear powers. His warning came at a time when two nuclear powers were engaged in a military conflict following the tragic event of Pahalgam. Ambassador Abdul Basit, the former High Commissioner to India, emphasized that regional connectivity cannot be realized unless conflicting bilateral issues, especially those with India, are addressed. He called for a thorough and

honest analysis of Indian strategic thinking to help create realistic and forward-looking policy responses. Highlighting the Kashmir dispute, he warned that the issue is becoming increasingly complex and continues to threaten regional peace and stability. Veteran journalist and DAWN anchor Ms. Arifa Noor noted that Pakistan's approach towards India has often been tactical rather than strategic. She argued that India's anti-Pakistan rhetoric is rooted in broader anti-Muslim narratives. She also criticized Pakistan's media landscape for failing to create space for active foreign policy debates and for not engaging Indian critics of the Modi government, which weakens Pakistan's counter-narrative.

Senator Javed Jabbar, a former Information Minister, emphasized the significant role of the Indian military in shaping New Delhi's foreign policy. He warned that "no diplomatic overture or troop movement occurs without military approval." Defending Track-II diplomacy, he stated, "It is not a betrayal; it is a patriotic platform where dedicated nationalists engage to prevent conflict and preserve dialogue." However, he also asserted that the "virus of Hindutva has infected the Indian psyche," and even if the Congress party were to win, he believes there wouldn't be much change. Mr. Hamid Mir, a senior anchorperson at GEO News, rejected the approach of

track two diplomacy with India, calling it a deceptive strategy. He argued that Pakistan's survival, rather than just the issue of Kashmir, is central to India's long-term strategic posture, which he linked to the ideological pursuit of 'Akhand Bharat.' Mr. Hamid emphasized that all policies toward India should be based on constitutional principles and supported by full parliamentary consensus. Panelists concluded that a shift in Pakistan's foreign policy from reactive to proactive was essential, highlighting the need for closer alignment among policymakers, media, and civil society to protect national sovereignty, ensure regional stability, and enhance international credibility.

## FM meets with Global CEO of Standard Chartered Bank

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday held a meeting with Group Chief Executive Officer of Standard Chartered Bank Bill Winters, in London. The meeting underscored the strong and enduring partnership between the government of Pakistan and Standard Chartered Bank in advancing Pakistan's economic development agenda, said a news release. The minister expressed his deep appreciation for the longstanding and vital support provided by Standard Chartered Bank to Pakistan's macroeconomic reform efforts. He acknowledged the Bank's instrumental role in facilitating sustainable economic development and its continued engagement with key financial initiatives in the country. Aurangzeb also reviewed the current pipeline of financial support and reaffirmed the government's commitment to ongoing reform measures aimed at ensuring macroeconomic stability and fostering inclusive growth. He lauded Standard Chartered's confidence in Pakistan's economic trajectory and its contributions to critical sectors of the economy. Bill Winters commended the progress being made by Pakistan on macroeconomic reforms and the recent signs of stabilization within the economy. He reiterated Standard Chartered Bank's support for Pakistan's financial and economic initiatives, emphasizing the Bank's long-term commitment to the country's development goals. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides reaffirming their intention to further strengthen collaboration and support shared objectives for Pakistan's economic prosperity. — DNA

## Flight operations resume at Lahore, Islamabad and Sialkot airports

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) on Thursday announced that flight operations have resumed at the Lahore, Islamabad, and Sialkot airports. Passengers are advised to stay in contact with their respective airlines for the latest information regarding their flights, the PAA added. However, there was no clarity about Karachi's situation. The PAA earlier suspended flight operations at Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and Sialkot airports, amid the current tension between Pakistan and India. The PAA first announced closure of the airports till 12pm today, then the period of closure was extended till 6pm. According to the PAA, flight operations were temporarily suspended due to operational reasons. The authority took the decision amid heightened threats of India's forces trespassing in the Pakistani airspace. Furthermore, several, mostly Asian airlines, announced that they were cancelling and rerouting some

flights following Indian strikes on Pakistan's territory, escalating the crisis between the nuclear-armed neighbours. Images from flight tracking websites after the attack showed a long line of airlines passing over Oman, UAE and Kuwait, raising the possibility of airspace congestion. Pakistani authorities said 57 international flights were operating in Pakistan's airspace when India struck. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's office said in a statement that India's action "caused grave danger to commercial airlines" belonging to Gulf countries and "endangered lives." Earlier on Wednesday night, the PAA confirmed that all the airports were functioning normally across the country after the national airspace was closed for a few hours Pakistan had suspended flight operations at major airports following India's attack inside the country on Tuesday-Wednesday night. Pakistan armed forces, in response to Indian aggression, shot down five IAF jets, a combat drone, and destroyed brigade headquarters after India carried out missile strikes in cities of Punjab and Azad Kashmir.

## Pak hails appointment of top Spanish diplomat

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan on Thursday welcomed the appointment of Miguel Angel Moratinos, a veteran Spanish diplomat, as the UN Special Envoy to combat Islamophobia amid a rising tide of anti-Muslim hate in several parts of the world. "This appointment is a major milestone in the OIC's efforts to combat Islamophobia and promote tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence," Ambassador Asim Ift-

ikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said in a statement. "Together, we stand against faith-based hatred and discrimination", the Pakistani envoy said, adding that Moratinos's appointment under UN General Assembly resolution 78/264 is "timely and essential." Pakistan, he said, stands ready to support the mandate of the envoy to foster mutual understanding and peace. On behalf of the OIC, Pakistan had piloted the resolution that recognizes the urgent need to counter the growing Islamophobia and develop a global consensus to curb the menace. In this regard, the resolution sought the appointment of a Special Envoy to deal with it.

## Initial gains wiped out as security concerns grip PSX

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Initial optimism faded on Thursday as the capital market witnessed a sharp intraday reversal, with investors turning risk-averse amid signs that the security situation between Pakistan and India could worsen before stabilising. The wave of panic selling drove the market sharply lower, triggering a regulatory circuit-breaker. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index had earlier rallied to an intraday high of 111,881.02 points, up 1,872.00 points, or 1.70%, from the previous close of 110,009.02. However, the index nosedived to a low of 101,598.90 points, down 8,410.12 points, or -7.64%, as investors rushed to exit positions. The broader KSE-30 Index dropped more than 5% from its previous close, triggering a market-wide halt at 12:34:15pm under PSX Regulations.

## North Korea fires flurry of ballistic missiles

SEOUL: North Korea fired multiple types of short-range ballistic missiles Thursday, South Korea's military said, around a week after leader Kim Jong Un tested a new weapons system for his latest warship. Seoul's military said it had "detected the launch of various types of short-range ballistic missiles," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. The missiles were "fired from the Wonsan area of North Korea into the East Sea between approximately 08:10 and 09:20 today (from 2310 GMT Wednesday)," they added, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan. — Agencies

## Access to jailed Istanbul mayor's X account blocked

ISTANBUL: Turkish authorities on Thursday blocked access to the social media account of Istanbul's jailed opposition mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, who has nearly 10 million followers on X. Imamoglu, who was detained on March 19 on corruption charges he strongly denies, is seen as the biggest rival to longtime leader President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The arrest could stop Imamoglu taking part in presidential elections scheduled for 2028. It was not possible to access to his X account on Thursday morning. A message read: "Account Withheld - @ekrem\_imamoglu has been withheld in TR (Turkey) in response to a legal demand." A spokesperson for the Istanbul municipality confirmed access to the account was blocked, without giving further details. Watchdog group EngelliWeb, which reports Internet censorship and blocked web sites in Turkey, said on X that access to Imamoglu's account had been blocked on national security grounds. The account "has been blocked under Article 8/A of Law No. 5651, on the grounds of protecting national security and public order, and has been made invisible in Turkey by X", it said. Yaman Akdeniz, a law professor and head of Turkey's Freedom of Expression Association (IFOD), said the details of the blocking order had not been revealed yet, but added: "Through our EngelliWeb project we detected the existence of an article 8/A

order." "This means that the arbitrary order was issued to protect national security and public order. Unfortunately, I am not surprised as hundreds of accounts have been subject to such orders since Imamoglu's arrest," he told AFP. "X has officially become the long arm of the Turkish law enforcement agencies," he said. Lawyer Gonenc Gurdaknak said he would object to the court order. "Regarding the court decision imposing an access restriction on Mr Ekrem Imamoglu's account on X, upon X's request and in my capacity as X's independent attorney, I will be filing an objection application this morning at the relevant court, comprehensively presenting all legal grounds for our objections on this matter," he said on his social media account. In a show of solidarity with Imamoglu, some X users replaced their profile pictures with the Istanbul mayor's. On his last message on X, Imamoglu, who is jailed in Silivri prison on the outskirts of Istanbul, had urged his supporters to join a protest rally held Wednesday, which was called by his CHP party. Tens of thousands of people took part in the Istanbul rally, one of the biggest in recent weeks. In the days after Imamoglu's arrest, tens of thousands of people took part in near-daily protests. But numbers had dwindled in recent weeks. Wednesday's protest was held outside Istanbul University, which had stripped Imamoglu of his degree the day before his arrest. — Agencies

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