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Turkish President Erdogan appreciates Pak policy of dialogue

Detailed News On Page-0

Kremlin blasts potential EU deployment

Detailed News On Page-07



Shoaib Malik breaks his silence at last

Detailed News On Page-06



Trump to Gulf leaders

Iran must cease support of groups

Trump's comments on Iran came after he met Wednesday with Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, a face-to-face engagement with the onetime insurgent leader. Qatar signs \$ 200 billion deal with US

CENTRELINE REPORT

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia: President Donald Trump told Gulf leaders on Wednesday that he urgently wants "to make a deal" with Iran to wind down its nuclear program but that Tehran must end its support of proxy groups throughout the region as part of any potential agreement. Iran "must stop sponsoring terror, halt its bloody proxy wars, and permanently and verifiably cease pursuit of nuclear weapons," Trump said in remarks at a meeting of leaders from the Gulf Cooperation Council hosted by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Saudi capital. "They cannot have a nuclear weapon." The US and Iran have engaged in four rounds of talks since early last month focused on Iran's nuclear program. Trump has repeatedly said he believes brokering a deal is possible, but that the window is closing. The president's strongly worded push on Iran to cease support of Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen come as its proxy network has faced significant setbacks in the 19 months since Hamas launched its Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

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Iran likely to hold nuclear talks with Europeans

TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat said Wednesday a new round of talks on his country's nuclear programme with Britain, France and Germany was likely to be held in Turkey later this week. "The next round, at the level of deputy foreign ministers, I think, is scheduled to be held in Istanbul on Friday," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters in Tehran. French diplomatic sources also told AFP the meeting would take place in the Turkish city on Friday, adding it would be held at the level of political directors. There was still no word from London or Berlin on the meeting, which was originally slated for earlier this month but postponed. Iran has held several discreet meetings on the nuclear issue with the three European nations since late last year – most recently in February in Geneva – ahead of indirect negotiations with Washington that began on April 12. "While we continue the dialogue with the United States, we are also ready to talk with the Europeans," Araghchi said. "Unfortunately, the Europeans themselves have become somewhat isolated in these negotiations with their own policies," he added, without elaborating. "We do not want such a situation and that's why we have continued our negotiations" with them, he said. Friday's expected meeting follows a round of Oman-mediated talks between Tehran and Washington on Sunday. The four rounds of US-Iran talks were the highest-level contact in years between the long-time foes, since US President Donald Trump in 2018 abandoned the 2015 nuclear accord with world powers. – APP

Easing of tensions

Pakistan, India exchange one prisoner each

Govt has directed all provinces, including Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), to compile a comprehensive report on the damage caused by recent Indian attacks

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan and India on Wednesday exchanged one prisoner each at the Wagah-Attari border post, security sources said. According to the sources, Indian Border Security Force (BSF) personnel Pranam Kumar Shah was handed over to Indian authorities by Pakistani officials. In return, Punjab Rangers' Mohammadullah was handed over to Pakistani authorities. The exchange was carried out at the Wagah-Attari post as confirmed by security sources. It is worth noting that following the ceasefire understanding between the two countries, the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs)

Continued on Page 06

Two more soldiers embrace shahadat

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Indian Armed Forces blatant and cowardly aggression which was launched on the night of 6-7 May 2025, targeted innocent civilians, including women, children, and the elderly. While defending the motherland with exemplary courage and unwavering resolve, 2 more valiant sons of the soil embraced shahadat today who were hospitalised, bringing the

Continued on Page 06



SIALKOT: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif salutes valiant soldiers who thwarted Indian aggression with full force and faith, during his visit to Pasrur Cantonment, on Wednesday. Army Chief General Asim Munir and Air Chief Zaheer Babar also accompanied the prime minister. – DNA

Post-war scenario

Nation proud of its braved armed forces, says PM

PM Shehbaz Sharif visits frontline areas of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos in Pasrur

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday paid a visit to the frontline areas of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos during the ongoing Maarka-e-Haq (Battle for Truth), reaffirming his support and solidarity with the armed forces of Pakistan. During his visit to the Pasrur Garrison near Sialkot, the prime minister met with officers and soldiers actively participating in the military operation, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. The PM praised their unwavering dedication and valor in defending the nation's sovereignty. The prime minister was flanked by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad

Continued on Page 06

PM talks to UAE President

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, this evening. During their warm and cordial conversation, the Prime Minister conveyed profound gratitude for UAE's diplomatic efforts and constructive role to defuse the recent crisis in South Asia.

Continued on Page 06

Trade war climbdown

China, United States slash sweeping tariffs

Washington, Beijing agree to drastically lower skyhigh tariffs in deal that emerged from pivotal talks

DNA

BEIJING: The United States and China slashed sweeping tariffs on each others' goods for 90 days on Wednesday, after a temporary ceasefire in a brutal trade war that roiled global markets and international

supply chains. Washington and Beijing agreed to drastically lower skyhigh tariffs in a deal that emerged from pivotal talks at the weekend in Geneva. US President Donald Trump said Washington now had the blueprint for a "very, very strong"

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Imran Khan Telecon with sons ordered

FIAZ CH.

ISLAMABAD: A special court in Islamabad on Tuesday instructed the Adiala Jail authorities to allow PTI founder Imran Khan to hold a telephone conversation with his sons abroad and also be allowed a medical check-up by his personal physician. Last month, Special Judge Central Shahrulh Arjumand approved two petitions filed on behalf of Imran related to the requests. The court had sought a response from Adiala authorities to provide the facilities. Today, the judge heard a request by the prison authorities against the court order and dismissed it.



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Bangladeshi envoy urges stronger trade, cultural ties with Pakistan

After visiting Lahore Press Club, he was talking to the media on the current scenarios of the region and emphasised improving air linkages and shipping connections between Pakistan and Bangladesh to enhance bilateral trade as well as strengthening relations

DNA

LAHORE: Bangladeshi High Commissioner to Pakistan Muhammad Iqbal Hussain Khan on Wednesday called for increasing cooperation in the areas of trade, economy, culture, health, education and people-to-people linkages for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

After visiting Lahore Press Club, he was talking to the media on the current scenarios of the region and emphasised improving air linkages and shipping connections between Pakistan and Bangladesh to enhance bilateral trade as well as strengthening relations. He said there was great potential to enhance education, health, agriculture and cultural cooperation between the two brotherly countries. He called for making efforts to further increase people-to-people and cultural exchanges to bring the two countries closer.

The HC said that Bangladesh greatly valued its relations with Pakistan,

which were based on common faith, shared history and cultural similarities. He highlighted the potential for increasing relations in the area of health tourism. He informed that Bangladeshi students were also interested in getting higher education from Pakistani universities. He said that people of both the countries are facing a challenge of direct flight, but he informed media that some of private companies are working on starting direct flights between Pakistan and Bangladesh, and soon the people of both countries would listen positive news. The high commissioner also highlighted the growing trade and diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan, stating that these ties would continue to grow stronger. In his remarks, the envoy also highlighted the need for increased cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh in various fields, including trade, commerce and culture. He expressed his optimism about the future of bilateral relations, citing the growing demand for direct flights between the two

countries. He emphasised the long-standing and friendly relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh and noted that both the countries were on a steady path of development and encouraged mutual investment in various sectors, particularly trade and industry. To a question about revival of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), he said that it should be revived as soon as possible and all the country should get benefits of roads, waters, trade opportunities, tourism, industry and other sectors of other nations of south Asia. To another query, Iqbal said that Bangladesh is never in favour of tensions on borders, issues should be resolved through dialogue.

Mr Khan stated his delight in visiting Lahore, highlighting its rich cultural heritage and economic potential.

Lahore Press Club President Arshad Ansari, General Secretary Zahid Abid and other office-bearers were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Fahadov called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The Prime Minister thanked the Azerbaijani leadership for supporting Pakistan. — DNA

Ayaz Sadiq salutes war heroes

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Wednesday visited the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Rawalpindi to meet with soldiers and civilians injured during the recent escalations between Pakistan and India. During his visit, the Speaker lauded the bravery and unwavering resolve of the armed forces in defending Pakistan's territorial integrity and foiling the enemy's nefarious designs. He lauded the sacrifices made by the nation's defenders and innocent civilians in the face of aggression. The speakers strongly condemned the unprovoked attacks by the Indian army, which resulted in the martyrdom of innocent civilians, including women and children. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to peace while affirming the country's right to defend its sovereignty. The speaker conveyed his heartfelt prayers for the swift recovery of the injured soldiers and civilians, assuring them of the nation's unwavering support and gratitude.

Million-rupees wroth goods saved

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Goods worth millions of rupees were saved as a fire suddenly erupted in a container was timely extinguished by rescue officials here on Wednesday. According to a Rescue 1122 spokesman, the incident took place on Dera's bypass when a container carrying various goods, tar, threads, tea leaves, and other valuable items coming from Karachi suddenly caught fire. After receiving information, Rescue 1122 teams swiftly reached the scene and immediately began firefighting operations. He said two fire vehicles from Rescue 1122 Station 11 responded promptly and used foam and water to combat the blaze. After two hours of continuous effort, the firefighters successfully brought the fire under control and thus saved the trailer and goods worth millions of rupees were saved.—APP

Meeting held to discuss ADP projects for Dera region

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: A meeting was held on Wednesday with Commissioner Zafar ul Islam in the chair to review ongoing development projects and discuss development schemes for the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the fiscal year 2025-26. The meeting was attended by deputy commissioners from all districts of the division along with representatives and officials from various departments including health, education, agriculture, livestock, social welfare, Rescue 1122, forests, and others. During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given on the progress of ongoing projects, existing challenges, and the effective utilization of available resources. Commissioner Zafar-ul-I directed the departments to ensure timely completion of ongoing development projects while maintaining transparency and quality. He said that priority should be given to improvements in education, healthcare, agriculture, irrigation, and road infrastructure in the upcoming development program. The departments were directed to submit lists of near-completion projects to ensure

the provision of necessary funds and their removal from the ADP list upon completion. The Commissioner stress that any obstacles hampering the development process must be reported and resolved immediately. He also instructed that issues related to law and order should be addressed in coordination with relevant authorities. Commissioner Zafar-ul-Islam urged all departments to strengthen interdepartmental coordination and cooperation to prioritize public-interest projects and eliminate hurdles in the development process without delay.—APP

schemes located on Main Ferozepur Road, Ahlu Road and Al-Jannat Road. Action was taken against 14 unauthorized housing schemes and land subdivisions, including Grand Avenue, Sun City, New Abadi Kahna, Rehan Garden, Shahzad Garden Villas, Bao Munir Town, Ahmed City and Al-Jannat Homes. Further enforcement was done in New Abadi Shahzada Village, Nai Abadi Ahlu Jhuggian, Rizwan Garden, Malkhan Wali Haveli, Waseem Colony and Green Valley. LDA teams demolished illegal roads, boundary walls, sewerage systems and other infrastructure, while sealing the site offices of these unauthorized schemes. The crackdown was overseen by the Chief Metropolitan Planner and carried out with the support of the LDA Enforcement Squad and Punjab Police.—APP

LDA intensifies crackdown on illegal properties

LAHORE: The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) has ramped up enforcement operations against illegal commercial properties and unauthorized housing schemes in its controlled areas, sealing 95 properties besides demolishing illegal structures. The LDA Town Planning Wing launched a large-scale operation in key city zones including Gulberg, New Garden Town, Shadman, Shah Jamal, New Muslim Town, UBD Main Canal Road and Sabzazar. As a result of these actions, 95 properties were sealed for violations such as illegal commercial usage and non-payment of commercial conversion fees. According

to LDA officials, 28 properties in Gulberg and New Garden Town were sealed, while 35 properties were targeted in Shadman, Shah Jamal, UBD Canal Road and New Muslim Town. Additionally, 32 properties were sealed in Sabzazar during a revenue recovery drive. The sealed properties include private schools, clinics, bakeries, grocery stores, restaurants, food points, workshops, shops and offices. The operation was conducted under the supervision of Chief Town Planner Asad Uz Zaman. In a parallel effort, the Directorate of Metropolitan Planning (Zone IV) carried out a comprehensive operation against illegal housing

ICC shows solidarity with Armed Forces

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Citizens Committee (ICC) in a resolution has expressed complete solidarity with the Nation and the Armed Forces Pakistan. The resolution was adopted by its Executive body, presided over by President, Syed M. Siddiq Hasan, here on Wednesday. It was passed in response to the unprovoked and cowardly attacks by India on Pakistani civilians on the night of 6th & 7th May, 2025. The resolution stated, "We strongly condemn the Indian aggression that targeted innocent civilians, mosques, and airports at 9 different locations, resulting in the loss of precious lives of children, women, and citizens. We express our deepest gratitude and pride to the Pakistan Army, Air Force, and Navy for their bravery and professionalism in defending our nation. Specifically: We commend the Pakistan Air Force for successfully shooting down Indian drones with minimal casualties. We salute the bravery of our pilots who downed 6 Indian fighter jets, including 3 state-of-the-art Rafale jets. We appreciate the strategic response on May 10, where our forces destroyed S-400 systems and six key locations with precision-guided missiles. We stand in solidarity with our armed forces and express our unwavering support for their efforts in keeping Pakistan safe and secure. This resolution is a testament to our unwavering confidence in the capabilities and sacrifices of our armed forces. We salute their bravery and dedication to defending our nation." It was adopted unanimously, reflecting our collective resolve and unflinching loyalty and commitment to stand behind our armed forces and our nation in these challenging times.—DNA

Steps underway to upgrade Sukkur Airport

ISLAMABAD : The National Assembly was informed on Wednesday that steps are being taken to upgrade Sukkur Airport to international standards, including improvements to its runway. Responding to a question during the National Assembly's question hour, Parliamentary Secretary for Aviation Zeb Jaffar stated that efforts are in progress to develop Sukkur into an international airport. She said Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), being a state-owned entity, must operate in line with international market dynamics to ensure sustainability. This includes consideration

of foreign exchange rates and operational costs. Addressing concerns raised by MNA Haji Jamal Kakakhel, Zeb Jaffar assured that complaints regarding high airfare from Quetta would be reviewed. Responding to a supplementary question from MNA Alia Kamran, she acknowledged that airfare generally increases during Eid and other festive occasions due to heightened demand across all transport sectors. She added that PIA has recently returned to profitability, earning over Rs 26 billion. Efforts are underway to further enhance this performance. In response to a

question from Zartaj Gul, Jaffar said that in regions where PIA does not operate, private airlines have been licensed to provide air travel services to ensure accessibility. She clarified that PIA does not offer free travel facilities, except for concessional fares granted to employees' families. Jaffar reiterated that the transformation of Sukkur Airport into an international facility is a priority, and work on runway upgrades is currently ongoing. Presently, the PIA fleet includes 19 aircraft: six Boeing 777s, eleven Airbus A320s, and the rest ATRs.—DNA

Herbal quackery threatens people's health

MULTAN: A dangerous trend of unqualified herbal quacks is rapidly spreading across south Punjab, putting public health at serious risk. These self-proclaimed healers, with no recognised medical degrees or formal training, are freely practising in villages and small towns often misguiding patients and causing long-term health complications. In almost every district of South Punjab, from Rajanpur to Layyah and Bahawalnagar to Lodhran, herbal clinics have mushroomed under various flashy names. Many of these so-

called herbal doctors are claiming to treat everything from infertility and obesity to chronic pain and kidney disorders often with harmful and unregulated substances. According to Dr Waqas Malik (MBBS), "These herbal quacks create fear among youth about their health, especially regarding masculinity and weakness, and then prescribe medicines that sometimes permanently damage kidneys and liver. Most of their formulas contain steroids and heavy metals." What makes the problem even more alarming is the

use of social media by these individuals to aggressively market their products. Different social media platforms are flooded with videos where such individuals pose in white coats, use medical terminology, and display fake testimonials to win trust. Many desperate patients, especially from undereducated or rural backgrounds, fall into their trap. "Uneducated patients can't differentiate between a real doctor and a herbal quack," said Sadia, a healthcare activist from Multan. "In some cases, patients stop taking proper medication for serious illnesses like diabetes or hepatitis and switch to these herbal treatments which worsened their condition. Despite repeated warnings from health experts, government authorities have taken little action, she added.—APP

Safe city project launched in Peshawar After 18-year delay: IG

PESHAWAR: Inspector General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Zulfiqar Hameed on Wednesday announced the official launch of the long-delayed Safe City Project here, marking a significant step forward in urban security. The project, which had been stalled for 18 years, is now set to be completed within the next six months. Speaking to the media, the IG revealed that over 700 surveillance cameras will be installed at more than 100 key locations across the city. These cameras will assist in enhancing citywide monitoring and security, ensuring better protection for citizens. Zulfiqar Hameed emphasized the use of modern technology in the project to improve police performance and public safety. He added that the Punjab Safe City Authority will support the implementation process in Peshawar. Highlighting the cost-effectiveness of the project, the IG noted that while the Lahore Safe City Project was completed at a cost of Rs. 17 billion, the Peshawar initiative will be finalized at just Rs. 2 billion. Despite limited resources, the IG affirmed that the project is progressing effectively and will play a vital role in improving the quality of life for Peshawar residents.—DNA

Employment milestones from Sahiwal Coal Power Plant

ISLAMABAD: Over the past decade, the Sahiwal Coal-Fired Power Plant has emerged as a powerful engine of employment and economic uplift in Pakistan. Launched in 2015 under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the plant has not only generated 1,320 MW of electricity but also created thousands of jobs during construction and operations. According to the official details, over 5,000 local workers were employed during construction alone, providing stability to struggling households and stimulating local commerce. More than 200 Pakistani staff received advanced training in China, gaining international exposure and technical expertise. Today, over 70% of the plant's workforce is Pakistani, with numbers set to rise due to a strategic focus on localization.

The establishment of a technical training institute further ensures long-term skill development for local workers. The journey started in July 2015 when the construction of the plant began. Just this phase created jobs for more than 5,000 local workers, offering immediate income and stability to families in the area. At that time, there was a shortage of electricity, and the financial condition of the people in the area was unstable. The arrival of jobs during this time not only raised household incomes but also invigorated local businesses and services, generating a ripple effect of economic expansion. During the commissioning of the Sahiwal power plant, more than 200 Pakistani staff traveled to China for over 10 months to learn advanced technical training and professional in-

dustry skills in various cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Rizhao and Weihai. The Sahiwal coal-fired power plant has provided its staff with international exposure opportunities. This initiative has benefited the local workforce and strengthened Pak-China bilateral relations. As a result, they have experienced career growth and financial stability. Continuous work and competency development. Currently, the Sahiwal Coal-fired Power Plant maintains a workforce in which over 70% of the employees are Pakistani. As more Chinese workers return to their country, the number of Pakistani workers is expected to increase in the near future. Thanks to this localization strategy that has been developed by the management of the Sahiwal power plant, the benefits of the plant have been deeply rooted in

the local community. One of the long-term benefits of the Sahiwal project is the transfer of technical knowledge. With a state-of-the-art technical training institute at Sahiwal power plant, the power plant organizes comprehensive technical training programs for the professional and personal growth of the employees, utilizing the advanced infrastructure of Huaneng Pakistan Vocational & Technical College. Chinese and Pakistani engineers worked side by side, exchanging expertise in advanced energy generation technologies. Local workers gained experience in managing and maintaining a large-scale thermal power plant, enhancing their skills and making them valuable assets for future energy projects in Pakistan.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

May 03/Poland National Day

May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day

May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day

May 07/ Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day

May 08/Czech Republic National Day

May 09/European Union National Day

May 17/Norway Constitution Day

May 21/Hungary Armed Forces Day

May 22/Yemen Republic Re-unification Day(National Day)

May 24/Eritrea National Day

May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day

May 25/Argentina National Day

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Expo in Muscat to highlight Pak economic strength

Dr. Baig emphasized that he would continue to raise the concerns of the business community at all relevant forums to ensure timely resolution, improved ease of doing business, and a conducive environment for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI)

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prominent business leader and Member National Assembly Dr. Mirza Ikhtiar Baig has reaffirmed his strong commitment to supporting Pakistan's business community and strengthening its role in national economic development. Speaking at a well-attended gathering at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday, Dr. Baig praised the community's resilience and expressed full cooperation in the Chamber's initiatives to boost economic growth and foreign investment. Dr. Baig emphasized that he would continue to raise the concerns of the business community at all relevant forums to ensure timely resolution, improved ease of doing business, and a conducive environment for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). He lauded ICCI's efforts in creating a business-friendly climate and assured his full support for the successful execution of the upcoming Build and Invest Pakistan Expo in Muscat, Oman,

scheduled for June 2025. He also committed to mobilizing support from the Karachi business community for the event. Dr. Baig paid rich tribute to the armed forces of Pakistan, acknowledging their unwavering dedication and sacrifices in protecting the country and dismantling threats to national security. ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi briefed the audience on the Chamber's key initiatives and its pivotal role in fostering economic activity. He noted that the Build and Invest Pakistan

Expo will serve as a strategic platform to highlight Pakistan's industrial, real estate, and investment potential, while establishing stronger trade and economic linkages with the Gulf region. "The Chamber has always remained at the forefront of advancing economic well-being, and this expo is aligned with our mission to connect Pakistani businesses with international markets," said Qureshi. President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI),

Atif Ikram Shaikh, applauded ICCI's advocacy efforts. He also demanded the deferment of new income tax amendments, which he termed harmful to business growth. He also paid homage to the armed forces for their vital role in safeguarding the nation. ICCI Group Leader Tariq Sadiq emphasized the importance of national unity within the business community by urging Dr. Baig to engage with Karachi-based businesses to maximize the impact of the upcoming expo. Former FPCCI President

Abdul Rauf Allam and United Business Group (UBG) Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari commended Dr. Baig's tireless efforts and leadership, recognizing his role in elevating the business community's image, both domestically and internationally. Former ICCI President Mian Akram Farid described Dr. Baig as the true representative of business interests in the National Assembly. Delivering the vote of thanks, ICI Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui reaffirmed the Chamber's resolve to continue acting as a strong advocate between the private sector and the government to ensure sustainable economic policies. The event was attended by a distinguished gathering of business leaders, including ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Council Members Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi and Mian Shaukat Masood, and Executive Members Ms. Fatima Azim, Ms. Shumila Siddiqui, Irfan Chaudhry, Rohail Anwar Butt, Aftab Gujjar, Imran Minhas, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Ishaq Sial, and several other prominent figures from Islamabad's business circles.

Families of thalassemia and hemophilia patients visit NA

ISLAMABAD: Representatives of families affected by thalassemia and hemophilia visited the National Assembly on Wednesday, where they observed the proceedings of the House. Upon their arrival, they were warmly welcomed by the Deputy Speaker, and members of the Assembly greeted them with desk-thumping as a gesture of support and solidarity. The visit aimed to raise awareness about the challenges faced by patients suffering from these lifelong blood disorders and to seek greater attention from lawmakers towards their healthcare needs.--APP

Land for Shifa Hospital allotted on investment, not trust basis

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Health Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath informed the National Assembly on Wednesday that land for Shifa Hospital in Islamabad was allotted in 1987 on an investment basis rather than as a charitable trust grant. Responding to a question from MNA Sahibzada Sibghatullah during the Question Hour, Malik stated that the land was provided at a significantly reduced price with the understanding that a modern hospital would be established in the capital. "Shifa's position was that it would build a state-of-the-art hospital in Islamabad, and a commitment of \$2 million in investment was made at the time," he said. Clarifying further, Malik added that the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) has no role in ensuring free treatment at trust hospitals. "Each trust operates under its own set of rules and regulations," he said. In a separate response to a question from Dr. Shazia Sobia Aslam, Malik said that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had originally announced civil defense training for 9,000 citizens, but has so far trained 13,000 individuals, including 12,000 men. He added that during recent hostilities, civil defense volunteers actively participated in emergency operations, including assisting with the transportation of the injured to hospitals. "We also have provincial-level data regarding civil defense training and preparedness," he concluded.--APP

Indian Major slammed for using derogatory remarks about Iranian FM

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: A wave of anger and grief has swept across Pakistan after Indian retired Major Gaurav Arya reportedly used derogatory language against Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Major (Retd) Arya, known for his appearances as a defense analyst on Indian television, allegedly used derogatory language while speaking about Iran's diplomatic stance during a recent broadcast. His comments targeted Foreign Minister Araghchi, a seasoned Iranian diplomat who has played a central role in Iran's foreign policy, including nuclear negotiations and regional diplomacy. The remarks have particularly upset Pakistani citizens, who see them as an affront not only to Iran but also to the principles of diplomatic courtesy and regional respect. Several

Pakistani social and political commentators have called on the Indian government to take disciplinary action against Arya and issue a formal apology to the Iranian government. Many emphasized that such inflammatory rhetoric damages regional relationships and undermines diplomatic norms. It is the responsibility of the Indian government to ensure that individuals representing their defense or media establishments uphold basic standards of respect when referring to foreign dignitaries. "Ordinary citizens have also taken to the streets in some parts of Pakistan to protest what they called "an insult to a brotherly country." Demonstrations were held in Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, where protestors demanded accountability and urged India to educate its citizens on how to respect guests and practice diplomatic etiquette.

Pakistan scores economic, diplomatic win: Dr Suleri

DNA

ISLAMABAD, Executive Director Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri has said that the two significant developments – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board's approval of a much-anticipated loan tranche and the successful securing of Climate Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) – despite formal resistance from India are the landmark achievements in the history of Pakistan's economic and diplomatic trajectory. Dr. Suleri said that India, officially opposing Pakistan's access to the RSF, found itself diplomatically isolated as the global financial body approved the facility, marking a defining moment in South Asia's financial and strategic landscape, said a press release. "The RSF approval is not only a financial milestone but also a statement of Pakistan's growing credibility in international financial

governance," he added. Pakistan's economy, he maintained, showed remarkable stability despite engaging in a brief but intense standoff with India – a nation with 10 times Pakistan's GDP and defence spending. Dr. Suleri underlined that the J-10C response, followed by high-level diplomatic engagements, forced India to the dialogue table and, for the first time, compelled it to accept international mediation. This shift has sparked optimism for de-escalation and long-term peace, with significant implications for macroeconomic stability, he added. He noted that the IMF's latest tranche came with three key challenges, i.e. global economic instability, geopolitical tension, and domestic turbulence yet Pakistan's continued structural reforms were appreciated. Pakistan's progress on state-owned-enterprises (SOE) reforms, energy pricing, IPP contract issues, competitiveness improvements in the industrial sector, and currency stabilization, even as

inflation dropped and monetary policy eased by 11%, are indicators of macroeconomic stability, he opined. "The nation's political parties collectively celebrated 'Youm-e-Tashakur' in a rare display of unity, rallying behind economic recovery and geopolitical resilience. The current fiscal indicators, including primary surplus and stabilizing exchange rate, have reinforced confidence in the government's macroeconomic strategy," Dr. Suleri said. Next month, he said, an IMF mission will assist Pakistan in crafting a reform-oriented budget, especially as the country prepares to reallocate PSDP funds to address the fiscal fallout from the recent conflict – a "force majeure" situation for which Pakistan bears no contractual liability. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to peace, offering to mediate long-standing issues such as Kashmir, the Indus Waters Treaty, and cross-border missile provocations, he said, adding that despite India's \$75–80 billion defence budget, Pakistan's

limited \$7.5 billion defence spending proved strategically effective, defying conventional assumptions of military superiority. Notably, he said, international players, including QUAD members (Japan, US, Australia) remained neutral, with Gulf states and Saudi Arabia also abstaining from supporting Indian positions, highlighting Pakistan's strategic restraint and diplomatic outreach. With a rebounding stock exchange and improved investor confidence, Dr. Suleri emphasized that Pakistan is now poised to leverage these gains for long-term economic strength. The twin pillars of IMF oversight and a fragile yet crucial ceasefire will shape the upcoming fiscal blueprint, he added. "Pakistan has emerged stronger, more united, and more credible – both in its defence capability and economic outlook," Dr. Suleri stated, noting that this moment must be capitalized upon to fortify Pakistan's economic foundations and pursue lasting regional peace.

Islamabad students and teachers rally

ISLAMABAD: Students, teachers, and non-teaching staff from various educational institutions in Islamabad gathered for a spirited "Thanksgiving Rally" to express unwavering support for Pakistan's Armed Forces. The event, which proceeded from the National Press Club to the Shaheed-e-Millat Secretariat, highlighted national unity and gratitude for the military's steadfast defense against Indian aggression. Leading the rally was Ms. Wajihah Qamar, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, alongside Professor Akram Khan Khosa, President of the Federal Government College Teachers Association (FGCTA), and Fazal-e-Maula, Chairman of the Joint Action Committee (JAC). These leaders, accompanied by their respective teaching communities, guided the enthusiastic participants waving national flags and chanting slogans of solidarity. Addressing the participants, Wajihah Qamar expressed deep appreciation for the teaching community and students, stating, "It is truly heartening to witness the educators and students of our colleges come together to stand with the Armed Forces of Pakistan. This rally sends a resounding message to the world that the nation stands firmly united behind its defenders." She praised the armed forces for their restraint in the face of provocations, while acknowledging their decisive response when required. Principals from various educational institutions, including Mansoor Ali Shah and Professor Javid Iqbal Mughal, marched with their students, reinforcing their commitment to national unity. Meanwhile, the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) held a parallel rally from the Pak Secretariat to the Parliament Building, led by Chief Coordinator Rehman Ali Bajwa, attracting a significant number of government employees in a show of collective support.--DNA

ICT educational institutions lead solidarity rally for armed forces

The rally was led by Ms. Wajihah Qamar, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, who expressed her gratitude to the teaching community and students for their spirited participation

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD. In a powerful demonstration of national unity, students, teaching, and non-teaching staff from various educational institutions in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) organized a vibrant "Thanksgiving Rally" from the National Press Club to Shaheed-e-Millat Secretariat. The event, held to express solidarity with Pakistan's Armed Forces and celebrate their resolute defense against Indian aggression, drew a large and enthusiastic crowd. The rally was led by Ms. Wajihah Qamar, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, who expressed her gratitude to the teaching community and students for their spirited participation. She praised their unwavering

support for the country's armed forces, emphasizing that the rally sent a powerful message to the world that the entire nation stands firmly behind its military. The teachers' union leaders played key roles in leading their respective communities in the rally. Professor Akram Khan Khosa, President of the Federal Government College Teachers Association (FGCTA), and Fazal-e-Maula, Chairman of the Joint Action Committee (JAC), led their teaching communities with passion and commitment, marching alongside their colleagues and students. Principals such as Mansoor Ali Shah, Professor Javid Iqbal Mughal, and many others also joined the rally, proudly waving the national flag as they demonstrated their support. Students, energized by national pride, danced in celebration, reflecting the

collective spirit of unity and resilience. Ali Naqvi, a student from Islamabad Model Postgraduate College H-8, while talking to APP, said that the armed forces had delivered a "crushing defeat" to Indian forces, ensuring that future provocations would be met with an even stronger response. In her address, Wajihah Qamar commended the armed forces for their measured yet effective responses to Indian provocations, highlighting their remarkable restraint and strategic acumen. She reaffirmed that when the situation demanded, the military acted with precision and courage to safeguard the nation's honour and sovereignty. The rally concluded with chants of national solidarity, reflecting the deep-rooted patriotism and collective resolve of Pakistan's academic community.

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Briefs

Dastgir Khan
commends
armed forces

ISLAMABAD: PML-N senior leader Khurram Dastgir Khan Wednesday commended Pakistan's armed forces' stellar response to recent challenges, highlighting its ability to deliver results despite limited resources and appreciating the government's efforts to strengthen diplomatic ties.

In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, Khurram Dastgir Khan expressed concern over India's increasing hostility towards Pakistan despite Pakistan's strong response, adding, Pakistan has never taken advantage of its position against India, but India's hatred towards Pakistan continues to grow.

Dastgir stressed that Pakistan remains committed to peace, but the continuous hostile rhetoric from India undermines efforts to resolve outstanding issues such as Kashmir, cross-border terrorism and military confrontations along the Line of Control (LoC).

He reaffirmed Pakistan's position on regional peace and security, saying that Pakistan was ready to engage in talks but would not tolerate any further aggression.

He underscored that Pakistan remains committed to resolving the Kashmir issue through peaceful means but also highlighted the importance of strengthening Pakistan's ties with the U.S. to ensure a united front in the international community.

He expressed confidence that a robust partnership between the two nations, backed by strong diplomatic efforts, could pave the way for a sustainable resolution to Kashmir and broader regional security challenges.

Dastgir Khan reiterated that Pakistan is not seeking confrontation but rather a fair solution that respects the rights and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.—APP

CCP imposes
Rs. 40 mln
penalty on
'Al-Ghazi
Tractors'

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) imposed a Rs. 40 million penalty on Al-Ghazi Tractors for a false fuel saving claim. Farmers across Pakistan, especially small landholders, often make purchasing decisions based on savings and efficiency, said a press release issued here.

For them, a claim like "up to 30% extra diesel savings" can mean the difference between affordability and hardship. But this claim, made by Al-Ghazi Tractors Limited (AGTL) in a newspaper ad, has now been declared false and misleading by the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP). The bench comprising Dr. Kabir Ahmed, the Chairman CCP and Mr. Salman Amin (Member) has imposed a penalty of PKR 40 million on AGTL for violating competition law and misleading consumers. In January 2022, AGTL ran a front-page ad in a leading Urdu newspaper, claiming its new Holland tractor models offered "up to 30% extra diesel savings compared to any competitor's tractors." The ad cited a report by the Agricultural Mechanisation Research Institute (AMRI), Multan, as a basis of its claim.—APP

Ministry pushes blue economy policy to tap \$100 bn opportunity

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chudhry, chairing a high-level meeting, directed the ministry to accelerate the policy development process and emphasized the importance of timely and inclusive policy formation, highlighting the economic opportunities the blue economy presents for Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Maritime Affairs has initiated the development of a comprehensive Blue Economy Policy to unlock the full potential of Pakistan's maritime sector to generate over \$100 billion annually. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chudhry, chairing a high-level meeting, directed the ministry to accelerate the policy development process and emphasized the importance of timely and inclusive policy formation, highlighting the economic opportunities the blue economy presents for Pakistan, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. "All stakeholders,

including relevant ministries, provincial governments, industry experts, and academic institutions, will be consulted to ensure a collaborative, effective policy framework," said the federal minister. "The blue economy is no longer a concept of the future, it is a priority for today." The blue economy is a sustainable use of ocean and marine resources to promote economic growth, improve livelihoods, create jobs, and maintain environmental sustainability while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems. The federal minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry noted that Pakistan's contribution currently is around \$1 billion annually, which accounts for just 0.4% of the national GDP with the potential to generate

over \$100 billion annually if fully optimized. "This revenue is primarily derived from fisheries, coastal tourism, and maritime trade. Notably, seafood exports contribute roughly \$450 million, while maritime tourism generates about \$300 million each year, the federal minister added. The minister said estimates suggest potential revenues of \$8-10 billion from shipping, \$7-8 billion from fisheries, \$10 billion from aquaculture, and \$5-6 billion from maritime tourism. Additional income could be realized through renewable ocean energy projects, ship recycling, and by transforming traditional ports into sustainable, environmentally friendly "green ports." Junaid Anwar said globally, the blue economy contributes ap-

proximately \$1.5 trillion annually, encompassing a wide range of sectors such as fisheries, shipping, tourism, offshore energy, and marine biotechnology, while Pakistan is generating a much smaller share relative to its neighbours. Junaid Anwar highlighted the urgent need to address structural and operational challenges of a maritime sector that include fragmented governance structures, outdated port and shipping technologies, marine pollution, lack of research and innovation, and inadequate infrastructure. "Our oceans are a national asset, and if managed wisely, they can serve as a key driver for economic growth, job creation, and environmental sustainability," said the minister. "We are committed to ensuring

that the Blue Economy Policy aligns with Pakistan's Vision 2035 and the Sustainable Development Goals." The ministry has already begun consultations with leading maritime experts, with a draft policy expected soon. The final document will outline actionable measures, investment strategies, and institutional reforms needed to unleash the full economic power of Pakistan's maritime sector.

Ministry of Maritime Affairs invites all stakeholders to participate actively in shaping this important policy, which is set to be a cornerstone of a sustainable economic future and strengthen Pakistan's approach to managing and growing its ocean-based industries in an economically productive manner.

Over 24,832
tractors
assembled
in 10 months

ISLAMABAD: Tractors production in the country during last 10 months of current financial year was recorded at 24,832 as compared to the output of 38,699 of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April, 2024-25, sales of tractor were recorded at 25,143 as compared to the sales of 39,838 tractors of the same period of the last year, according to the data of Pakistan Automotive Manufacturing Association. Meanwhile, the Fiat assembled about 9,428 tractors during first 10 months of current financial year as compared to the output of 13,798 tractors of the same period of the last year, it added. The sale of tractors assembled by the Fiat were recorded at 9,455 as compared to the sales of 13,144 tractors of the same period of the last year, the data revealed. The output of Massey Ferguson stood at 15,725 tractors during 10 months of current financial year as compared to the production of 26,040 tractors of the same period of the last year, it added. Meanwhile, the sale of the above mentioned company during the period under review was recorded at 15,377 tractors as compared to the sales of 25,555 tractors of the same period of the last year, the data revealed.—APP

1.3 mln
afghan
refugees
repatriated

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary Mukhtar Ahmad Malik informed the National Assembly on Wednesday that approximately 1.3 million Afghan refugees have been repatriated from Pakistan so far. Responding to a question raised by MNA Anjum Aqeel Khan during the National Assembly session, Malik stated that around 3 million Afghan refugees had been residing in Pakistan. Of these, 813,000 hold Afghan Citizen Cards (ECC), while 1.3 million possess Proof of Registration (PoR) cards. He emphasized that under the One Document Regime, Afghan nationals who wish to enter Pakistan for medical treatment, education, or business purposes are welcome, provided they obtain the appropriate visa and carry valid documentation.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambssador Ali bin Mubarak Al Khater welcomed in his office, Neil Hawkins, High Commissioner of Australia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. They engaged in discussions on matters of mutual interest.—DNA

India knocked out in the first
round, Modi licking his wounds

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the

President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Wednesday that India has faced its most significant defeat in history at the hands of Pakistan.

He mentioned that Indian aircraft, missiles, drones, and defense equipment valued at billions of dollars will either be displayed in museums or be sold for scrap.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that a new normal has emerged in the region. However, Modi, still intoxicated with dreams of regional supremacy and military dominance, continues to deceive his people with his typical cunning even after being knocked out. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that

grief grips the Indian public and media. At the same time, silence and embarrassment hover over Delhi's power corridors. The business leader said that some circles perceive the peace and mediation process as an attempt to save India. Still, the survival and security of South Asia now demand that India come to its senses.

Mushaal hails Pakistan's
bold stance against India

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick Wednesday, praised Pakistan's armed forces for their bold stance against India, asserting that Hurriyat leaders' participation is crucial in Pakistan-India dialogue on Kashmir and appreciating potential mediator roles of global powers like China and the US in resolving the longstanding conflict. In an exclusive interview, Mushaal Hussein Mullick appreciated the US President's role and China, welcoming Donald Trump's statement on the Kashmir issue. Mushaal Hussein Mullick expressed her fervent hope for a resolution to the Kashmir conflict, condemning India's persistent human rights abuses despite the ceasefire. She urged the US, UN and global powers to immediately release Hurriyat leaders, including her husband Yasin Malik, emphasizing that their participation is crucial in any dialogue process on Kashmir. Without the inclusion of these leaders, she stressed no meaningful resolution can be achieved, she added. Mushaal Hussein Mullick stated that Pakistan delivered an unimaginable response to Indian aggression, leaving India still in shock. Mullick urged the global community to resolve the Kashmir conflict within a specific time frame, emphasizing the need for immediate action to prevent further human rights abuses and escalation. She also strongly condemned the killing of three more Kashmiris by Indian forces, bringing attention to the ongoing violence and human rights abuses in Indian-Occupied Kashmir. She highlighted that despite international calls for peace, India continues to conduct search operations, encounters and extrajudicial killings, showing blatant disregard for Kashmiri lives. The Indian government's actions, she emphasized, are fueled by hatred and a refusal to acknowledge the ceasefire for Kashmiris, further exacerbating the region's suffering, she mentioned.—DNA

Govt taking all steps to make
Pakistan pride of country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi Wednesday said the government is taking every possible measure to make Pakistan Railways the pride of the country.

"Our goal is not only to improve the performance of the department but also to address all the issues and corruption present within its systems on special instructions of the Prime Minister," he said while chairing a meeting. The minister emphasized the importance of safeguarding the rights of the employees, saying, "We will ensure full protection for our employees and will vigorously defend their rights. Our employees are the engine of Pakistan's progress. Their development will ensure the development of



Pakistan." He also announced the decision to further empower the Vigilance Department to ensure accountability. "We will ensure transparency and accountability in every department and anyone attempting corruption will be held accountable." Hanif Abbasi firmly stated that only those who work will remain in Railways. "We will not tolerate incompetence or laziness and no form

of nepotism will be allowed." The minister directed all Divisional Superintendent, saying, "There will be no compromise on the timely arrival of trains, as it is a matter of our system's importance and public trust." Hanif Abbasi assured that within a few months, all forms of corruption and failures in every department will be eradicated. "We will take

steps at every level to bring Pakistan Railways into a new era." The minister also announced that third-party evaluations will be conducted for every procurement in the railways to ensure transparency and quality. "Cleanliness and hygienic food are the rights of every passenger and any negligence in this regard will be intolerable," he added.

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Trump’s Gulf Tour – deals, diplomacy, and disruption

US President Donald Trump’s recent tour of the Gulf states has once again captured global headlines, not only for the dramatic diplomatic overtures but also for the staggering financial figures involved. During his visit, Trump announced over \$600 billion in investment pledges from Saudi Arabia alone – a colossal sum that, if materialized, would mark one of the most significant foreign investment commitments in recent history. Trump, never one to shy away from spectacle or grandiosity, hailed the agreements as a testament to his enduring global influence and business acumen. While many remain skeptical about the actual disbursement and long-term impact of these investments, there is little doubt that the visit was choreographed to send a message: Trump’s political ambitions remain alive, and he still wields influence in international corridors of power. Central to the tour was Trump’s renewed push for Saudi Arabia to normalize relations with Israel. Following in the footsteps of the Abraham Accords brokered during his presidency, Trump emphasized the importance of continued momentum toward Arab-Israeli reconciliation. Although Riyadh has yet to officially recognize Israel, Trump’s remarks suggest that the possibility is not off the table. He framed this potential diplomatic breakthrough as both a strategic necessity for regional stability and a legacy-defining move in his broader vision for Middle East peace. Trump’s rhetoric, however, extended beyond the Middle East. In a surprising moment during his remarks, he brought up the long-standing conflict between India and Pakistan. He claimed personal credit for preventing what he described as a “nuclear war” between the two South Asian rivals during his time in office. While such claims are difficult to verify, they reflect Trump’s tendency to highlight his role in de-escalating global tensions – a point frequently contested by critics, but embraced by his base. The tour has drawn mixed reactions globally. Supporters laud the massive investment commitments as a sign of economic optimism and a reinvigoration of U.S.-Gulf ties under Trump’s influence. Critics, however, caution against interpreting pledges as firm deals, warning that such announcements can often be symbolic or politically motivated. They also point out that Trump’s foreign policy legacy, particularly in the Middle East, remains controversial – marked by a transactional approach that some say neglected deeper regional complexities. Nonetheless, Trump’s visit underscores his enduring appeal among certain international actors who view him as a pragmatic dealmaker. The spectacle of investment pledges and political overtures is as much about perception as it is about substance. Whether or not these pledges translate into tangible outcomes, the optics serve a purpose i.e bolstering Trump’s image abroad.

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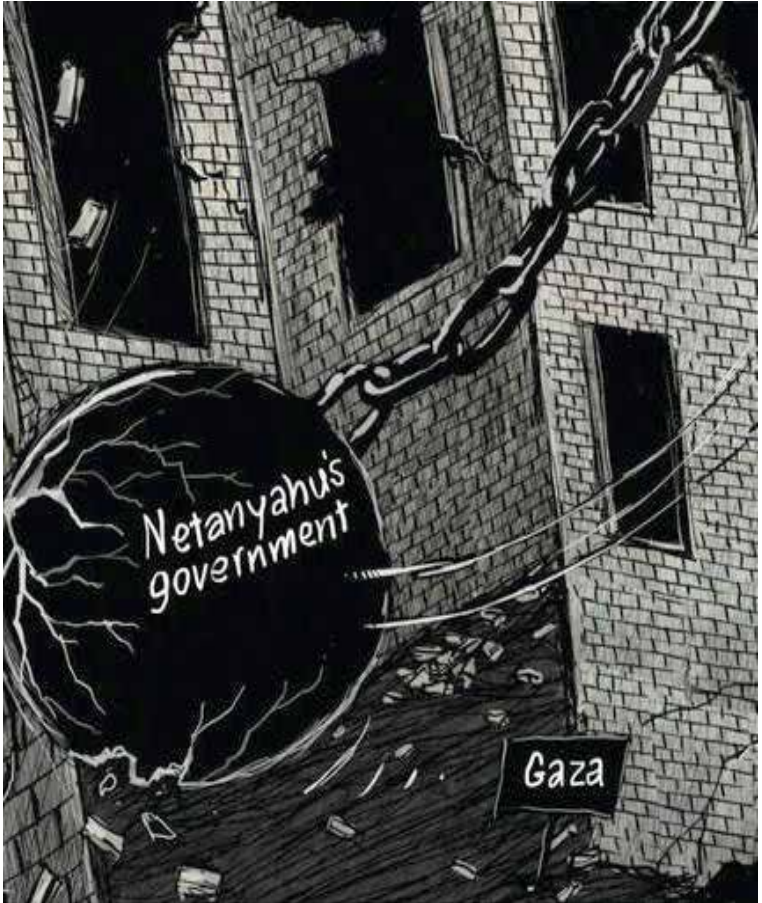
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A new chapter for Syria? US sanctions eased

THE recent announcement by the United States to lift certain sanctions on Syria marks a potentially significant shift in the long-stagnant geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. After over a decade of war, displacement, and international isolation, Syria now finds itself at a crossroads – one that could lead to cautious reintegration or renewed instability, depending on how key actors respond to this opportunity. The U.S. decision to ease sanctions, particularly in the sectors of energy, reconstruction, and humanitarian trade, comes amid growing regional efforts to bring Syria back into the Arab fold. Several neighboring countries, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have already restored diplomatic ties with Damascus, and Syria’s re-entry into the Arab League last year signaled a broader desire for normalization. Washington’s latest move suggests a recognition that the previous “maximum pressure” strategy has failed to bring about meaningful political change or alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. By easing sanctions, the U.S. hopes to encourage economic stability and humanitarian access while creating space for political dialogue. Critics, however, warn that such concessions may embolden the Assad regime, which has been accused of widespread human rights violations throughout the conflict. Without concrete reforms or accountability, they argue, lifting sanctions risks legitimizing authoritarianism without securing any real benefits for ordinary Syrians. Nonetheless, the practical realities on the ground cannot be ignored. Syria’s economy is in ruins, with more than 90% of the population living below the poverty line. Infrastructure across much of the country lies in rubble, and millions remain displaced. Reconstruction is urgently needed, and sanctions have long hindered international companies and NGOs from engaging in meaningful rebuilding efforts. If managed carefully, the easing of sanctions could open the door to renewed investment and, more importantly, humanitarian aid to a deeply suffering population. Regional powers will play a decisive role in determining Syria’s path forward. With Turkey, Iran, Russia, and Gulf states all having vested interests in Syria’s future, the risk of foreign manipulation remains high. However, the potential for multilateral coordination, particularly with a shift in U.S. policy, offers a glimmer of hope for a more stable and inclusive future. Ultimately, the lifting of sanctions should not be seen as an endorsement of the status quo in Damascus, but as a strategic pivot toward engagement over isolation. For any long-term peace to take hold, political reforms, reconciliation, and accountability must accompany economic relief. The international community now faces a delicate balancing act – one that could either usher in a new era of rebuilding or repeat the cycles of past missteps. Syria’s future is far from certain, but for the first time in years, there is at least a path forward.

Pakistan’s strategic masterstroke

Qamar Bashir



Pakistan’s security apparatus has long accused Indian agents, including those like Kulbhushan Jadhav, of fostering instability through direct support of the Baloch insurgency and Pakistan-based terror cells. Any retaliatory operation by Pakistan may therefore be framed not just as strategic but also as counter-terrorist in nature—seeking to dismantle what Islamabad sees as India’s covert war within Pakistani borders. In this fragile equilibrium, nuclear deterrence plays a silent but powerful role. Both India and Pakistan maintain credible second-strike capabilities

IN the wake of India’s recent missile strikes on Pakistan—targeting nine sites, including mosques and civilian infrastructure—the balance of power in South Asia has been dramatically disrupted. While Indian media boasted of its precision strikes, an alternative and far more consequential narrative emerged from within India itself. Eyewitnesses, social media users, and independent sources reported the downing of five Indian fighter jets, including three Rafale aircraft—France’s most advanced export fighters, considered the pride of the Indian Air Force. If confirmed through independent validation, the loss of these highly sophisticated jets would constitute a military and symbolic setback far greater than the one India sustained during the 2019 Balakot episode. Unlike that episode—where a MiG-21 was shot down and its pilot captured—this time the aircraft were reportedly destroyed without even crossing into Pakistani airspace. The destruction of these jets within Indian territory marks a devastating blow to India’s aerial supremacy, while simultaneously showcasing the evolving technological edge of Pakistan’s defense apparatus. According to local accounts, defense analysts and independent reports the Indian jets lost communication with ground control and each other mid-flight, with their navigation and command systems abruptly disabled. Strikingly, mobile networks in areas surrounding the incident reportedly collapsed, hinting at a broader electromagnetic jamming operation—a capability rarely demonstrated so visibly in the subcontinent. This capacity, analysts suggest, stems from Pakistan’s historical partnership with the United States. During the Cold War and especially the post-9/11 War on Terror, Pakistan served as a frontline state and a major non-NATO ally. In this role, it received extensive U.S. training, funding, and technology to jam and intercept militant communications across the Afghan border. Over time, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and military have mastered and localized these tools. Now, that expertise appears to have been redirected toward conventional military threats—with extraordinary results. The most strategically alarming element for India is that these aircraft were reportedly neutralized within its own territory. This defies conventional engagement rules and shatters the illusion of sanctuary previ-

ously associated with Indian airspace. Pakistan’s capability to inflict such damage without physically breaching Indian skies gives Islamabad a decisive psychological and operational edge. Furthermore, this development underscores India’s vulnerability in future conflicts. Despite extensive modernization and foreign defense procurements, including the multibillion-dollar Rafale deal with France, India’s air defense systems failed to protect its assets from remote disablement and destruction. That vulnerability, exposed by Pakistan without escalation into full-blown war, may trigger a long-term reassessment of India’s military readiness and aerial strategy. India’s initial missile strikes, while lethal—killing at least 28 civilians and damaging religious sanctuaries—have now been counterbalanced by Pakistan’s tactical retaliation. The destruction of five premier aircraft, particularly the Rafales, serves as both military deterrent and political message. It reflects a sophisticated and proportionate response: Pakistan absorbed the blow, demonstrated capability, and reclaimed initiative—without overstepping into recklessness. But Islamabad has not yet retaliated with a missile strike of its own. Instead, it has opted for a strategic pause, allowing the psychological pressure to build within Indian corridors of power. This calculated restraint serves multiple goals: it signals maturity, garners international respect, and keeps India in a constant state of anticipation, with its armed forces on high alert—an expensive and exhausting condition to maintain. This waiting game has gripped India’s leadership, military, and public. Every hour that Pakistan delays its next move deepens Indian anxiety. Troop deployments remain on standby. Fighter jets scramble at false alarms. Decision-makers face mounting political and public pressure to either escalate or retreat. The paralysis is palpable. For India, this is a worst-case scenario: an adversary that has drawn blood, seized momentum, and now holds the power to dictate the tempo of conflict. With the memory of five aircraft incinerated on home soil, Indian morale is visibly shaken. Should Pakistan decide to launch a missile-based counterstrike, it is expected to avoid areas like East Punjab—home to India’s Sikh population and the Khalistan movement. Pakistan is unlikely to target regions sympathetic to separatist causes, particularly given its longstanding rhetorical and diplomatic support for Sikh self-determination.

Instead, deeper strikes into India’s urban and military infrastructure are on the table. Major command centers, weapons depots, or intelligence facilities linked to anti-Pakistan operations—such as alleged support for BLA militants or anti-state actors in Balochistan—are possible targets. Pakistan’s security apparatus has long accused Indian agents, including those like Kulbhushan Jadhav, of fostering instability through direct support of the Baloch insurgency and Pakistan-based terror cells. Any retaliatory operation by Pakistan may therefore be framed not just as strategic but also as counter-terrorist in nature—seeking to dismantle what Islamabad sees as India’s covert war within Pakistani borders. In this fragile equilibrium, nuclear deterrence plays a silent but powerful role. Both India and Pakistan maintain credible second-strike capabilities. However, analysts believe that tactical nuclear superiority, particularly in battlefield-ready deployments, now lies with Pakistan. This asymmetry reinforces the perception that any large-scale conflict would end in mutually assured destruction, dissuading India from escalating beyond conventional limits. Yet, the downing of aircraft without resorting to nuclear signaling gives Pakistan a new avenue of response—one that is potent yet non-apocalyptic. It affirms that Islamabad can punish aggression without inviting global alarm, thus reclaiming space for calibrated, tech-driven deterrence. With each passing hour, the strategic pendulum swings further in Pakistan’s favor. India’s rash missile strike—perhaps meant to bolster domestic support or avenge perceived slights—has now backfired spectacularly. Its air force lies bruised, its political elite cornered, and its public haunted by uncertainty. Meanwhile, Pakistan’s decision to delay a missile-based counterattack, while visibly preparing for it, has turned this into a psychological siege. The question now is not if, but when Pakistan will strike—and how deeply. By choosing the right moment, possibly when India lowers its guard or assumes the storm has passed, Pakistan can deliver a blow that not only balances the score but teaches a lasting lesson. One that redefines red lines, reasserts strategic parity, and restores deterrence in a volatile region where perception often defines reality. Until then, India waits—nervously, restlessly, sleeplessly—for Pakistan’s next move.

When blood spoke louder than words

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



In response to this grave act of aggression, the Pakistan Armed Forces launched Marka-e-Haq—a just war—executing Operation Bunyanum Marsoos with precision and resolve. This was not merely a retaliatory campaign; it was the nation rising in dignity, reclaiming its honour. Our defenders did not seek war, but once drawn into it, they responded...

ALLAH Almighty says in the Holy Qur’an: “Every soul shall taste death” (Surah Al-Imran, 3:185). This is an unchangeable truth accepted by all religions of the world. Yet, Islam elevates the one who dies a martyr’s death to a station beyond human comprehension. The Holy Qur’an declares: “And do not say of those who are slain in the way of Allah, ‘They are dead.’ Nay, they are living, but you perceive not” (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:154). The martyr does not die in the true sense—his blood becomes the foundation of a nation’s honour, his sacrifice a beacon of valor for generations to come. Among the many ranks of martyrdom, one of the highest is laying down one’s life in defence of the motherland. Ask the mother whose son went to the battlefield and never returned. Ask the father who buried his child wrapped in the national flag. Ask the widow who weeps silently, raising her children with the dignity her husband died preserving. Ask the children who look at a photograph to know the warmth of their father’s face. The pain of these noble families cannot be measured, but their courage is the lifeblood of this nation. As someone rightly said, the death of a martyr is the life of the nation. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “The martyr is granted six blessings by Allah: he is forgiven with the first drop of his blood; he is shown his place in Paradise; he is spared the torment of the grave; he is secured from the great terror; a crown of dignity is placed on his head... and he is permitted to intercede for seventy of his relatives” (Hadith, Sunan At-Tirmidhi). What an exalted rank, reserved only for those who give everything in the path of duty, justice, and faith. The history of Islam is rich with examples of noble martyrs—towering figures who laid down their lives for the truth, for justice, and for the preservation of righteousness. Our civilian and military martyrs

today walk in the sacred footsteps of Hazrat Ameer Hamza (RA), “Syed-ul-Shuhada” and the beloved uncle of the Prophet (peace be upon him); Hazrat Umar Farooq (RA), the embodiment of justice; Hazrat Usman Ghani (RA), the generous and steadfast; Hazrat Ali (RA), “Saif Ullah”; Hazrat Imam Hassan (RA), the emblem of peace; Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), who sacrificed everything at Karbala to uphold the truth. These shining names of Islamic history form the vanguard of martyrdom, and our martyrs are their proud companions in spirit and in sacrifice. On the tragic night of 6th to 7th May 2025, the Indian Armed Forces launched unprovoked and reprehensible attacks on Pakistani soil, targeting innocent civilians, including women, children, and the elderly. In their barbarity, they martyred 40 civilians—among them 7 women and 15 children—and wounded 121 more, including 10 women and 27 children. The night was dark, not merely in time but in spirit, drenched in the blood of innocents. Yet even in mourning, Pakistan did not falter. The cowardice of the enemy was answered with the courage of the brave. In response to this grave act of aggression, the Pakistan Armed Forces launched Marka-e-Haq—a just war—executing Operation Bunyanum Marsoos with precision and resolve. This was not merely a retaliatory campaign; it was the nation rising in dignity, reclaiming its honour. Our defenders did not seek war, but once drawn into it, they responded with unmatched valour, defending our soil and sovereignty with every drop of blood. During this noble defence, eleven sons of Pakistan from the Armed Forces embraced martyrdom, and seventy-eight were injured. Their names will remain inscribed in the heart of the nation, not as casualties but as eternal symbols of bravery. The ever-shining stars of the Galaxy of Martyrs are Squadron Leader Usman Yousuf, Naik Abdul Rehman, Lance Naik Dilawar Khan,

Lance Naik Ikramullah, Naik Waqar Khalid, Sepoy Muhammad Adeel Akbar, Sepoy Nisar, Chief Technician Aurangzeb, Senior Technician Najeeb, Corporal Technician Farooq, and Senior Technician Mubashir. Each of these martyrs stood not merely for a uniform or an institution, but for the idea of Pakistan—a land that lives free because of the sacrifice of its brave. These names shall not be lost to time; they are now written in the annals of glory. Let it not be forgotten that as we sleep in peace at night, it is because of the countless men in uniform—soldiers, airmen, sailors—who guard the frontiers of our nation, who remain awake under open skies, so we may close our eyes without fear. The martyr may fall, but his blood waters the tree of our liberty. And as some returned from battle, not as martyrs but as Ghazis, they too are bearers of honour. They are the shining beacons of victory and sovereignty, living testaments of Pakistan’s indomitable will. They have written with their courage a story of defiance and dignity that generations shall remember. The Pakistan Armed Forces, alongside the entire nation, pay solemn tribute to the martyred civilians and military personnel, and extend heartfelt prayers for the swift recovery of those injured. Their grief is our collective grief; their pride, our shared honour. Let the enemy know—and let the world bear witness—that the nation of Pakistan shall never bow before tyranny. The Holy Qur’an states: “Indeed, Allah defends those who believe” (Surah Al-Hajj, 22:38). With this divine promise in our hearts and the resolve of our defenders in the field, we stand united. Our sovereignty is sacred, and any attempt to challenge it shall be met with full-spectrum, swift, and decisive response—Inshallah. The spirit of martyrdom is not death—it is eternal life. It is the force that shields the weak, humbles the oppressor, and secures the homeland. Today, we honour those who gave everything, so that Pakistan may live forever in dignity, freedom, and peace.

Briefs

Iran must
cease
support
of groups

FROM PAGE 01
In Iran, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called Trump's remarks "deceitful" but did not directly address the US leader's call on Iran to cease support of proxy groups. Trump added that he believed the moment was ripe "for a future free from the grip of Hezbollah terrorists." Hezbollah is severely weakened after its war last year with Israel in which much of its top leadership was killed, and after losing a key ally with the fall of former Syrian President Bashar Assad, a conduit for Iran to send arms. Trump said he decided to meet with Al-Sharara after being encouraged to do so by Prince Mohammed and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The president also pledged to lift years long sanctions on Syria. "The sanctions were really crippling and very powerful," Trump said. "It's not going to be easy anyway, so it gives them a good, strong chance" to rebuild the country, he added. Prince Mohammed joined Trump and Al-Sharara for the meeting, which lasted about 33 minutes. Erdogan also took part in the talks via video conference. The prince said Trump's decision to engage with Al-Sharara and lift the sanctions will "alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people" and spur a "new chapter" for the nation.

Pak, India
exchange...

FROM PAGE 01
had made contact on May 12 and agreed to maintain the ceasefire. Meanwhile, the federal government has directed all provinces, including Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), to compile a comprehensive report on the damage caused by recent Indian attacks, according to sources. The directive was issued by the Prime Minister's Secretariat and circulated across provincial administrations, instructing local authorities to gather detailed information on human and infrastructural losses. District deputy commissioners have been tasked with preparing the assessments, which will include damage to homes, schools, hospitals, and civil infrastructure.

China,
US slash...

FROM PAGE 01
trade deal with China that would see Beijing's economy "open up" to US businesses, in an interview broadcast Tuesday on Fox News. "We have the confines of a very, very strong deal with China. But the most exciting part of the deal...that's the opening up of China to US business," he told the US broadcaster while aboard Air Force One on the way to the start of his Gulf tour. "One of the things I think that could be most exciting for us and also for China, is that we're trying to open up China," he added, without elaborating on details. Trump had upended international commerce with his sweeping tariffs across economies, with China hit hardest.

SBP has
received...

FROM PAGE 01
instalment under the EFF agreement. The SBP said the received amount will be reflected in the country's foreign exchange reserves for the week ending May 16. SBPs post on social media platform X on May 14, 2025. — X/@StateBank_Pak
SBP's post on social media platform X on May 14, 2025. — X/@StateBank_Pak
The disbursement follows the IMF Executive Board's approval on May 9, which also cleared a new US\$1.4 billion arrangement under the Resilience and RSF to support Pakistan's climate resilience initiatives. With this, total disbursements under the EFF have reached approximately US\$2.1 billion (SDR 1.52 billion). The approval came amid geopolitical tension, with India urging the IMF to reconsider Pakistan's case following a deadly attack in Pahalgam, JIOJK.



ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan Hockey Federation Tariq Bugti, Secretary Rana Mujahid, head coach Pakistan Hockey team Olympian Tahir Zaman, Olympian Zeeshan Ashraf and other offering fateha for the departed soul of mother of Syed Zia Ullah Shah, Secretary Islamabad Hockey Association. — DNA

Shoaib breaks silence after quitting PCB mentorship role

Says he had submitted his resignation two weeks earlier, citing challenges in managing professional, personal responsibilities

DNA

DLAHOORE: Former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik has stepped down from his role as mentor for domestic teams and the Champions Cup, formally ending his involvement with the panel. Malik shared a statement on his social media platforms, thanking the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for the opportunity to support domestic cricket. He disclosed that he had submitted his resignation two weeks earlier, citing challenges in managing multiple professional and personal responsibilities. "Two weeks ago, I informed the Pakistan Cricket Board

(PCB) of my decision to step down from my role as domestic cricket mentor after much consideration and submitted my formal resignation in writing," Malik stated. "This was not an easy choice, but after reflecting on my commitments, I realised that juggling multiple responsibilities would prevent me from giving my best-both to Pakistan cricket and to my other professional and personal priorities. To ensure fairness to all, I believe this is the right time to transition," he added. The veteran all-rounder confirmed that he would honour all existing contractual obligations to ensure a smooth transi-



tion and give the PCB adequate time to appoint a successor ahead of the upcoming domestic season. He also extended his gratitude to PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, Director

of Champions Events Wahab Riaz, the PCB executive team, and his fellow coaching staff. Malik expressed particular appreciation for the players he mentored, describing the

experience as "immensely fulfilling." "I will fulfill my contractual obligations as planned, allowing the PCB ample time to appoint a new Mentor well ahead of the next season," he continued. I am deeply grateful to PCB Chairman Mr. Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB executive team, my former teammate and Director of Champions Events Wahab Riaz, my coaching staff at the Stallions, and, most importantly, the players who entrusted me with the opportunity to share my knowledge." "I wish the PCB and everyone involved continued success. Cricket runs in my blood, and I remain committed to supporting Paki-

stan's cricketing future in any capacity I can," he concluded. Earlier in the day, reports emerged suggesting that the PCB had decided to part ways with all five mentors appointed last year for the Champions Cup. Sources indicate that the decision—reportedly initiated by Chairman Mohsin Naqvi—is part of a broader strategic shift in preparation for upcoming domestic and international cricket events. The five mentors affected by this restructuring include Saqlain Mushtaq, Waqar Younis, Misbah-ul-Haq, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Shoaib Malik. They were initially appointed in August 2024 on three-year contracts.

Two more soldiers embrace shahadat

FROM PAGE 01

total number of martyred personnel of the Pakistan Armed Forces to 13 while 78 have sustained injuries in the line of duty. The martyred heroes are Havaldar Muhammad Naveed Shaheed of the Pakistan Army and Senior Technician Muhammad Ayaz Shaheed of the Pakistan Air Force. Their noble sacrifice stands as a timeless testament to their courage, devotion to duty, and unshakeable patriotism. The Pakistan Armed Forces, in unity with the people of Pakistan, pay the highest tribute to these brave martyrs and extend heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. Prayers are also offered for the swift and complete recovery of all those injured in the attack. Their sacrifice will forever remain etched in the nation's collective memory, inspiring generations to come.

Nation proud of its braved armed forces, says PM

FROM PAGE 01

Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Attaullah Tarar, Corps Commander Sialkot, and other senior civil and military officials. In a show of continued support for all branches of the military, the prime minister is scheduled to visit various air bases and naval bases in the coming days to meet with personnel from the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy.

PM talks to UAE President

FROM PAGE 01

He added the UAE had always stood by Pakistan, through thick and thin. The Prime Minister said that Pakistan desired peace in South Asia, and in this spirit, had agreed to the ceasefire understanding with India. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to uphold the understanding, as well as its iron resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity at all costs. He also made it clear that Pakistan would never permit the sanctity of the Indus Waters Treaty to be challenged. The Prime Minister affirmed the warm, close and brotherly ties between Pakistan and the UAE. He recalled with great satisfaction that during the last one year, bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries was progressing well, especially in the areas of economy and investment. He renewed his strong resolve to transform the existing Pakistan-U.A.E. ties into a mutually beneficial economic partnership.

Bomb exploded at Mubarak Zeb residence

FROM PAGE 01

"The main gate of my house was blown up with a bomb," he added.

'Measures underway to revive sports in Pakistan'

Highlighting a recent achievement, she mentioned that Pakistan's hockey team was runner-up in a 2024 tournament, after which the Prime Minister announced a cash reward of Rs. 1 million for each player

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary Kiran Imran Dar informed the National Assembly on Wednesday that comprehensive measures are being taken to promote sports in the country, including the revival of departmental support and steps to depoliticize sports federations. Responding to questions from lawmakers during the Question Hour, Dar acknowledged that Pakistan's national hockey team has failed to qualify for international events since 2012 due to internal issues within the federation. She said the government has now introduced several reforms to boost sports development, particularly hockey. "A model constitution for National Sports Federations has been introduced within the Pakistan Sports Board framework, and policy guidelines have been issued to ensure timely elections in various federations," she said. "Instructions have also been provided regarding foreign tours." Dar noted that the Pakistan Hockey Federation received a budget of Rs. 119 million. She emphasized that efforts are being made to eliminate politics from sports organizations to improve overall performance and transparency. She added that, following the 18th Amendment, sports have become a provincial subject, but the federal government continues to support athletes showing promise at international levels, including enhancing rewards for outstanding performances. In response to supplementary questions from MNAs Dr. Nafisa Shah, Samina Khalid Ghurki, and Shehryar Afridi, Dar said 44 sports federations are currently active in the country and that promising talent is being nurtured through training and opportunities at the national level. Highlighting a recent achievement, she mentioned that Pakistan's hockey team was runner-up in a 2024 tournament, after which the Prime Minister announced a cash reward of Rs. 1 million for each player. She also confirmed that departmental sports support, which was previously discontinued, has been reinstated to provide stable platforms for athletes across various disciplines. — DNA

Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Tourism Forum

TASHKENT: The delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic, led by the Deputy Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh Nurlanbek Azygaliev, visited the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Current issues of interparliamentary cooperation and the current state and prospects of cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic were discussed during the meeting with the Chairperson of the Senate, Tanzila Narbayaeva. It was noted that interparliamentary cooperation is one of the most significant elements of a sustainable political dialogue between the two friendly states. The parties expressed satisfaction with the steady development of bilateral relations, which is carried out through high-level official visits and participation in international parliamentary forums. Special attention was paid to the positive practice of holding meetings of the Interparliamentary Commission in the regions, which, in the opinion of the parties, contributes to strengthening interregional ties and serves as an effective platform for direct dialogue between parliamentarians. At the meeting, it was emphasized that the First Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Tourism Forum, held in Samarkand as part of the activities of the Interparliamentary Commission, was another step in enhancing cooperation between the two countries. — Agencies

Minister Arora, TDAP chief discuss minority inclusion in trade, tourism

The leaders also addressed the importance of providing minority businesses with better access to international markets. They discussed strategies to ease trade barriers and facilitate export opportunities, enabling minority entrepreneurs to tap into global demand for their products

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs, Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, on Wednesday visited the Lahore office of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), where he held an important meeting with TDAP's Director-General, Rafiyya Syed. According to a spokesperson, the meeting discussed initiatives promoting minority inclusion in trade and tourism. One of the key topics discussed was the involvement of the Sikh community in the Kartarpur religious tourism trail. Both leaders acknowledged the potential for expanding religious tourism and agreed on the need to develop more inclusive programmes that cater to the religious tourism interests of minority communities. The conversation also turned towards the upcoming Pakistan International Expo and Exhibition, PIXS 2026, where Sardar Arora and Rafiyya Syed discussed the importance of including minority entrepreneurs. They emphasized the need to provide these businesspeople with opportunities to showcase their products on an international stage, thus opening new doors for growth and market access. Similarly, the inclusion of minority communities in the Pakistan Travel Mart (PTM) 2026 was discussed as part of broader efforts to promote Pakistan's diverse tourism offerings. Another significant area of discussion was the role of minority entrepreneurs in the start-up accelerator programme. Both leaders agreed that it was essential to provide these entrepreneurs with the necessary support and resources to grow their businesses. Furthermore, the meeting highlighted the need to create sustainable employment opportunities for minorities, particularly in sectors like trade and tourism. Both discussed collaborative efforts to create jobs that would offer long-term stability and financial security to members of minority communities. The leaders also addressed the importance of providing minority businesses with better access to international markets. They discussed strategies to ease trade barriers and facilitate export opportunities, enabling minority entrepreneurs to tap into global demand for their products. In addition, a proposal for a community-based and experiential tourism model was put forward, focusing on religious and cultural tourism that highlights the rich heritage of Pakistan's diverse communities. A significant part of the conversation also revolved around empowering skilled women from minority communities. The minister and TDAP DG proposed connecting these women to TDAP's trade portal and e-commerce platforms, which would provide them with greater visibility and market access for their products. They expressed their shared commitment to working together to foster a long-term partnership aimed at promoting inclusive trade and religious tourism. They were expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) soon, formalizing the collaboration between TDAP and the Department of Minorities Affairs. This partnership was seen as a crucial step toward creating an inclusive economic environment that offers equal opportunities to all communities. — DNA

Hadi, Bismal clinches DHA Punjab Tennis C'ship titles

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Rising star Hadi Hussain captured the spotlight by clinching the Men's Singles title at the prestigious DHA Lahore Punjab Juniors and Seniors Tennis Championship 2025, held at the state-of-the-art DHA Sports Complex. In a commanding performance,

Hadi defeated Musa Haroon 6-1, 6-2 in the final to claim top honours in the premier men's category. In the Men's Doubles final, the duo of Musa Haroon and Talha Saleem emerged victorious after a thrilling contest, edging past Ahsan Javeed and Taha Saleem 9-8 in a closely fought match. The Seniors Doubles 60+ title was secured by seasoned campaigner Rashid Malik, who teamed up with Brig.

Ghazanfar to defeat Saleem Khan and Dr. Mushtaq Haroon 8-2 in a dominant display. The junior categories saw an impressive array of talent on display. In the Boys U-18 final, Asad Zaman showcased his class by beating Ohad-e-Mustafa 6-2. The Girls U-18 and U-14 titles were both claimed by the talented Bismal Zia, who continued her remarkable run by defeating Romisa Malik 6-1 in the U-18

final and Khadija Khalil 6-4 in the U-14 final. The concluding ceremony was graced by PLTA Senior Vice President and tournament organiser Rashid Malik, who attended as the chief guest and distributed prizes among the winners. He was joined by Brig. Mir Muhammad Siddique, Director Sports DHA Lt. Col. Muhammad Shahbaz, Col. (R) Asif Dar and a large gathering of tennis enthusiasts.



Briefs

6.1-magnitude earthquake strikes near Fry

ATHENS: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck south of the Greek island of Kasos on Wednesday, the United States Geological Survey said, but there were no immediate reports of damage. The offshore quake hit at a depth of 78.4 kilometres (49 miles), about 15 kilometres from the island's capital of Fry at 1:51 am (22:51 GMT Tuesday). Greece is located on a number of fault lines, and is sporadically hit by earthquakes. Between January 26 and February 13, more than 18,400 quakes, mainly of a low magnitude, were recorded off islands in the Cyclades archipelago, according to the University of Athens (EKPA) seismology laboratory. The seismic swarm caused no casualties or significant damage, but worried authorities and residents.—APP

Naqvi Inquires about the health of drone attack victim

Islamabad:— Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi arrived at Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi, where he visited Taqueer Abbas, a hardworking man injured in the Indian drone attack near Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. He inquired about the health of Taqueer Abbas, the cousin of martyr Ali Haider—the only brother of eight sisters. He appreciated his resilience and courage. Mohsin Naqvi discussed the treatment of Taqueer's injured eye with the doctors and instructed that he should be provided the best medical care. Interior Minister emphasized that all possible efforts would be made to save Taqueer Abbas's eye and offered a special prayer for his quick recovery. He reiterated that the sacrifices of martyrs have led the nation to victory. It is noteworthy that martyr Ali Haider and his injured cousins, Taqueer Abbas and Manzoor Faisal, used to sell fries & burgers outside the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium to earn a living for their families.—APP

ANF recovers over 376 kg of drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting nine operations across the country, recovered as many as 356 kg of drugs worth more than Rs 174 million and arrested nine suspects, including three women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Wednesday. He informed that one kg of ice was recovered from two suspects during an operation in the DHA area of Karachi. The arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions. In another operation, 12 kg of hashish was recovered from the possession of two women near the Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza. As much as 168 kg of opium and 72 kg of hashish were recovered from the possession of two suspects near the Shamkot Motorway Toll Plaza, Khanewal. Two capsules containing 32 grams of cocaine were recovered from the possession of a woman near Chungi No. 26, Bus Stop Rawalpindi. Similarly, 1.7 kg of opium hidden in a bed sheet parcel being sent to Canada was recovered at GPO Lahore. As many as 3.6 kg of hashish was recovered from the secret compartments of a vehicle near Noor Khan Air Base, Old Airport Road, Rawalpindi and two suspects were arrested. 1 kg of hashish hidden in three cylinders sent to Hari-pur was recovered at the courier office located on Warsak Road, Peshawar. As much as 480 grams of ice hidden in a shoe parcel sent from Peshawar was recovered at the courier office in Sialkot. 96 kg of heroin hidden for smuggling was recovered near the Master Plant in an uninhabited area of Chaman. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.—APP

Kremlin blasts potential EU deployment of French bombers

The proliferation of nuclear weapons on the European continent is something that will not add security, predictability, or stability to the European continent,”

DNA

MOSCOW: The possible deployment of French nuclear bombers across the EU will not enhance security on the continent, the Kremlin said Wednesday, after French President Emmanuel Macron said he was ready to discuss the issue “The proliferation of nuclear weapons on the European continent is something that will not add security, predictability, or stability to the European continent,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. The French president floated the idea



during a TV appearance on Tuesday, comparing it to the United States's nuclear umbrella policy that guarantees Washington would reciprocate if its allies come under nuclear attack. “The Americans have the bombs on planes in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Türkiye,” Macron told TF1 television. “We are ready to open this discussion. I will define the framework in a very specific way in the weeks and months to come.” France is the EU's only nuclear-armed nation. Amid Russia's offensive on Ukraine and US President Donald Trump's calls on Europe to take more of the

burden for its own defense, discussion is growing over extending Paris's nuclear deterrent to the rest of the 27-member bloc. Russia, the world's biggest nuclear power, possesses about 4,000 warheads and views France's nuclear deterrence as a potential threat to its national security. “At present, the entire system of strategic stability and security is in a deplorable state for obvious reasons,” Peskov added. Amid his offensive on Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has several times threatened nuclear escalation, drawing rebukes from the West over “reckless

Civil society commends KP Govt's education reforms

.” Fazeela Shah, a Class 10 student at Government Girls High School and a member of the Rise and Shine Education Network, shared her optimism that this was a promising development. Many girls like me want to study but don't have the facilities

PESHAWAR: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have welcomed the landmark decisions taken by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to address the alarming number of out-of-school children. The decision was taken during a high-level meeting on Elementary and Secondary Education chaired by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur here Wednesday. It outlines data-driven reforms to improve the state of education in KP. Civil society organizations, including Blue Veins, applaud these commitments to ensuring that every child, especially girls, is allowed to learn, thrive, and succeed. The key highlights include declaring an emergency in districts where 50 percent or more children are currently out of school, signaling a strong commitment to address the education crisis. The government plans to launch accelerated enrollment drives alongside district-specific education plans tailored to local needs. Temporary schools will be established in rented buildings where needed, ensuring immediate access to education. The upcoming provincial budget will introduce new schemes aimed at improving school access and providing essential facilities. A strong emphasis has been placed on increasing girls' participation in education, recognizing the gender gap that persists in many areas. All schools will be equipped with clean drinking water and proper washroom facilities to create a supportive learning environment. Additionally, schools with better enrollment will be prioritized for upgrades, and all recruitment and teacher training will be conducted strictly on a 100 percent merit basis to enhance the overall quality of education. Blue Veins extended appreciation to Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Education Minister Mr. Faisal Khan Tarakai, Finance Advisor Muzzammil Aslam, Secretary Education Masood Ahmed, and Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah for their leadership and collaborative efforts to put education at the heart of provincial development. Qamar Naseem, Program Manager at Blue Veins and Education Champion associated with the Pakistan Education Champion Network, remarked: Declaring an education emergency demonstrates the government's commitment and highlights the urgency of addressing the crisis. We commend the KP Government's leadership and assure our full support to make sure these plans reach all those corners of the province, especially where girls are still struggling to access education.” Fazeela Shah, a Class 10 student at Government Girls High School and a member of the Rise and Shine Education Network, shared her optimism that this was a promising development. Many girls like me want to study but don't have the facilities. It feels amazing that our leaders are thinking about us and our future. I hope every girl in KP gets the chance to be in school—DNA

Zong empowers marginalized students

As Kohsar School continues to expand and upgrade its infrastructure, sustained partnerships like this remain crucial in shaping a more inclusive and technologically empowered future

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading technology innovation company, has taken another step toward bridging the digital divide by revamping the digital learning lab at Islamabad Model School (IV) F-6/3, commonly known as Kohsar School. This initiative is part of Zong's ongoing mission to provide smart education solutions to underserved communities across Pakistan. Located in Kohsar Market, Islamabad, this school serves around 400 students, with over 70% belonging to marginalized communities. Despite challenges, the school plays a vital role in the capital's public education system, with plans to introduce specialized spaces such as a Robotics Lab, Art Studio, and Tech Learning Centre. The newly upgraded digital lab is equipped with state-of-the-art tools designed to support gamified and interactive learning. By creating a dynamic and engaging environment, the lab helps primary-level students; many of whom have limited prior exposure to technology, experience visual and interactive education. Andleeb Aslam, official spokesperson for Zong, emphasized the initiative's impact: “By integrating digital tools into the classroom, we are not only enhancing learning but also laying the groundwork for equitable access to digital opportunities, regardless of a child's background.” Through such efforts, Zong is ensuring that no child is left behind in the rapidly evolving digital age. By embedding digital education in underserved communities, the company is fostering social inclusion, gender equality, and long-term community upliftment. As Kohsar School continues to expand and upgrade its infrastructure, sustained partnerships like this remain crucial in shaping a more inclusive and technologically empowered future.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan, H.E. Yerzhan Kistafen, Holds an Important Meeting with Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi .

Turkiye extends strong support to Pakistan

SHABANA AYAZ

AS tensions between Pakistan and India flare once again, Türkiye has emerged as a staunch ally of Pakistan, offering diplomatic, political, and public support. The Turkish government and public alike have taken to national and social media to openly express solidarity with Pakistan's stance. Chairman of the Türkiye-Pakistan Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group and Member of the Turkish Parliament, Ali Şahin, played a key role in amplifying Pakistan's position on international platforms. In his statements, Şahin highlighted what he termed as a broader “neo-colonial security agenda” led by global actors, aiming to establish

a nuclear-free security corridor for Israel stretching from Tel Aviv to the India-China border.

> “India is applying Israel's occupation model from Palestine to Kashmir,” Şahin stated, adding, “While India seeks to become the 'Israel of Asia', it is turning Kashmir into another Palestine.” Şahin warned that just as the Middle East conflict between Muslims and Jews has destabilized global peace, a similar conflict on the Asian frontier could result in the opening of a third major global front. He emphasized that the Pakistan-India conflict remains one of the easiest to escalate into nuclear warfare, making regional peace increasingly fragile. He further noted that the emerging power blocs—China-Russia-Pakistan on one side, and the U.S.-India-Israel on the other—are

pushing the region toward a long-term, potentially irreversible state of confrontation. Backlash from India Türkiye's support has triggered backlash in India, where social media campaigns and boycott movements have gained traction. Hashtags such as #TurkeyBoycott have trended widely, and Indian media outlets are discouraging big-budget weddings in Turkish destinations like Antalya. Following reports of Pakistan using Turkish-made drones and military technology in recent border clashes, Indian frustration has grown. Additionally, the downing of Israeli-made Harop drones by Pakistan has delivered a blow to the India-Israel defense cooperation. In retaliation, pro-Israel and pro-Hindu groups in India have called for a boycott of Turkish products. A

viral poster circulating online targets major Turkish brands such as Arçelik, Beko, Vestel, Ülker, Çaykur, and Turkish Airlines, calling on Indian consumers to halt all purchases of Turkish goods. Turkey Dismisses Boycott Fears Despite the noise, Turkish tourism and economic experts have downplayed the impact of India's boycott efforts. Gökhan Sönmez, a leading tour operator in Antalya, commented: > “The absence of Indian tourists will not significantly affect us. Turkey is a global tourism destination with nearly 7 million Russian tourists annually, along with millions from Germany, the UK, Poland, and the Netherlands. Indian tourist numbers are quite limited in comparison.” He added that 2025 is already shaping up to be

a record-breaking year for Turkish tourism, with high early bookings and limited hotel availability well into the summer. “If Indians don't come, Pakistanis will. European interest is also rising,” Sönmez said. Pakistani Support to Turkish Tourism In response to the Indian boycott, Pakistanis have rallied in support of Turkish tourism. Last month, at a tourism expo held in Pakistan, sessions titled “Discover Türkiye's Tourism Potential” were held. Both countries signed new tourism cooperation agreements, indicating a growing partnership in the travel sector. Türkiye receives approximately 250,000 to 300,000 Indian tourists annually, and a projected 20% increase had been expected this year. However, officials believe that Pakistan and even Chinese tourists could

help bridge any resulting gaps. Moreover, around 35,000 to 40,000 Turkish citizens travel to India each year, but many are now reconsidering their travel plans due to the political climate and ongoing boycott campaign. A Brotherhood That Withstands Pressure: Türkiye's unwavering support for Pakistan reflects not only diplomatic alignment but also a deep-rooted bond grounded in shared values, historical ties, and mutual respect. Despite economic retaliation and social media outrage from India, the Türkiye-Pakistan friendship remains resilient. In the face of growing geopolitical tensions and emerging power blocs, Türkiye and Pakistan continue to stand shoulder to shoulder, prioritizing peace, justice, and strategic cooperation over intimidation and division.

Sony girds for US tariffs after record annual net profit

TOKYO: Japan's Sony on Wednesday reported a record annual net profit but issued a cautious forecast, saying it hopes to “manage the impact” of US trade tariffs on its business. The entertainment and electronics giant said takings had been strong in the gaming, music and image sensor sectors in the year to the end of March 2025. But US President Donald Trump's sweeping trade levies have made the business environment less predictable, including for global conglomerates like Sony Group. “We are responding quickly to the additional US tariffs that have already been implemented and are considering responses to multiple possible future scenarios,” the company said.—APP

Trump says ‘possibility’ he will go to Turkey talks if Putin does

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE, :US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said there was a possibility he would head to Turkey for talks on Ukraine if his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, also travelled there. “I don't know that he (Putin) would be there if I'm not there,” Trump told reporters on Air Force One as he flew from Saudi Arabia to Qatar. “I know he would like me to be there, and that's a possibility. If we could end the war, I'd be thinking about that,” he said. Trump, however, noted that he was already scheduled to be in the United Arab Emirates on Thursday, on the third and final leg of his Gulf tour.—APP

PTV, National Media fulfilled responsibilities

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Wednesday commended the role of Pakistan Television (PTV), state broadcasters, and national media during the recent episode of Indian aggression, stating they fulfilled their responsibilities in an exemplary manner. Speaking during the Question Hour in the National Assembly in response to a query from MNA Dr. Shazia Raza, Dr. Chaudhry emphasized that the country faced sensitive circumstances during the recent tensions with India, and the national media played a pivotal role in maintaining unity and disseminating accurate information. He revealed that PTV bore significant expenses to meet international media rights and strategic commitments, highlighting the organization's contribution under challenging conditions. Dr. Chaudhry said that Pakistan's media effectively countered international disinformation through accurate and fact-based reporting. “Our media acted with responsibility and vigilance, winning the information battle on the global front,” he added. The minister also assured the House that efforts are underway to resolve longstanding issues related to PTV and improve its operational efficiency.—APPW

Briefs

FIA arrests
human
traffickers

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has carried out a major crack-down against human trafficking, visa fraud, and illegal money transfer networks across multiple cities. In Gujranwala Zone, five agents involved in human trafficking were arrested. The suspects – Rauf, Tariq Masih, Satooni Masih, Muhammad Naeem, and Christopher Asif – were nabbed from different areas of Islamabad, Gujranwala, and Gujrat. They allegedly defrauded citizens of millions of rupees by promising jobs abroad in countries like Italy and Saudi Arabia and provided fake visas and tickets. Meanwhile, in the Multan Zone, two men – Muhammad Hussain and Hassan Askari – were sentenced to two years in prison for human trafficking and corruption. A third suspect, Usman Tahir, was arrested in Khanewal for taking over Rs. 1.4 million from a citizen for a fake job offer in Spain. Separately, in Faisalabad, FIA officials raided a location in Model City and arrested three men – Nasir Raheem, Nawas Khan, and Muhammad Suleman – linked to an international hawala-hundi network.

Mohsin Naqvi
visits drone
attack victim

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi to inquire about Tauqeer Abbas, who was injured in an Indian drone attack near the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Tauqeer Abbas is the cousin of Ali Haider, the only brother of eight sisters, who was martyred in the attack. Minister Naqvi praised Tauqeer's courage and spoke with doctors about treatment of his injured eye. He directed the hospital staff to provide the best medical care and assured that every effort would be made to save Tauqeer's eye. The minister also offered a special prayer for his quick recovery. Mohsin Naqvi said that Pakistan's victory was made possible due to the sacrifices of its martyrs. – APP

Online
shopping may
soon be taxed

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The government is considering various measures to bring e-commerce under the tax umbrella in the upcoming 2025-26 budget, aiming to tap into the rapidly growing digital retail sector. Officials are evaluating multiple approaches to increase revenue from online shopping, which has become a routine part of consumer behavior, particularly among middle and upper-income households in the country's major urban centers. The FBR is contemplating options to impose GST with provision to allow deduction of 3% tax from the customer by the deliverer on cash delivery on behalf of the FBR.

Japan funds digital transformation (DX) of water supply in Pakistan

Government of Japan and JICA signed the Exchange of Notes (E/N) and the Grant Agreement (G/A) with Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the "Economic and Social Development Programme"

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Government of Japan and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) provides grant aid of 510 million yen to provide smart water meters and related equipment to Water and Sanitation Agency, Faisalabad (WASA Faisalabad). On May 14, 2025, in Islamabad, Government of Japan and JICA signed the Exchange of Notes (E/N) and the Grant Agreement (G/A) with Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the "Economic and Social Development Programme". In Faisalabad, the third most populous city in Pakistan, WASA Faisalabad is responsible for providing water services. However, the residents are unable to enjoy sufficient water services, and water is only available for about six hours a day. One of the reasons is that the water tariff is a flat rate system in which the water tariff does not change regardless of how much water customers use, which leads to customers wasting water. As a result, WASA Faisalabad's water tariff revenue has not increased, making it impossible to renovate or expand facilities. Through technical cooperations and other grant aid projects, Japan has been supporting WASA Faisalabad in expanding water supply for shifting from a flat rate system to a metering rate system



in which water charges are based on the amount of water consumption through the installation of water meters to increase water revenues. This programme will provide 8,400 smart water meters to WASA Faisalabad, promoting WASA Faisalabad's shift to a metering rate system, establishing an efficient bill collection system and water distribution system, and achieving digital transformation of water supply in Faisalabad. This programme will contribute to improving water services in Faisalabad, and ultimately to improving the public health and living environment of citizens, and the realization of SDGs Goal 6 "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all." At the signing ceremony, Ambassador AKAMATSU stated, "We hope the water supply services in Faisalabad will further improve through this grant aid, and ultimately the public health and living environment will improve. Japan will continue to cooperate with Pakistan in the area of water." Mr. Miyata, JICA Pakistan Chief Representative of JICA Pakistan Office stated, "We hope that the smart water meters will promote digital transformation (DX) of the water supply and improve water services in Faisalabad." Through this grant aid, Government of Japan and JICA will contribute to the supply of safe water in Pakistan.

Stand-off with India

Erdogan appreciates
Pak policy of dialogue

"We highly appreciate the prudent, patient policy of the Pakistani state that prioritizes dialogue and reconciliation in resolving disputes," Erdogan wrote on X

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday emphasising bilateral brotherly ties, appreciated Pakistan's prudent policy that prioritized dialogue and reconciliation in resolving disputes.

"We highly appreciate the prudent, patient policy of the Pakistani state that prioritizes dialogue and reconciliation in resolving disputes," Erdogan wrote on X, responding to Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's post, in which he praised Türkiye's role in promoting peace in South Asia. He said that Ankara placed "great importance" on Pakistan's peace, stability, and prosperity. Erdogan said that the "brotherhood" between Ankara and Islamabad, "which is a rare blessing for only a few nations in the world," was "one of the most beautiful examples of true friendship." Extending "heartfelt greetings" to the Pakistanis, the Turkish leader expressed Türkiye's solidarity with Pakistan "in both good times and bad." Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz had thanked President Erdogan for his strong

support and unwavering solidarity with Pakistan.

"Pakistan is proud of its long-standing, time-tested, and abiding fraternal ties with Türkiye that have grown stronger with each new challenge. I am particularly grateful for His Excellency's constructive role and concerted efforts in promoting peace in South Asia," the prime minister wrote on X, commenting on President Erdogan's earlier comments before the cabinet meeting he chaired on Tuesday. At the cabinet meeting, he hailed the recently declared ceasefire between Pakistan and India, urging both sides to avoid further provocations moving forward.

"We took a very clear stance both on the heinous terrorist attack in (Indian-administered) Jammu and Kashmir and on the missile strikes targeting Pakistan. While openly declaring our support for the brotherly people of Pakistan, we also made intense efforts to de-escalate the tension, which had risen to very dangerous levels," he said. He expressed hope that the calm achieved via the ceasefire will also help facilitate the resolution of all other issues between the two nations, especially the water dispute.

NATO hatches deal
on higher spending

Trump has piled on pressure ahead of the summit by insisting he wants NATO to agree to devote five percent of GDP to defence – a level no member, including the United States, currently reaches

BRUSSELS: NATO foreign ministers meeting in Antalya from Wednesday will look to forge a compromise deal on ramping up defence spending as allies scramble to satisfy US President Donald Trump's demand to agree to five percent of GDP at a summit next month. The two-day gathering in the sun-baked Turkish seaside resort comes as diplomatic intrigue swirls over a possible meeting across the country in Istanbul between Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia's Vladimir Putin. But it will be the internal wrangling over NATO's spending target that dominates the meat of the debate Thursday among foreign ministers with just over six weeks before leaders come face-to-face with Trump in The Hague.

Trump has piled on pressure ahead of the summit by insisting he wants NATO to agree to devote five percent of GDP to defence – a level no member, including the United States, currently reaches. The volatile former reality TV star has rattled European allies worried about the menace from Russia by threatening not to protect countries that, in his eyes, don't spend enough. In a bid to prevent him blowing up the alliance, NATO boss Mark Rutte has floated a proposal for allies to commit to 3.5 percent of direct military spending by 2032, as well as another 1.5 percent of broader security-related expenditure. That would hand Trump the headline figure he's demanding while giving enough wiggle room to European allies who are struggling just to reach NATO's current spending threshold of two percent. "Trump will be able claim victory and say that he got NATO to spend five percent," one senior NATO diplomat, talking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. "In reality it will be more complicated than that – but that will be the essential political message from the summit." – Agencies

NA Speaker
condemns
IED attack

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Wednesday strongly condemned the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast outside the ancestral residence of Member of the National Assembly and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Mubarak Zeb, in Bajaur.

"It is by the grace of Allah Almighty that no loss of life occurred during the blast at Mubarak Zeb's home," the Speaker said.

He extended his best wishes to Mubarak Zeb and his family and expressed relief over their safety.

The Speaker directed the relevant authorities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to conduct a transparent investigation into the incident and bring the perpetrators of this malicious act to justice.

He further emphasized the need to ensure the security of all members of the National Assembly and to provide them with maximum protection.

European Union
agrees 17th package
of sanctions on Russia

BRUSSELS: The EU on Wednesday approved a fresh package of sanctions on Russia, clamping down on its "shadow" oil fleet, as Europe threatens further punishment if Moscow does not agree to a Ukraine truce. The new measures against the Kremlin – the 17th round of sanctions from the EU since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine – were in the pipeline before European leaders issued their latest ultimatum to Moscow over US-led peace efforts. Diplomats representing the EU's 27 member states approved the package at a meeting in Brussels, according to the Polish presidency of the bloc. The package – set to be formally adopted on Tuesday – includes blacklisting some 200 oil tankers used to circumvent curbs on Russian oil exports.

Companies in countries including Vietnam, Serbia and Turkey accused of helping supply goods to the Russian military are also set to face restrictions. Dozens of Russian officials are to be added to the nearly 2,400 people and entities already facing visa bans and asset freezes. The package also brings sanctions on Russian individuals over cyberattacks, human rights abuses and sabotage in Europe. Officials admit that the latest round of sanctions against Moscow are relatively limited compared to previous packages as the EU finds it more difficult to agree targets. Further to these measures, EU leaders have threatened Russia with "massive sanctions" if it doesn't agree to a 30-day ceasefire proposal backed by the United States. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz warned Russia on Tuesday that it would face additional European sanctions if there was no "real progress" this week towards peace in Ukraine. Merz urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss a Ukraine ceasefire and peace with President Volodymyr Zelensky in Istanbul on Thursday. US President Donald Trump has said he could attend talks in Turkey if Putin and Zelensky sit down, but so far, there has been no indication from the Kremlin that Putin will attend. – Agencies

Pakistan urges UNSC to urgently
act to end Palestinians' suffering

"The humanitarian tragedy (in the Occupied Palestinian Territory) has reached catastrophic proportions," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member Council

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: With Gaza under a complete aid blockade by Israel for more than two months, Pakistan has called on the UN Security Council and act with "urgency" to end the suffering of the Palestinian people and bring the long-awaited justice to them. "The humanitarian tragedy (in the Occupied Palestinian Territory) has reached catastrophic proportions," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member Council on Tuesday. "We, this Council, and those most responsible, are being judged, and will be judged in posterity; Let us come together, and act, united, in the interest of peace, for the sake of humanity," he said during a briefing on the humanitarian situation and the protection of aid workers in Gaza. At the outset, Thomas Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that "Israel is deliberately and unashamedly imposing inhumane conditions on civilians in the Occupied Pal-

Russia, China, UK reject
US-Israeli aid plan

DNA

LONDON: Israeli forces intensify attacks on Gaza, killing at least 51 Palestinians since midnight, medics say. Victims include 45 who were killed in north Gaza, reported Al Jazeera. Russia, China and the UK have rejected a US-Israeli plan for distributing aid in Gaza, instead urging Israel to lift its two-month blockade on Gaza.

estonian Territory." For more than 10 weeks, "nothing has entered Gaza – no food, medicine, water or tents," he noted. Fletcher urged the international community to reflect on what it will tell future generations about action taken "to stop the 21st century atrocity to which we bear daily witness in Gaza." He wondered, for example, if "we will use those empty words: 'We did all we could,'" and urged the Council to act decisively to prevent genocide from happening.

In his remarks, Ambassador Asim, the Pakistani envoy, commended Fletcher for his "sobering and deeply troubling" briefing.

"What we are witnessing is not incidental – it is the systematic destruction of a civilian population; the deliberate use of starvation; the relentless siege; and the targeted and methodical dismantling of humanitarian architecture," he said. "This is something that Israel, the occupying power, is doing 'deliberately and unashamedly' as Mr. Fletcher has put it," the Pakistani envoy pointed out. "Over 2 million people, half of them children, are enduring the unendurable. Aid is blocked, hospitals have collapsed, and families are trapped amid rubble and despair. Famine is no longer looming – it is present. One in every three children under two years is acutely malnourished." Meanwhile, the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) snapshot released by WFP presents a grim reality, with 470,000 people in Gaza facing catastrophic hunger, and the entire population experiencing acute food insecurity, he said. The WFP has exhausted its last food stocks to support hot meals kitchens for families on 25 April.

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