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**PM Shehbaz directs to formulate early agro-industry policy**

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**Political process essential for peace in Yemen**

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## Shehbaz talks to Ilham Aliyev

# Pak will always remember support of Azerbaijan: PM

The Prime Minister emphasized that Pakistan had agreed to the ceasefire understanding with India in the interest of regional peace, and remained committed to upholding it

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with H.E. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, this afternoon. During their warm and cordial conversation, the Prime Minister conveyed his profound gratitude to President Aliyev for resolutely standing with Pakistan during the recent crisis in South Asia. He said President Aliyev's steadfast support was yet another demonstration of his great love and affection for the people of Pakistan. The Prime Minister also thanked the brotherly people of Azerbaijan for their overwhelming expression of solidarity with Pakistan. This has once again demonstrated the abiding friendship between the two nations, which had always stood by each other as true brothers, he added. The Prime Minister emphasized that Pakistan had agreed to the ceasefire understanding with India in the interest of regional peace, and remained committed to upholding it. However, he expressed his concern over the recent provocative statements by the Indian leadership, and affirmed that in face of any future aggression, Pakistan would resolutely defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. He stressed

## PM says six Indian planes were shot down

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday expressing his concern over the recent provocative statements by the Indian leadership, affirmed that in face of any future aggression, Pakistan would resolutely defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. While talking to PAF officers and jawans the prime minister disclosed that six Indian planes were shot down by Pakistani jets. Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Minister of Defence, Minister of Planning & Development, Minister of Information, Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) and the Chief of the Naval Staff, visited the Pakistan Air Force's operational base at Kamra today. During the visit, the Prime Minister received a comprehensive briefing on the operational preparedness and combat capabilities of the Pakistan Air Force. He engaged with frontline personnel—including pilots, engineers, and technical staff and conveyed profound appreciation for their professionalism, precision, and steadfast dedication to national defence. — DNA

that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was the root cause of instability in South Asia, which should be resolved in accordance with the UN Security Council's resolutions. In this regard, he conveyed his profound thanks to President Aliyev for his country's steadfast and principled support to the Kashmir Cause. On Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations, the Prime Minister highlighted the special, time-tested and brotherly relations between the

two countries. He said Pakistan was fully committed to elevate this friendship to a mutually beneficial economic partnership. In this context, he expressed satisfaction at the progress being made to finalize proposals related to investment worth USD 2 billion by Azerbaijan in different sectors of Pakistan. He also renewed to President Aliyev a most cordial invitation to

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## Amid media reports

# PTI rubbishes reports 'Imran has made a deal'

"Political issues must be resolved through dialogue," says PTI's Barrister Gohar

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has emphasised the need for dialogue to address political matters, saying that all such issues should be resolved through talks. Speaking to the media outside the Parliament House on Wednesday, Barrister Gohar reaffirmed his party's stance on seeking reconciliation through political means rather than confrontation. In his remarks, Gohar distanced the party from any behind-the-scenes arrangements, stating categorically that "no deal has been made" with any quarters regarding the party's incarcerated founder, Imran Khan. "I completely deny reports that the PTI founder has entered into any deal," he said, stressing that political negotiation is the only acceptable path forward. "Imran Khan has never shared his internal discussions publicly, and I will continue to uphold that confidentiality," he remarked, when asked about details of his recent meeting with Khan in Adiala jail.

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## Bilawal Bhutto Zardari says India may not uphold ceasefire

DNA

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Thursday that they fear that the ceasefire may not be upheld by India, however, he admitted that a ceasefire has been held between both nations despite a series of public statements. He said that the ceasefire is a major test for US President Donald Trump and the prime ministers of both countries. The PPP chairman added that Pakistan wants the resolution of all disputes, including the Kashmir issue, via dialogue. He also said that he believes that talks will also include the Indus Waters Treaty.

# Trump says 'getting close' to deal to avoid Iran action

"We're in very serious negotiations with Iran for long-term peace," says US president during his visit to UAE

CENTRELINE REPORT

DUBAI: US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that the United States was getting very close to securing a nuclear deal with Iran, and Tehran had "sort of" agreed to the terms. "We're in very serious negotiations with Iran for long-term peace," Trump said on a tour of the Gulf, according to a shared pool report by AFP. "We're getting close to maybe doing a deal without having to do this... there (are) two steps to doing this, there is a very, very nice step and there is the violent step, but I don't want to do it the second way," he said. An Iranian source familiar with the negotiations said there were still gaps to bridge in the talks with the United States. Fresh talks between Iranian and US negotiators to resolve disputes over Tehran's nuclear programme ended in Oman on Sunday with further negotiations planned, officials said, as Tehran publicly insisted on continuing its uranium enrichment. Though Tehran and Washington have both said they prefer diplomacy to resolve the decades-long nuclear dispute, they remain divided on several red lines that negotiators will have to circumvent to reach a new deal and avert future military action.

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## Pak hails US decision to lift sanctions against Syria

DNA

PAKISTAN welcomes the United States' decision to lift sanctions from Syria, marking a pivotal step towards regional stability and economic recovery. Pakistan has consistently advocated for constructive engagement and dialogue. The easing of sanctions is expected to facilitate economic growth, improve access to essential services, and support the rebuilding efforts of the Syrian authorities. We commend the commitment of all countries, in particular the US, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, working constructively towards a peaceful Syria, the foreign ministry said. Pakistan supports a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned resolution and remains steadfast in its support for Syria's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, it added.



ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, accompanied by Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir and the Chief of the Naval Staff, visited the Pakistan Air Force's operational base at Kamra, on Thursday. — DNA

## Dar says Pak-India ceasefire extended till May 18

Development came during hotline contact between Pakistan, India DGMOs on May 14: Dar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Ishaq Dar on Thursday confirmed that the US-brokered ceasefire between nuclear powers Pakistan and India had been extended until May 18. Addressing the Senate, Dar, who also holds the foreign affairs portfolio, said that the development came during a hotline contact between the director general of military operations (DGMO) of the two sides on May 14. After the US brokered a ceasefire between the nuclear-armed countries, Pakistan's Director General Military Operations (DGMO) Major General Kashif Abdullah and his Indian

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## FO spokesman says

# Pakistan capable of 'detering India sans nuclear blackmail'

Islamabad strongly condemns Indian defence minister's remarks on its nuclear arsenal

ALI FIRQAN

ISLAMABAD: In a loud and clear message to its eastern neighbour, Pakistan said on Thursday that its conventional capabilities are sufficient to deter India, without resorting to the self-imposed "nuclear blackmail" that New Delhi suffers from. The nuclear-armed nation's response came after Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Pakistan's nuclear arsenal should be brought under the surveillance of the UN's nuclear agency. "These irresponsible remarks reveal his profound insecurity and frustration regarding Pakistan's effective defence and deterrence against Indian aggression through conventional means," Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said in a statement. The nuclear-armed rivals ended their worst military conflict in nearly three decades with a ceasefire announcement on Saturday.

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## Diplomats briefed about ceasefire

Amna also talked about Indian baseless accusations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary, Amna Baloch, briefed the Islamabad-based diplomatic missions on the recent developments in Pakistan-India relations. The Foreign Secretary apprised the diplomatic corps of the implementation and progress of the ceasefire announced on 10 May 2025. She underscored that, as a goodwill

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## Briefs

### JUI leader targeted in explosion

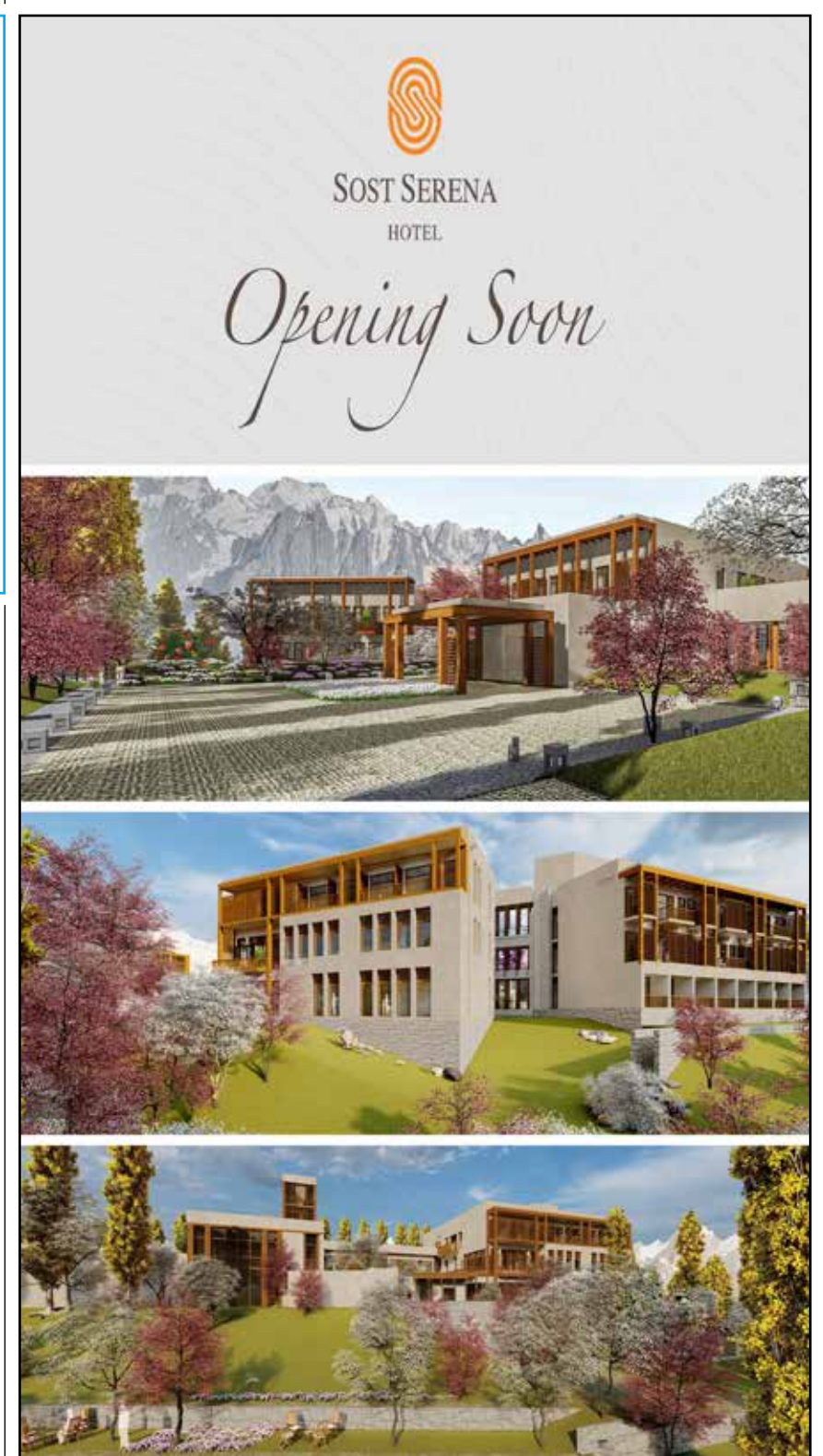
BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: A powerful explosion targeted the vehicle of local JUI-F leader Maulana Noorullah on Thursday near a seminary in the lower South Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, police said. The explosion hit Maulana Noorullah's car near Shahzad Madrassah, adjacent to a police station in the district's Azam Warsak market. According to a police statement, the bomb attack was carried out to target Maulana Noorullah, who remained unharmed. Police confirmed the incident and said there were no casualties in the explosion. Security forces cordoned off the area and started an investigation. According to a video later released by the JUI-F, Maulana Noorullah told his supporters that he was accompanied by local party leaders Maulana Ishaq and Maulana Amanullah when the blast occurred.

### 'Indus Water Treaty to remain in abeyance'

DNA

INDIAN External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday said India's relation with Pakistan would be strictly bilateral, adding that Indus Waters Treaty would remain in abeyance until talks with Pakistan on terrorism is completed. "The Indus Waters Treaty is held in abeyance and will continue to be held in abeyance until the cross-border terrorism by Pakistan is credibly and irrevocably stopped," said the Indian foreign minister while speaking to the media in New Delhi.



# Sukkur-Hyderabad-Karachi Motorway top priority: Aurangzeb

“This project will be reflected not only in the PSDP but also supported through foreign funding and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models,” he said adding that groundwork is underway to begin the project in the next fiscal year

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday assured the National Assembly that the Sukkur-Hyderabad-Karachi Motorway is essential for Pakistan's economic connectivity and will be completed at all costs. Responding to concerns raised by lawmakers, the minister said the project has been prioritized and will move forward with funding either through foreign sources or the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). He said the federal budget is currently being finalized, and the Minister for Planning will be informed about the importance of the project so that appropriate allocations can be made. Minister of State for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Chaudhry Armaghan Subhani while responding to calling attention notice

over the project's exclusion from the PSDP 2024-25, he clarified that although the motorway did not make it to this year's development portfolio, he assured members that the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway (M-6) would be included in the PSDP 2025-26 and treated as a priority initiative under multiple funding mechanisms.

He added that the Ministry of Communications has already proposed Rs 10 billion for the M-6 in the next PSDP, with the figure subject to revision. “This project will be reflected not only in the PSDP but also supported through foreign funding and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models,” he said adding that groundwork is underway to begin the project in the next fiscal year. He informed the House that global financial institutions, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), are interested in co-financing the mo-

torway and that negotiations are in progress. Dismissing allegations of regional favoritism, he said the M-6 is not a Punjab-centric project, pointing out that only an 18-kilometer stretch falls in Punjab, while the rest covers Sindh and Balochistan, including key routes like Karachi to Quetta. He confirmed that the motorway project is in an advanced planning phase, with land acquisition and preliminary work already started. “This project is part of our government's broader motorway network vision initiated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. We are fully committed to completing the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway,” he said. The minister said that the motorway will not only bridge a crucial infrastructure gap but also promote economic growth and strengthen regional connectivity.

## CDA chief directs MPO to maximize in-house resources

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and DG Civil Defense Muhammad Ali Randhwa along with Member Engineering Nafasat Raza paid a surprise visit to review ongoing work at the parking area designated for Pak Secretariat in order to ease out the parking issue of the employees and visitors of Pak Secretariat and the adjacent areas. The relevant officers from the Engineering Wing and the Machinery Pool Organization (MPO) briefed Chairman CDA regarding the establishment of the new parking area. During the visit, Chairman CDA was briefed that the parking area is being developed in the area of about 133729 square feet which would accommodate more than 1000 cars in the new parking. This initiative would help in addressing the long standing issue of the parking which is being faced by the employees and visitors of the Pak Secretariat and other adjacent areas. It was highlighted that the parking is being developed through the in-house capability of MPO and resources of CDA. During the visit, Chairman CDA directed the Machinery Pool Organization (MPO) to further accelerate its efforts using in-house resources and capabilities. Chairman CDA said that this initiative reflects CDA's commitment to self-reliance, efficiency, and capacity building within its departments. Recognizing the challenges faced by the visitors and government offices in the capital, he stated that this initiative would address the parking issues especially regarding parking facilities around the Secretariat and its adjacent buildings. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhwa expressed his appreciation for the MPO actively utilizing its available machinery, manpower, and expertise. Chairman CDA instructed to develop the required parking infrastructure under the MPO's own supervision, minimizing dependency on external contractors.—DNA



RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf visits Combined Military Hospital (CMH) and pays tribute to injured troops of operation Bunyanum Marsoos.

## 37 officers promoted to inspector rank in Punjab Police

LAHORE: A rank-pinning ceremony was held at the Central Police Office on Thursday where 37 officers were formally promoted to the rank of inspector. Inspector General of Punjab Police Dr Usman Anwar conferred inspector ranks on 37 officers – 30 from Rawalpindi, five from Sahiwal and two from Sargodha – during a ceremony attended by their families, according to a Punjab Police spokesperson. IG Usman extended his congratulations to the newly promoted officers and their families, emphasizing the importance of professionalism and teamwork in addressing the challenges of terrorism, extremism and crime. He said that training courses for further promotions from sub-inspector to inspector have commenced and a promotion board was scheduled for the first week of September. Usman Anwar also announced plans for promotions to 30 SP-rank and over 70 DSP-rank positions. An additional 400 inspector-level seats will also be made available, he added. Dr Usman said that new specialized units, including Cyber Crime and Punjab Tourism Police, were being established to improve policing in the province. He urged officers and personnel to maintain updated Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) and service records, reiterating that the department aims to complete 5,000 promotions this year.—APP

## Chairman WAPDA reviews construction on Dasu Dam, Power House

PESHAWAR: Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) on Thursday visited Dasu Hydropower Project, being constructed on River Indus in Upper Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During his day-long visit, the Chairman reviewed construction progress on key sites, which include River Diversion System, Main Dam, Power House and relocated Karakoram Highway (KKH-1). The Project team, comprising GM/PD Dasu Hydropower Project, the Consultants and the Contractors, briefed the Chairman about site-wise targets and achievements. It was briefed that construction activities on 20 work fronts are progressing at a good pace. Several critical targets have recently been completed, while a

number of milestones are about to be achieved. As per the details, excavation of right and left abutment of the Main Dam has been completed. Likewise, extended right bypass tunnel and right-side open channel are also ready for operation to pass excess water during the high flow season. After completion of the upstream and downstream starter (coffer) dams, excavation of the Main Dam's foundation is in progress and will be completed in August 2025. Yet another critical activity of placing RCC in the Main Dam is likely to be started by December this year. Excavation of the Power House will be completed in January 2026, while 25 Km-long KKH-1 with seven tunnels and three bridges will also be completed in February 2026. Electricity

generation from the Project is scheduled in 2027. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman urged upon the Consultants and the Contractors to expedite their efforts for completion of the Project as per the timelines. In second leg of the visit, the Chairman participated in a Jirga with local elders. Detailed deliberations were made on payment issues under Enhanced Self-Managed Relocation (ESMR) Package and implementation of LADS. The Chairman said that WAPDA stands committed for socio-economic development of the people hailing from the Project area. He added that WAPDA is spending hefty amount on resettlement of the locals, environmental management and social development in the Project area. – APP

## Court Notice

In the court of Faiza Riaz Civil Judge 1st Class Kharian

Title: Bushra Bibi Versus Nikah Registrar etc.

Notice to: 3-Itikhar Ahmad S/o. Noor Hussain cast Gujjar R/o. Chak Perana Tehsil Kharian Distt Gujrat.

Suit for Declaration with consequential Relief

Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 22-05-2025, otherwise case will be decided ex parte.

## COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Shahzada Kamran Civil Judge Family Court Rawalpindi. application Guardian. Samia Khan versus Saim Malik S/o Malik Imran Father of minor Resident House No. 676 Street No. 43 Block C PWD Housing Society Islamabad, Public at Large. Whereas respondent cannot be served in ordinary manner so you are inform to attend the Court personal through counsel or attorney on 30-05-2025 at 8 am to avoid ex-parte proceedings.

## Three arrested in Hawala Hundi operation

LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Corporate Crime Circle Lahore arrested three individuals involved in illegal hawala and currency exchange activities during a raid at Race Course Road. A spokesperson for the FIA said, the arrested individuals have been identified as Muhammad Mohsin, Mubeen Rashid and Zahid. These suspects were found to be part of an international hawala net-

work, which operates in illegal currency exchanges. The investigation revealed that other accomplices of the suspects were operating the hawala network from Dubai. According to preliminary investigations, the suspects were caught red-handed, while receiving and recording funds from their hawala operations on Race Course Road in Lahore. During the raid, the authorities seized a substantial

amount of money, including 12.38 million Pakistani rupees, 20,110 British pounds, 457 Saudi riyals and 167 US dollars. Additionally, several key pieces of evidence were recovered, including chequebook, rubber stamps, receipts and mobile phones, all linked to the illegal hawala operation. The suspects failed to provide satisfactory explanations regarding the seized currencies. Following their arrest, the FIA initiated further investigations and was conducting raids to apprehend their remaining accomplices. Director FIA Lahore, Sarfaraz Khan Virk, emphasized that individuals involved in activities harming the national economy will not be spared.—APP

## Ulemas approve Quran app, declare Friday as ‘Day of Gratitude’

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Thursday held a significant conference of the National Ulama and Mashaikh Council and brought together prominent religious scholars from across the country, representing various schools of thought, to deliberate on crucial national and religious matters at a local hotel. The conference featured extensive discussions on the proposed National Ulama and Mashaikh Council Bill. In a notable development, the participants approved the English translation of the Holy Quran, and the official launch of a dedicated Quran mobile application also took place during the event. Prominent religious figures including Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, Maulana Hanif Jalandhri, Maulana Abdul Haq, and Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman and Badshahi Mosque Khateeb, Maulana Syed Abdul Khair Azad addressed the gathering. The scholars paid tribute to the sacrifices made by the armed forces of Pakistan and emphasized national unity. Speaking at the occasion, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf announced that all recommendations put forward during the conference would be conveyed to the prime minister. “The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony takes the suggestions presented today seriously and will work towards implementing them,” he stated announcing plans to revive the existing Cell for the Protection of the Sanctity of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), and to organize similar conferences across other provinces and cities. Sardar Yousaf also strongly condemned the ongoing oppression in Palestine and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, urging the global academic and religious community to play their role in advocating for the oppressed. He reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the Kashmiri people in accordance with UN resolutions. Expressing gratitude to all scholars who traveled from distant areas to attend the event, he noted that while the conference was originally expected to be held after Hajj, efforts by the ministry's team enabled its early convening. He expressed hope for a successful Hajj season ahead and reassured the religious community that the ministry belongs to them. Calling for religious harmony, the minister urged scholars from all sects to promote peace and brotherhood in the Muslim Ummah and refrain from issuing divisive Fatwas. Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, while addressing the gathering, praised the role of religious leaders, mosques, and seminary students in uniting the nation during times of aggression. “When Modi attacked our madaris, I declared then his game was over,” he said, attributing Pakistan's recent defensive success to the prayers and resolve of scholars and citizens alike. Usmani assured that all recommendations from the conference, including those related to the Madaris Bill, would be conveyed directly to the prime minister.—DNA

## Govt empowering youth for brighter tomorrow: Fahad

RAWALPINDI: In a significant development aimed at youth empowerment and national progress, Fahad Shahbaz, the Focal Person for the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP) Punjab, made a special visit to Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) here Thursday to engage with students and highlight the government's latest initiatives in line with the vision of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif. Addressing the audience, Fahad Shahbaz reiterated the Prime Minister's vision of a progressive Pakistan where the youth are seen not just as the future but as active agents of change in the present. He emphasized that the government of Pakistan is deeply invested in creating

avenues for young people to succeed and has introduced a series of initiatives under the PMYP umbrella to provide critical support to students and early-career professionals. He highlighted PM Laptop Scheme, saying it has already enabled thousands of students across Pakistan to access modern educational tools, enhance their research capabilities, and bridge the digital divide that has historically hindered progress in many sectors. Fahad noted that the world is rapidly moving towards digitalization and that Pakistani youth must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to remain competitive. In this context, he unveiled the Youth's Digital Hub, a comprehensive online platform

that offers a one-stop solution for young Pakistanis to access educational resources, track scholarships suited to their academic interests, explore job opportunities, and learn about government incentive programs. He further elaborated that the Digital Hub allows students to craft a personalized path toward their careers, aligned with national development priorities and global trends. He encouraged all students to register on the platform and make full use of the tools provided. In his welcoming address, the Vice Chancellor RMU, Prof. Muhammad Umer appreciated the government's initiative to prioritize youth empowerment and described it as a timely and much-needed step in the

right direction. He emphasized that Rawalpindi Medical University aligns itself with the national vision of equipping the young generation with the tools necessary to thrive in a competitive global landscape. “The future is in the hands of our youth,” he said, and said that it is heartening to see our leadership investing in their capacity building. “We at RMU are fully committed to leaving no stone unturned in supporting our students through innovative programs and sustained guidance for lifelong success,” the VC said. He further praised the PMYP for playing a critical role in enabling young people to transform their ambitions into achievements. He expressed pride in RMU's

ongoing projects in energy conservation, environmental protection, and rainwater harvesting, which, he noted, align with national and global sustainability goals. “These initiatives,” he added, “not only empower students academically but also socially and environmentally, molding them into well-rounded contributors to national progress.” Later, the focal person also conducted an open question and answer session, giving students the opportunity to directly interact with the PMYP leadership and voice their queries and suggestions. The session proved to be both enlightening and encouraging, as students expressed appreciation for the government's proactive engagement.—DNA

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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

May 25/Jordan Independence Day

May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day

May 28/Ethiopia National Day

May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day

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Bomb Disposal.....15

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Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

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Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

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Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada chairing meeting of the 59th Board of Directors (BoD) of PHA Foundation.

# UK,Pak step up cooperation against illegal immigration

To tighten border control, Minister Naqvi announced that deported individuals involved in illegal migration would now be included in the passport control list for five years. The proposal to add sex offenders to this list is also under consideration

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Kingdom have agreed to enhance their cooperation to tackle illegal immigration, on-line child harassment, and other serious crimes. The commitment was reaffirmed during a high-level meeting in Islamabad, chaired by Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, where officials from both countries reviewed progress under the UK-Pakistan Serious Crime and Law Enforcement Programme (UPSCALE). The meeting focused on reviewing progress under the UK-Pakistan Serious Crime and Law Enforcement Programme (UPSCALE). Officials from UPSCALE, including Neil Fowler, Ken Daines, Habib Gul, and Fizza Waheed, participated in the session along with senior officers from Pakistan's Ministry of Interior and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). The participants reviewed actions taken to address key issues such as illegal immigration, online child harassment, mutual legal assistance, extradition, criminal record sharing, illegal funding, and anti-narcotics measures.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi emphasized the need for stronger coordination and joint actions to curb illegal immigration and drug trafficking. "Illegal immigration is a top priority, and coordinated efforts must be made to prevent it," he said. The minister also stressed the importance of dealing firmly with online child harassment. "Immediate and strict action must be taken in such cases, and all available resources will be used to protect children online," Naqvi stated. To tighten border control, Minister Naqvi announced that deported individuals involved in illegal migration would now be included in the passport control list for five years. The proposal to add sex offenders to this list is also under consideration. Acknowledging the UK's support, Naqvi welcomed continued collaboration. "Mutual cooperation is essential to combat illegal immigration. We value British assistance in this regard," he noted. He also highlighted improvements made in mutual legal assistance rules between the two countries, which have led to more effective outcomes. The meeting was briefed on the progress of the UPSCALE programme, including the operational status of a dedicated delivery unit and the establishment of Pakistan's first sex offender registry. Naqvi pointed out that the Anti-Narcotics Force's capabilities have significantly improved under the programme and stressed the need to maintain the UPSCALE initiative on a long-term basis. The meeting concluded with a decision to conduct monthly progress reviews of the programme to ensure consistent advancement in combating organized crime and strengthening law enforcement.

Tobias visits ICCI to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan

Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, briefed the visitors on the Chamber's mission to support economic development, policy advocacy, and facilitate member businesses across multiple sectors

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer of German/Swiss Investment Fund, Tobias Hundertmark, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Thursday to explore promising avenues of investment in Pakistan. He termed the interaction with the Chamber as highly productive and expressed his firm's strong interest in joint ventures, particularly in the automobile manufacturing sector. Highlighting his firm's global experience in mergers and acquisitions, Hundertmark revealed plans to establish manufacturing plants for heavy military-grade trucks as well as commercial light and heavy vehicles in Pakistan. He praised Pakistan as an emerging investment destination, citing its market potential and strategic location. He was accompanied by Sohail S. Kiani, CEO of Canadian investment and trading firm S.A.R.F. Investment LLC, Mansoor Shaikh, representing a well-known textile family, and Mahr Shaban of Advance Era Tech. Welcoming the delegation, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, briefed the visitors on the Chamber's mission to support economic development, policy advocacy, and facilitate member businesses across multiple sectors. He emphasized the export potential of Pakistan in areas such as sports goods, surgical instruments, minerals, pharmaceuticals, and textiles, and highlighted Islamabad's growing strengths in IT, education, real estate, and services despite prevailing economic challenges. He assured full support for facilitating future collaborations. Advisor to the ICCI President, Mr. Naeem Siddiqui, elaborated on the Chamber's initiatives and the vast landscape of investment opportunities available in Pakistan. Mansoor Shaikh and Mahar Sunhan also shared insights into their companies' operations and expressed their commitment to contribute to Pakistan's economic growth through strategic investments. The meeting was attended by ICCI Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Executive Members Imran Minhas, Waseem Chaudhry, Zulqurnain Abbasi, and Raja Naveed Satti—DNA

Govt committed to facilitating overseas Pakistanis

The minister reiterated that no country is treating Pakistan with discrimination and the government remains committed to safeguarding the rights and interests of its citizens abroad

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is taking concrete steps to address the needs and concerns of overseas Pakistanis, said Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry during a National Assembly session on Thursday. Responding to a question raised by MNA Syed Rafiullah, Dr. Chaudhry emphasized that overseas Pakistanis are a vital and respected segment of the nation. He said the government is taking concrete initiatives aimed at improving services for Pakistanis abroad and dismissed concerns about discriminatory treatment against Pakistan in any foreign country. He informed the House that the largest-ever Overseas Pakistanis Conference was recently held, reflecting the government's strong engagement with the diaspora. The increase in remittances, he added, is a clear indicator of trust and satisfaction among overseas Pakistanis regarding government services. Addressing concerns about documentation processes abroad, Dr. Tariq Fazal said that a new, transparent system has been introduced after repeated complaints about the previous manual certification procedures. Now, overseas Pakistanis can get their documents verified through courier services, online appointments, or walk-in facilities. He acknowledged some complaints regarding courier companies but stated the system is largely functioning effectively, with all relevant information available on the official web portal. In response to a supplementary question by Noor Alam Khan, the minister affirmed that Pakistani citizens with dual nationality have the right to vote and regularly exercise this right during elections. Regarding their representation in Parliament, he said the decision rests with the National Assembly and can be debated. The minister also noted the unwavering support overseas Pakistanis have shown during times of national crisis, particularly in response to Indian aggression. He clarified that deportations from foreign countries typically involve individuals lacking legal documents, overstaying visas, or engaging in unlawful activities—not due to discrimination. Answering Mahreen Razzaq Bhutto's question, he informed the House that the Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis is a significant body. Junaid Akbar was its chairman until he assumed a new role as Public Accounts Committee chairperson; a new chairman will be elected within a week. Responding to Muhammad Moeen Amin Pirzada, Dr. Chaudhry stated that courier companies were selected through an open tender process, and the inclusion of Pakistan Post in future tenders will be brought to the attention of relevant authorities. In reply to Iqbal Afridi, the minister said Community Welfare Officers have been appointed in Pakistani missions abroad to assist overseas nationals. These officers remain in contact with Pakistanis imprisoned overseas and help provide them with legal assistance. The minister reiterated that no country is treating Pakistan with discrimination and the government remains committed to safeguarding the rights and interests of its citizens abroad.

Book 'Boltey Kathey' launched

RAWALPINDI:The Punjab Council of the Arts, Rawalpindi, in collaboration with Potohari Adabi Sangat Kallar Syedan, organized a launching ceremony of the book "Boltey Kathey" (speaking inscriptions) by renowned poet, writer and broadcaster Abdul Rehman Kashif. The event was presided over by eminent literary figure Qayyum Tahir, with celebrated poet and critic Dr. Fozia Saher as the chief guest while Nusrat-ul-Nusrat was the guest of honor. Distinguished speakers including Prof. Jamal Zaidi, Abid Hussain Janjua, Naeem Akram Qureshi, Zeenat Abbasi and Director of Arts Council Sajjad Hussain highlighted the literary contributions and life of Abdul Rehman Kashif. The ceremony was elegantly anchored by Khair-un-Nisa Khairi attended by a large number of writers, poets, and literary enthusiasts. The participants appreciated Boltey Kathey as a valuable addition to contemporary Urdu literature and praised Abdul Rehman Kashif's unique style and thematic depth. —APP

RDA inflows rise to \$10.180b

ISLAMABAD:The inflow of remittances under Roshan Digital Account (RDA) has risen to US \$10.180 billion by the end of April 2025 as compared to US \$10.003 billion by March (2025) end. The data showed that the inflows of remittances during April were recorded at US\$ 177 million as compared to US\$ 235 million in March and US\$ 204 million in February 2025, according to the latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). These accounts provide innovative banking solutions to millions of Non-Resident Pakistanis (NRPs), including Non-Resident Pakistan Origin Card (POC) holders, seeking to undertake banking, payment, and investment activities in Pakistan.—APP

Summary sent for appointment of NCSW Chairperson

ISLAMABAD:The National Assembly was informed on Thursday that a summary for the appointment of the Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has been sent, while a Gender Parity Report has already been published under the commission's supervision. Responding to a question from MNA Dr. Shazia Sobia during the Question Hour, Parliamentary Secretary for Human Rights, Saba Sadiq, told the House that women constitute half of the country's population and are entitled to their rights as guaranteed by the Constitution and Islamic teachings. She stated that currently an interim chairperson is serving and the process for permanent appointment will be completed soon. "The commission's board is functional and meetings are being held regularly," she added—DNA

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## Briefs

## Efforts afoot to prevent dengue outbreak

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified its crackdown on dengue fever in the federal capital, taking strict measures to eliminate mosquito breeding sites across the city. According to DC Office, authorities have sealed multiple CNG stations, restaurants and under-construction buildings found violating anti-dengue regulations. Several individuals responsible for maintaining these premises have also been arrested for negligence. Deputy Commissioner Islamabad (DC) has issued clear directives for a zero-tolerance policy against those facilitating dengue spread. "We will not hesitate to take legal action against anyone found promoting conditions for mosquito breeding," the DC warned. The campaign comes as part of emergency measures to control the seasonal surge in dengue cases. Health officials have urged citizens to remove stagnant water from homes and workplaces to help curb the outbreak.—APP

## Reko Diq Project Talks underway on Saudi investment

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary Mian Khan Bugti informed the National Assembly on Thursday that discussions are currently ongoing regarding Saudi Arabia's potential investment in the Reko Diq mining project. So far, two meetings have been held between the concerned parties, but no final agreement has been reached. Responding to a question by MNA Mirza Ikhtiar Baig during the question hour session, Bugti said that negotiation teams from both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are engaged in dialogue, and the matter is progressing. "Once the talks reach a conclusive stage, the House will be duly informed," he assured. In response to a supplementary question by Shagufta Jumani, he clarified that no specific timeline has been set yet for the investment process.—APP

## IRSA releases 172,689 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 172,689 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 200,634 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1464.45 feet, which was 62.45 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 97,900 cusecs and 82,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1145.45 feet, which was 95.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 40,045 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal with participants at "UNICEF-WHO Industry consultation on local production of vaccines and pharmaceuticals session."

## Portuguese classic Guitarist, Pedro Jóia visiting Pakistan

Pedro Jóia presents a very solid and acclaimed artistic itinerary. As a soloist, he has performed with several orchestras and chamber groups from Portugal, Venezuela, Italy and China. His work is impacted by musical dimensions and influences from the rich Portuguese music environment but also from Brazil, Andalusia, Latin America, Brazil, Africa and Asia

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Acclaimed Portuguese classic guitarist and composer, Pedro Jóia, is visiting Pakistan from the 23rd till the 28th May, at the invitation of the Embassy of Portugal in Islamabad, supported by the Camões-Institute for Cooperation and Language I.P., and Emirates Airlines. Pedro Jóia will participate in the 2025 International Jazz Festival, with shows in Islamabad, Silk Road Culture Centre,



the 23rd, and Lahore, Alhambra Art Center, the 25th Bothe in Lahore and Islamabad the Portuguese classical guitarist and composer will participate in special recitals and jam sessions, masterclasses and interactions with the media. Pedro Jóia presents a very solid and acclaimed artistic itinerary. As a soloist, he has performed with several orchestras and chamber groups from Portugal, Venezuela, Italy and China. His work is impacted by musical dimensions and influences from the rich Portuguese music environment but also

from Brazil, Andalusia, Latin America, Brazil, Africa and Asia. In 2008 and 2021 he received the coveted Carlos Paredes Prize, as the best classic guitar player. He also has been the musical director, for 7 years, of Mariza, a very much renowned Portuguese Fado Artist. Pedro Jóia's visit is part of a broader initiative celebrating, in May, the International Day of the Portuguese Language and Cultures of the CPLP and also marks the opening of the Portugal National Day' program of celebrations in Pakistan.

## Misuse of tax exemptions in tribal areas drains public funds

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The business community has welcomed the restoration of the Sales Tax Amendment Act in the erstwhile FATA and PATA regions, calling it a great decision. The move will provide a level playing field to industries located in settled areas, which were unable to compete with those located in tribal areas, said Mirza Abdul Rehman, former Vice President of FPCCI and founder President of Attock Chamber of Commerce. Talking to the business community, he said that the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Provincially Administered

Tribal Areas (PATA) were granted special tax exemptions under constitutional arrangements intended to support economic development in these underdeveloped regions. However, he said, over the years, these exemptions were grossly misused, turning them into tools for tax evasion, money laundering, and commercial manipulation by influential business groups outside the region. Initially, these tax exemptions aimed to incentivize investment, boost local industry, and integrate marginalized areas into the national economy. However, he observed that the ground realities turned out to be very different. Mirza Abdul Rehman said

that instead of local tribesmen reaping the benefits, these tax exemptions became a haven for business mafias, politically connected individuals, and large industrialists based in other parts of Pakistan. Major industries, especially sugar mills, textile units, ghee, and steel re-rolling mills, were illegally registered under the names of locals from FATA and PATA while authorities turned a blind eye to this practice, which cost the exchequer billions. The crooked businessmen used the exempt status to avoid taxes that their competitors in settled areas were legally bound to pay. As a result, an unfair market advantage emerged, distorting com-

petition and discouraging legitimate business activity. The business leader informed that the government failed to introduce a regulatory mechanism that could distinguish between genuine local enterprises and those exploiting the system through fake documentation or proxy ownership. The issue became more pronounced after the merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018. Surprisingly, a five-year transitional period was granted for the continuation of exemptions, providing further opportunity for tax avoidance. Mirza Abdul Rehman said that these exemptions created a parallel economy.

## Ahsan affirms Pakistan's strong resolve to defend itself

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said that the nation has a strong belief in its ability to defend itself and to live as an equal among the world's nations. Speaking at certificate awards ceremony of 37th Senior Management Course, he said that Pakistan has done its utmost to prevent war, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the country is fully prepared to cooperate with any independent international investigation. Referring to recent tensions, the minister said that whether the incident was planned by the Indian leadership or carried out by extremist elements, it appears that there was a premeditated intent to achieve certain objectives. From the beginning, they ignored all warnings, and on May 7, they launched an operation inside Pakistan. The minister praised the response of the armed forces and the nation, saying, "The way our armed forces and people stood together will be remembered in history for a long time." He stressed that the recent events served as a reminder that success is not solely dependent on numbers or advanced technology, but on the courage and commitment of individuals. "Our pilots, Mashallah, and the entire eco-system successfully countered the extremists. This is a moment of immense pride for us all." Talking on the country's economic challenges, the minister recalled a critical moment on April 1, 2022, when, for the first time in history, the fourth-quarter release of the development budget was withheld. "Even during the time when Pakistan conducted its nuclear tests and faced international sanctions, we managed to fund our development budget for the entire year. Yet in FY 2022, the government was unable to release the final quarter's allocation," he said.—DNA

## IG visits motorway driving license authority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of National Highways & Motorway Police (NHMP), B.A. Nasir, on Thursday, visited the Motorway Driving Licensing Authority and conducted a detailed review of the modern licensing system and facilities. The Inspector General emphasised that the driving license issuance process must be transparent, efficient, and citizen-friendly to ensure that licenses are provided to the public promptly and with ease, a spokesperson for the NHMP said. He directed the staff to deliver uniform and high-quality services to all citizens and to further promote the use of modern technology to enhance overall performance. He appreciated the performance of the Motorway Driving Licensing Authority and stated that the Motorway Police are committed to providing the public with the highest standards of services. During the visit, he also listened to suggestions from the staff aimed at improvements and issued relevant instructions. B.A. Nasir stated that the Motorway Police will continue to improve the driving licensing system through reforms and modern facilities, enabling citizens to easily obtain high-quality driving licenses in the future.

## Syedaal calls for people-friendly budget

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan on Thursday urged the government to make the upcoming federal budget people-friendly, considering the country's current economic challenges. Speaking during a meeting with senators, members of provincial assemblies, parliamentarians, lawyers, students, tribal elders, and a delegation of children from Punjab, he highlighted the government's efforts, in partnership with coalition allies, to provide relief to the public. He pointed out that these efforts are beginning to show results, particularly through noticeable reductions in electricity tariffs, prices of essential items, and petroleum products. Syedaal Khan stressed the need for urgent measures to reduce the burden on people already affected by high inflation. He called for prioritizing key sectors such as education, health-care, and employment in the upcoming budget. He said Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is committed to delivering public relief and regularly consults with party leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, which has brought consistency and improvement in policymaking. The Deputy Chairman added that the country's security challenges are being addressed effectively through strategic planning, while steps are also being taken to guide the economy toward stability.—APP

## Ayaz visits Deputy Speaker's residence

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Thursday visited the residence of Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah to offer his heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of his paternal aunt. During the visit, the Speaker offered Fataha for the departed soul and prayed for her eternal peace. Expressing his sorrow, the Speaker termed the passing of the late aunt as an irreparable loss for the bereaved family. "In this hour of grief and sorrow, I stand in solidarity with the grieving family," said Ayaz Sadiq. He also prayed to Almighty Allah to elevate the ranks of the deceased in the hereafter and to grant patience and strength to the family to bear this profound loss.—APP

## Jazz to elevate fashion, lifestyle industry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Jazz, Pakistan's leading digital operator is set to enhance fashion and lifestyle retail with the launch of Zarr, a new digital marketplace. Building on its strong digital legacy – through industry-leading platforms like JazzCash, Garaj, Tamasha, SIMOSA, FikrFree, and GameNow – and a user base of over 100 million, Jazz is uniquely positioned to introduce an innovative e-commerce platform that seamlessly connects fashion and lifestyle brands with the right customers, said a news release. Derived from the Persian word "zar" meaning gold, Zarr will be Pakistan's ex-

clusive platform for top local and international fashion and lifestyle brands, offering unique discounts and product offerings not available elsewhere. Built in collaboration with Hanker Global, a leader in technology and marketing solutions, this dynamic marketplace leverages deep consumer insights to create a frictionless shopping experience. Zarr, designed as a collaborative ecosystem, will strengthen the fashion and retail industry by helping businesses expand their digital footprint and drive sales growth. Kazim Mujtaba, President Consumer Division at Jazz, highlighted the initiative's strategic importance, stating, "This is more than an expansion – it's a bold step

in Pakistan's digital and Jazz's ServiceCo evolution. With over 100 million Pakistanis connected through Jazz and its products, we understand consumer preferences like no other. With Zarr, our goal is to empower both buyers and businesses with a smarter, data-driven retail experience, connecting them at the right time and in the right place." Ali Fahd, Head of Marketing at Jazz, added, "Fashion is more than just style – it's a statement. With Zarr, we're empowering brands to make their mark in the digital space. By combining Jazz's data-driven approach with Hanker's expertise, we're not just launching a shopping destination; we're curating an ecosystem where fashion meets tech-

nology, enabling brands to thrive and customers to discover trends effortlessly." Omar Farooq, CEO at Hanker Global, terming Zarr as a timely breakthrough in Pakistan's evolving digital commerce ecosystem, commented, "Pakistan's e-commerce market has immense potential, but restrictions on dollar-based international media spends pose challenges. Zarr offers a powerful local alternative—an indigenous platform built on local data, digital infrastructure, and market insight. By helping fashion and lifestyle brands maximize sales through a homegrown marketplace, we're boosting brand performance and strengthening Pakistan's digital economy."

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## BRICS future and the prospect of Pakistan’s inclusion

THE BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) group has evolved over the years from a loosely tied association of emerging economies into a formidable global forum with growing geopolitical and economic influence. As the bloc expands its reach, the possibility of new members joining—particularly Pakistan—has gained momentum. Given Pakistan’s strategic location, its economic potential, and its increasing alignment with key BRICS members, particularly China and Russia, the time may be ripe for the country to consider integration into this emerging global consortium.

BRICS is often compared to well-established forums like the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). While the EU is a highly integrated economic and political union, and ASEAN focuses on regional stability and economic cooperation in Southeast Asia, BRICS offers a unique platform driven by global south solidarity. It aims to challenge the existing Western-dominated global financial and political systems, particularly institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This gives BRICS a more ideological and strategic edge, rather than being solely economic or regional.

With the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and discussions about a potential common currency to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar, BRICS is attempting to redefine global economic norms. It represents nearly 42% of the world’s population and over 25% of global GDP—figures that are hard to ignore. This growing influence makes BRICS an attractive bloc for countries like Pakistan, which often find themselves at the mercy of Western financial institutions and fluctuating diplomatic ties. Pakistan’s potential membership in BRICS would provide it with an alternative platform for economic engagement and diplomatic balancing. With its close partnership with China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and warming relations with Russia, Pakistan is already ideologically and strategically aligned with some of the BRICS core members. However, India’s presence in BRICS presents a challenge. The strained relations between Pakistan and India could complicate any near-term accession prospects, unless diplomatic channels are normalized. Furthermore, Pakistan must also present itself as a stable and forward-looking economy. The country’s internal political turmoil, economic volatility, and security concerns could act as deterrents for BRICS members who value economic resilience and cooperation. Stability and policy consistency are key prerequisites for any serious consideration. Nevertheless, BRICS is shifting from being a closed group to a more inclusive and diverse forum. The inclusion of countries like Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia in its recent expansion wave suggests a broader vision that Pakistan can potentially benefit from. Membership could provide Pakistan with greater access to developmental financing, trade opportunities, and a stronger voice in shaping global norms that better represent the interests of developing countries. In conclusion, while immediate entry into BRICS may be complicated by political and regional factors, the long-term prospect holds promise for Pakistan. A strategic pivot toward BRICS could complement Pakistan’s broader foreign policy goals, diversify its economic partnerships, and reduce reliance on Western institutions. For this to materialize, Pakistan must stabilize its domestic front and pursue proactive diplomacy with all BRICS members—including India. The future of global power dynamics may well depend on how such emerging alliances evolve, and Pakistan must position itself wisely within that transformation.

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## A welcome thaw – U.S.-China tariff row resolved

AFTER years of economic brinkmanship, the resolution of the long-standing tariff dispute between the United States and China marks a significant turning point in global trade dynamics. The tit-for-tat tariff war, which began in earnest during the Trump administration and continued with varying intensity through the Biden era, had disrupted global supply chains, strained diplomatic relations, and injected uncertainty into the world economy. Now, with both sides agreeing to roll back several key tariffs and engage in renewed economic dialogue, the global market is likely to breathe a sigh of relief. This agreement does not just represent the cessation of a commercial spat—it symbolizes the recognition by both powers that interdependence and cooperation are far more sustainable than economic isolationism. Over the past few years, the tariff row saw hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of goods subjected to punitive duties, hurting businesses and consumers alike on both sides. American farmers, manufacturers, and tech companies suffered losses, while Chinese exporters faced declining demand and slowed growth. In the end, the “winner” of the tariff war was no one—only global economic fragmentation. The decision to de-escalate, therefore, is not only rational but also inevitable. The timing of this resolution is also critical. The global economy is still grappling with the aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and rising inflation. For Washington, a stable trade relationship with China offers relief from domestic economic pressures. For Beijing, which is contending with slower growth and internal structural issues, normalized trade ties with the world’s largest economy offer a much-needed economic boost. From a geopolitical standpoint, this resolution may also help to lower the rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific region. Although the rivalry between the U.S. and China remains deep-rooted—spanning issues such as Taiwan, technology, and military posturing—the easing of economic tensions could open new avenues for dialogue. Economic cooperation can act as a buffer, preventing the relationship from spiraling into open confrontation. However, it is important not to be overly optimistic. The structural issues that led to the tariff war—concerns over intellectual property theft, market access, forced technology transfers, and state subsidies—have not disappeared. These will require deeper, more nuanced negotiations in the years ahead. But at least for now, both sides have recognized the futility of an aggressive tariff regime and the need to return to the negotiating table. The resolution of the U.S.-China tariff row also sends a strong signal to the rest of the world: major powers can settle their differences through dialogue, not economic warfare. For smaller economies and global institutions, this breakthrough offers hope that a more stable and predictable international trade environment is possible. In conclusion, the end of the tariff war is a step in the right direction. While challenges remain, this breakthrough underscores the importance of diplomacy and economic interdependence in a rapidly changing world. It is now up to both Washington and Beijing to build on this momentum and work toward a more balanced and mutually beneficial economic relationship—because the world is watching, and much is at stake.

# Gulf Wealth, U.S. Power, and the Middle East Reset

Qamar Bashir



President Donald Trump’s decision to begin his second term with a summit in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations is a telling recognition of this shift. It affirms the Gulf’s rise not only as a regional powerhouse but as a global actor actively reshaping diplomacy, development, and security. At the epicenter of this transformation stands Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), whose strategic clarity and economic foresight have positioned Saudi Arabia and its allies at the vanguard

IN a world no longer solely defined by military alliances or ideological blocs, power is increasingly shaped by capital, technology, and human development. President Donald Trump’s decision to begin his second term with a summit in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations is a telling recognition of this shift. It affirms the Gulf’s rise not only as a regional powerhouse but as a global actor actively reshaping diplomacy, development, and security. At the epicenter of this transformation stands Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), whose strategic clarity and economic foresight have positioned Saudi Arabia and its allies at the vanguard of a multipolar world. The summit, hosted in Riyadh, was more than ceremonial—it was a moment of recalibration for the global order. What distinguishes the modern GCC is not just its wealth, but the vision to wield it with purpose. With sovereign funds reaching into the trillions, Gulf nations are redirecting capital from passive holdings to strategic investments—funding artificial intelligence, quantum computing, energy transitions, and educational partnerships with elite American institutions. This is a new form of diplomacy: one where influence is purchased not through arms but by acquiring intellectual property, embedding talent in global research, and co-creating innovation ecosystems. Gulf money is no longer idle—it is building future influence. President Trump, recognizing this shift, lauded the Gulf’s transformation as “the envy of the world,” citing over \$1 trillion in projected investments and over \$110 billion in bilateral trade in 2024 alone. But beyond the numbers was a message: Gulf leadership is not following the West—it is co-authoring the future with it. The summit focused heavily on regional stabilization. In one of the most consequential announcements, Trump declared the complete lifting of U.S. sanctions on Syria, signaling a dramatic shift in American policy. He credited Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Turkish President Erdogan for facilitating the move—an act designed to provide Syria with a “fresh start” and reintegrate it into the Arab fold after years of civil war and isolation. This development was not a concession—it

was a calculated diplomatic trade-off. In return for massive Gulf investment into American infrastructure, defense contracts, and educational programs, the U.S. acknowledged the Gulf’s new authority to shape the political future of the region. Addressing the Gaza tragedy, MBS underscored that a sustainable peace lies in a just resolution of the Palestinian issue through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, in line with United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. He categorically rejected any plan to displace or resettle Palestinians in foreign territories, reaffirming their right to homeland and sovereignty. In this broader context, the Gulf nations’ alignment with the United States reflects not just shared economic interests, but a mutual strategic goal of containing Iranian influence, stabilizing regional politics, and eliminating armed proxies that thrive on chaos. One of the most overlooked, yet powerful, elements of the U.S.-GCC partnership is the massive investment in human capital. Tens of thousands of students from the Gulf are studying in top American universities, training in advanced fields like robotics, aerospace engineering, nanotechnology, and cybersecurity. These students are not merely recipients of Western knowledge—they are future architects of a Middle East prepared to lead. MBS has paired this educational strategy with significant incentives for American universities to expand in Saudi Arabia and across the GCC. These joint campuses are fast becoming incubators for innovation, preparing the region to compete not only economically but intellectually in the coming decades. The Gulf states are no longer content to influence global policy from the sidelines. By investing in American industries, real estate, and financial markets, they are embedding themselves deeply into the U.S. economic architecture. But what’s more strategic is their targeted investment in intellectual property and cutting-edge technology. This ensures that as America innovates, the Gulf is not just a client but a partner—and in many cases, a co-owner. This strategic stakeholding, wisely replacing dormant assets and offshore accounts, reflects a new doctrine: soft power

through smart capital. Trump also unveiled a fresh diplomatic offensive aimed at liberating Lebanon from Hezbollah’s shadow. A new U.S. ambassador—a Lebanese-American with deep regional roots—has been appointed to lead this mission, backed by economic assistance and civil society outreach. It’s a move meant to offer the Lebanese people an alternative path forward—free from sectarian domination and foreign interference. This summit may well be remembered as the moment when the Gulf ceased to be a regional player and assumed its role as a global co-author of peace, stability, and progress. With sanctions lifted on Syria, and the Palestinians firmly defended through diplomatic backing, the message is clear: the future will be written by those who blend capital, conviction, and clarity of purpose. The partnership between President Trump and the Gulf leaders—particularly Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman—is not about fleeting gestures or transactional politics. It is about long-term architecture—of peace, of prosperity, and of power sharing. As the tectonic plates of global influence continue to shift, one thing is certain: the Gulf has arrived—not merely through the power of petro dollars, but by the sheer force of merit, strategic foresight, and visionary leadership. The prosperity of the GCC is no longer defined by passive wealth accumulation, but by the intelligent reassignment of resources—where idle capital is transformed into active investment across continents. They are acquiring foreign assets, attracting global minds, and integrating world-class expertise to exponentially grow their economic footprint. Recognizing that true and lasting prosperity lies in empowering their own people, GCC nations are investing billions to build human capital—sending their youth to top global institutions, creating ecosystems of entrepreneurship, and opening channels of trade and innovation. By aligning emerging technologies with national ambitions and training their citizens to lead in these domains, the Gulf states are not only securing their place at the forefront of global progress but are reshaping the narrative of power, productivity, and purposeful development for the 21st century.

# Invisible kill chain: A new normal for the aerial warfare

Naveed Khaliq Ansaree

At the epicentre of this revolution lies the “Invisible Kill Chain” dictated not by the battle-agility of combat aircraft or machines—performance but rather a duel of ecosystem enabling who strikes first, and from an imperceptible distance. Beyond Visual Range Air to Air Missiles (BVRAAMs) have now become a cornerstone of latest-generation aerial warfare, shaping the very doctrines of Air Dominance, psychological ascendancy and strategic deterrence. Current BVRAAMs do not merely showcase the latest technologies; they are the lethal instruments of deterrence, denial and control supported by a seamless fusion

IN the constantly evolving theatre of 21st-century aerial warfare, air combat has undergone a silent revolution. At the epicentre of this revolution lies the “Invisible Kill Chain” dictated not by the battle-agility of combat aircraft or machines—performance but rather a duel of ecosystem enabling who strikes first, and from an imperceptible distance. Beyond Visual Range Air to Air Missiles (BVRAAMs) have now become a cornerstone of latest-generation aerial warfare, shaping the very doctrines of Air Dominance, psychological ascendancy and strategic deterrence. Current BVRAAMs do not merely showcase the latest technologies; they are the lethal instruments of deterrence, denial and control supported by a seamless fusion of sensors, space systems, data-links and shooting platforms; all within a distributed kill chain. The effective operational range of any BVRAAM largely depends on the lock-range of the radar of the launch platform and the launch altitude. A 5th generation fighter, like J-35 stealth aircraft currently under induction in the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), can even launch a BVRAAM without illuminating the target, thus maintaining stealth and retaining the tactical advantage. The targeting data can be communicated through a data-link facility among other options. The days are not far off when the Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles carrying BVRAAMs into contested battle space will serve as “Loyal Wingmen” of the Next Generation Air Dominance aircraft, operating both as “Bait and Blade.” Lest one forget, as the engagement range increases, the fog and friction magnify and the capability may breed fragility of the advantage. To counter a BVRAAM threat, Digital Radio Frequency Memory, Directional Infrared Counter Measures and towed-decoys have now become standard equipment on modern aerial platforms. Amongst the latest generation of BVRAAMs is Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) or AIM-120D with an academic range between 160-180

Km as claimed by the manufacturer. AMRAAM is valued as a prized possession by several air forces across the globe including the PAF. The missile employs active radar for terminal guidance augmented by GPS and an inertial navigation system, thus substantially enhancing the missile’s accuracy and effective range within a distributed kill chain. Joint Advanced Tactical Missile or AIM-260 is another BVR missile developed by the US with a reported range of over 200 Km. MBDA Meteor, with its ramjet propulsion system and claimed range of 200 Km, is also effective against manoeuvring targets. The Meteor is jointly produced by Germany, France, Sweden and the UK. Meanwhile Russian R-77 or AA-12 Adder, a BVRAAM, has claimed range of 80 Km to 110 Km depending on the launch conditions. India has developed Astra BVR missiles, and its latest variant is a solid-fuel ducted-ramjet Astra MK-3, with a claimed range of over 300 Km. This BVR missile has issues, however, could become available to the Indian Air Force by sometime beyond 2028. The track record of excessive delays and technical snags in Light Combat Aircraft and other projects, also raises serious doubts about the claimed range and availability of Astra Mk-3 to IAF in the near future. China’s PL-15 missile is an advanced BVR missile that employs AESA active radar for terminal guidance and a data link for midcourse correction, thus significantly enhancing the BVR’s engagement zone and asserting air dominance against highly agile and evasive aerial targets. Claimed range by the manufacturer is between 200-300 Km. PL-15 is integrated into contemporary combat aircraft including the J-10C, JF-17 block III and under induction J-35 with the PAF. With an impressive claimed range of 350-400 Km, PL-21 is a latest state-of-the-art Very Long Range Air to Air Missile (VLRAAM) that Pakistan is vying to acquire from China along with 5th Generation Stealth fighter J-35. With its extended-range and

advanced AESA radar guidance systems, the PL-15 and PL-21 rightly represent the strategic statement rather than only a formidable weapon on the inventory of the Chinese and Pakistan Air Force. The Pakistan Air Force has always endeavoured to retain a first-shoot edge and stay ahead of the IAF. Under the dynamic leadership of the current Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber, Sidhu, the dream of inducting 5th generation stealth fighter J-35, the Crown-Jewel of the Pakistan Air Force, is likely to come true next year. With the combined AESA radar capabilities of JF-17 Block-III, J-10C and J-35, and F-16 as well as the lethal BVRAAMs held on PAF’s inventory, the IAF would have to be wary of any misadventure against Pakistan. On the night of May 07, 2025, downing of three Rafales, one Su-30, one Mirage, one Mig-29 and a multimillion-dollar drone “Heron” of IAF against none of the PAF stand testimony to the vision of the Chief of the Air Staff that enabled the PAF to earn the title of an “Undisputed King of the Skies.” PAF etched an unprecedented decisive-dominance and an invisible kill-chain for the IAF, thus translating BVR capability from a tactical advantage into a strategic imperative for operationalising the doctrines of strategic reach, air dominance and escalation control, and making it an essential component of deterrence and power projection in the contested skies. Future BVRAAM will not be just a guided weapon but rather a thinking node continuously adjusting in flight, making its own tactical decisions within the programmed operational framework. Therefore, the next-generation aerial combat will not reward those who fly the fastest but rather those who think and perform the farthest. —The writer, is a Director at the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, Lahore. He can be reached at info@casslhr.com

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**Pak will always remember support...**

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undertake an official visit to Pakistan, at his earliest convenience. The invitation was very graciously accepted by President Aliyev. President Aliyev warmly congratulated the Prime Minister upon Pakistan's remarkable success. He welcomed the ceasefire understanding, while appreciating Pakistan's efforts for peace. He reaffirmed that Azerbaijan was committed to the strengthening of its brotherly ties with Pakistan across all spheres.

**Trump says 'getting close' to deal to...**

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Iran's president reacted to Trump's comments on Tuesday calling Tehran the "most destructive force" in the Middle East. "Trump thinks he can sanction and threaten us and then talk of human rights. All the crimes and regional instability is caused by them (the United States)," Masoud Pezeshkian said. "He wants to create instability inside Iran." US officials have publicly stated that Iran should halt uranium enrichment, a stance Iranian officials have called a "red line" asserting they will not give up what they view as their right to enrich uranium on Iranian soil. However, they have indicated a willingness to reduce the level of enrichment. Iranian officials have also expressed readiness to reduce the amount of highly enriched uranium in storage—uranium enriched beyond the levels typically needed for civilian purposes, such as nuclear power generation. However, they have said it would not accept lower stockpiles than the amount agreed in a deal with world powers in 2015 – the deal Trump quit. The Iranian source said that while Iran is prepared to offer what it considers concessions, "the issue is that America is not willing to lift major sanctions in exchange." Western sanctions have severely impacted the Iranian economy. Regarding the reduction of enriched uranium in storage, the source noted: "Tehran also wants it removed in several stages, which America doesn't agree with either." There is also disagreement over the destination to which the highly enriched uranium would be sent, the source added.

**PTI rubbishes reports 'Imran...**

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This statement comes just days after Khan reportedly gave his nod for dialogue with the government, following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's call for national political talks. The News reported. Gohar, who met Khan in jail earlier this week, had relayed the offer but declined to share with the publication what was discussed during the meeting. The PTI chairman reiterated that the party will pursue any political resolution within the framework of constitutional dialogue, maintaining that genuine progress requires discretion and sincerity rather than media sensationalism.

**Pak-India ceasefire...**

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counterpart Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai held the first round of talks via hotline on May 10. "During the DGMOs' conversation, the ceasefire was extended until May 12. When the DGMOs spoke again on May 12, the ceasefire was extended until May 14. Further talks on May 14 led to the ceasefire being extended until May 18," the DPM told the upper house. In a bid to clear the confusion surrounding the recent US-brokered ceasefire between arch-rival nuclear powers Pakistan and India, DPM Dar said that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, on the evening of May 10, told him that New Delhi was ready for a ceasefire.

# ICC World Test champions to bag \$3.6 million purse

The runner-up of the WTC final will bag more than USD 2.1 million, while the prize for the same in the previous editions was USD 800,000. India, who finished third on the table, will receive over USD 1.4 million, while fourth-placed New Zealand get USD 1.2 million

ANSAR BHATTI  
ISLAMABAD: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has confirmed a massive increase in prize money for the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) as the champion will secure a prize money of USD 3.6 million, more than double of the winners in the last two cycles. Final to be played between South Africa and Australia at Lord's next month. "The increase in prize money exhibits the ICC's efforts to prioritize Test cricket as it looks to build on the momentum of the first three cycles of the nine-team competition," the ICC said

in its release. The runner-up of the WTC final will bag more than USD 2.1 million, while the prize for the same in the previous editions was USD 800,000. India, who finished third on the table, will receive over USD 1.4 million, while fourth-placed New Zealand get USD 1.2 million. Even the prize money for teams finishing fifth (USD 96000) and sixth (USD 840000) – England and Sri Lanka – is more than what it was for the runners-up in the previous editions. Pakistan finishing bottom of the World Test Championship rankings will walk away with USD \$480,000 South Africa topped the table in the 2023-25 edition with eight wins from 12 games, and were the first team to

seal a final spot with a dramatic two-wicket win over Pakistan. Defending champions Australia got through by pipping India to the second spot after winning the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 3-1 at home. Both teams have named their squads for the final. The focus for South Africa will be on their pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada after his one-month ban for failing a drug test, while Cameron Green makes his return to Australia's Test side after undergoing a lower spine surgery last year. ICC Chairman Jay Shah, in a statement, said the WTC has brought renewed interest and competitiveness to Test cricket. "We have witnessed a very interesting

third cycle of the ICC World Test Championship, where the finalists were decided only towards the end of the competition. This final is a true celebration of cricket," he remarked. South African captain Temba Bavuma expressed his team's eagerness to claim their first-ever ICC title. "The World Test Championship lends context to this vital format of the game, and Lord's is a fitting venue for such a mega fixture," he said. Australian captain Pat Cummins said his side was proud to defend the title. "It's a great honour for all of us to be in the final again. We look forward to the challenge South Africa will present at the home of cricket," he stated.

# Special Olympics Pak holds trials at NUML

Speaking on the occasion, Regional Sports Manager of Special Olympics Pakistan Ms. Shamiala Iram said, "These trials are not just about winning or losing, they are about celebrating ability, promoting acceptance, and building a more inclusive society. We are proud to witness such incredible talent and spirit today

DNA  
ISLAMABAD : Special Olympics Pakistan, in collaboration with the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), organized trials in Table Tennis, Bocce, Powerlifting, and Basketball at the NUML today. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from children with autism and other intellectual disabilities

representing schools from Islamabad and Rawalpindi districts. The trials are part of Special Olympics Pakistan's ongoing efforts to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities through sports, providing them with opportunities to showcase their talents, build confidence, and foster inclusion. Special Olympics is the world's largest sports organization in this domain, reaching over 5.3 million athletes

and unified partners in nearly 170 countries. Speaking on the occasion, Regional Sports Manager of Special Olympics Pakistan Ms. Shamiala Iram said, "These trials are not just about winning or losing, they are about celebrating ability, promoting acceptance, and building a more inclusive society. We are proud to witness such incredible talent and spirit today." The event drew attention to the role of sports

in uplifting the lives of differently-abled individuals, offering them a platform to grow physically, emotionally, and socially. The trials also reflected NUML's commitment to social responsibility and inclusive development. Teachers, parents, and volunteers were present to support the athletes, making the event a vibrant celebration of courage, determination, and unity.

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Another phase of the boxing trials under the Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt Program has successfully concluded in QuettaAccording to Javed Memon, Director Sports at the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the trials were organized under the umbrella of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) in collaboration with the Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences. The initiative aimed to expand the reach of the Talent Hunt Youth Sports League and drew enthusiastic participation from young boxers across various cities of Balochistan.Memon

emphasized that the primary goal of the trials is to identify talented athletes at the grassroots level and provide them with structured training, exposure, and opportunities to represent their province and the country at national and international platforms. Male and female boxers between the ages of 15 and 25 competed in various weight categories. The selected athletes will now advance to the next phase of the Youth Sports League, where they will receive professional training under the supervision of qualified coaches. PMYP and HEC expressed their gratitude to the host university, local administration, coaches, and young athletes for their active participation and support in making the Quetta trials a success.

# PM youth talent hunt boxing trials held in Quetta

# Players stuck in middle with IPL, national teams on collision course

NEW DELHI: The IPL resumes Saturday after its suspension because of the Pakistan-India conflict, but there are doubts over foreign players and the extended schedule has sparked a showdown with international cricket. The IPL will now end on June 3, nine days later than planned, putting it on a collision course with the English summer of cricket and preparations for the World Test Championship (WTC) final at Lord's on June 11. An England ODI series against the West Indies starts on May 29 while the South Africa and Australia squads are due to begin build-up for their WTC final before the end of May. South Africa says its Test players must leave India by an originally agreed date of May 26. "Our initial agreement with the IPL and the Indian board was that our players would return (for national duty) on the 26th," said South Africa coach Shukri Conrad, who has eight members of his Test squad contracted to IPL teams. "As it stands, we're not budging on this.—DNA

# PCB announces update on tickets for upcoming PSL X matches

Fans can use same tickets for corresponding fixtures of May 17, 18, 19

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Wednesday ticket details regarding the remaining eight Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10 matches to be played in Rawalpindi and Lahore from May 17 to 25. The fans who had bought tickets for the May 8 Peshawar Zalmi v Karachi Kings, May 9 Peshawar Zalmi v Lahore Qalandars and May 10 Islamabad United v Karachi Kings fixtures can now use the same tickets for the corresponding May 17, 18 and 19 fixtures, respectively. With May 18 being a double-header day at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, the previously issued May 9 ticket can be used to attend both games, the PCB said in a statement. Additionally, fans who have bought tickets for Eliminator 1, 2 and the Final can use them as per the newly announced dates of the respective matches. The tickets for the remaining league games and the playoffs can also be bought from www.pcb.tcs.com.pk and designated courier company centres. The fans can avail a refund for the May 5 and 10 Multan contests, earlier scheduled in Multan, and the previously scheduled Qualifier in Rawalpindi. Online and corporate refunds will be transferred to the accounts used at the time of booking. Physical tickets will need to be refunded in person at designated centres. The date for the refunds will be announced in due course. As of the suspension, 27 matches had been completed, with Quetta Gladiators leading the points table. They have already secured a spot in the playoffs with six wins, two losses, and one no-result from nine matches. The Karachi Kings hold second place with 10 points, having won five out of eight matches. Defending champions Islamabad United are in third place, also with 10 points, after five wins and four losses in nine games. The Lahore Qalandars are placed fourth with nine points from four wins, four losses, and one no-result, while Peshawar Zalmi sit fifth with eight points, secured through four wins in their nine games. The Multan Sultans have been eliminated from playoff contention, managing just one win and suffering eight losses in their nine matches.—DNA

# Rehabilitation of RO plants in Mithi is a great achievement of PHED Sindh

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



THARPARKAR, a vast desert region located in the southeastern part of Sindh, Pakistan, has long been synonymous with drought, poverty, and underdevelopment. The area—particularly its main town, Mithi—is defined by arid conditions, sandy terrain, and a chronic shortage of potable water. The region's only accessible water source is underground, but it contains high levels of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), making it bitter and unsafe for human consumption. As a result, water scarcity has remained one of the most pressing and persistent challenges for the people of Tharparkar. To address this critical need, the Sindh government installed over 800 Reverse Osmosis (RO) plants across Tharparkar over the years. These plants, with capacities ranging from 10,000 to 2 million gallons per day, were introduced as a sustainable solution to provide clean drinking water. The project was plagued by neglect, mismanagement, and technical failures. For nearly seven years, the majority of the RO plants remained non-functional, leading to acute water shortages and frequent public protests. Tharparkar's geography and climate pose unique challenges. The region receives

minimal annual rainfall and relies heavily on seasonal rains and underground water for survival. Unfortunately, most of this groundwater is saline and unsuitable for drinking or agriculture. For decades, residents have struggled with this crisis. Women and children often travel several kilometers daily to collect water from remote wells or temporary sources. The impacts of this scarcity are far-reaching—leading to poor health, malnutrition, economic stagnation, and social unrest. The absence of clean drinking water has made life extremely difficult for Tharparkar's communities, particularly affecting women, children, and livestock-dependent households. In an attempt to address this crisis, the Sindh government initiated the installation of RO plants. These desalination units were initially seen as a breakthrough in combating the region's water woes. The initiative soon faltered due to systemic issues such as poor planning, lack of maintenance, understaffing, insufficient funding, and energy constraints. Out of 832 RO plants installed—some powered by solar energy, others by diesel or electricity—most eventually fell into disrepair. This collapse resulted from overlapping failures: delayed payments led contractors to abandon projects, neglect caused equipment to deteriorate, and the absence of trained staff rendered many plants inoperable. Public trust in the government began to erode. Protests became commonplace, particularly during the scorching summer months when demand for water spiked and supply systems broke down. The situation turned into a political liability for the Sindh government. Despite repeated efforts to restore functionality, failures outnumbered successes. Over time, several strategies and personnel changes were tried, but none achieved the desired outcome. The non-functional RO plants, once celebrated as life-saving in-

novations, had become enduring symbols of broken promises and bureaucratic inefficiency. In the summer of 2025, as temperatures soared and water resources dwindled once again, the Sindh government made a decisive move. Under increasing public pressure, Muhammad Farrukh Khan was appointed Executive Engineer for Operations and Maintenance (O&M) in Mithi. Farrukh Khan brought with him a reputation for competence, discipline, and a hands-on better style. He received strong backing from key government officials, including PHED Minister Saleem Baloch,

and commitment stood in stark contrast to years of prior inaction and neglect. One of the key factors behind this turnaround was a strategic, no-nonsense approach. Farrukh Khan's team conducted rapid assessments of non-functional RO plants, identifying technical faults, logistical gaps, and administrative bottlenecks. Plants were categorized by the type of repairs required, energy needs, and restoration timelines. Priority was given to plants that needed minimal intervention. Skilled technicians were deployed to fix pumps, replace membranes, repair leaks, and recalibrate sys-

tem. Farrukh Khan personally visited sites, supervised the work, and ensured accountability. His hands-on involvement inspired his team and raised morale. Transparency was emphasized. Contractors—many of whom had walked away due to delayed payments in the past—were paid on time, restoring their trust in the gov-



team members walking miles across dunes, tools in hand, to reach remote sites and perform repairs under the harsh desert sun. These efforts did not go unnoticed. Where there was once despair, hope began to blossom. Communities that had previously protested against the government now rallied behind the restoration

mission. This resurgence of trust became a driving force. It accelerated repairs, fostered collaboration, and transformed the project into something far greater than a technical undertaking. It became a symbol of what determined leadership, hard work, and public service can achieve. The impact was immediate and profound. For the first time in years, families had access to clean drinking water in their neighborhoods. Women and children were spared the exhausting daily treks to fetch water. School attendance rose, as children were freed from household water-fetching duties. Health indicators improved—cases of waterborne illnesses declined significantly. Public sentiment began to shift. Where once the mention of the Sindh government elicited frustration, people now expressed gratitude. Praise for the revival efforts—particularly those led by Farrukh Khan—spread across social media, radio broadcasts, and word-of-mouth. The success of the RO plant revival holds broader implications for governance in Sindh. It proves that with effective leadership, political backing, and a committed administration, even deep-rooted failures can be overcome. This case sets a precedent for managing infrastructure projects in underserved regions across Pakistan. While the restoration of 105 RO plants is a significant milestone, the journey is far from over. The goal remains to restore every plant and ensure sustainable water access across the entire region. This effort should serve as a model not only for Sindh but for the entire country. For the people of Tharparkar, clean water is no longer a distant dream. It flows once again—through the pipes and tanks of 105 operational RO plants—each one a living testament to resilience, leadership, and the power of public service done right.

# Pakistan capable of 'detering..

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The conflict sparked global concerns that it could spiral into a full-blown war. The fighting began last Wednesday when India launched strikes against what it described as "terrorist infrastructure" in Pakistan. Pakistan immediately responded with heavy artillery fire and a four-day standoff ensued between the South Asian rivals. In the statement, Ambassador Shafiq said that the comments of India's defence minister also showed his sheer ignorance of the mandate and responsibilities of a specialised agency of the United Nations like the IAEA. If anything, he said, the IAEA and the international community should be worried about the repeated theft and illicit trafficking incidents involving nuclear and radioactive material in India. Just last year, the spokesperson reminded the world, that five individuals with a radioactive device reportedly stolen from the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) were found in Dehradun, India. Later, a gang of individuals was found with illegal possession of a highly radioactive and toxic substance, Californium, worth \$100 million. Three incidents of theft in Californium were also reported in 2021. These recurring incidents call into question the measures taken by New Delhi for the safety and security of nuclear and other radioactive materials, the spokesperson said. "These incidents also suggest the existence of a black market for sensitive, dual-use materials inside India," he said. Pakistan, Ambassador Shafiq said, urges a thorough investigation of these incidents and calls upon India to ensure the safety and security of its nuclear facilities and arsenal.

# Diplomats briefed about ceasefire

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gesture, Pakistan and India exchanged the personnel of Pakistan Rangers and the Indian Border Security Force in each other's custody, yesterday. She thanked the friendly countries for their constructive role in achieving the ceasefire. In the context of India's baseless assertions on establishing a "new normal", the Foreign Secretary stressed that the only "normal" in bilateral relations is respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. She emphasized Pakistan's preference for peaceful co-existence, dialogue and diplomacy over conflict and strife.

## Briefs

## Migrants bear brunt of Trump border policy

NEW YORK:Colombian Sindy Estrada and her family try to stay off the streets of New York as they battle her deportation order for fear they could be detained by the authorities. Estrada and her family received a deportation order from the US government telling them to leave the country by April 30. "It has caused a nervous breakdown - we have suffered stress, depression, anxiety, panic," said the businesswoman, 36, who fled Colombia three years ago after her husband's business was targeted by extortionists. Now, US immigration officials have fitted her husband with an electronic ankle bracelet to track his whereabouts and her 16-year-old son has begun therapy amid the emotional toll of their situation. Her son "started biting his nails and couldn't sleep, his grades dropped a lot," Estrada said. "At his school they ask him what's going on - whether he will stay or go." "(Despite) my desire to pack a suitcase and go... I think about what would await me there. I'm afraid to return to Colombia." Estrada and her family, who live in New Jersey, are among the millions of undocumented migrants in the United States fearful of President Donald Trump's onslaught against non-citizens. Experts say his crackdown has exerted a psychological toll akin to the September 11, 2001 attacks that claimed almost 3,000 lives. —APP

## Cuban cigarillo factory overwhelmed by demand

HAVANA:Cuba's sole producer of cigarillos cannot keep up with exploding demand abroad for the smaller, cheaper, machine-rolled version of the island nation's much more famous Working at full capacity, the Internacional Cubana de Tabacos S.A. (ICT) factory produces 800,000 cigarillos a day. It is not enough. Exports have increased tenfold in two decades - and that's despite stricter smoking laws worldwide, and not being able to sell into the US market due to its decades-long embargo. "Today we have a problem, which is a good problem. Our warehouses, our inventories of finished products, are at zero. Everything we produce, we sell," ICT president Ricardo Soler told AFP at the factory in Havana. "Our production capacity has not been able to meet demand" mainly in Europe, but increasingly also Asia, he said. ICT is a semi state-owned company partnered with Spain's Tabacalera. Its sales grew from 25.4 million cigarillos in 2001 to 200 million last year when the company reported a turnover of \$38 million. Unlike Cuba's famous hand-rolled "Habanos," cigarillos are aimed at a market with "lower purchasing power," said Soler. Growth in Cuban cigar sales has also remained strong, reaching \$827 million last year - a 16-percent increase from 2023 driven by Asian demand for luxury products. —APP

## Australian rocket launch delayed

SYDNEY:An Australian aerospace firm said Thursday it has delayed a historic first attempt to launch a locally developed rocket into orbit, with a jar of Vegemite as its payload. Gilmour Space Technologies said a ground system glitch forced it to postpone the first test launch of its three-stage Eris rocket by a day until Friday. "The issue was with an external power system we use during system checks," communications chief Michelle Gilmour told AFP. "We've identified the fix but ran out of time to implement it and fuel the rocket within today's launch window." The rocket has a multi-day launch window to fly from a spaceport near the east coast township of Bowen, about 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) up from the Queensland capital Brisbane. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch briefs diplomats about Indian aggression and continued ceasefire violations. DNA

## Ukraine peace talks: What are Kyiv and Moscow's positions?

Russia has also demanded that Ukraine be barred from joining the NATO military alliance and has repeatedly said it wants Zelensky removed from office

ISTANBUL: Delegations from Kyiv and Moscow are set to hold their first direct talks on the possibility of ending the war in Ukraine for more than three years. Volodymyr Zelensky has announced he will travel to Turkey, while Russia's Vladimir Putin indicated he will not attend the talks. Despite the flurry of diplomacy and US President Donald Trump's call for a swift end to the fighting, Moscow and Kyiv's demands appear to be far apart. Russia has repeatedly demanded to keep the territory in southern and eastern Ukraine that it occupies and for Kyiv to cede even more land. Moscow in 2022 annexed four Ukrainian regions - Donetsk, Lu-

gansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson - despite not having full control over them. Russia also annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 and has held it ever since. President Vladimir Putin last year demanded Ukraine pull its forces out of parts of those regions that its army still controls as a prerequisite to any peace settlement. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said recognition of Moscow's ownership of these territories was "imperative" for any negotiations. Kyiv has said it will never recognise its occupied territories, including Crimea, as Russian. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has

said Kyiv may be forced to try to secure their return through diplomatic means - effectively conceding that Russia could maintain control over some land in any peace deal. Russia has also demanded that Ukraine be barred from joining the NATO military alliance and has repeatedly said it wants Zelensky removed from office. Russia had intended to topple Zelensky when it launched its invasion in 2022, with Putin calling in a televised address for Ukraine's generals to oust him in a coup d'etat and then open talks with Moscow. Putin in March floated the idea of Ukraine being put under a UN-backed "temporary administration",

refreshing his call to essentially remove Zelensky. Russian officials have throughout the war called for the "de-militarisation" and "de-Nazification" of Ukraine - casting Kyiv as a neo-Nazi "regime". Kyiv, the West and independent experts have rejected those narratives. Russia has also sought at times to limit the size of Ukraine's army, wants Ukraine to be declared a neutral state and for Western countries to stop supplying it weapons. Zelensky has for months been calling for "security guarantees" for Ukraine to stop Russia invading again. His top demand would be for Ukraine to be admitted to NATO, or for

Ukraine to fall under the military alliance's Article Five collective defence term. Trump has however, dismissed the possibility of Ukraine joining the bloc and Russia says NATO membership would be "unacceptable". Instead, Kyiv is pushing for some other form of Western military commitment that would deter Moscow. Britain and France are leading discussions about a possible European troop deployment to enforce any ceasefire, among a group of countries dubbed the "coalition of the willing". But Zelensky and Kyiv still want Washington to back up any "security guarantee". Moscow has said it would not accept troops

from NATO countries being deployed to Ukraine in any capacity. wants an immediate, full and unconditional ceasefire to cover combat on air, sea and land. He accepted a US proposal for that in March but Putin rejected it. Putin has instead ordered two short "truces" - over Easter and to cover Russia's May 9 Victory Day celebrations. Air attacks dipped during the periods but Ukraine accused Moscow of violating both on hundreds of occasions. In his late-night address from the Kremlin calling for the direct Russia-Ukraine talks, Putin said he did not "exclude" that some kind of ceasefire could be agreed between the sides.)—Agencies

## Ben &amp; Jerry's cofounder removed from Senate in Gaza protest

WASHINGTON:Ben Cohen, co-founder of Ben & Jerry's ice cream and a longtime progressive activist, told AFP he was speaking for millions of Americans outraged by the "slaughter" in Gaza after his removal from a US Senate hearing on Wednesday. Cohen, 74, was among a group of protesters who startled Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr. by interrupting his testimony about his department's budget proposal. Shouting that "Congress pays for bombs to kill children in Gaza" while lawmakers move to slash Medicaid - the health insurance program for low-income families - the businessman and philanthropist was placed in handcuffs by Capitol Police. He urged senators to press Israel to let food reach "starving kids" as he was led away. "It got to a point where we had to do something," Cohen said in an interview after his release, calling it "scandalizing" that the US approved "\$20 billion worth of bombs" for Israel even as social programs are squeezed back home. "The majority of Americans hate what's going on, what our country is doing with our money and in our name," he said. US public opinion toward Israel has become increasingly unfavorable, especially among Democrats, according to a Pew Research Center Poll last month. Beyond the spending, Cohen framed the issue as a moral and "spiritual" breach. "Condoning and being complicit in the slaughter of tens of thousands of people strikes at the core of us as far as human beings and what our country stands for," he said, pointing to the fact that the United States pours roughly half its discretionary budget into war-related spending. "If you spent half of that money making lives better around the world, I think there'd be a whole lot less friction." Invoking a parenting analogy, he added: "You go to a three-year-old who goes around hitting people and you say 'Use your words.'—DNA

## Berlin meeting backs UN peacekeeping as global threats mount

UNITED NATIONS:More than 130 countries and international partners threw their weight behind UN peacekeeping at a high-level ministerial summit in Berlin on Wednesday, pledging military, technical and political support, according to a communique released here. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres meanwhile, warned that peace operations are under growing strain and must adapt to meet today's rising threats. The two-day conference on peacekeeping, hosted by the Government of Germany, brought together over 1,000 participants - including defence and foreign ministers - to reaffirm commitment to the UN's flagship tool for maintaining peace and stability. It concluded on Wednesday with a wide array of pledges, including 88 military and police units, specialized training, and investments in emerging technologies and strategic communications. "In trouble spots around the world, 'blue helmets' can mean the difference between life and death," Guterres said in his opening remarks. "Now more than ever, the world needs the United Nations. And the United Nations needs peacekeeping that is fully equipped for today's realities and tomorrow's challenges." Germany, which currently contributes troops to UN missions in South Sudan, Lebanon, and Western Sahara, announced 82 million euros (around \$91.7 million) in funding, along with commitments in training, renewable energy solutions and drone technology. "Germany continues to be a steadfast supporter of UN peacekeeping," said Defence Minister Boris Pistorius. A total of 74 UN Member States made specific pledges, ranging from uniformed personnel to training and strategic support. This includes pledges which will bolster military and police units, including airlift and rapid deployment capabilities (53 national contributions), specialized training (59), technological enhancements (18), advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (38) and safety and protection (16). Eleven countries also committed to improving accountability and conduct, including support to the trust fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and eight nations supporting the UN's efforts to counter mis and disinformation through strategic communications. At a press conference following the meeting, Secretary-General Guterres acknowledged that peacekeepers operate in an increasingly complex and dangerous environment, citing a record number of global conflicts, the targeting of peacekeepers by drones and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the rising threat from disinformation campaigns. "We need to ask some tough questions about the mandates guiding these operations, and what the outcomes and solutions should look like," he said, speaking alongside German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl and Defence Minister Pistorius. "Every context is different, and missions must be adapted accordingly." The UN chief also stressed the importance of sustained financial backing, highlighting that many missions continue to struggle with cash flow shortages due to delayed payments from Member States. "It is absolutely essential that all Member States respect their financial obligations, paying their contributions in full and on time," he said. The Berlin meeting feeds into the UN's broader reform efforts, including an ongoing Review of Peace Operations announced in last year's Pact for the Future, aimed at making peacekeeping and peace enforcement more flexible, cost-effective, and aligned with real-world needs. —DNA

## Story of slain Gaza photojournalist touches Cannes

CANNES, France:Filmmaker Sepideh Farsi is still in shock after an Israeli air strike killed her documentary's main subject, 25-year-old photojournalist Fatima Hassouna, in Gaza last month. "Why would you kill someone and decimate an entire family just because she was taking photos?" she told AFP ahead of her film's premiere at the Cannes Festival Thursday. With Israel banning foreign media from entering the besieged Palestinian territory, Farsi reached out to Hassouna through video calls, turning their conversations into "Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk". A day after Hassouna was told it had been selected for a sidebar section at the world's most prestigious film festival, an Israeli missile

pummelled into her home in northern Gaza, killing her and 10 relatives. Israel has claimed it was targeting Palestinian Islamist group Hamas. But "they were normal people. Her fa-

ther was a taxi driver, she was a photographer, her sister was a painter and her little brother was 10 years old", said Farsi. "My heart goes out to her mother, who lost six of her



children, her husband and her home. She lost everything." Tens of thousands of people have been killed in Gaza and an aid blockade threatens famine, while Israeli leaders express a desire to empty the territory of its inhabitants as part of the war sparked by Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel. As the death toll mounts, with rescuers saying 80 people were killed in Israeli strikes on Wednesday alone, the conflict has cast a shadow over Cannes. Several actors have walked its red carpet wearing Palestinian flags pinned to their jackets, while others have sported a yellow ribbon for Israeli hostages still held in Gaza. Exiled Gazans Arab and Tarzan Nasser will on Monday screen "Once Upon a Time in Gaza",

a portrait of two friends set in 2007, the year Hamas started tightening its grip on the territory. On the eve of the festival, "Schindler's List" actor Ralph Fiennes and Hollywood star Richard Gere were among more than 380 figures to slam what they see as silence over "genocide" in Gaza. "The English Patient" actor Juliette Binoche, who heads the main competition jury, paid homage to Hassouna on opening night. Sepideh said she had believed until the very end that Hassouna "would survive, that she would come, that the war would stop". "But reality caught up with us," she said. Reporters Without Borders estimates that around 200 journalists have been killed in 18 months of Israeli strikes on Gaza. —Agencies

## Pandemic accord, tightened budget on menu at WHO meet

GENEVA:Next week promises to be a crucial one for the World Health Organization, with member states coming together in Geneva to adopt a landmark pandemic agreement and a slimmed-down budget amid US funding cuts. Dozens of high-ranking officials and thousands of delegates are set to gather for the United Nations health agency's annual decision-making assembly, due to last from May 19 to 27. "This huge gathering comes... at a pivotal moment for global health," Catharina Boehme, WHO's assistant director-general for external relations and governance, told reporters. It comes as countries are confronting "emerging threats and major shifts in the landscape for global health and international development", she said. More than five years after the emergence of Covid-19, which killed millions of people, much of the focus next week will be on the expected adoption of a hard-won international agreement on how to better protect against and tackle future pandemics. After more than three years of negotiations, countries reached consensus on a text last month but final approval by the World Health Assembly is needed - a discussion expected to take place on Tuesday. The United States, which has thrown the global health system into crisis by slashing foreign aid spending, was not present during the final stretch of the talks.—DNA

## Trump's Greenland threats spark Iceland jitters

REYKJAVIK:US President Donald Trump's threats to take over Greenland have neighbouring Iceland rethinking its long-term defence, currently provided by the United States and NATO as the volcanic island has no military of its own. 74 percent of Icelanders think Trump's interest in Greenland, and in the Arctic in general, pose a threat to their country, according to a recent poll by public broadcaster RUV. "We can easily put ourselves in Greenlanders' shoes," an Icelandic member of parliament for the governing Social Democrats, Dagur Eggertsson, told AFP. The White House under Trump has not so far voiced any plans for Iceland, a subarctic island in the North Atlantic between the UK and Greenland and home to 390,000 people. Trump "is threatening Greenland every day but doesn't say a thing about Iceland", said Valur Ingimundarson, a professor of contemporary history at the University of Iceland. He noted that while Iceland shares Greenland's geostrategic location, it does not possess the mineral riches believed to be hidden under Greenland's soil. And like Greenland, Iceland has close military ties with the United States. Washington has guaranteed Iceland's defence since 1951 following an agreement between the two NATO members.—Agencies

## Syrian leader says lifting of US sanctions 'historic'

DAMASCUS:Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa on Wednesday welcomed US President Donald Trump's "courageous" lifting of sanctions on his country. Speaking in a television address, Sharaa said Trump's move "was a historic and courageous decision, which alleviates the suffering of the people, contributes to their rebirth and lays the foundations for stability in the region". The US president's offer to lift sanctions on Syria, mostly imposed during the repressive rule of ousted president Bashar al-Assad, comes as a major boost to the war-ravaged country, still getting to grips with Sharaa's December toppling of Assad. Trump met Sharaa in Riyadh on Wednesday, becoming the first US president to meet a Syrian leader in a quarter of a century and urged him to normalise ties with Israel. The Syrian president thanked Saudi Arabia's de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who organised the meeting, as well as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan - a key supporter of the new Damascus government - for his role in the encounter.—APP

## Briefs

Pakistan  
braces  
for \$1.5bn  
payout

Unfavourable market conditions or high interest rates could pose challenges to Pakistan's borrowing plans

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's upcoming budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 is projected to see a significant jump in external debt repayments as it will be required to clear two major Eurobond obligations, totalling \$1.5 billion, upon maturity this year. Faced with these mounting debt servicing requirements, Islamabad is actively exploring options to re-enter the international capital market. The government is considering launching various international bonds in the next fiscal year, including Eurobonds, Sukuk, and potentially Panda bonds. However, the success of these planned bond issuances will heavily depend on the prevailing market appetite and the mark-up rates in the United States and other global financial hubs. Unfavourable market conditions or high interest rates could pose challenges to Pakistan's borrowing plans. Following the successful completion of the first review of its current loan programmes with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the subsequent release of the second tranche of funds, Pakistan anticipates a further improvement in its credit rating from international rating agencies. The government made efforts to launch a Panda bond in the outgoing fiscal year but failed to deliver. There are increased requirements to enter the Chinese market, so the Panda bond is expected to be launched in the next fiscal year with a first issuance of \$200 to \$250 million.

Naqvi pays  
tribute to FC  
personnel

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has paid tribute to the Frontier Constabulary (FC) personnel for foiling the Khawarij terrorists' attack at the Tora warrai check post in Hangu. He commended the bravery and professional capabilities of the Frontier Constabulary personnel. He said that the brave personnel of Frontier Constabulary repelled the attack through timely action. He added that The Frontier Constabulary personnel who thwarted the evil designs of the Khawarij terrorists are heroes of the nation. He stated that the courage demonstrated by the Frontier Constabulary personnel is a matter of pride for the nation. He said that the Frontier Constabulary personnel deserve appreciation, and I congratulate the entire team.

PM directs to formulate  
early agro-industry policy

*Emphasizing to utilize the vast potential of agriculture sector for rapid economic development, he said that Pakistan was rich with fertile land, capable agricultural experts, and hardworking farmers*



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the authorities concerned to formulate a sustainable and

long-term policy for agro-industrial development to promote agriculture and forestry, as well as help counter climate change. The prime minister, chairing a meeting on agricultural sector reforms, also instructed the formulation of a coordinated strategy to

develop the agriculture sector in consultation with provinces and all relevant stakeholders. He said that the government was developing the agriculture sector on modern lines to achieve self-sufficiency. Emphasizing to utilize the vast potential of

agriculture sector for rapid economic development, he said that Pakistan was rich with fertile land, capable agricultural experts, and hardworking farmers. The prime minister directed the provision of agricultural loans to farmers on easy terms and focus on agricultural research to enhance production. He also instructed the relevant department to present a National Agri-Innovation Plan for the agricultural sector. Prime Minister Shehbaz also called for accelerating ongoing reforms in the certification system for agricultural seeds and developing an effective action plan to promote high-quality seeds. Calling the promotion of modern technology in the agricultural sector the government's priority, he directed the development of a comprehensive regulatory framework for the agriculture sector. In the meeting, the proposals were presented by the working group formed for agricultural reforms. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Rana Tanveer Hussain, Ahad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, and Musadik Malik, besides senior government officials.

Rana Sanaullah urges  
political parties to forge  
'charter of economy'

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah Thursday emphasized that collective action is crucial, urging all political parties, including PTI, to put aside differences and forge a charter of economy and national unity to tackle the threats of terrorism and Indian aggression. In an exclusive interview, Adviser to PM declared that Pakistan's swift and decisive response has earned the admiration of the Islamic world, and now, unity among all political parties is the need of the hour to tackle the pressing threats facing the nation. Sanaullah highlighted the strength of Pakistan's democracy, stating that diverse narratives and opinions among political parties are a testament to its beauty, but emphasized that when it comes to defending the country, all parties stand united on the same page. He further emphasized that Pakistan's security forces are indeed taking aggressive measures against terrorism, aiming to defeat the menace and bring stability to the country. Rana also expressed confidence that Pakistan will triumph over terrorism, leveraging its strong commitments to eradicate the menace from its soil. In response to another query, Adviser Rana Sanaullah emphasized the PM and PML-N's unwavering commitment to table talks with PTI, aimed at addressing national issues. Responding to another query, he appreciated countries that supported Pakistan's stance against India, highlighting international backing for Pakistan's position. Rana Sanaullah also praised Donald Trump's initiatives to resolve the Kashmir issue through dialogue, highlighting his commitment to facilitating talks between India and Pakistan. — DNA

Russian delegation,  
without Vladimir Putin,  
arrives in Istanbul  
for Ukraine talks

ISTANBUL: A Russian delegation landed in Istanbul on Thursday for the first direct peace talks with Ukraine in more than three years, Russian state media reported, but without President Vladimir Putin as many world leaders had urged. Putin was not included on a list of Moscow's negotiating team published by the Kremlin late Wednesday, after Zelensky challenged him to turn up in person to the talks. Putin opted instead to send a lower-level team headed up by a headline aide who oversaw the failed peace talks in March 2022 in the first weeks of Russia's invasion. The absence of Putin — as well as any top diplomats like Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov or foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov — would seem to diminish the talks' importance or any possibility of a breakthrough. Tens of thousands have been killed since Moscow invaded in February 2022, and Russia now occupies about a fifth of Ukraine's territory in Europe's worst conflict since World War II. A Ukrainian official told AFP that Zelensky planned to meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara, not Istanbul, later on Thursday, and only then would decide his approach to the talks. — Agencies

ECC authorises shifting  
relief of Rs4.12 per litre  
in petrol, HSD prices

For the next 12 months,  
the decision to raise POL  
prices by Rs4.12 per litre  
will remain in effect

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) on Tuesday decided to transfer the Rs4.12 per litre relief from the price reduction of Pakistan Oilfields Limited (POL) products to refineries, OMCs (oil marketing companies), and dealers for the upcoming two weeks. For the next 12 months, the decision to raise POL prices by Rs4.12 per litre will remain in effect, which will be adjusted in light of the oil price relief that is anticipated to begin on May 16, The News quoted a senior official who attended the meeting as saying. This is how, beginning on May 16,

end users would pay an extra Rs85 billion in the form of increases in Internal Freight Equalisation Margin (IFEM), OMCs' margin, and dealers' margin in the upcoming year. "The top functionaries of the Petroleum and Finance Divisions, after consultation with the prime minister, will finalise the decision and notify the next POL prices today (Thursday)," said the official. Earlier, the government, instead of passing relief to the end consumers, had increased the petroleum levy twice; firstly to provide relief to electricity consumers and secondly for the construction of the N-25 highway in Balochistan. In its summary, the Petroleum Division proposed to the ECC to hike Internal Freight Equalisation Margin (IFEM) by Rs1.87 per litre for refineries and OMCs margin by Rs1.13 per litre to help recover Rs34 billion in losses in the next 12 months. Refineries and OMCs are facing perpetual losses because of the sales tax exemption on POL products since FY25. This measure has not only stopped the upgrade projects of refineries valued at \$6 billion but also increased their operation costs. ECC has also endorsed the dealers' margin of Rs1.12 per litre.

Chairman Senate Yousaf Raza Gilani  
visits Moscow's Grand Mosque

"The people of Afghanistan deserve more than survival—they deserve dignity, education, and opportunity," Gilani emphasized. "And the Kashmiri people cannot be forgotten in the face of silence and suppression. It is the moral duty of parliaments across the world to become voices of the voiceless"

## DNA

MOSCOW: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, met with the First Deputy Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Mr. Alexander Zhukov. The high-level engagement signalled a broad-based commitment by the Russian legislature to deepening ties with Pakistan in an era of rising global uncertainty. The meeting served as a platform to candidly address shared concerns over regional stability—chief among them, the protracted crisis in Afghanistan and the rising tensions in South Asia. Chairman Gilani underscored Pakistan's principled stance on the urgent need for humanitarian engagement in Afghanistan and for justice and peace in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK). "The people of Afghanistan deserve more than survival—they deserve dignity, education, and opportunity," Gilani emphasized. "And the Kashmiri people cannot be forgotten

in the face of silence and suppression. It is the moral duty of parliaments across the world to become voices of the voiceless." Chairman Gilani also drew attention to the alarming rise in Islamophobia, state-sponsored censorship, and extremism in the region. He advocated for sustained parliamentary engagement to confront narratives of hate and build bridges across civilizations. Discussions also touched upon strengthening collaboration at multilateral forums such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), where both countries advocate for multipolarity, inclusive development, and cultural diplomacy. Accompanying Chairman Gilani were Pakistan's Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Khalid Mahmood Jamali; Financial Advisor to the Chairman Senate, Mr. Aizaz Khan; and members of the local embassy staff. The Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani speaking during an interview with Russian TV, underscored that Pakistan-Russia inter-parliamentary dialogue is actively developing based on mutual respect and shared interests.

PHC bench  
acquits  
murder  
convict

ABBOTTABAD: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) Abbottabad Bench has acquitted a murder convict, Naseer Akhtar, citing lack of evidence, overturning a previous life imprisonment sentence handed down by a lower court. The case stems from a murder that took place on March 26, 2013, within the jurisdiction of Kot Najibullah Police Station, where a man named Azhar was killed. Naseer Akhtar was nominated in the case, and an FIR (No. 459) was registered against him on July 26, 2013, under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code. Following the completion of the investigation, the prosecution presented 14 witnesses in the court of the Additional Sessions Judge, Haripur. Based on the evidence and legal arguments, the trial court had sentenced Akhtar to life imprisonment. However, the accused challenged the verdict in the Peshawar High Court Abbottabad Bench. Senior Supreme Court lawyer Atif Ali Jadoon represented him in the appeal, after concluding arguments from both sides, the High Court ruled in favour of the appellant and acquitted him honorably due to insufficient evidence. The decision brings an end to the legal battle that spanned over a decade, clearing Naseer Akhtar of all charges. — APP

PSX resumes  
rally after  
midweek slip

KSE-100 Index rises to intraday high of 119,741.20 points, up 1,204.68 points, or 1.01%

## NAZIR SYIAL

KARACHI: Bulls took charge at the stock market on Thursday, driven by sustained market momentum, improving economic indicators, and easing regional tensions, all contributing to investor confidence across multiple sectors. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index climbed to an intraday high of 119,741.20 points, up 1,204.68 points, or 1.01%, from the previous close of 118,536.52. The index also touched a low of 118,871.13 points, reflecting an early gain of 334.61 points, or 0.28%, before settling within a tight range mid-session. "Refinery stocks are up today after news of a Rs34 billion compensation package for the sector. We've already been observing some momentum, particularly with talk of the IMF disbursement and the geopolitical ceasefire that followed," said Sana Tawfik, Head of Research at Arif Habib Limited. "There's also discussion of an increase in OMC margins, which has caused movement in that sector too. Yesterday, Barron's called Pakistan a 'macroeconomic miracle' in a positive report, all these factors are adding up to the positive sentiment." On Wednesday evening, SBP confirmed receipt of the second IMF tranche of \$1.023 billion, under EFF. — APP

Reinvigorated political  
process essential for  
peace in Yemen

## DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for reinvigorating the political process in Yemen to lay the foundation for a comprehensive and durable solution that would ensure a peaceful future for the Arab country. There is no military solution to the Yemen crisis, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan, told the UN Security Council on Wednesday, noting that persistent political divisions, economic collapse and environmental degradation are exacting a heavy toll on civilians. "The international community and the Council must remain engaged and act in earnest to prevent further deterioration and to help chart a path toward a peaceful and more hopeful future for Yemen," he said in a debate on the situation in Yemen. The crisis in Yemen worsened in 2014 after Houthi rebels (known officially as Ansar-Alah) seized the capital, Sanaa, spawning complex political and military tensions. Since then, the Houthis and Yemeni Government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, have been battling for control of the country for more than a decade.

As a result, more than 17 million people — half the country's population — remain dependent on humanitarian assistance and protection. In his remarks, Ambassador Asim said that Pakistan backs a UN-facilitated, Yemeni-owned and Yemen-led peace process as the only viable path to lasting peace, welcomes the ongoing diplomatic efforts by Saudi Arabia and Oman, and urges all parties to build-on the December 2023 Roadmap that provides a credible framework for sustainable peace. "All sides must honour their commitments, exercise maximum restraint, and prioritize diplomacy above all else," he said. Pakistan, he said, urges all donors to respond swiftly and generously to OCHA's urgent appeal as Yemen's humanitarian crisis remains dire. Noting that no recent Houthi attacks on merchant vessels in the Red Sea had taken place, Ambassador Asim said that Pakistan views the recent ceasefire between the Houthis and the United States as a positive development. "This opportunity must not be squandered or exploited — it should be used to advance an inclusive, intra-Yemeni political process." Pakistan also strongly condemns the continued detention of UN and humanitarian personnel, a clear violation of international law, and called for their unconditional release.

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