

# Islamabad POST

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**Rubio has no high expectations for Ukraine-Russia talks**

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**Mitchell Starc opts out of return to IPL**

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## Regional peace, stability

# Pakistan ready for dialogue with India: FO

FO spokesperson says India has been involved in instigating and promoting terrorism within Pakistan

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: While Pakistan believes in peaceful resolution of conflicts, it will not compromise on its sovereignty, Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan stated on Friday. Addressing his weekly press briefing in Islamabad, he said it was India who pushed the entire region into war. The spokesperson emphasised that Pakistan responded to Indian aggression and demonstrated that there would be no compromise on the nation's honour and dignity. FO spokesperson Shafqat said in response to Indian aggression, Pakistan launched 'Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos'. The Pakistan armed forces shot down six Indian warplanes during this operation, he added. Appreciating the role of various countries in achieving the ceasefire between the nuclear-armed neighbouring countries, the spokesperson further noted that the ceasefire was made possible through the efforts of numerous friendly nations. At the same time, he warned that any future aggression against Pakistan would be met with a strong response. Following the killing of 26 people in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir in April, New Delhi accused Islamabad of orchestrating the deadly militant attack, which Pakistan denied. On the basis of these baseless allegations, India started the war against Pakistan earlier this month, which was the heaviest fighting to have

## Natalie Baker calls on Interior Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Natalie Baker called on Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Islamabad. Matters of mutual interest, Pakistan-U.S. relations, and enhancing bilateral cooperation were discussed during the meeting. Moreover, the situation following the Pakistan-India ceasefire was also discussed. Mohsin Naqvi expressed gratitude to U.S. President Donald Trump and the U.S. Ambassador for their key role in the Pakistan-India ceasefire. He said that the credit for the ceasefire between two nuclear powers goes to President Donald Trump, who saved the region from a catastrophic disaster and rendered a service to humanity. Mohsin Naqvi further stated that Pakistan welcomes President Trump's positive views regarding the country's leadership. He emphasised that Pakistan wishes to further enhance mutual cooperation with the United States. Acting U.S. Ambassador Natalie Baker said that the U.S. enjoys excellent relations with Pakistan and will continue its cooperation in various sectors. Federal Interior Secretary Khurram Agha was also present on the occasion.

occurred between the two neighbouring nations in decades, before a ceasefire was reached last week. Pakistan is not afraid to discuss the issue of terrorism, the Foreign Office spokesperson reaffirmed in his address. Highlighting Pakistan's own experience as a victim of terrorism, the spokesperson stressed the Pakistan's understanding of the pain of terrorism. However, the spokesperson said that India has been involved in instigating

and promoting terrorism within Pakistan. Furthermore, the Foreign Office said that India has orchestrated assassination plots not only in Pakistan but also in other countries. The spokesperson made it clear that whenever the topic of terrorism arises, Pakistan will present its stance unequivocally. "We possess concrete evidence and material regarding India's role," he stated.

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## Lammy meets Dar

# UK says Pakistan-India ceasefire must hold

"It's important that this ceasefire holds. It's fragile," says British foreign secretary

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: British Foreign Secretary David Lammy has said that the ceasefire between India and Pakistan is highly welcome but it remains fragile, and his government is working with international partners to sustain the ceasefire agreement. Lammy is currently in Pakistan to meet the Pakistani leadership to hold talks on various issues, including the recent fight between India and Pakistan. When asked by Geo News about India's arrogant attacks on Pakistan without producing any evidence of Islamabad's involvement in the Pahalgalam attacks,

PICTURE ON BACK PAGE

the foreign secretary said: "We made it clear that terrorist attacks in Pahalgalam were horrific. Our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who suffered in these attacks. The UK government has been condemning terrorism in all forms, in no uncertain terms. I offered my condolences." The UK foreign secretary said he had discussed the issue of terrorism in Pakistan. He said: "Here in Pakistan, we have discussed this. Pakistan too has been subject to terrorism in the recent past. The focus has been to

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## India asks IMF to reconsider Pakistan programme

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should reconsider a \$1 billion loan to Pakistan alleging it was "funding terror", a move denounced by Islamabad as proof of New Delhi's desperation. India and Pakistan last week clashed in the worst military violence in decades, killing around 70 people before agreeing a ceasefire that began Saturday. The confrontations were sparked by an attack on tourists by gunmen in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) last month that New Delhi accused Islamabad of backing — a charge it denies. "I believe a big portion of the \$1 billion coming from IMF will be used for funding terror infrastructure,"

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**RAWALPINDI:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif along with Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar visited Combined Military Hospital Rawalpindi to meet the soldiers injured during M'arka-e-Haq. Rawalpindi, 16 May, 2025. – DNA

## PM hoists flag to mark Youm-e-Tashakkur

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday hoisted the national flag at the PM House to mark Youm-e-Tashakkur (Thanksgiving Day). Youm-e-Tashakkur is being observed across the country to thank Allah Almighty for the magnificent success and victory of Pakistan against the open aggression and provocation of India. In his message in connection with the day, the prime minister highlighted that during the midnight of May 6 and May 7, India while acting cowardly attacked Pakistan resulting in the martyrdom of innocent Pakistani citizens and we were forced to respond for the sake of these innocent citizens.

Continued on Page 06

## Many in Gaza are 'starving', says Trump

AGENCIES

ABU DHABI: US President Donald Trump said Friday "a lot of people are starving" in the besieged Gaza Strip, where rescuers reported more than 50 deaths in Israeli air strikes since midnight. Trump's brief comments on Gaza came as he capped the first foreign tour of his second term that saw him visit several Gulf countries but excluded key ally Israel. A two-month ceasefire between Israel and Hamas collapsed in March, shortly after Israel reimposed a total blockade on Gaza that aid agencies say has sparked critical food shortages. Trump backed aid for the Palestinians, saying people in Gaza are starving and adding that he expected "a lot of good things" in the next month.

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## Shehbaz says

# World must acknowledge Pak sacrifices

"Pakistan is the biggest victim of terrorism. We have lost around 90,000 lives, and suffered economic losses exceeding \$150 billion," the premier said while addressing a ceremony related to Youm-e-Tashakkur

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has urged the world community to acknowledge Pakistan's immense sacrifices in the fight against terrorism, stating that the country has paid a heavy price in both human and economic terms. "Pakistan is the biggest victim of terrorism. We have lost around 90,000 lives, and suffered economic losses exceeding \$150 billion," the premier said while addressing a ceremony related to Youm-e-Tashakkur. He noted that Pakistan's efforts were not only aimed at restoring peace within its own borders but for the world at large. "If our brave armed forces had not engaged these terrorists, they would have been roaming freely in various parts of the world," he added. The prime minister urged the world to recognise the sacrifices and suffering Pakistan has endured in the battle against extremism. "The world must acknowledge what we have gone through," he reiterated.

## PM visits CMH, inquire after health of injured soldiers

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday visited Combined Military Hospital (CMH) to inquire after the health of Jawans of Pakistan Army and civilians who were injured during M'arka-e-Haq (Battle of Truth) against India. The prime minister was accompanied by Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar.

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## Duties to be dropped

# Govt unveils tariff reforms

Additional customs, regulatory duties would be phased out in the next four to five years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday unveiled major tariff reforms, capping customs duty at a maximum of 15%. Chairing a meeting on National Tariff Policy, PM Shehbaz said that additional customs and regulatory duties would be phased out in the next four to five years. "This move is being considered a major milestone toward economic improvement that will enable export-led growth. This decision is expected not only to help control unemployment but also to keep inflation in check," said the premier. He maintained that it would also encourage international investment and help create new job opportunities. The prime minister directed that Additional Customs Duty (currently rang-

ing from 2% to 7%) and Regulatory Duty (currently varying from 5% to 90%) be eliminated over the next four to five years. Similarly, the customs duty will be capped at a maximum of 15%, as currently, for some items, the rate exceeds 100%, read a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office. The number of duty slabs has also been reduced to four to ease legal complexities related to imports and provide a level playing field to various industries. PM Shehbaz reiterated that his government was committed to developing a strong economy, creating employment opportunities, and doing away with inflation. He said that after thorough consultations with national and international economic experts, a comprehensive plan for fundamental

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# India mulls plan to slash Pak water supply

Pakistan has denied involvement in IIOJK attack, but accord hasn't been revived despite ceasefire

DNA

ISLAMABAD: India is considering plans to dramatically increase the water it draws from a major river that feeds Pakistani farms downstream, as part of retaliatory action for a deadly April attack on tourists that New Delhi blames on Islamabad, according to four people familiar with the matter. Delhi suspended its participation in the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, which governs the usage of the Indus river system, shortly after 26 civilians in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) were killed. Pakistan has denied involvement in the incident, but the accord has not been revived despite the two nuclear-armed neighbours agreeing on a ceasefire last week following the worst fighting between them in decades. After the April 22 attack, Indian Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi ordered officials to expedite the planning and execution of projects on the Chenab, Jhelum and Indus rivers, three bodies of water in the Indus system that are designated primarily for Pakistan's use. One of the key plans under discussion involves doubling to 120km the length of the Ranbir canal on the Chenab, which runs through India to Pakistan's agricultural powerhouse of Punjab, two of the people said. The canal was built in the 19th century, long before the treaty was signed. India is permitted to draw a limited amount of water from the Chenab for irrigation, but an expanded canal — which experts said could take years to construct — would allow it to divert 150 cubic metres of water per second, up from about 40 cubic metres currently, the four people said, citing official discussions and documents they had seen. Details of the Indian government's deliberations on

expanding Ranbir have not previously been reported. The discussions started last month and continue even after the ceasefire, one of the people said. The Indian ministries responsible for water and foreign affairs, as well as Modi's office, did not respond to questions. Indian hydropower giant NHPC, which operates many projects in the Indus system, also did not respond to an email seeking comment. Modi said in a fiery speech this week that "water and blood cannot flow together," though he didn't refer to the treaty. Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters Tuesday that India "will keep the treaty in abeyance until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism". Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told lawmakers this week that the government had written to India arguing that suspending the treaty was unlawful and

that Islamabad regarded it as remaining in force. Islamabad said after India suspended the treaty in April that it considered "any attempt to stop or divert the flow of water belonging to Pakistan" to be an "act of war." About 80% of Pakistani farms depend on the Indus system, as do nearly all hydropower projects serving the country of some 250 million. Any efforts by Delhi to build dams, canals or other infrastructure that would withhold or divert a significant amount of flow from the Indus system to India "would take years to realise," said water security expert David Michel of the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies. But Pakistan has had a preview of the kind of pressure it could face from India: Water at a key receiving point in Pakistan briefly fell by as much as 90% in early May after India started maintenance work on some Indus projects.

## Briefs

### Contempt Case

## Intra-court appeal not admissible

IHC's Justice Ishaq says he will proceed with contempt of court case and will write judgment

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday ruled that the intra-court appeal against a judge's interim order was inadmissible. Justice Ishaq made the remarks while hearing a suo motu case pertaining to the removal of a case from the cause list. The IHC judge in March initiated suo motu contempt proceedings after a case concerning the prison superintendent's failure to arrange a meeting between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and his lawyer, Mashal Yousafzai, was removed from the cause list. The court's action comes after the case was delisted following the formation of a larger bench pursuant to the orders issued by IHC Acting Chief Justice Justice Sarfraz Dogar, who also directed to merge over 20 pleas pertaining to the meeting rights of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan. At the outset of today's hearing, the IHC single bench expressed wonder over the division bench's order halting the contempt proceeding by the IHC.

### Holiday Notice

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

## Ceremony held to honor Major Aziz Bhatti Shaheed

GUJRATA solemn ceremony was held at the mausoleum of Nishan-e-Haider recipient Major Aziz Bhatti Shaheed in Ladian village, Tehsil Kharian, to mark Youm-e-Tashakkur. The event was attended by Pakistan Army officers, Deputy Commissioner Gujrat Safdar Hussain Virk, District Police Officer Mustansar Atta Bajwa, MNA Chaudhry Ilyas, MPA Chaudhry Ijaz Raina, Assistant Commissioner Kharian Ahmed Sher, and prominent local political and social figures including Raja Muhammad Aslam and Chaudhry Khalid Asghar Ghral. A large number of citizens also participated. Floral wreaths were laid at the mausoleum, and special prayers were offered for the peace, security, and stability of the country. Major Aziz Bhatti Shaheed embraced martyrdom on September 6, 1965, while defending the homeland at the Barki sector near Lahore during Indian aggression. He was posthumously awarded the Nishan-e-Haider for his exemplary courage and devotion to duty. Participants paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the armed forces and reaffirmed the nation's unwavering commitment to its defenders. They said that Youm-e-Tashakkur reflects the spirit of sacrifice, unity, and national resolve. —APP

## Martyr's blood strengthens resolve: Danyal

ISLAMABAD: Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, visited the families of young soldiers martyred in 'Ma'rka e Haq' on Friday and expressed deep condolences and solidarity with the bereaved families. Speaking on the occasion, Barrister Danyal hailed the martyr's sacrifice stating that "by laying down their lives for Pakistan's security, these heroes have etched their names into our nation's enduring legacy. We stand indebted to our brave sons, and the entire nation bows its head in gratitude on 'Youm-e-Tashakkur'." He vowed, "Every drop of a martyr's blood fortifies our resolve. Those who challenge Pakistan's sovereignty will meet only humiliation." Together with the bereaved family, officials offered prayers for the martyr's eternal peace and heavenly elevation. —APP

## RCCI observes Youm-e-Tashakkur

RAWALPINDI: A dignified ceremony of thanksgiving was held at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) to commemorate the historic victory of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos. The event featured a flag hoisting ceremony and was attended by Station Commander Brigadier Ahmad Nawaz as the chief guest. RCCI President Mr. Usman Shaikat, Group Leader Mr. Sohail Altaf, Patron-in-Chief of Sweet Homes Mr. Zamurrad Khan, former Station Commander Brigadier (R) Ijaz Qamar Kayani, representatives of the traders' community, and RCCI office bearers participated in the ceremony. Brigadier Ahmad Nawaz, along with the dignitaries, hoisted the national flag to honor the achievements of Pakistan's armed forces. During the ceremony, speakers paid rich tributes to the brave soldiers, air force pilots, and naval officers for their outstanding courage and sacrifices. —APP

# Martyrs are pride of our nation: Naqvi

The Interior Minister listened to the problems of the families of the martyrs and gave instructions on the spot to resolve these issues, saying that it is our responsibility to resolve the problems being faced by the families of the martyrs

LAHORE: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) Headquarters on the occasion of Youm e Tashakkur. Director General Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) Major General Muhammad Atif Bin Akram welcomed Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. The Interior Minister visited the Martyrs' Memorial, laid flowers, recited Fateha and prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs. Interior Minister paid rich tribute to the great sacrifices of the martyrs. Later, he met the families of the martyrs and appreciated their high morale. The Interior Minister listened to the problems of the families of the martyrs and gave instructions on the spot to resolve these issues, saying that it is our responsibility to resolve the problems being faced by the families of the martyrs.



He added that the martyrs are the pride of our nation. He said that the entire nation salutes

the families of the martyrs. He emphasized that the sacrifices of the martyrs are unparalleled

and the entire nation stands with the families of the martyrs. He further said that the

officers and personnel of Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) have written new chapters in the history of courage and bravery. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi appreciated the professional preparedness, capability, determination and courage of the Pakistan Rangers (Punjab). Later, he also recorded his impressions in the guest book. He hailed the martyr's sacrifice stating that "by laying down their lives for Pakistan's security, these heroes has etched their names into our nation's enduring legacy. We stand indebted to our brave sons, and the entire nation bows its head in gratitude on 'Youm-e-Tashakkur'." He vowed, "Every drop of a martyr's blood fortifies our resolve. Those who challenge Pakistan's sovereignty will meet only humiliation."

## Cultural dialogue step towards achieving peaceful world: Aleem

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from Pakistan, led by Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has participated in the Kazan Forum organized under the auspices of the Russian Federation in the capital of Tatarstan. On the opening day, while addressing the session on Cultural Dialogue, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that Pakistan possesses a rich historical and social heritage, said a press release issued here on Friday. He welcomed cultural exchanges with Russia and Central Asian States, terming such initiatives a positive and promising step towards achieving a peaceful world and paving the way for harmony. Aleem Khan underscored the importance of preserving multifaceted cultural heritage and stressed that through mutual dialogue and understanding, the world can become more peaceful, diverse and harmonious. He appreciated the organization of the "Russia-Islamic World Kazan Forum 2025" and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to playing. —APP

# Kundi vows to protect workers' rights

## DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Friday reaffirmed the Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) commitment to restoring jobs and creating new employment opportunities, rather than terminating employees. He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation from the All Employees Coordination Council, which included leaders from federal and provincial departmental unions. The delegation was led by Shah Zulqarnain and Aslam Khan. Governor Kundi pledged to act as an advocate for the employees by presenting their charter of demands

to the federal government.

He emphasized that the PPP considers the working class a vital part of Pakistan's development and has always prioritized labor rights, staying true to the mission of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Highlighting key issues faced by employees, he called for serious attention from the federal government to address concerns such as salary increases, pension-related injustices, and departmental privatizations.

He criticized the provincial government for imposing excessive taxes, violating workers' rights, and contributing to widespread corruption. The Governor also announced that the PPP will hold a province-wide protest

in Peshawar on May 26 against these injustices. He assured the delegation that PPP members in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, the provincial president, and the entire party leadership stand in solidarity with government workers. In response, labor leaders expressed their gratitude to the Governor for meeting with them and acknowledged PPP's historical support for labor rights. They credited Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for granting workers the right to unionize and reiterated their long-standing support for the party. Among the delegation were labor leaders Abdul Manaf, Habibullah Umarzai, Riaz Khan, Ashfaq Bacha, and others.

# Abasin Columnists Association signs agreement with Khana-e-Farhang

PESHAWAR : The Abasin Columnists Association has signed an agreement with Khana-e-Farhang to strengthen collaboration in the fields of religion, culture, civilization and journalism. This agreement aims to foster mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and intellectual discourse through joint initiatives, research, and public programs. The collaboration reached during an event held here with Director General Khana Farhang Iran, Dr. Hussain Chagomi, in chair. President of the Abasin Columnists Association and Senior Vice President of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi paid tributes to the Director General of Iran, Dr. Hussain Chagomi, for his services and said that there is a need for close ties and exchange of columnist delegations between Pakistan and Iran. He also appreciated the performance of Iranian Consul General, Ali Benafshakhawa and thanked him for sending a 6-member delegation of the Abasin Writers Association to participate in the National Day of Iran in 2019. He said that promoting mutual relations with the delegation of the Abasin Writers Association is also commendable. "Pakistan and Iran are not only have brotherly relations on religious grounds, but the two countries are also very close to each other in terms of civilization and culture," he added. Ziaul Haq Sarhadi further said that the Abasin Columnists Association consists of columnists from the province, which also has the status of a think tank and whose articles and columns are published in national newspapers. —DNA

# PODA congratulates NA on historic move to end child marriage in ICT

ISLAMABAD: PODA (Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy) congratulates the National Assembly of Pakistan for taking a historic step toward eliminating child marriage by passing groundbreaking legislation banning child marriage in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). This legislation marks a significant advancement in protecting children's rights and aligns with international human rights standards. Sameena Nazir, Executive Director of PODA, stated that PODA has been consistently advocating for children's rights across multiple platforms over the past three years, calling for the implementation of a uniform national law to end child marriages in Pakistan. She commended the government for prioritizing children's rights and taking concrete steps to combat child marriage. She also extended special appreciation to parliamentarian Sharmila Farooqi for her courage and relentless advocacy in bringing this bill to the National Assembly — a space where representatives can respond to the will of the people for the betterment of society. Under the project "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality" — supported by the Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad — PODA led extensive advocacy efforts through its annual Rural Women's Conferences. Over the past three years, these conferences have passed resolutions demanding an end to child marriage under the age of 18. These resolutions garnered the support of more than 2,000 women leaders from all four provinces, as well as the regions of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. In addition to legislative advocacy, PODA mobilized public support by sending hundreds of letters — signed by concerned citizens — to then Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani in 2023. The organization also broadcast multiple series of radio programs to raise awareness about the harmful impacts of child marriage, launched multiple effective social media campaigns, and observed series of key international days to amplify the issue. PODA received substantial support from the media, particularly the print press, in building nationwide consensus on the need for a uniform law to end child marriage in Pakistan. Advocate Khawaja Zahid Nasim, Chairperson of the Naheeda Mehboob Elahi Foundation — an organization providing free legal aid to vulnerable segments of society, especially women — also welcomed the passage of the ICT Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2024. He called it a landmark victory for child rights in Pakistan. "The bill criminalizes marriage under the age of 18 and makes CNIC verification mandatory prior to marriage registration. While this is a milestone achievement for ICT, it is imperative that similar legislation be adopted across all provinces to truly eradicate child marriage across Pakistan," he said. —DNA

# Thailand-Pakistan explore economic cooperation at PIDE

## MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD :Rongvudhi Virabutr, Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan, paid a visit to the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) for a focused dialogue on strengthening bilateral and regional economic cooperation. The meeting, hosted by Vice Chancellor Dr. Nadeem Javaid, centered on identifying practical pathways to enhance collaboration between the two nations. The discussion covered several key areas of mutual interest. Both parties emphasized the importance of trade diversification by identifying high-potential product categories to broaden the scope of bilateral trade. The Ambassador also

expressed keen interest in encouraging Thai investments in Pakistan's recycling and sustainable manufacturing sectors,

thereby promoting green industry initiatives. Energy cooperation featured prominently in the dialogue,

with both sides exploring possibilities for cross-border energy trade, particularly within the framework of the



China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In addition, the leaders discussed enhancing regional connectivity by improving access to Central Asian markets through coordinated strategies and infrastructure development. Another major theme was policy innovation, with a shared resolve to jointly develop adaptive trade and economic policies that address evolving global challenges. The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation of commitment from both sides to establish institutional linkages and formalize collaboration through concrete follow-up initiatives. PIDE reiterated its role in offering research and policy support to facilitate sustained engagement and impactful economic partnerships.

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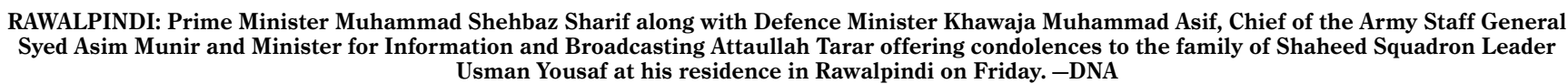
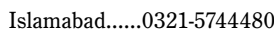
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**Head Office**  
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.  
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272773, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2825132, 2274227.  
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Turkish Airlines.....8494949



The prime minister paid tribute to the martyr's services for the country and his sacrifice while defending the homeland.

cases with proven intent or involvement, holding OMCs accountable before penalizing pump operators, and prohibiting sealing or fines without due process, except in emergencies. They also demand OGRA's reinstatement as the lead regulator with 48-hour reporting of actions, formation of a Petroleum Retailers Grievance Committee, whistleblower protections, penalties for officials violating procedures, and compensation for wronged retailers. Amendments to Sections 23(3A-3C) are sought to eliminate strict liability, and a grace period is requested under Section 4(kk) for digital tracking implementation. Major Retved Suleman Malik (Ned) also addressed the gathering, stating that executive powers should be exercised only after a proper inquiry and with judicial authorization.

Chief Secretaries and Deputy Commissioners to ensure the registration of all newspapers. We have also received such complaints that many traders or people doing any work have published dummy newspapers and published bogus news against certain persons to blackmail them. Action will be taken to rectify this", he remarked. He said that action has also been taken against a property dealer who was blackmailing traders by publishing fake news in a newspaper. He said that any newspaper registered with the Press Registrar had to be registered with the Press Council of Pakistan after charging a small fee. He said that the Press Council of Pakistan has taken suo motu notice regarding several fake news reports and action was started against them by sending a 15-day notice. The PCP said that the organisation has started an internship program for students from different universities.—DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, paid an official visit to the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) in Islamabad. He was accompanied by the Federal Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Division, Asad Rehman Gilani, said a press release here on Friday. The visit included a high-level meeting attended by Chairperson of the PAL, Dr. Najiba Arif; Director General, Abdul Basit; PAL's Administrator, Muhammad Asim Butt; Deputy Director (Awards and Programs), Mir Nawaz Solangi; Deputy Director (Research and Translation), Akhtar Raza Saleemi; and Administrative Officer, Rafiq Nazli. During her address, Dr. Najeeba Arif provided a comprehensive overview of the Academy's establishment, objectives, rules and regulations, initiatives for the promotion of literature in Pakistani languages, writer welfare programs, publications, international literary collaborations, and ongoing and future projects.—APP

**RAWALPINDI:** Rawalpindi Cantonment Board celebrated a grand ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1947-48 Indo-Pakistani War. The ceremony was held at RCB premises, and solidarity was expressed with the Pakistan Air Force and Armed Forces for their unwavering defence against Indian aggression. A cake-laying ceremony was also conducted in honor of the brave air warriors and soldiers who displayed exceptional valor during the Pak-India conflict. Speakers emphasized that the nation stands shoulder-to-shoulder with its armed forces in defence of the homeland, ready to make any sacrifice for national security. "The Pakistan Armed Forces are among the best in the world, making the nation proud. The entire country stands firmly with them, and no sacrifice will be spared in protecting our motherland," said the Chief Guest, Raza Haider Shuja. Additional CEO Arshad Khan on the occasion remarked, "Our land, naval, and air forces have forced India to its knees. We salute the successful and dignified defence by the Pakistan Armed Forces, especially the heroes of the Pakistan Air Force." The speakers further asserted that Operation Binyan Marsoos sends a clear and powerful message to all enemies of Pakistan: "Pakistan was founded in the name of Allah, of Islam, and no global power can erase its existence. —DNA

**RAWALPINDI:** The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting eight operations across the country, recovered as many as 116.36 kg of drugs worth over Rs 90 million and arrested 11 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday. He informed that 1000 ecstasy pills weighing 500 grams and a pistol were recovered from the possession of a suspect near Hayatabad in Peshawar. In another operation, 100 ecstasy pills weighing 56 grams were recovered from a suspect near Haji Camp. The arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions. As many as 15 kg of heroin were recovered from an Afghan national driving a Mazda truck near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza, Attock. Similarly, 24 kg of hashish was recovered from two suspects riding a motorcycle near the Hafizabad-Lahore area. As much as 7.2 kg of opium and 10.8 kg of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Chan Da Qila, Gujranwala, and the accused was arrested. During an operation, 2.4 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle at G-9 Markaz in Islamabad, and two accused were arrested. As many as 43.2 kg of hashish and 9.6 kg of opium were recovered from a vehicle near the Motorway Toll Plaza in Islamabad, and two accused were arrested.—APP

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has appointed Muhammad Zahid Akhtar Khaki as the new Controller of Examinations at the university. Following the issuance of the official notification, he has formally assumed charge of his position. Prior to this, he was serving as the Additional Controller of Examinations. On his appointment, the university's faculty members, senior officials, and staff have expressed their happiness and extended best wishes to him. It is expected that he will play a significant role in making the examination system more efficient and transparent through his experience and leadership skills.—APP



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## Briefs

Five reports  
laid in  
Senate

ISLAMABAD: Five reports from various standing committees—including Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Commerce, Communications and Federal Education and Professional Training were presented in the Senate on Friday. Chairman, Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Senator Sardar Al Haj Muhammad Umer Gorgaji presented a report of the Committee in the House on a Bill further to amend the Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Act, 1992 [The Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (Amendment) Bill, 2024], introduced by Senator Shahadat Awan on 19th February, 2024, while Chairperson, Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training Senator Bushra Anjum Butt, presented a report of the Committee on a point of public importance raised by Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan, on 25th October, 2024, regarding strikes being observed by the students and teaching / non-teaching staff of the Federal Urdu University against non-payment of salaries in the House. Chairperson, Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt presented report of the Committee on a point of public importance raised by Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan, on 25th October, 2024, regarding ban on Students' Unions in the Universities.—DNA

Cardiologist  
warns of  
Hypertension  
epidemic

ISLAMABAD: Cardiologist Friday stressed that hypertension is increasingly affecting Pakistani youth, emphasizing the need for regular monitoring and awareness as the World Health Organization reports over 1 billion people worldwide are affected with estimates suggesting a rise to 1.5 billion by 2025. In an exclusive conversation with a private news channel, renowned Heart Specialist Dr. Bashir Hanif highlighted the significance of World Hypertension Day, observed annually on May 17 to raise public awareness and promote prevention and control of this disease. Dr. Hanif emphasized the importance of awareness and regular monitoring in combating hypertension, a growing health concern worldwide. Hypertension is often referred to as the "silent killer" because it can gradually build up in the body without noticeable symptoms, ultimately leading to severe cardiovascular issues like myocardial infarction, stroke and heart failure, he mentioned. According to Dr. Bashir Hanif, around 42% of people in Pakistan are unaware of hypertension symptoms and lack disease awareness, highlighting a significant need for education and awareness efforts.—APP

World powers urged to  
help resolve Kashmir dispute

Human rights activist Marjan Lucas appealed to the international community, especially the European Union, to play an effective role in resolving the Kashmir issue

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The speakers addressing a seminar in Brussels stressed that the international community, especially the European Union and other global powers, should play their effective role for a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute. A one-day seminar "Kashmir Key to Peace in South Asia" was held at the European Press Club in Brussels under the auspices of the Kashmir Council Europe (KCEU). The guest speaker was Marjan

Lucas, an eminent human rights activist from the Netherlands. Other speakers included human rights activists, Kashmiri and Pakistani leaders, civil society representatives, and important figures from various fields, received a press release here on Friday. During her address, human rights activist Marjan Lucas appealed to the international community, especially the European Union, to play an effective role in resolving the Kashmir issue. She warned that with two nuclear powers in South Asia, if the issue is not resolved, a dangerous tragedy could

occur. She said that now is the time for the Kashmiri people to unite and raise their voice at the global level. Professor Willa Kennedid from Holland and European Intellectual Endre Barces were also among the prominent participants of the seminar. Endre Barces said, "We will raise our voices in Europe in favour of oppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir, who are struggling for their right to self-determination." Other speakers at the seminar also expressed their views and urged the United Nations, the European Union and world powers to play

their actual role in resolving this long-standing conflict. The host of the seminar and Chairman of the Kashmir Council EU, Ali Raza Syed, thanked the participants of the seminar and emphasized that we will continue our peaceful and diplomatic struggle in Europe on the Kashmir issue. He said that in recent times, during the tension between Pakistan and India, the Kashmir issue has once again come to the fore and no one can deny the fact that the Kashmir issue is the real reason for the tension between the two neighboring countries. Ali Raza Syed

said that India has been occupying a large part of Kashmir for a long time and to maintain this illegal occupation, it is oppressing and abusing the Kashmiris. He said that the Council is committed to advocating for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people and the UN resolutions. He called for the immediate release of Kashmiri prisoners, an impartial international investigation into human rights violations, and granting the right of self-determination for the Kashmiris.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani administering oath to the newly elected Senator Syed Waqar Mehdi during senate session at Parliament House.

Hajj package offers max  
comfort at affordable price

ISLAMABAD: Director General (DG) of Hajj Abdul Wahab Soomro said on Friday that the government has expressed unwavering commitment to prioritize intending pilgrims' comfort, safety and spiritual fulfillment while maintaining the highest standards of service excellence this year. The DG talking to Radio Pakistan said the government Hajj Scheme for 88,380 pilgrims is being elevated to unprecedented heights to ensure a seamless and spiritually enriching pilgrimage. Highlighting the key initiatives, he mentioned that the scheme offers the lowest-cost Hajj package globally. Pilgrims now have the option to choose between single, double, or triple-bed rooms at an additional cost, while family rooms are provided free of charge wherever possible, the DG added. Accommodations are allocated based on pilgrim profiling to ensure optimal convenience, considering the non-uniform nature of buildings in Makkah. Standardized luggage, designed for easy identification, has been provided to all pilgrims, he said, highlighting the introduction of air-conditioned tents with gypsum board partitions and sofa beds in Mina. For transportation in Mashair, 73% of pilgrims will use trains, while 27% will use buses. All pilgrims will be housed in Madina Markazia, enjoying premium transportation and catering services in both holy cities, he said. A robust healthcare network, in collaboration with Saudi German Hospital and other leading medical institutions, ensures 24/7 emergency care, he added. A dedicated team of almost 1,800 welfare personnel, working with Service Provider Company Al Rajhi, will assist pilgrims throughout their journey, he further said.—DNA

COAS rekindles national pride  
and reshapes power balance

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of the Pakistan Business Network, Omar Butt, said on Friday that Pakistan has triumphed not only in military confrontations but has also successfully unveiled India's vulnerabilities on the psychological front. This dual victory underscores Pakistan's military leadership's resilience and strategic superiority. He noted that the long-standing myth of Indian superiority, which had cast a shadow of fear across South Asia for decades, has been shattered by our leaders' wisdom, insight, and strategic resolve. In a statement issued here today, he stated that India's most dangerous weapon was not its missiles or tanks but its psychological dominance,

which New Delhi had systematically imposed on its smaller neighbours. However, through its unwavering courage, visionary approach, and meticulous planning, Pakistan's military leadership not only neutralized enemy tactics but also revealed the true nature of India's inflated image to the world, inspiring a new narrative of strength and resilience. Omar Butt added that regional countries had long grown weary of India's bullying, coercion, and hegemonic ambitions. Yet, because of New Delhi's psychological pressure and global perception as a "rising power," these nations remained silent. However, the recent actions of Pakistan have shaken the very foundations of India's carefully constructed image and changed the security architecture. He pointed out that those

so-called experts who consistently portrayed Pakistan as a failed, fragmented, and unstable state have now been left speechless. Pakistan has ensured its national defence and redefined the strategic balance in South Asia. Omar Butt said Indian media orchestrated a drama of victory to hide the truth. However, as reality surfaced, Indian politicians, military leaders, and even the general public fell silent. This was not merely a military clash; it was an ideological and psychological confrontation, and Pakistan's armed forces, under the leadership of General Asim Munir, responded with unparalleled professionalism, unwavering discipline, and strategic acumen that is now etched in history.

Mohsin Naqvi  
thanks nation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi issued a strong statement on the occasion of Youm-e-Tashakkur (Day of Gratitude), celebrating what he called a "remarkable victory" by Pakistan against Indian aggression. In his message, the interior minister expressed deep gratitude to Allah Almighty for what he described as a successful and dignified defense by Pakistan's armed forces. "We bow in prostration before Allah for this glorious victory against the enemy," said Naqvi. Naqvi paid heartfelt tribute to the martyrs of the nation, emphasizing that the country's triumph was made possible through their unmatched sacrifices. "Salute to our brave martyrs who laid down their lives to protect the motherland," he said. The minister strongly criticized India for launching attacks during the night, calling it a "cowardly enemy." He stated, "Just like in the past, the enemy once again attacked under the cover of darkness but had to face a humiliating defeat." Naqvi claimed that Pakistan's air force shot down six Indian fighter jets, setting a new example of aerial supremacy. "Our brave falcons wrote a new chapter in aerial warfare by turning Indian aircraft into dust," he added. He described the enemy's retreat as a clear sign of defeat. "The overconfident enemy fled the battlefield just a few hours after launching the attack," he said. The federal minister commended the armed forces for giving a strong and fitting reply. "The Pakistan military gave a befitting response, turning every brick thrown at us into a stone in return. This is a golden chapter in our military history," Naqvi stated. He went on to say that the entire nation shares in this victory. "This is not just the victory of our armed forces, but also of the proud and resilient people of Pakistan. Every Pakistani stands tall with pride today," he said. Mohsin Naqvi also extended special tributes to the heads of Pakistan's three armed forces: Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar, and Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf. "Under the wise and courageous leadership of our three services chiefs, our forces crushed the enemy's evil plans and defended the nation with unmatched bravery," Naqvi concluded.—DNA

Big industry  
grows by 1.79  
% in March  
2025

ISLAMABAD: The output of the Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) witnessed an increase of 1.79 per cent during the month of March 2025 compared to the same month of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. On month-on-month basis, the LSMI's production in March 2025, however, decreased by 4.64 per cent when compared with that of February 2025. Overall the LSMI output showed a decline of 1.47 per cent during July-March 2025 when compared with the same period of last year, according to the PBS data. The provisional quantum induces of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) for March 2025, with the base year 2015-16, have been developed based on the latest data supplied by the source agencies. The main contributors towards overall growth of -1.47% are tobacco (0.17), textile (0.35) garments (1.14), petroleum products (0.30), pharmaceuticals (0.13), automobiles (0.68), other transport equipment (0.14), food (-0.09), chemicals (-0.45) non metallic mineral products (-0.68), cement (-0.37), iron & steel products (-0.51), electrical equipment (-0.47), machinery & equipment (-0.17), and furniture (-1.94).—APP

National Housing  
Policy 2025  
SOON

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Housing and Works was in the process of formulating the National Housing Policy 2025, with input from all provinces to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative approach. This policy aimed to address critical housing needs across the country, with provincial participation at every stage, an official source told APP on Friday. The Ministry of Housing and Works, under the Rules of Business 1973, does not hold a direct mandate to coordinate infrastructure development among provinces, he said. However, in the past, infrastructure projects have been implemented across the province through the Planning Division under the national development initiatives, he added.—APP

Pakistan, Thailand may  
double bilateral trade volume

## DNA


ISLAMABAD : The Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan has stated that there are vast opportunities to enhance trade, tourism, and economic cooperation between Pakistan, Thailand, and the ASEAN region. By effectively utilizing these opportunities, not only can the bilateral trade volume be doubled, but regional connectivity can also be significantly strengthened. He expressed these views during a meeting with Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman of the Pakistan-ASEAN Friendship Association, and other business and social figures. The meeting featured a detailed discussion on bilateral trade opportunities, investment, logistics, visa policies, tourism, and collaboration in various sectors. The ambassador noted that the current bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Thailand stands at USD 1.1 billion, with the potential to increase up to USD 2.2 billion. He recalled that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the trade volume between the



two countries had reached USD 1.8 billion, which clearly demonstrates that avenues for cooperation remain open. Emphasizing the importance of free trade agreement the Thai ambassador said that his country is seriously interested in establishing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Pakistan. Such an agreement would help elevate trade and investment between the two nations to new heights. He also suggested to increase direct flights and relaxing visa policies between Pakistan and Thailand to further boost business and tourism ties. Zafar Bakhtawari, secretary General UBG, said during the meeting that Pakistan is now in a position to play a

significant economic role in the region, and enhancing relations with ASEAN countries is the need of the hour. He stressed the importance of linking Pakistan with ASEAN countries through direct air connectivity to open new dimensions in public and business-level engagements. He added, "We consider all countries that maintain direct air links with us as our best friends. We deeply respect all those nations that continued air connectivity with Pakistan even during the most challenging times, and we wish to enhance our trade, economic, and investment ties with them." Referring to ASEAN, he said, "In my view, the ASEAN Regional Forum is


even more effective than the European Union, as its member countries share stronger mutual relations, connectivity, respect, and commitment to development and prosperity, making it a global model." He added that Pakistan is a member of Asean Regional Forum and sectoral partner and desire Thailand's support in helping Pakistan become a full dialogue partner. "On this occasion, Ahsan Bakhtawari noted that recent reductions in Pakistan's interest rate have created a more favorable investment environment. He urged Thai and Pakistani investors to capitalize on emerging economic opportunities through digital platforms.



## یومِ تشکر

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ  
صَفًا كَانَتْهُمْ بُتَيَانُ مَرُصُوصٌ (الصف: 61)

Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array,  
as if they were a solid cemented structure.



# A NATION UNITED IN HEART & SOUL



## A FEARLESS LEADER,

# BRAVE ARMED FORCES, A UNITED COUNTRY

### Operation Bunyan Um Marsoos

is a living example of the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's  
courageous leadership, the unmatched bravery of the Pakistan Armed  
Forces, and the unwavering unity of the nation. It crushed the evil  
intentions of a cowardly enemy.

This national unity is our identity and a shining example for generations to come.

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## Trump’s Gulf tour – deals over diplomacy

FORMER U.S. President Donald Trump’s recent tour of the Gulf region – including stops in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates – marked a continuation of his signature foreign policy style, placing a premium on business deals and economic agreements rather than the nuanced practice of diplomacy. While the tour produced several landmark agreements and large-scale investment pledges, it also reignited long-standing debates about ethics, regional stability, and the role of the United States in the Middle East. The visit to Saudi Arabia was particularly symbolic. Trump received a lavish welcome, signaling the Kingdom’s eagerness to maintain strong ties with the former president, whose administration had previously supported its leadership even amid international criticism over human rights issues. The centerpiece of the Saudi leg was a reported \$142 billion arms deal, complemented by discussions of potential investments that could exceed \$1 trillion. This level of economic engagement is unprecedented and signals Saudi Arabia’s intention to further modernize its defense and infrastructure sectors with American support. In Qatar, the U.S. secured what has been described as a “historic” commercial deal: the purchase of 210 Boeing aircraft, the largest order in the company’s history. The agreement not only benefits the U.S. aerospace industry but also deepens the economic interdependence between the two nations. Defense contracts worth more than \$1 billion were also signed, reinforcing Qatar’s role as a strategic military and economic partner in the region. Trump’s stop in the UAE added a technological dimension to the tour. A new AI data center was announced, created in collaboration with Emirati tech company G42. This move aligns with the UAE’s ambitions to become a leader in artificial intelligence and digital innovation. The partnership also showcases the former president’s keen interest in aligning with Gulf nations’ long-term strategic visions, such as Saudi Vision 2030 and the UAE’s AI national strategy. However, these economic accomplishments have been accompanied by renewed scrutiny. The region continues to be plagued by complex geopolitical tensions, including the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Iran’s advancing nuclear program. Critics argue that Trump’s tour did little to address these pressing issues. Instead, it focused overwhelmingly on financial gain, sidelining the importance of diplomatic leadership and conflict resolution. Moreover, concerns about the Trump family’s business interests in the Gulf are mounting. The former president’s commercial ties in the region – including licensing deals and real estate ventures – have raised ethical questions. Watchdog groups and policy analysts fear that such personal affiliations could compromise national policy, blurring the line between statecraft and private enterprise. In conclusion, while Trump’s Gulf tour succeeded in forging impressive commercial agreements, it revealed a lopsided approach that prioritizes deals over diplomacy. The United States, as a global leader, must not retreat from its responsibility to engage in constructive diplomacy, especially in volatile regions like the Middle East. Economic cooperation is vital, but it must be balanced with a commitment to peace, human rights, and long-term regional stability.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



## Nakba Day observed globally amid renewed calls to end Gaza war

MAY 15 marks Nakba Day, a solemn occasion commemorated by Palestinians and their supporters worldwide to remember the catastrophe of 1948, when over 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced during the creation of the state of Israel. This year, the observance of Nakba comes amid the devastating war in Gaza, giving the historic tragedy a grim contemporary echo and amplifying calls for an immediate end to Israeli military aggression. Around the globe, millions gathered in protests, vigils, and educational events to not only reflect on the past but to condemn the ongoing humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. From London to Jakarta, from New York to Cape Town, demonstrators demanded a ceasefire and an end to what many human rights groups and observers are calling a campaign of collective punishment against the Palestinian population. The airstrikes, blockades, and ground operations have led to the deaths of thousands, with the majority being women and children, and have destroyed homes, hospitals, and vital infrastructure. This year’s Nakba observance is deeply interwoven with the present. As the Israeli military offensive in Gaza intensifies, so too does global outrage. Footage of destroyed neighborhoods, overcrowded refugee shelters, and mass graves has circulated widely, fueling a sense of urgency. International humanitarian organizations have repeatedly warned that the scale of suffering in Gaza is reaching catastrophic levels. Many countries have officially condemned Israel’s actions, with some even pushing for sanctions or legal action under international law. The historical trauma of Nakba is no longer a distant memory for Palestinians—it is a lived experience, repeated in real time. For many, the echoes of 1948 are not just symbolic; they are painfully tangible. Entire families have been displaced yet again. Generations of Palestinians continue to live under occupation, with limited access to justice, rights, or even basic services. It is not enough to remember the Nakba as a historical event. The international community must recognize its legacy as an ongoing reality that requires urgent action. Statements of sympathy must be followed by concrete political measures. There must be an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, an end to the blockade, and a renewed push toward a political resolution that guarantees Palestinians their right to self-determination, dignity, and safety. The Israeli government must be held accountable for actions that may constitute war crimes under international law. Equally, it is imperative that all parties respect civilian life and work toward long-term peace. But peace cannot exist without justice. Nakba Day reminds us that the roots of the current conflict run deep and cannot be ignored or whitewashed by military might or political rhetoric. In a world increasingly unified in its demand for human rights, the message from this year’s Nakba commemorations is clear: the war in Gaza must end now, and a just resolution to the Palestinian question is long overdue.

# May 16: A day of victory, unity, and gratitude

Qamar Bashir



Pakistan’s three military branches, missile engineers, cyber analysts, and defense strategists operated in perfect coordination. Their synergy ensured that our missiles hit their targets with devastating precision, while Indian weapons turned into little more than expensive fireworks. This conflict proved that true technological edge lies not in budget, but in professionalism, expertise, training, and mastery of modern warfare. Yet, every war is fought not only at borders but in the hearts of the people. And in this war, the hearts of the Pakistani people were stronger than steel

THE war, triggered by unprovoked Indian aggression on May 7, concluded decisively in Pakistan’s favor by May 10. In just four days, Pakistan—through unmatched unity, strategic brilliance, and unwavering faith—shattered the illusion of regional hegemony and emerged triumphant on military, technological, and moral fronts. Now, on May 16, the entire Pakistani nation—joined in spirit by the global Muslim community and peace-loving nations worldwide—commemorates this triumph with prayers, humility, and a renewed resolve to defend peace, dignity, and sovereignty against all aggression. This was not merely a military victory—it was a moral, spiritual, and technological triumph. It marked the vindication of decades of resilience, the reward for unshakeable unity, and the blessing of divine support that carried the nation through a storm not of its choosing. It was, we believe, not only the help of Allah Almighty but also the spiritual approval, blessings, and support of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) that guided and protected the people of Pakistan. Pakistan did not seek war. It did not provoke. Yet aggression was imposed by a neighbor long harboring hegemonic ambitions and delusions of grandeur. Armed with a bloated ego and far greater military, economic, and human resources, India assumed it could subjugate a nation it mistakenly deemed weak and divided. But this time, the script did not follow their expectations. When war broke out on May 7, 2025, it was Pakistan—the so-called underdog—that stood with clarity and purpose. And when the war ended in humiliation for the aggressor, it was Pakistan that emerged with honor, unity, and humility intact. As missiles flew and fighter jets roared through the skies, something even more powerful unfolded within Pakistan: a nationwide unification of spirit. All political, religious, ethnic, and regional divides vanished. Pakistan stood as one—unshakable in purpose and united in resolve. From political leaders across the divide to military commanders in war rooms, from soldiers in trenches to engineers in command centers, from mothers in prayer to diplomats on global media platforms, the nation moved like a single organism. Social media activists, journalists, analysts, veterans, youth, women, and men all became an army of truth-tellers. They countered false narratives with facts, logic, and passion, dismantling the enemy’s propaganda in real time. It wasn’t just a military front—it was a national front. The war revealed the brilliance of Pakistan’s strategic capabilities. Despite

limited resources and less expensive equipment, our armed forces outperformed expectations and embarrassed a technologically superior foe. The Pakistan Air Force, with fewer and less costly jets but superior skill, executed aerial maneuvers that left international analysts awestruck. Our pilots evaded advanced radar, outmaneuvered India’s much-touted defense systems, and neutralized the highly acclaimed Rafales, Su-30s, MiG-29s, and even the S-400 air defense system. Meanwhile, Pakistan’s cyber warriors intercepted and disrupted India’s missile control systems. As a result, many Indian missiles self-destructed mid-air, misfired on their own territory, or landed harmlessly in Pakistan’s empty deserts. It wasn’t magic—it was the result of meticulous preparation, relentless training, and indigenous innovation. Pakistan’s three military branches, missile engineers, cyber analysts, and defense strategists operated in perfect coordination. Their synergy ensured that our missiles hit their targets with devastating precision, while Indian weapons turned into little more than expensive fireworks. This conflict proved that true technological edge lies not in budget, but in professionalism, expertise, training, and mastery of modern warfare. Yet, every war is fought not only at borders but in the hearts of the people. And in this war, the hearts of the Pakistani people were stronger than steel. I recall asking my sister—whose son, Muhammad Ali, was preparing to join the Air Force as an engineer—if she feared losing him in battle. Her response still echoes in my mind: “Not only him. If I had more sons, I would send each one of them to defend our motherland.” That sentiment resonated across the nation. Parents wept but did not hesitate. Women contributed through prayers, volunteering, and keeping national morale high. Children displayed fearlessness, and elders raised their hands in fervent supplication. The spirit of sacrifice extended far beyond the battlefield—it permeated every home. Pakistan did not stand alone. The entire Muslim world extended moral and diplomatic support. Though Pakistan did not request material assistance, the solidarity from brotherly nations became a powerful moral shield. It was a collective declaration: Pakistan is not alone. When a journalist asked China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson whether Beijing would support Pakistan, the answer was unequivocal: “We stand by Pakistan like an iron wall. We will take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty, dignity, and territorial integrity.” This firm affirmation sent a clear

message to the world: Pakistan is not isolated. It is respected, and its cause is seen as just. As Indian planes fell and their missiles misfired, Pakistan’s diplomats took center stage across global media. They calmly dismantled India’s narrative, laid out the facts, and reminded the world that Pakistan was not the aggressor—it was the victim of unprovoked hostility. The moral high ground remained firmly with Pakistan. International media took notice. Major outlets condemned India’s recklessness. Analysts questioned its motives and highlighted the emptiness of its justifications. The myth of Indian military invincibility crumbled—not merely through brute force, but through a united, truth-speaking nation backed by ethics, professionalism and courage. And so, on May 16, 2025, the nation celebrates—not with arrogance, but with humility. We do not rejoice in destruction, but in the defense of our honor. We do not glorify war—we honor the peace that was preserved through sacrifice. We do not boast—we give thanks. We thank Allah Almighty, whose unseen help turned fear into courage, division into strength, and defense into victory. And we thank our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), whose eternal guidance, blessings, and spiritual support inspire courage, discipline, and justice in every Muslim heart. We thank our mothers, fathers, and children. We thank our scientists and engineers. We thank our pilots, soldiers, cyber warriors, and strategists. We thank our friends and allies—and above all, we thank the people of Pakistan. Across the country, prayers will be offered. Seminars will be held. Lessons from this victory will be taught in schools and remembered in homes—not as a tale of conquest, but as a story of resolve, righteousness, and resilience. We reaffirm that Pakistan is not an aggressor. We have never invaded another nation, nor will we ever provoke war. We believe in peaceful coexistence, regional stability, and mutual respect. But when our sovereignty, dignity, or survival is threatened, the world now knows what we are capable of. We do not fight for conquest—we fight for our right to exist. And when we fight with unity, faith and discipline, even the mightiest aggressor will stumble. So today, we stand proud—but humble. Victorious—but peaceful. Thankful—but prepared. May Allah continue to guide and protect our nation, and may the blessings and example of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) continue to illuminate our path.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)  
Former Press Minister at the  
Embassy of Pakistan to France  
Former MD, SRBC  
Macomb, Michigan, USA

## The Butchers’ Alliance

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Recently, credible security analysts have highlighted the presence of Israeli military advisors and experts in Indian defense institutions, particularly in training counter-insurgency forces and enhancing electronic surveillance against Pakistan. Some of the drone strikes and precision attacks on the LoC and near sensitive Pakistani installations bear the hallmark of Israeli...

HISTORY has witnessed tyrants whose names are etched in infamy—Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, and others who drenched continents in blood and sorrow. Hitler’s regime was responsible for the Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of over millions of Jews, and his war of aggression caused the deaths of nearly 70 to 85 million people worldwide during World War II. Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy, invaded Ethiopia in 1935, killing hundreds of thousands, and was complicit in Nazi atrocities. Stalin, though remembered for industrializing the Soviet Union, orchestrated the Great Purge and state-induced famines, particularly in Ukraine, resulting in the deaths of more than 20 million people. These were men whose legacies are not debated—they are condemned. Despite the passage of time and evolving global norms, their ideological descendants still walk among us. In today’s world, Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Narendra Modi of India represent a modern version of these past tyrants. Both have cultivated global images of democratic leadership, but behind the carefully managed appearances lie brutal records of human rights violations and ethnic persecution. Netanyahu has overseen repeated military operations in Gaza—Operation Cast Lead (2008-09), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and the ongoing 2023-25 Gaza offensive. According to the United Nations and international rights organizations, these Israeli operations have killed over 35,000 Palestinians, including more than 14,000 children, injured tens of thousands, and displaced over 1.7 million people. Entire neighborhoods have been reduced to rubble under the pretext of targeting militants. Narendra Modi’s political rise is rooted in the 2002 Gujarat riots, which took place under his watch as Chief Minister. The riots resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 Muslims, with thousands more injured

and displaced. Though cleared legally, Modi’s role remains deeply controversial. Under his leadership, India has witnessed a rise in religious extremism, mob lynchings, and hate crimes, especially against Muslims. The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 and the subsequent lockdown of occupied Kashmir, involving deployment of over 900,000 Indian troops, led to widespread detentions, curfews, and communication blackouts. Since 1989, in Indian-occupied Kashmir alone, more than 100,000 Kashmiris have been killed, over 10,000 women raped, and thousands have disappeared in custody, according to human rights watchdogs. Both Netanyahu and Modi share not just strategic ties, but also a chilling ideological harmony. Their friendship is rooted in their shared disdain for pluralism, tolerance, and international humanitarian law. From defense deals worth billions of dollars to joint counter-terrorism efforts, Israel and India have strengthened their military alliance significantly. Israel is now among India’s top arms suppliers, and according to intelligence sources, Israel has been actively assisting India in its strategic objectives, including its posture towards Pakistan. Recently, credible security analysts have highlighted the presence of Israeli military advisors and experts in Indian defense institutions, particularly in training counter-insurgency forces and enhancing electronic surveillance against Pakistan. Some of the drone strikes and precision attacks on the Line of Control (LoC) and near sensitive Pakistani installations bear the hallmark of Israeli tactical doctrine. This collaboration has moved beyond diplomacy and trade—it now constitutes an operational axis against Pakistan and Muslims in the region. Yet, history teaches us that the powerful often overestimate their reach and underestimate the resilience of nations born through struggle. Pakistan, created through countless sacrific-

es in 1947, has never shied away from defending its honor. From the wars of 1948, 1965, 1971, to the Kargil conflict in 1999, and more recently, the swift and calibrated response in Operation Swift Retort (2019) after Indian aggression in Balakot, Pakistan has proven it possesses both resolve and capability. Any misadventure involving Israeli-backed Indian aggression will be met with unified resistance. Pakistan is a nuclear power, with a well-structured, professionally trained defense system. But more than that, it has the will of its people. From the tribal areas to the streets of Karachi, from the mountains of Skardu to the plains of Punjab, Pakistanis unite when their sovereignty is threatened. No force, no alliance, and no conspiracy can break that bond. The dream of disintegrating Pakistan or turning it into a submissive state will remain unfulfilled, as did the dreams of those who underestimated it in the past. It is a cruel irony that in an age of the United Nations, International Criminal Court, and global human rights advocacy, men like Netanyahu and Modi continue their campaigns of oppression. While Hitler’s gas chambers and Stalin’s Gulags have become symbols of horror, today’s tools are F-16s over Gaza, pellet guns in Kashmir, digital surveillance, and economic suppression. The methods have changed, but the mindset remains the same. Let it be clear: history may take time, but it never forgets. The tyrants of today will meet the judgment of tomorrow. Just as Hitler and Mussolini were brought down, Netanyahu and Modi’s legacies, too, will be remembered not for their politics, but for the human suffering they left behind. Their names will not be carved on monuments of glory, but written in the footnotes of cruelty. And standing against them will be the people of Gaza, Kashmir, and Pakistan—resilient, unbowed, and unbroken.

## Briefs

**Pakistan ready for dialogue with India: FO**

FROM PAGE 01  
Shafqat said Pakistan seeks a permanent solution to the issue of terrorism. Pakistan has no objection to discussing terrorism on international forums, he added. Concluding the statement, the FO reiterated Pakistan's belief in the peaceful resolution of issues.

**UK says Pakistan-India ceasefire must hold**

FROM PAGE 01  
de-escalate and build a horizon where there is confidence between the two countries. We have to bear down on terrorist threats and ensure that militancy doesn't go on." Answering a question, he said the UK was friends with both countries. "We have deep relations with both sides. We are working with our other partners." The foreign secretary confirmed that the Indian government has not shared any evidence with the UK on the allegations it made against Pakistan but without providing any evidence. MP Lammy said: "I wouldn't expect India to share its matters of national security with me. What we are here to do is to ensure support to friends to maintain an enduring ceasefire whilst recognising that terrorism has to be dealt with. There are concerns that there are groups here engaged in causing harm. This all began with the horrendous terrorism threat." He said the leadership of both countries was 'impressive' and showed statesmanship in de-escalating tensions and agreeing to a ceasefire. He said: "It's important that this ceasefire holds. It's fragile. My visit is about this and other matters. I am the first foreign secretary to come here in four years. I will be speaking about important links and friendships between our two countries, trade and cultural exchange and the support we give to Pakistan on many issues."

**India asks IMF to reconsider Pakistan programme**

FROM PAGE 01  
Singh told troops at an air force base in western India. "I believe any economic assistance to Pakistan is nothing less than funding terror." Despite India's objections, the IMF last week approved a loan programme review for Pakistan, unlocking a \$1 billion payment which the state bank said has already been received.

**PM visits CMH, inquire after health of injured soldiers**

FROM PAGE 01  
The prime minister praised the injured soldiers for their exceptional bravery, determination, and sense of duty during the M'arka-e-Haq. "The way the Pakistan armed forces and the entire nation fought this war is unparalleled." He said the steadfastness of the people has become a decisive chapter in the country's military history.

**Govt unveils tariff reforms**

FROM PAGE 01  
economic reforms had been formulated, and the decision to reduce customs duties was also part of those reforms. The prime minister's "historic decision" will open the economy to foreign investment and ensure that domestic industries have easy and affordable access to raw materials, intermediate goods, and capital equipment, read the statement.

# Australia's Starc opts out of return to IPL: reports

*The competition will resume Saturday but faces losing several top stars for the closing stages because of clashes with the schedules of international teams including Australia, England and South Africa*

NEW DELHI: Australian fast bowler Mitchell Starc will not return to the disrupted Indian Premier League, reports said Friday, while England's former white-ball captain Jos Buttler will leave before the playoffs. The world's richest cricket tournament was suspended last week because of a brief but deadly conflict between nuclear-armed neighbours India and Pakistan. The competition will resume Saturday but faces losing several top stars for the closing stages because of clashes with the schedules of international teams including Australia, England and South Africa. Four days of drone, missile and artillery exchanges from May 7 left around 70 people, including dozens of civilians, dead on both sides of the border. Starc's Delhi Capitals were playing in Dharamsala when a match was abandoned because of what officials said was floodlight failure. Dharamsala is less than 200 kilometres (125 miles) from the town of Jammu, where explosions were reported hours earlier the same day. The stadium was swiftly evacuated and players including the 35-year-old Starc whisked out of the ground in the team bus. Starc told the Delhi Capitals that he will not return, Australian media reported, free-



ing him up to focus on the build-up to his country's World Test Championship final against South Africa on June 11 at Lord's. There was no immediate confirmation from the Delhi team or the IPL. Australia captain Pat Cummins and star batter Travis Head will both return to India, but the plans of other Australians is unclear. The league's suspension has thrown its schedule off kilter, with the playoffs now starting later and the final moved back nine days to June 3. Gujarat Titans top the 10-team table and are almost sure to reach the playoffs starting May 29. But wicketkeeper Buttler will leave the team after the group stage and will be replaced by the Sri Lankan Kusal Mendis, allowing the Englishman to be available for the first ODI against the West Indies. England all-rounders Jacob Bethell and Will Jacks, who play for Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Mumbai Indians respectively, are also expected to leave the IPL early, the BBC reported. South African players also look set to miss the playoff phase should their teams get there. South Africa has said its players must leave India by May 26 so they can prepare for the WTC final. "As it stands, we're not budging on this," coach Shukri Conrad said this week. - Agencies

## Raisue death to 'motivate' Castres in Top 14 season run-in

PARIS: Castres travel to Bordeaux-Begles in the French Top 14 on Saturday in their first game since the tragic death of Fijian Josiaa Raisue. Raisue, who turned 30 in July, was killed last Thursday after being hit by a train while driving to training. The Paris 2024 silver medalist joined Castres four years ago before becoming a popular member of the squad. "What happened will be with us every day, we have to use it as motivation," Castres captain Mathieu Babilot told reporters on Thursday. "It's something that needs to bring us together, as he did, he brought the team together," the five-

time France flanker added. Raisue, who could feature at flanker, winger and centre, had played only seven games this term and was set to join ambitious second-tier club Brive next season. "It's not normal what we've experienced," Castres head coach Xavier Sadourny said. "You lose your parents, grandparents, you don't lose a friend who is the same age as you, even younger. "It will remain a strange moment for us, which will remain with us until the end of the season and for years to come," he added. Raisue was part of a sizeable Fijian community at the five-time former French champions along-

side lock Leone Nakarawa as well as centres Vilimoni Botitu and Adrea Cocagi. "For them it's strange," flanker Babilot said. "They're experiencing it differently to the other players, they have other traditions, other ways of doing things. "We try and communicate with one another, to be there for your team-mates," he added. This weekend's game at Stade Chaban-Delmas comes a week before the hosts play Northampton in their first Champions Cup final. Bordeaux-Begles are second in the table having lost just twice at home this season with Castres in fifth, eyeing a play-off spot. "We've got a big away trip

in front of us," Babilot said. "I think things have been managed well by the club and the team. "When we're on the field we're focused on rugby and when we're off it we try to feel as good as possible. "We will use Josh's life to go as far as possible in the competition," he added. Elsewhere, Raisue's first club in France Stade Francais find themselves in a relegation fight with Vannes and Perpignan. The three sides, who are separated by just four points with three games to play, are desperately scrabbling to avoid bottom spot, currently occupied by Vannes, which signals automatic relegation. The team finishing thirteenth will face a play-off against the second division runners-up. That space is held by the once-mighty Stade Francais who host a Lyon side which is equally fired up at the other end of the table, sitting just three points outside top six. Vannes head to fourth-placed Bayonne while Perpignan travel to Clermont in a throw-back to the heady days of 2009 and 2010 when they met in consecutive finals. Fixtures (times GMT) Bordeaux-Begles v Castres (1230), Clermont v Perpignan, Bayonne v Vannes, Pau v Toulon, Stade Francais v Lyon (all 1430), Toulouse v Racing 92 (1905) La Rochelle v Montpellier (1905). - Agencies



## Pakistan Davis Cup juniors team arrives in Kazakhstan

Col. Zia-ud-Din Tufail, Secretary General of the PTF, also offered his support, saying, "Good luck to our boys. Play with heart and the results will naturally follow"

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Davis Cup Juniors team has arrived in Shymkent, Kazakhstan ahead of the Asia/Oceania Final Qualifying Event, taking place from May 19 to May 24, 2025. According press release issued here on Friday, The team earned its spot in this prestigious tournament by winning the qualifying event in Kuching, Malaysia in March 2025. The Pakistani squad includes players Abubakareel Ali Baig, and Hamza Roman with Shahzad Khan serving as the team captain. Captain Shahzad Khan expressed confidence in his team's abilities, stating, "Our players are fully prepared and fit. We are optimistic about replicating the outstanding performance we delivered in Kuching." Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), wished the team success, saying, "This team is a strong combination of talent and dedication. They performed exceptionally well in Kuching, and hopefully, they will continue that momentum in Shymkent." Col. Zia-ud-Din Tufail, Secretary General of the PTF, also offered his support, saying, "Good luck to our boys. Play with heart and the results will naturally follow." The event will showcase some of the best junior tennis talent from across Asia and Oceania. - DNA

## EU braces for far-right George Simion win in Romania

BRUSSELS: The European Union is bracing for yet another far-right politician to join the 27-nation club of leaders, with George Simion the favourite to win Romania's presidential election on Sunday. Yet, while many in Brussels are wary of Simion's brand of politics - the nationalist euro-sceptic is a big fan of US President Donald Trump - there is also a keenness not to overplay the impact of a potential victory. "It wouldn't be good news to have a Europhobe but that doesn't mean it's going to bring the (EU) machine to a standstill," said one European diplomat. The vote will be closely watched internationally following the rare annulment of last November's election in the key NATO country of 19 million people. "Naturally we all keep an eye on that," said another European diplomat. Simion gained almost 41 percent of votes in the contest's first round - double the score of his rival in Sunday's runoff, pro-EU centrist candidate Nicusor Dan. His victory would boost the EU's nationalist camp, already championed by the likes of Hungary's Viktor Orban, Slovakia's Robert Fico, and Italy's Giorgia Meloni. "The populist side will rejoice in having a new unruly kid on the block," said Florent Parmentier, a political analyst at the Jacques Delors Institute, a think-tank. Ahead of the vote, Simion burnished his hard-right

credentials meeting Meloni in Rome and Poland's outgoing conservative President Andrzej Duda in Warsaw Wednesday. And on Thursday, the 38-year-old presidential hopeful was mingling with right-wing European lawmakers in Brussels. While the presidential office is largely ceremonial in Romania, the president does represent the country at EU leaders' summits. Opposed to any military aid to Ukraine and a critic of the "absurd policies" of the bloc, Simion would thus wield veto power on key foreign policy or defence topics - something Hungary's Orban has long been using to the irritation of other members. Yet, "Romania is not Hungary", cautioned the second European diplomat. "Neither internally, with regard to state capture of media... nor externally, with regard to its willingness and ability to take a stand against the EU mainstream". And Simion is "much more in the business of denouncing Brussels, and a group of technocrats, than the European Union" itself, added Parmentier. The European Commission, the bloc's executive body, for its part, has adopted a cautious stance. "There's still going to be a second round, allow us not to speculate on what might happen or not happen in the future," said commission spokesman Stefan de Keersmaecker. - APP

## In Poland, a presidential election with European stakes

WARSAW: The future of Poland's pro-EU government is riding on the country's presidential elections, which come at a fraught moment for Europe, analysts said ahead of the first round of voting on Sunday. The electoral campaign in the European Union and NATO member largely revolved around foreign policy, showcasing a clash of philosophies over Poland's engagement with the EU and the United States. "It was a kind of identity campaign," said Marcin Zaborowski, a fellow at think tank Globsec. "There was Ukraine, the attitude towards the European Union, towards migration, towards the United States," he told AFP. The job of Polish president is sometimes dismissed as a ceremonial post, but it comes with some real power. And that has often stymied Prime Minister Donald Tusk, a former European Council chief whose centrist Civic Coalition (KO) has clashed on multiple fronts with conservative President Andrzej Duda since coming to power in 2023. Tusk's KO is supporting pro-EU Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski for president. Duda, who cannot run again, is allied with

Trzaskowski's top rival for the Belweder presidential palace, nationalist historian Karol Nawrocki, endorsed by the main opposition Law and Justice party (PiS). Thirteen candidates of all stripes are vying to be the next president of the Central European country of 38 million people. Trzaskowski is the frontrunner, with 33 percent of the vote in the latest opinion polls, compared with 26 percent for Nawrocki. With neither on track to win more than 50 percent, they will likely meet again in a runoff on June 1. The role of kingmaker could go to Slawomir Mentzen, the far-right Confederation party candidate, who is polling in third with 11 percent. The three candidates of the fragmented left have no more than 11 percent together. The governing coalition is hopeful a victory by Trzaskowski, 53, would enable it to fulfil its hitherto undelivered campaign pledges. Tusk's administration has been blocked from easing Poland's stringent abortion laws and introducing other changes by the head of state's veto power. That difficult cohabitation would only be reinforced if Nawrocki, 42, becomes president. Unleash-

ing the Tusk government's power is the "main issue" in the election, said expert Zaborowski. Poland's president has limited powers, but is commander-in-chief of the armed forces, steers foreign policy and can introduce and veto legislation. Unfulfilled pledges - or ones carried out only partially or later than hoped for - have left some voters disappointed in the government. "With Nawrocki as president, the government would be paralysed, and that could eventually lead to the fall of the ruling coalition," said political scientist Anna Materska-Sosnowska of the University of Warsaw. His victory could mean "the return of the populists with renewed force in two years" at the next general election, she told AFP. The stakes are high for Europe. Under Tusk, Poland has grown more important on the continent and reinforced its position as a key voice on NATO's eastern flank against Russian aggression. Materska-Sosnowska said the ballot is fundamental for "attempts to stop the anti-democratic, populist trend running through Europe". The vote is also crucial for security, said Wojciech Przybylski, head of the Res Pub-

lica foundation. Depending on the outcome of Romania's presidential election, Poland risks becoming the only large country "with strategic security importance (on NATO's eastern flank) capable of deterring Russian aggression", Przybylski said. He said Nawrocki's politics "are clearly linked to the mindset and approach of (US President) Donald Trump", whose country the candidate touts as the sole guarantor of security. Tusk's government meanwhile "is beginning to operate in a new paradigm where security is not uniquely based on transatlantic ties", Przybylski told AFP. Last week, Tusk signed a treaty with France, committing both sides to mutual assistance in case of an attack by an aggressor. Nawrocki admires Trump, whom he met at the White House this month. The Pole claimed Trump told him: "You will win." Some lawmakers from the governing coalition have accused Trump of election interference. Days before the vote, Nawrocki received an endorsement from Romania's far-right presidential candidate George Simion, who faces a runoff on Sunday. The two Trump fans vowed to work together. - Agencies

## PM hoists flag to mark Youm-e-Tashakkur

FROM PAGE 01  
He said the world saw that in just a few hours, an enemy which was many times bigger came to its knees, and the planes which were the pride of India turned into ashes and became a sign of a bitter lesson. "Our Shaheens hammered the enemy and gave it a befitting reply," he said, adding the brave and professional armed forces of Pakistan effectively and fully responded in the language of the enemy and wrote a golden chapter in the military history and foiled the designs of the enemy.

## Many in Gaza are 'starving', says Trump

FROM PAGE 01  
Asked whether he supported Israeli plans to expand the war in Gaza, Trump told reporters: "I think a lot of good things are going to happen over the next month, and we're going to see. We have to help also out the Palestinians. You know, a lot of people are starving on Gaza, so we have to look at both sides."

## Rawalpindi man sentenced to death

DNA  
RAWALPINDI: A sessions court in Rawalpindi sentenced a man to death on Friday for raping a woman. Additional Sessions Judge Afshan Ijaz Sufi announced the verdict today, sentencing the convict to be hanged to death under Section 17 of the Anti-Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act, 2021. The judge also imposed a fine of Rs200,000 and ordered him to pay Rs500,000 in compensatory damages to the victim. In case of failing to pay, the convict will be sentenced to six months' additional imprisonment. The first information report of the case was lodged at the Saddar Beroi police station on July 20, 2024, under Pakistan Penal Code Section 376iii (punishment for rape of a minor) on the complaint of the victim's mother.

## Man who attacked Rushdie sentenced

DNA  
TEHRAN: The man who stabbed and partially blinded novelist Salman Rushdie on stage at a Western New York arts institute in 2022 was sentenced to 25 years in prison on Friday for an attack that also wounded a second man, the district attorney said. Rushdie, 77, has faced death threats since the 1988 publication of his novel The Satanic Verses, which Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, denounced as blasphemous, leading to a call for Rushdie's death. Hadi Matar, 27, a US citizen from Fairview, New Jersey, was found guilty of attacking the author in the Chautauqua County Court in Mayville, New York, in February. He faced a maximum sentence of 25 years in prison on the attempted murder charge. Video that captured the assault shows Matar rushing the Chautauqua Institution's stage as Rushdie was being introduced to the audience for a talk about keeping writers safe from harm. Some of the video was shown to the jury during the seven days of testimony.

## Briefs

## PM seeks win as Portugal ends election campaigning

LISBON:Portugal's general election campaign ends on Friday for a vote that Prime Minister Luis Montenegro is expected to win but with no guarantee he can form a more stable government. Montenegro's centre-right Democratic Alliance (AD) is tipped to win 32.5 percent of the vote, ahead of the Socialist Party (PS) on 26.5 percent, according to a poll of polls by Radio Renascença. The recently formed far-right Chega ("Enough") party could take 17.6 percent of the vote – almost the same as it did in March 2024 elections – to consolidate its position as Portugal's third political force. Montenegro as a result risks finding himself again at the head of a minority government, caught between the PS, which was in power from 2015 to 2024, and Chega, with which he has refused to govern. Sunday's election was called in March after the 52-year-old lawyer lost a vote of confidence in parliament following criticism that his consultancy firm created conflicts of interest. As such, "staying in power would already be a good result" for the prime minister, who took a "calculated risk" in the hope of strengthening his parliamentary seat, political commentator Paula E polls appear to indicate an AD majority is unlikely.—APP

## Kitchen items' prices up by 1.03pc

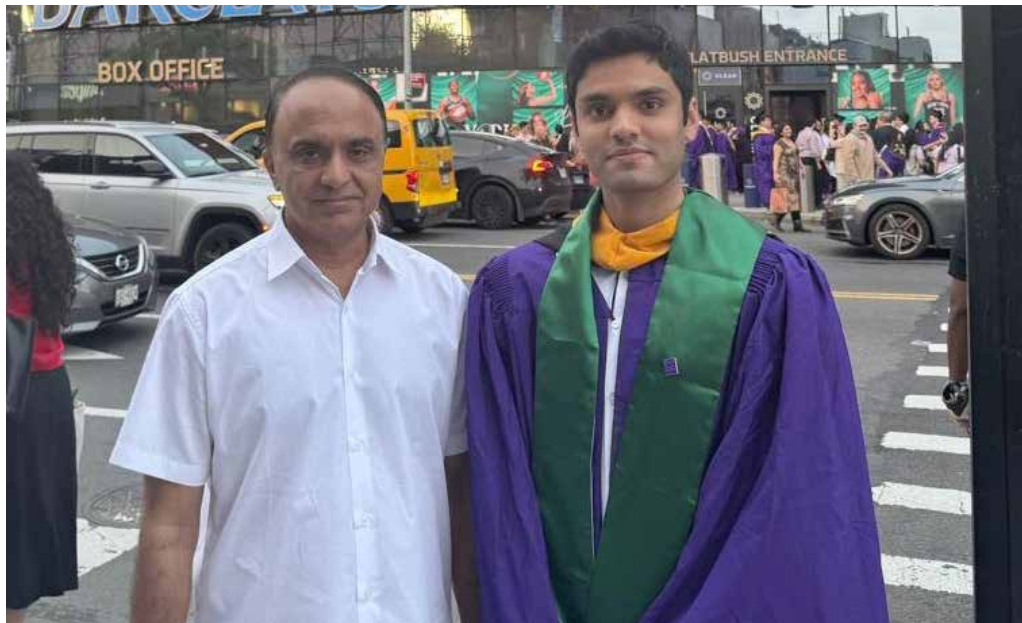
ISLAMABAD:The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), increased by 1.03 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on May 15, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 313.24 points as compared to 310.05 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 1.29 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed an increase of 0.92 per cent and went up to 300.97 points from last week's 298.24 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, went up 1.02 percent, 0.98 percent, 1.06 percent and 1.03 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 18 (35.29%) items increased, 12 (23.53%) items decreased and 21 (41.18%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Chicken (15.95%), Eggs (8.34%), Sugar (1.97%), Long Cloth (1.74%), Powdered Milk (1.59%), Gur (1.48%), Pulse Gram (0.94%)—APP

## Saad secures master degree from New York University

Saad's achievement marks a significant milestone, not only for him personally but also for his family. His academic journey at one of the world's leading universities has equipped him with advanced knowledge and skills in construction planning, project management, and sustainable development practices

## DNA

NEW YORK: Saad Raza, son of Abid Raza—Deputy Editor of the Daily Islamabad POST and CEO of Shifa Builders—has proudly earned his Master's degree in Construction Management from New York University (NYU), USA. Saad's achievement marks a significant milestone, not only for him personally but also for his family. His academic journey at one of the world's leading universities has equipped him with advanced knowledge and skills in construction planning, project management, and sustainable development practices. To celebrate this momentous occasion, Abid Raza traveled from Paki-



stan to the United States to attend his son's graduation ceremony. His presence was a source of immense pride and joy, symbolizing a father's unwavering support and the importance of family in moments of success. Saad's dedication and hard work have been widely appreciated by peers and mentors alike. With a solid academic foundation from NYU, he is expected to contribute significantly to the construction and development sector, both in Pakistan and internationally. The entire team at the Daily Islamabad POST extends heartfelt congratulations to Saad Raza on this remarkable achievement and wishes him continued success in his future endeavors.

## Pak raises missing persons issue in IIOJK at UNSC

UNITED NATIONS:A senior Pakistani diplomat told the UN Security Council Thursday that the "acute" matter of missing persons in armed conflict was persisting like a "silent crisis", as he underscored that absence of such individuals from their loved ones was "a wound that never heals". "The issue of missing persons is particularly acute in conflict zones and occupied territories from Palestine to occupied Jammu and Kashmir," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said during a discussion in the 15-member Council on the implementation of its Resolution 2474, which addresses that "critical issue". "They are fathers who never returned home, mothers separated from their children, young boys who disappeared in the dead of night, and daughters whose fates are sealed in silence," he said, adding, "Their absence is a wound that never heals, leaving families trapped in an endless cycle of hope and despair." In this regard, the Pakistani envoy said that despite calls for investigations and accountability, the plight of missing persons continues to exacerbate in Indian-Occupied Kashmir, pointing out that after India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, thousands of young boys were abducted and many still missing. "The recent terrorist incident in Jammu and Kashmir was used as a pretext to round up more than 2,000 people with the view to further oppress Kashmiris' struggling for their legitimate right to self-determination," Ambassador Asim highlighted. Referring to the unmarked and unknown graves of thousands of victims that have surfaced in recent year, the Pakistani envoy said, "From the investigations held so far, it has been revealed that these victims are first disappeared by Indian occupation forces and then tortured to death or summarily executed." The occupying power, he said, continues to be in denial about the thousands of enforced and involuntarily disappeared persons from Kashmir and is reluctant to conduct forensic investigations into the 7,000+ unmarked mass graves. He said that Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in its two reports of 2018 and 2019 on Kashmir, had recommended to "ensure independent, impartial and credible investigations into all unmarked graves" in occupied Kashmir.—DNA

## Decorated Australian soldier loses war crimes defamation appeal

SYDNEY:One of Australia's most decorated soldiers on Friday lost a legal bid to overturn bombshell court findings that implicated him in war crimes while serving in Afghanistan. Former SAS commando Ben Roberts-Smith has been fighting to salvage his tarnished reputation since 2018, when newspapers unearthed allegations he took part in the murder of unarmed Afghan prisoners. His multi-million dollar bid to sue three Australian newspapers for defamation failed in 2023, with a judge ruling the bulk of the journalists' claims were "substantially true". The 46-year-

old suffered another setback on Friday, when Australia's Federal Court dismissed his appeal. Justice Nye Perram withheld the reasons for the decision, saying there were national security implications the government must consider before they are released. A published summary said there was sufficient evidence to support findings Roberts-Smith had "murdered four Afghan men". Roberts-Smith said he would now fight to clear his name in Australia's High Court – his last avenue of legal appeal. "I continue to maintain my innocence and deny these egregious

spiteful allegations," he told local media in a statement. "We will immediately seek to challenge this judgement in the High Court of Australia." Roberts-Smith argued in his appeal that the judge "erred" in the way he assessed some of the evidence. Perth-born Roberts-Smith had been Australia's most famous and distinguished living soldier. - Decorated soldier - He won the Victoria Cross – Australia's highest military honour – for "conspicuous gallantry" in Afghanistan while on the hunt for a senior Taliban commander. The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Canberra Times shredded this reputation with a series of reports in 2018. The papers reported Roberts-Smith had kicked an unarmed Afghan civilian off a cliff and ordered subordinates to shoot him. He was also said to have taken part in the machine-gunning of a man with a prosthetic leg, which was later brought back to an army bar.—APP



Islamabad: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif performs flag hoisting in Prime Minister House with regard to Youm-e-Tashakkur on Friday. —DNA

## Pakistani community in Chicago commemorates Youm-e-Tashakur

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani community in Chicago observed Youm-e-Tashakur (Thanksgiving Day) with patriotic fervor, expressing gratitude to Almighty Allah and paying tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces for their sacrifices and valor. At a special event hosted by the Pakistani community in Chicago on Friday, Naveed Anwar, President of the Pakistani American Business Chamber of Commerce, praised U.S. President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Naveed commended President Trump for brokering a ceasefire at India's request, describing it as a major step toward global peace. Every peace-loving person welcomes President Trump's initiative. Pakistan's government and armed forces played their role as a responsible state, adhering to international law. Naveed Anwar stated that India launched its aggression under the cover of night, targeting innocent civilians, including women and children, while Pakistan responded in broad daylight, specifically targeting Indian military installations. "We must build an economic powerhouse as strong as our defense," he said, adding that everyone in Pakistan's political, diplomatic, and military leadership—including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar—demonstrated remarkable dedication and expertise.—APP

## Japan launches economic security clearance system amid privacy woes

TOKYO: Japan on Friday launched a "security clearance" system to allow critical government information to be classified on economic security grounds, as critics warn that background checks on individuals to allow them access may amount to an unwarranted invasion of privacy. With the new law now in effect, the government expanded the scope of information deemed classified to include that linked to economic security, such as critical infrastructure and advanced semiconductors. Areas of defense, diplomacy, espionage and counterterrorism are already covered by a separate law to protect state secrets. Government officials and employees at private companies subject to the security clearance will have to undergo vetting by the Cabinet Office, which will examine their jobs and criminal records, foreign travel, alcohol consumption habits and hospital visits for mental illness. In a 35-page questionnaire, individuals will also be asked about their families, including nationalities, real estate ownership and bank accounts at foreign financial institutions among other matters.—DNA

## World Telecom Day 2025: From progress to challenges

MUHAMMAD FAROOQ



EVERY year on May 17, the world observes World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD), a moment to recognize how far we've come in connecting humanity—and how far we still have to go. First celebrated on May 17, 1969, the day was established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to mark its founding and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention on May 17, 1865. In 2025, this occasion holds added significance as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) commemorates its 160th anniversary. From the advent of the telegraph in 1865 to today's AI-powered networks, tel-

ecomunications have shaped the fabric of modern life. From phone in your hand to satellites in the sky, every time we make a call, send a text, turn on the Radio, watch TV, use GPS, access the internet, check the weather, or view satellite images we rely on vital services coordinated by the ITU. As the United Nations' specialized agency for digital technologies, the ITU plays a pivotal role in connecting the world through spectrum management, setting global standards, and working to bridge the digital divide. From telegraph to the transformative digital technologies of today, the field of telecommunications has revolutionized how we communicate. What began as a means to send messages across long distances has evolved into a powerful tool for economic development, emergency relief, and technological innovation. Today, mobile technologies and services support over 7 billion connections worldwide. When considering IoT devices, the total number of connections exceeds 13.7 billion, according to GSMA's Live Report. These services contribute approximately 5.8% to the global GDP, amounting to \$6.5 trillion, with projections indicating the figure will rise to

\$11 trillion (8.4% of global GDP) by 2030. Globally, with a population of 8.22 billion (42% of rural and 58% urban residents with a gender ratio 49.73% females and 50.27 % males), 71% are unique mobile subscribers (5.8 billion people), and 60% (4.7 billion) access mobile internet. Although Smartphone adoption has reached 80%, 20% still rely on basic feature phones. These numbers reflect both significant progress and persistent gaps in digital access. Pakistan, the telecommunications landscape shows positive growth. The country now boasts more than 197 million mobile subscribers with 80.3% teledensity and 147 million broadband subscribers, translating to a 59.83% penetration rate. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) is not just a regulator—it has played a key role in driving digital inclusion efforts, working to bridge the digital gender divide and address issues such as e-waste, child abuse, and other challenges through collaborations with global organizations like the United Nations, ITU, SATRC, GSMA, UNESCO, and the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI). This illustrates that Pakistan remains on the path of

sustainable and inclusive digital growth. We live in an era where the number of mobile connections now surpasses the global population. At first glance, this may seem like a triumph of access—but this statistic masks a deeper truth: connectivity alone does not equate to inclusion. To fully realize the promise of "technology for all and for good," we must confront persistent disparities in access, affordability, digital literacy, and infrastructure. At the same time, we face rapidly growing challenges such as e-waste, child exploitation, cyberbullying, cybersecurity threats, fake news, disinformation, misinformation, and the need for responsible AI governance. Most critically, we must address the enduring digital gender divide, which is the central theme of WTISD 2025. Let's be honest—while steps have been taken to address these issues, are they truly sufficient? We must move beyond general calls for safe spaces and equal opportunities and take targeted, bold actions that prioritize vulnerable communities—especially women, children, and those living in underserved or unserved areas. True digital inclusion requires more than access; it demands equity, safety, and empowerment for all, regardless of gender or

geography. Despite billions of devices in use, millions of women and girls—especially in low- and middle-income countries—remain offline. Globally, 70% of men are using the Internet, compared with 65% of women. This means there are 189 million more men than women using the Internet. In 2024, women were 17% less likely than men to use mobile internet, according to ITU data. In rural and marginalized communities, the gap is even wider. The consequences are profound. Without access to digital tools, women miss out on educational, economic, and social opportunities. This gap is not just an issue of fairness—it is a barrier to shared prosperity. Governments can take practical steps to close this divide. These may include: Revising telecom license conditions to prioritize women's access; Using Universal Service Funds to provide incentives for mobile devices and SIM card ownership; Offering digital literacy programs, particularly for remote or underserved areas; and collaborating with civil society, media, and academia to raise awareness and change perceptions. Another mounting concern is the growing issue of electronic waste (e-waste). Technology

also has an environmental cost. In 2022 alone, the world generated a staggering 62 billion kg of e-waste, but only 22.3% was formally collected and recycled. Without responsible disposal, harmful materials like lead, mercury, and plastic contribute to pollution, health hazards, and economic loss. The ITU set a target for 50% of countries to have e-waste legislation by 2023, yet only 42% have achieved this. Current figures highlight a significant challenge in managing e-waste, including inadequate data collection, widespread informal recycling practices, and a lack of meaningful legislation and public awareness campaigns. To effectively address these issues, immediate steps can be taken. For instance, strengthening manufacturers' take-back policies—with appropriate incentives—can encourage responsible collection and disposal. Additionally, establishing model recycling plants, whether managed by governments, manufacturers, or other stakeholders, would provide a scalable framework for proper e-waste management. At the same time, it is essential to launch public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the importance

of responsible disposal and the health risks of improper e-waste handling. While the figures suggest progress, it is crucial to ask critical questions: Who is still excluded from the digital revolution? Who lacks the tools to succeed in a connected world? As we edge deeper into the age of 5G, IoT, AI, and quantum technologies, the focus must remain on ensuring that every person—regardless of gender, geography, or income—can participate fully in the digital future in a safe environment. WTISD 2025 is more than a celebration; it is a global call to action. It reminds us that while technology has connected billions, millions are still waiting to be heard. Governments, private sector leaders, NGOs, and individuals must come together to expand access, build inclusive digital services, and invest in sustainable infrastructure. From the telegraph to transformation, our digital journey has redefined human possibility. Connectivity is a starting point—not a finish line. In the end, true progress isn't measured by how many are connected—but by how meaningfully they are empowered. The journey continues....

## Briefs

## Sherry lauds opposition's unity amid regional tension

ISLAMABAD: Presiding Officer in Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman, Friday, lauded the opposition for its constructive and unified stance in the context of recent heightened tension between Pakistan and India. While chairing the proceedings of the House, she said the current session had seen, for the first time, a truly exemplary performance by the opposition benches. "The opposition stood united, shoulder to shoulder with the government and armed forces in the hour of need," she said. She referred to recent discussions in the Senate on regional stability, stressing that despite political differences, both the opposition and government adopted a cohesive approach on Pakistan's position regarding India. "In this delicate situation, the opposition chose unity over division and reflected the maturity expected in such circumstances," she said. — APP

## Restoration of Neelum-Jhelum project likely

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Water Resources Muhammad Moeen on Friday told the National Assembly that the restoration of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHPC) is expected to be completed within two years. During the question hour, he said a committee investigating the issue will soon finalize its report. The minister said about Rs 6.6 billion has been spent so far to repair the project's Tail Race Tunnel (TRT). After the TRT was fixed, the plant resumed full operations in March 2024, generating 969 megawatts of electricity. However, the plant had to be shut down again in May 2024 due to an issue in the Head Race Tunnel (HRT). He added that the main contract for repairing the HRT has not yet been awarded, following government instructions. Giving more details, the minister said NJHPC spent Rs 3.8 billion in 2022-23 and Rs 3 billion in 2023-24 for TRT repairs, with approval from its Board of Directors. He said the project is currently working under a provisional tariff on a "take-and-pay" basis. He said there are no fixed payments or returns on investment being paid. The company is managing its expenses through its own resources and pending payments from power sales to the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G). According to the National Power Control Centre, the country currently has enough power generation to meet demand, and no load-shedding is being done due to shortages.

## UN projects Pakistan's economy to grow by 2.3%

*UN report notes declining inflation has allowed most of South Asian central banks to continue monetary easing*

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan, a key part of the South Asian region, is expected to experience "moderate growth, stabilising after a period of economic contraction", with its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) projected to expand by 2.3% in 2025, according to a United Nations report. The report, titled 'the UN World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025', noted that declining inflation has allowed most of the South Asian region's central banks to commence or continue monetary easing in 2025. Meanwhile, governments in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are expected to continue fiscal consolidation and economic reforms under International Monetary Fund (IMF)-supported programmes. It said that the near-term outlook for South Asia is expected to remain robust, with growth projected at 5.7% in 2025 and 6.0% in 2026, "driven by strong performance in India as well as economic recovery in a few other economies", including Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The report said the global economy is at a precarious juncture, marked by heightened trade tensions and elevated policy uncertainty. The recent surge in tariffs — driving

the effective US tariff rate up steeply — threatens to raise production costs, disrupt global supply chains and amplify financial turbulence. Uncertainty over trade and economic policies, combined with a volatile geopolitical landscape, is prompting businesses to delay or scale back critical investment decisions. These developments are compounding existing challenges, including high debt levels and sluggish productivity growth, further undermining global growth prospects. Global GDP growth is now forecast at just 2.4% in 2025, down from 2.9% in 2024 and 0.4 percentage points below the January 2025 projection. Slower global growth, elevated inflationary pressures and weakening global trade — including a projected halving of trade growth from 3.3% in 2024 to 1.6% in 2025 — jeopardise progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. The slowdown is broad-based, affecting both developed and developing economies. Growth in the United States is projected to decelerate significantly, from 2.8% in 2024 to 1.6% in 2025, with higher tariffs and policy uncertainty expected to weigh on private investment and consumption. In the European Union, GDP growth is forecast at 1.0% in 2025, unchanged from 2024, amid weaker net exports and higher trade barriers. China's growth is expected to slow

to 4.6% this year, reflecting subdued consumer sentiment, disruptions in export-oriented manufacturing and ongoing property sector challenges. Several other major developing economies, including Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, are also facing growth downgrades due to weakening trade, slowing investment and falling commodity prices. India, whose 2025 growth forecast has been revised downward to 6.3%, remains one of the fastest growing large economies. "The tariff shock risks hitting vulnerable developing countries hard, slowing growth, slashing export revenues, and compounding debt challenges, especially as these economies are already struggling to make the investments needed for long-term, sustainable development," said United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua. While global headline inflation eased from 5.7% in 2023 to 4.0% in 2024, price pressures remain stubbornly high in many economies. By early 2025, inflation exceeded pre-pandemic averages in two-thirds of countries, with over 20 developing economies facing double-digit rates. Food inflation, averaging above 6%, continues to hit low-income households hardest, particularly in Africa, South Asia and Western Asia. Higher trade barriers and climate shocks are further amplifying inflation risks, underscoring the need for

coordinated policies — combining credible monetary frameworks, targeted fiscal support and long-term strategies — to stabilise prices and shield the most vulnerable. In many countries, monetary policy challenges have intensified in an uncertain economic environment. Central banks are grappling with difficult trade-offs between managing inflationary pressures — exacerbated by tariff-induced price shocks — and supporting slowing economies. At the same time, limited fiscal space, especially in developing economies, constrains governments' ability to effectively mitigate the economic slowdown. Deteriorating global prospects and geopolitical fragmentation undermine development progress. For many developing countries, this bleak economic outlook undermines prospects for creating jobs, reducing poverty, and addressing inequality. For least developed countries — where growth is expected to slow from 4.5% in 2024 to 4.1% in 2025 — declining export revenues, tightening financial conditions and reduced official development assistance flows threaten to further erode fiscal space and heighten the risk of debt distress. Escalating trade frictions are further straining the multilateral trading system, leaving small and vulnerable economies increasingly marginalised in a fragmented global landscape.

## FIA cracks down on human traffickers

DNA

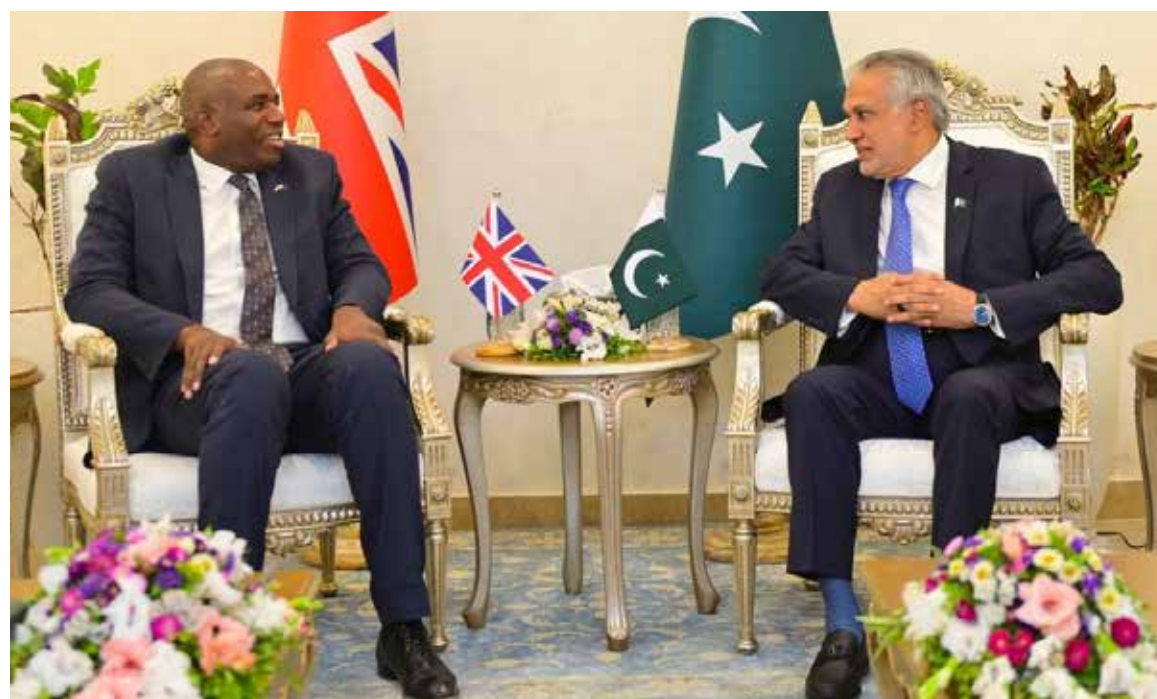
LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala Zone on Friday arrested three human traffickers involved in defrauding citizens under the pretense of overseas employment. A FIA spokesperson said that the suspects have been identified as Azhar Iqbal, Muhammad Ikram and Yousaf Ali. The arrests were made in various areas of Gujranwala and Gujrat. The accused lured victims with promises of jobs abroad, extorting millions of rupees from them. Accused Azhar Iqbal was apprehended during a raid in Mohallah Usmanpura, Gujrat. He had extorted over Rs.6 million from citizens by falsely promising employment in Italy but instead sent them to Libya. He also attempted to smuggle them to Europe via boat. One victim refused to take the illegal sea route and returned, but his brother and brother-in-law, who accompanied him, are still missing. Muhammad Ikram was arrested in Wazirabad, Gujranwala.

## NA passes nine bills

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Friday passed as many nine different bills including the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001 [The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2024]. The House also passed the bills including the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (Amendment) Bill, 2024, The Extradition (Amendment) Bill, 2025], The Pakistan Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2024], [The Naturalization (Amendment) Bill, 2024], The Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill, 2025, The Anti-Dumping Duties (Amendment) Bill, 2025]. The Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Bill, 2024 and the Trade Organization (Amendment) Bill, 2025. — APP

## NA approves resolution to increase CSS Exam age limit

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Friday approved a resolution to increase the upper age limit for candidates appearing in the Central Superior Services (CSS) examination by five years, setting the new limit at 35 years starting from 2026. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, MNA Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar sought permission to suspend the rules and present the resolution. Upon receiving approval, she introduced the resolution in the House. According to the text of the resolution, the House urged the government to provide a five-year age relaxation for CSS aspirants. It called for fixing the upper age limit at 35 years for all candidates starting in 2026 and proposed increasing the number of attempts allowed to five. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar met with the UK Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon David Lammy MP in Islamabad. The two leaders discussed regional developments, including Pakistan-India ceasefire. — DNA

## Indian claims of hitting Pakistani jets 'nonsense': US defence analyst

"I am astonished by the claim that 20% of Pakistan's air force has been rendered unusable," says analyst

CENTRELINE REPORT

NEW YORK: US defence expert Dr C Christine Fair has rejected India's claims of downing Pakistani aircraft, labelling them as "nonsense". Fair, a political scientist specialising in security, counterterrorism and South Asia, has been an open critic of Pakistan, which some on social media argue makes her dismissal of India's claims particularly significant. She made these remarks while appearing on Indian journalist Karan Thapar's show on The Wire, 'The Interview with Karan Thapar'. Thapar had questioned Fair regarding Indian Air Force Director General of Air Operations Air Marshal Bharti's claim that the Indian Air Force had downed an undisclosed number of Pakistani jets. He also referenced "satellite images suggesting extensive damage" to Pakistani airbases in "Chaklala, Rahim Yar Khan, Sargodha, Jacobabad and Bholari". In response, Dr Fair stated there was "no evidence" of massive destruction and categorically rejected claims that 20% of Pakistan's air force had been destroyed by India. "There is certainly no evidence....I am astonished by the claim that 20% of Pakistan's air force has been rendered unusable. I've never heard that before. It's quite an astonishing claim and most certainly false." When Thapar asked directly, "Air Marshal Bharti has claimed that India has shot down an unspecified number of Pakistani air force planes...how do you view this claim?" Fair replied: "Bakwas", there's no evidence for it".

## Pakistan's large-scale manufacturing grows 1.79%

LSM sector is crucial to Pakistan's economy, contributing 8.2% to GDP

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's large-scale manufacturing (LSM) sector posted a year-on-year growth of 1.79% in March 2025, The News reported, citing Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). According to data released on Thursday, despite this improvement on a monthly basis, the sector saw a contraction of 1.47% over the July-March period of the ongoing fiscal year 2024-25 when compared to the same period last year, reflecting persistent headwinds for major industries. Within this nine-month span, notable increases were recorded in the production of tobacco, textiles, wearing apparel, coke and petroleum products, automobiles, and other transport equipment. However, output declined in several key segments including food, chemical products, non-metallic mineral products, iron and steel,

electrical equipment, machinery and equipment, and furniture. The LSM sector is crucial to Pakistan's economy, accounting for 69.3% of the country's total manufacturing and contributing 8.2% to the gross domestic product (GDP). Despite the year-on-year growth, the sector posted a month-on-month contraction of 4.64% from February 2025. However, manufacturing activity continues to face significant challenges that are impeding broader sectoral growth. Comparing the March 2025 performance with March 2024, several major industries faced a sharp decline. The iron and steel sector saw a contraction of 4.24%, machinery and equipment 71.7%, and fabricated metals output shrank by 19.1%. Despite the overall contraction, some sectors posted gains on a year-on-year basis. Textiles output surged by 5.15%, automobiles by 18.8%, leather products increased by 4.33%, and pharmaceuticals 4.75%. Other sectors that reported growth included coke and petroleum products, up by 4.47%, computer, electronics and optical products by 8.15%, food 20%, and sugar by 67%. Cotton yarn output rose by 8.8%, and cotton cloth production increased by 0.74%.

## Rubio has no high expectations for Ukraine-Russia talks

ISTANBUL: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Thursday he had little hope that Russia-Ukraine talks in Istanbul would produce a peace breakthrough after the two sides traded insults during a tense buildup to negotiations. Russia's President Vladimir Putin decided against going to Istanbul and Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky sent the country's defence minister but it was unclear what kind of talks would be held between the rivals who have been at war for more than three years. Turkish officials said that "trilateral talks between Russia, Ukraine and Turkey are on the agenda" for Friday and there would be talks between US, Ukrainian and Turkish officials. But Rubio told reporters in Turkey "I want to be frank... we don't have high expectations of what will happen tomorrow". US President Donald Trump also appeared to concede that progress on ending the war was unlikely until he could meet Putin. Zelensky said that Russia was "not serious" about ending the war. "Unfortunately, they are not taking the real negotiations very seriously," Zelensky told reporters after meeting Turkish President

Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "Out of respect" for Erdogan and Trump, Zelensky said he would send a delegation led by Defence Minister Rusten Umerov to the Istanbul talks. The Russian side is led by Vladimir Medinsky, an adviser to Putin who has questioned Ukraine's right to exist and led failed talks in 2022 just after Russia launched its invasion. The Russian delegation met Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, his spokesman said, after a long wait for the Ukrainians at the talks venue in Istanbul. A Turkish foreign ministry source indicated the expected meetings on Friday. "Tomorrow there will be more talks in different formats," the source said. In a televised briefing for Russian media in Istanbul, Medinsky said: "Tomorrow morning, literally from 10 am, we will be waiting for the Ukrainian side, which has to show up to the meeting." Tens of thousands have been killed since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and Russia now occupies about a fifth of Ukraine's territory. There have been no direct peace talks since the first weeks of the war and the two sides' positions appear to have grown further apart since then. — Agencies

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,  
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan  
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-8488394