



Thursday, May 22, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Romania, Pakistan have huge business potential: Amb. Dan

Detailed News On Page-08

India's 'new fatal for India, say Bilawal

Detailed News On Page-08



Babar Azam not included in T20 Sqad

Detailed News On Page-06



Bomb explosion

Six including three school kids martyred

Indian-sponsored terrorists targeted the school-bound vehicle, says ISPR

DNA

KHUZDAR: A powerful explosion near Zero Point in Khuzdar targeted a school bus on Wednesday, martyring six, including three children, and injuring dozens more, officials confirmed. "In yet another cowardly and ghastly attack planned and orchestrated by [the] terrorist state of India and executed by its proxies in Balochistan, [an] innocent school-going children bus was targeted today in Khuzdar," the military's media wing said in a statement. In the communique, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that after having miserably failed on the battlefield, through these most heinous and cowardly such like acts, Indian proxies have been unleashed to spread terror and unrest in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Having failed in Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos and being hunted by military and law enforcement agencies, the ISPR said, these Indian terror proxies are being employed as a state tool by India to foment terrorism in Pakistan against soft targets such as innocent children and civilians. "[The] use of terrorism as a state policy by the Indian political government is abhorrent and reflective of their low morality and disregard for basic human norms," the ISPR noted. Planners, abettors, and executors of this cowardly Indian-sponsored attack will be hunted down and brought to justice, and the heinous face of India will be exposed in front of the entire world. "Pakistan Armed Forces, with the support of a brave Pakistani nation, stand united to uproot Indian-sponsored terrorism from Pakistan in its all manifestations." According to Deputy Commissioner Khuzdar, 35 others sustained

Continued on Page 06

President, PM condemn terrorist attack on school bus in Balochistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday strongly condemned the cowardly terrorist attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan, which claimed the lives of five individuals, including three innocent children. In a separate statement issued by the Presidency, the president extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for strength and patience in their time of grief. The president called the attack on school-going children an inhumane and despicable crime. The president held India responsible for backing terrorist groups involved in such atrocities. He reiterated that the state of Pakistan would fully expose India's role in sponsoring terrorism at international forums. "Terrorists targeting education and innocent lives are enemies of humanity," the president said. He added that these acts are aimed at derailing development in Balochistan, but the nation remains resolute. "Those who wish to disrupt the peace

Continued on Page 06



RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir laid a floral wreath at the Yadgar-e-Shuhada and offered Fateha to pay tribute to the martyrs of Pakistan. – DNA

Field Marshal recognizes services of martyrs

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A Special Guard of Honour ceremony was held at Yadgar-e-Shuhada, General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi, in honour of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M). On this solemn occasion, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir laid a floral wreath at the Yadgar-e-Shuhada and offered Fateha to pay tribute to the martyrs of Pakistan. The Field Marshal dedicated this honour to the entire nation, the Armed Forces of Pakistan, and in particular, to the martyrs and veterans of both civil and Armed Forces & Law Enforcement Agencies. COAS expressed that, "This honour is a tribute to the entire Pakistani Nation and the valiant men and women of the Armed Forces of Pakistan, particularly the martyrs who stood like a 'Wall of Steel' against Indian unprovoked, cowardly and unlawful aggression against Pakistan."

Appointing field marshal was 'my own decision'

"During the war, Israel extensively supported India," says prime minister

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that the decision to promote Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, who led Pakistani armed forces during the recent conflict with India, to the rank of field marshal was his own. In recognition of his exceptional leadership during Pakistan's recent military clashes with India and the successful execution of "Operation Bunyan-um-

Continued on Page 06

DG ISPR says

Military conflict between two nuclear states is stupidity

Pakistan desires peace but if war is imposed then we are ever ready, says Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations Director General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that a military conflict between Pakistan and India, which are nuclear powers, is "sheer stupidity" and is an absurd idea. The military spokesperson expressed his views while talking to a British media outlet following the recent standoff with India. He added that a nuclear conflict could lead to mutual destruction for both countries. "Pakistan desires peace, but if a war is imposed, then we are ever ready," said the military spokesperson. He slammed India's "arrogance" by promoting a narrative of war between the two countries. He added that a dispute does exist, which could be ignited at any moment. To a question regarding the possibility of a nuclear conflict between the South Asian nations, the DG ISPR replied that India is "playing with fire" based on a false narratives. Chaudhry further said that Pakistan has reacted with great maturity

Continued on Page 06

India declares Pakistani official 'persona non grata'

CENTRELINE REPORT

NEW DELHI: The Indian Ministry of External Affairs on Wednesday declared an official of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi as "persona non grata", ordering the diplomat to leave the country within 24 hours. "Charge d'Affaires Pakistan High Commission was issued a demarche to this effect today. He was asked to strictly ensure that none of the Pakistani diplomats or officials in India misuse their privileges and status in any manner," the ministry claimed in a statement. According to the Indian government, the official was found engaged in "activities deemed incompatible with diplomatic duties".

Continued on Page 06

UN life-saving aid allowed to trickle into besieged Gaza

The aid blockade has pushed the entire population, more than two million people, to the brink of famine, amid ongoing bombardment and recurrent displacement orders

APP

UNITED NATIONS: Aid is trickling into Gaza after nearly three months of Israeli blockade, but it remains far from enough to meet the soaring humanitarian needs, UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric has said. He stressed that the assistance must be delivered swiftly and directly to those most in need. Dujarric told reporters in New York on Tuesday that UN humanitarian workers were sending flour, medicines, nutrition supplies and other basic items through the Palestinian side of the Kerem Shalom crossing – a day after they managed to bring in baby

formula and other nutrition supplies. The first trucks of vital baby food are now inside Gaza after 11 weeks of total blockade, and it is urgent that we get that assistance distributed. We need much, much more to cross, he added. In the face of mounting international objections over the total blockade imposed on 2 March – and condemnation over the risk of widespread famine – Israel started to allow a handful of aid trucks to enter Gaza on Monday, while simultaneously intensifying its military offensive. The aid blockade has pushed the entire population, more than two

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

ISPR refutes reports

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Following a tragic incident on 19 May 2025 in the general area of Mir Ali, North Waziristan District, which regrettably resulted in civilian casualties, unfounded and misleading allegations have been circulated by certain quarters, falsely implicating Pakistan's security forces. These claims are entirely baseless and are part of a coordinated disinformation campaign aimed at discrediting the security forces' steadfast efforts in the ongoing counterterrorism operations. In response to these accusations, a comprehensive investigation was promptly initiated. Initial findings have established that this heinous act has been orchestrated and executed by Indian sponsored Fitna Al Khwarij.

Pakistan reports two polio cases from KP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's total confirmed polio cases for 2025 have risen to 10 after the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at NIH confirmed two new cases of wild poliovirus in Lakki Marwat and Bannu districts of southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Of the total, five cases are from KP, four from Sindh, and one from Punjab. While high-quality polio vaccination campaigns continue nationwide, certain areas, particularly in southern KP, continue to face challenges such as restricted access and difficulties in conducting house-to-house vaccination campaigns. These access and operational hurdles leave thousands of children in the province at the risk of exposure to poliovirus as a result of missed opportunities for vaccination, according to health authorities.

Indian aggression

India's proxies will be defeated, says Tarar

Tarar said India was supporting terrorism in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through Fitna al-Khawarij

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday reaffirmed the government's commitment to defeating terrorism and said India's proxies would be defeated from Pakistan's soil. Speaking in the National Assembly, the minister strongly condemned the terrorist attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan, calling it a cowardly act by enemies who have failed to confront Pakistan in traditional warfare. "This morning, a school bus was deliberately targeted in Khuzdar. Innocent children were attacked. It is a day of national mourning," he said. Tarar said India was supporting terrorism in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through Fitna al-Khawarij. He said, "These are enemies who do not know our history. When the time comes to sacrifice, even the sacrifices of our children are worthy of being written in golden words." He praised Pakistan's armed forces for their courage and resilience in defending the nation. "Thanks to Allah, our forces have always defeated the enemy with bravery. But today's attack on schoolchildren shows how desperate our enemies have become," he added. The minister said that after losing in



direct combat, the enemy was now using proxy warfare to destabilize the country. "They lack the courage to face us openly. Under the leadership of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, our forces have shown dominance. Having failed on the battlefield, the enemy is now trying to create unrest in Balochistan and KP through terrorist groups," he said. He assured the House that these attacks would not weaken the nation's resolve. "Our unity is our strength. These foreign-funded terrorists cannot match our willpower. We have previously taken down enemy airbases, missiles, and plans." Tarar said the attack on schoolchildren has been condemned by the House. "We will not rest until every terrorist is punished. Investigations are ongoing, and those behind this attack will be brought to justice." He also prayed for the early recovery of the injured children, some of whom are in critical condition. "May Allah grant them a quick recovery. Our resolve stands firm—India's proxies will be defeated, and terrorism will be completely wiped out," he added.

Australia Day in Spring celebrated with cultural fusion

Haroon Akhtar Federal Minister for Industries and Production was the chief guest. The Minister also spoke on the occasion and vowed to further strengthen relations with Pakistan

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission hosted a colourful and culturally rich reception to mark Australia Day in Spring 2025, highlighting the vibrant people-to-people ties that define the ever-growing relationship between Australia and Pakistan. Haroon Akhtar Federal Minister for Industries and Production was the chief guest. The Minister also spoke on the occasion and vowed to further strengthen relations with Pakistan. Held in the lush gardens of the High Commission in Islamabad, the event brought together diplomats, government officials, civil society members, academia, and media representatives to celebrate the shared values and enduring partnership between the two nations. The reception this year embraced a unique and interactive theme—"Powered by People"—which was vividly brought to life through creative expressions of both Australian and Pakistani cultures. From kangaroos adorned with Pakistani truck art to ambient sounds of native Australian birds echoing



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries Haroon Akhtar, Governor KP Faisal Karim Kundi and Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins cutting the cake to celebrate Australia Day Spring 2025. The event was held at the lawns of the Australian residence. – DNA

across the venue, the setting reflected a dynamic blend of heritage, nature, and innovation. In his keynote address, Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins emphasized the human dimension of bilateral ties. "This relationship is powered by people," he noted, recounting the journey from the Baloch cameleers who helped build Australia's outback to today's thriving Pakistani diaspora of over 100,000 individuals in Australia. "Ours is a relationship built on cooperation and shared experience—scientists tackling salinity together, girls playing cricket, alumni shaping Pakistan's future. It's about connection, hope, and a shared future," Mr Hawkins said. The High Commissioner highlighted the enduring cooperation of more than 40 years of working together to build resilience in the agriculture and water sectors, and our long-standing defence ties. Australia's support continues to strengthen climate resilience, education, and gender equality through grassroots partnerships that uplift Pakistani communities. "This friendship is not just official—it's about connections between ordinary people. And it's growing stronger every day," Mr Hawkins concluded.

Sultan denounces India violating Pak territorial sovereignty

Former President of Azad Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Member of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Sardar Hassan Ibrahim Khan, former government minister Sardar Abid Hussain Abid, Vice Chancellor of Poonch University Prof. Dr. Zakaria Zakir, Presidential Advisor Sardar Imtiaz Khan and others were also present on the occasion

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: The president Azad Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has said India's warmongering regime and its Hindutva policies pose a serious threat to peace and stability in South Asia. He said this while addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Chuotta Gula Campus of the University of Poonch here on Wednesday.

The Modi government, he said, used Pahalgam false flag operation as a pretext to attack Pakistan to achieve its political gains. Denouncing India for violating the territorial sovereignty of Pakistan, the president said, "Bombing civilian properties, destroying mosques and martyring innocent people reflects the Indian government's fascism". He praised the Pakistan army for delivering a

crushing response to India's war aggression which forced the enemy to lick the dust. The president, while extending solidarity with the Kashmiri people in Indian occupied Kashmir, assured that people of Azad Kashmir stand shoulder to shoulder with their brethren in their struggle for right to self determination. "The president said that it was a matter of pride for him to lay the foundation stone of the Chhota Gula Campus of the Poonch University." The inauguration of this project was a dream as well as a challenge for me", he said. He hoped that this project, built at a cost of Rs 3.5 billion, will lead to wider benefits for the local population. He said that it was quite heartening to see that the state resources were being effectively utilized for nation building. The government, he said, has invested heavily in the higher education sector. "At present, there

are 6 public sector universities in Azad Kashmir, in which thousands of students are getting quality education in a very peaceful and conducive environment", Barrister Chaudhry said. "I am delighted that the University of Poonch has a world-class faculty which is not only focusing on the education and research but also paying special attention to the character building and career counseling of the students", the president remarked. Former President of Azad Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Member of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Sardar Hassan Ibrahim Khan, former government minister Sardar Abid Hussain Abid, Vice Chancellor of Poonch University Prof. Dr. Zakaria Zakir, Presidential Advisor Sardar Imtiaz Khan and others were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, presenting Chamber's shield to Ms. Dana Goldfinca, Non-Resident Ambassador of Latvia to Pakistan. Chairman ICCI Founder Group Tariq Sadiq, former Presidents Mian Akram Farid, Zahid Maqbool, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Mohammad Ahmad, Mian Shaukat Masood and Executive Member Ms. Fatima Azim also present on the occasion.

CM to inaugurate new food testing laboratory soon

PESHAWAR, May 21 (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru has said that state-of-the-art Static Provincial Food Testing Laboratory of KP is nearing completion and will be formally inaugurated by Chief Minister (CM) Ali Amin Khan Gandapur very soon.

Chairing a high-level meeting to review progress on the project, the minister said that the laboratory being established under KP food authority would be a milestone to ensure food safety and quality. The meeting was attended by Director General of the Food Authority Wasif Saeed, Project Director Dr. Abbas, Director Operations Akhtar Nawaz, Director Technical Dr. Abdul Sattar Shah, and other senior officials. The minister was informed that civil works on the laboratory is in final stages while the procurement of advanced high-tech testing equipment is also nearing completion. The facility is being developed in line with international standards specifically those of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Once operational, the laboratory would offer testing services not only to food business operators but also to the general public. It would be capable of analyzing a wide range of food items including edible oil and ghee, drinking water, flour, biscuits, yogurt, powdered milk, potato chips—APP

tion of public institutions, industry, and academia, the consultative workshop is expected to contribute significantly to building a self-reliant and sustainable energy infrastructure. On the directions of Managing Director NGC, Engr. Muhammad Waseem Younas, a pre-meeting with contractors and stakeholders was convened by Engr. Dr. Khawaja Riffat Hassan, DMD (P&E) and DMD (AD&M) Engr. Rasheed A. Bhutto, at WAPDA House, Lahore. Their feedback and insights were also incorporated in the preparation for the National Consultative Workshop. The LUMS Energy Institute is a nationally recognized think tank dedicated to accelerating Pakistan's transition towards sustainable and secure energy system. Through data-driven analysis, interdisciplinary research, and strategic policy design, LEI engages with government entities, industry leaders, and global institutions to shape evidence-based solutions for the country's energy future.—DNA

Governor Sindh, ambassador hoist Philippines-Pak flags together

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Ambassador of Philippines and Governor Sindh will attend the hoisting flag ceremony to mark the 127th National day of the Republic of the Philippines here in Karachi. The Council General of Philippines in Karachi Dr. Imran Yousuf S.I and The Islamabad Ambassador H.E Emmanuel R Fernandez from Philippines embassy has invited the Governor of Sindh Kamran Tessori to participate in the 76th anniversary of



the establishment of Philippines-Pakistan bilateral relations, and 127th anniversary of the declaration of independence of Re-Public of Philippines to promote the bilateral relations on the Philippines national independence day organized on Monday 16th June, 2025,

while on 15th June 2025 the Governor of Sindh Kamran Tessori and the Ambassador H.E Emmanuel R Fernandez from Philippines embassy with his diplomatic team to hoist both Philippines-Pakistan flags together at Fountain Chowk near Karachi Press Club on the occasion.

Expats welcome govt's decision to elevate Gen Asim to Field Marshal Rank

ISLAMABAD: Khurshid Ahmad Hashmi, Vice President of the Pak-UK Trade Forum, has lauded the Government of Pakistan's decision to elevate Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal, calling it a commendable move and a great honor for the entire nation. Speaking at a press conference held at a local hotel in Islamabad during his visit from the United Kingdom, Mr. Hashmi praised the Pakistan Armed Forces for their decisive and courageous response to Indian aggression under the cover of darkness. "The Pakistani military has once again brought pride to the nation on the global stage through its unmatched professionalism and val-



or," he said. Mr. Hashmi stated that the recent military engagement significantly boosted the morale of the Pakistan Army and won the hearts of overseas Pakistanis, who stand shoulder to shoulder with the armed forces. "The exceptional strategy and leadership of General Syed Asim Munir have strengthened Pakistan's defense

capabilities," he added. He emphasized that the Federal Cabinet's decision to promote General Munir as Field Marshal truly reflects the aspirations of the Pakistani people. "With divine support and professional excellence, the Pakistan Army has demonstrated its ability to defend the motherland against a far larger adversary, proving that it is among the best armies in the world." Mr. Hashmi also paid tribute to the success of Operation "Bunyan Marsos", acknowledging the vital role played by Pakistan's Army, Navy, and Air Force. "Overseas Pakistanis are immensely proud of the accomplishments of our armed forces, and their heads are held high with pride," he said.

KP govt urged to raise legal marriage age to 18

PESHAWAR: The Rise and Shine Girls' Education Leadership (RSGEL) Network on Wednesday strongly urged the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to immediately enact legislation raising the minimum legal age of marriage to 18 for both girls and boys, stressing that there is no longer any justification for delay. Comprising young education activists from across the province, the RSGEL Network advocates for girls' rights to education, leadership, and equality, while opposing harmful practices like child marriage that hinder their futures. With the recent passage of child marriage restraint laws in Punjab and Islamabad, and with Sindh having led the way in 2014, KP and Balochistan remain the only regions yet to take decisive legal action. "A clear national consensus has emerged," the Network stated. "The legal age for marriage must be 18 — KP has no valid excuse for further inaction." Fareeha Inam, a member of the Network, pointed to Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE that have set the marriage age at 18. This is about justice and opportunity. We cannot continue to rob girls of their childhoods and education," she said. The Network cited Islamic declarations like the Cairo Declaration (1990) and the Khartoum Declaration (2007), which call on Muslim nations to eradicate child marriage, identifying it as a barrier to health, dignity, and development. Moreover, rulings by the Federal Shariat Court and high courts in Lahore and Islamabad affirm that raising the marriage age aligns with Islamic teachings and constitutional protections. — APP

India's Continued Journey of Failures

NUSRAT KHAN

The show of solidarity with Pakistan by countries such as China, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan is nothing short of a nightmare for India. The primary reason for this development on both regional and global levels is Pakistan's consistent stance that it presented to the international community even before the Pulwama incident occurred. The truth is that the Hindu extremist politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has not only

endangered India itself but also increased risks on regional and global scales. Undoubtedly, the role of U.S. President Trump following the escalation between Pakistan and India is commendable. President Trump not only persuaded India to agree to a ceasefire but also identified the Kashmir issue as the core dispute between the two countries. Nothing could be a greater proof of the failure of Modi's foreign policy than the fact that for decades he has been shouting to the world that the Kashmir

dispute is merely a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan — not an international matter. Certainly, in the current situation, Pakistan is moving in the right direction. The visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar to China will have far-reaching consequences amidst the changing regional landscape. The meeting of the foreign ministers of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan in Beijing sends a clear message to India to refrain from further reckless actions.

NGC, LUMS to host national consultative workshop



LAHORE: The National Grid Company (NGC) of Pakistan (formerly NTDC), in collaboration with LUMS Energy Institute, will host the National Consultative Workshop on the Power Sector Indigenization Road Map on Saturday, May 24, 2025, at LUMS Lahore. Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari will grace the occasion as Chief Guest, while Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council, Engr. Waseem Nazir will address the gathering and highlight the

role of regulatory body in accelerating industrial localization. Dr. Fiaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Chairman Board of Directors NGC and Senior Advisor at LUMS Energy Institute, stated "This workshop aims to bring together leaders from the power sector, local manufacturers, regulatory authorities and academia to chart out a unified and actionable roadmap to strengthen Pakistan's electrical equipment manufacturing ecosystem." As part of this initiative, the event will feature the official launch of Pakistan's first Power Equipment Manufacturing Dashboard, a real-time digital platform designed to track localization progress, map vendor capacity, and identify strategic investment opportunities. This tool is developed by the LUMS Energy Institute and will become a cornerstone of the Power Sector Indigenization Plan (PSIP). The workshop fea-

tures distinguished speakers and participants, including the Chairman WAPDA, Managing Director PPMC, CEO K-Electric, Chairman BoDs of DISCOs, CEO CPPAG and other senior representatives from government, industry, and regulatory institutions. The forum will host expert-led discussions on the challenges and potential of localizing key electrical equipment across the generation, transmission, and distribution segments. Special sessions will evaluate the capability of local manufacturers to meet national demand, with stakeholder recommendations to be presented directly to decision-makers for actionable outcomes. This timely initiative aligns with Pakistan's ongoing energy reforms under the National Electricity Plan 2023-2027, which emphasizes reducing import dependency and promoting indigenous capabilities. With the collabora-

EU delegation Sindh PA Speaker discuss uplift projects

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A delegation from the European Union, led by Mr. Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation, called on the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, Syed Awais Qadir Shah, at his office on Wednesday. The delegation included Dr. Sebastian Liron, Team Leader for Governance and Human Capital Development, and Ms. Brekhna Ajmal, Programme Manager for Parliaments and Gender Equality. The Honourable Speaker was accompanied by MPA Tanzeela Qamrani, Secretary Provincial Assembly Mr. G.M. Umar

Farooq, Director General Media Mr. Irfan Ahmed



Memon, and Ms. Huma Ikramullah. Discussions focused on the progress of ongoing collaborative efforts, including the Mustehkam Parlmaan program and its role in strengthening the strategic planning of the Sindh Assembly. The Speaker appreciated

the continued cooperation and discussed future

support avenues. The delegation also reviewed the e-Parliament initiative, a project where the European Union will assist in digitizing the Assembly by providing modern technology and equipment to facilitate a transition toward a paperless legis-

lative environment. Additionally, the EU delegation shared details of an upcoming initiative—the Pakistan Women Leaders Program—being developed in collaboration with UN Women. This program aims to build the capacity of the Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) by addressing issues such as harassment during election campaigns, cyber-crime challenges faced by women legislators, and efforts to enhance women's voter registration across Sindh. The Speaker expressed his strong support for these initiatives and reiterated his commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment within the legislative

process. He acknowledged the role of the EU as a key development partner and assured full cooperation from the Assembly's leadership. Later, the Honourable Speaker personally guided the delegation on a tour of the new hall of the Sindh Assembly, where he briefed them on the planned technological installations under the EU-supported digitization program. In conclusion, Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah thanked Mr. Jeroen Willems and his delegation for their continued engagement and invaluable support to the democratic and institutional strengthening of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

May 03/Poland National Day

May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day

May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day

May 07/ Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day

May 08/Czech Republic National Day

May 09/European Union National Day

May 17/Norway Constitution Day

May 21/Hungary Armed Forces Day

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

May 24/Eritrea National Day

May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day

May 25/Argentina National Day

May 25/Jordan Independence Day

May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day

May 28/Ethiopia National Day

May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949

Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

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

Emergency Ambulance.1122

& Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police....9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114

PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Netherlands envoy, Finance minister for boosting economic coop

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing confidence in the strengthening of Pakistan-Netherlands bilateral relations and continued collaboration in areas of shared interest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting today with H.E. Mrs. Henny de Vries, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Pakistan, at the Finance Division, Islamabad. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of mutual interest and avenues for further strengthening bilateral economic cooperation. The Finance Minister briefed the Ambassador on Pakistan's current macroeconomic outlook and the government's reform agenda, with particular focus on key sectors of the economy. He emphasized the government's commitment to achieving sustainable, productivity-driven, and export-led growth, highlighting the critical role of the private sector as the real engine of economic development. The Minister also acknowledged and appreciated the technical and financial support provided by the Netherlands to Pakistan in various areas, including development and capacity-building initiatives. Senator Aurangzeb further welcomed the continued interest and investment by Dutch companies in Pakistan and reaffirmed the government's commitment to facilitating foreign investment and fostering a conducive business environment. H.E. Mrs. Henny de Vries expressed appreciation for the government's macroeconomic reforms and its focus on export-oriented policies. She reiterated the Netherlands' support for Pakistan's economic development and affirmed her country's interest in deepening economic ties and cooperation across diverse sectors. The meeting concluded with both sides expressing confidence in the strengthening of Pakistan-Netherlands bilateral relations and continued collaboration in areas of shared interest.

President lauds China's role in Pakistan's socio-economic uplift

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has extended heartfelt congratulations to the governments and peoples of Pakistan and China on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. He said that Pakistan highly valued its historic and time-tested relationship with China, adding that ties with China remained a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. The President remarked that over the past seven decades, bilateral relations between the two brotherly nations had grown from strength to strength, evolving into a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership. He described Pakistan and China as "iron brothers" bound by an all-weather friendship. "Pakistan is a staunch supporter of the 'One China' policy and will continue to stand firmly with China on its core national interests," he added. The President expressed gratitude to the government and people of China for consistently supporting Pakistan in times of need. He lauded China's vital role in Pakistan's economic and social development, as well as in strengthening Pakistan's defence sector. Highlighting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a shining example of bilateral cooperation, the President noted that CPEC has positively impacted Pakistan's economy, infrastructure, and energy sector. "Pakistan-China relations are anchored in mutual trust, respect, and goodwill, and both countries remain committed to promoting regional peace, stability, shared prosperity, and enhanced connectivity," the President stated. He reiterated Pakistan's desire to further deepen bilateral ties in the areas of economy, technology, defence, education, and trade. He also reaffirmed his resolve to broaden and strengthen these relations in the future. The President also extended his best wishes to the people and leadership of China on this occasion.—APP

The decision to declare Islamabad Tourist City commendable: Ahsan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, Ahsan Bakhtawari, has welcomed the Government of Pakistan's decision to declare Islamabad a "Tourist City," stating that this step will promote the federal capital's positive image on a global level. He made these remarks today during a meeting of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, while appreciating CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Islamabad is already considered one of the most attractive capitals in the world due to its natural beauty, clean environment, and well-organized urban system. This decision by the government is a practical step towards promoting tourism, preserving cultural heritage, and achieving sustainable development. Offering his full cooperation to the CDA Chairman, he emphasized the need to protect and make areas like Margalla Hills, trails, and natural parks more tourist-friendly. He suggested launching awareness campaigns for cleanliness and waste management in these areas. He also proposed improvements in tourism infrastructure, including modern information centers, clear signboards, navigation mobile apps, washroom facilities, and availability of basic amenities. He recommended organizing special events and festivals at cultural and historical sites such as Shakarparian, Lok Virsa, Faisal Mosque, and Rawal Lake to attract both local and international tourists. To ensure a clean and healthy environment, he called for the announcement of cleanliness drives, tree plantations, and plastic-free zones at tourist spots under the "Clean and Green" campaign. He also emphasized involving local communities in tourism activities to create employment opportunities and make the dream of sustainable development a reality. Ahsan Bakhtawari assured that the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, along with the business community of Islamabad, is ready to fully cooperate with the government and district administration, and will play every possible role in transforming Islamabad into a model tourist city.

Cattle markets to be setup at five locations

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad's district administration has started planning ahead of Eid-ul-Azha to manage cattle markets and prevent illegal animal trading in the federal capital. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon chaired a meeting to review the arrangements. The session was attended by assistant commissioners and the Director of the Metropolitan Corporation (DMA). During the meeting, officials were briefed on the locations where cattle markets will be allowed. According to the plan, five designated spots across the federal capital will host animal markets this year. Markets will be established in Sangjhani, Sector I-15, and Bhara Kahu. Two additional markets will be set up along Lehtar Road and Islamabad Expressway. These venues have been selected to manage the flow of people and livestock more efficiently, and to minimize disruption in residential areas. The briefing further outlined that no trading of animals will be allowed outside these official markets. The district administration has decided to strictly enforce this rule to maintain order and hygiene in the city during the days leading up to Eid. Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon directed authorities to prepare for a city-wide crackdown on illegal cattle markets. He said any unapproved trading spots that emerge in local neighborhoods or along roadsides will be removed without delay. He emphasized that only authorized markets will be allowed to operate and instructed the assistant commissioners to remain active in their respective areas to monitor the situation. The district administration also plans to issue clear instructions to vendors and buyers regarding health, sanitation, and traffic management near these markets. Special teams will be deployed to manage waste and ensure cleanliness during the peak trading days. Apart from administrative measures, coordination with the police and municipal authorities will be enhanced to regulate traffic around market areas and maintain law and order. Emergency services and medical teams will also be placed on standby to deal with any incidents. This year, the district administration is focusing on limiting the spread of cattle trading into urban areas, especially to prevent health risks and inconvenience to residents. Officials say previous years have shown that unregulated markets create problems ranging from traffic jams to waste disposal issues. By limiting trading to designated areas, the administration aims to make the process more organized and easier to manage for both sellers and buyers. Deputy Commissioner Memon instructed the DMA and assistant commissioners to finalize preparations and submit detailed plans for each market location. He added that field inspections will begin soon to check whether the designated sites meet the required conditions. Special attention will be paid to water availability, shade arrangements for animals, and waste management systems at the approved market sites. Veterinary services will also be available to check the health of the animals before and during trading. The administration plans to run public awareness campaigns before the markets open, informing residents about the approved locations and encouraging them to avoid buying animals from unverified sellers. To further support the effort, security personnel will be deployed around all official markets. Surveillance systems, including CCTV cameras, may also be installed to monitor large gatherings and deter any criminal activity. In addition to the operational aspects, the meeting also discussed coordination with the Capital Development Authority (CDA), sanitation staff, and emergency responders.—DNA

NA referred medical college licensing controversy to NA body

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Standing Committee will now review concerns regarding favoritism in the registration of medical colleges, as directed by Presiding Officer Abdul Qadir Patel. The matter was raised on Wednesday during the National Assembly's Question Hour. The Federal Ministry of National Health Services informed the House that under an agreement between Pakistan and Hungary, scholarships are being awarded to 1,000 students. PPP MNA Sharmila Faruqi criticized the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), alleging that favoritism is influencing the issuance of licenses to medical colleges. She revealed that an inquiry is currently underway into the registration process of seven medical colleges. She said that registrations should be conducted transparently and strictly on merit. Chairman Patel noted that around Rs. 500 million annually is spent on medical education abroad, pointing to the financial and academic impact of the alleged favoritism. He referred the issue to the relevant parliamentary committee and instructed that PMDC officials be summoned to respond. Patel added that due to preferential treatment, the education of students is being adversely affected.—APP

ANF arrests 6 smugglers with over 2294 kg of drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting nine operations across the country, recovered as many as 2294.81 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 434.4 million and arrested six suspects, including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Wednesday. He informed that 4.5 kg of ice was recovered from the luggage of a passenger visiting Doha at Islamabad International Airport. In another operation, 40 grams of MDMA powder were recovered from a parcel sent from Holland at a courier office in Chaklala Garrison, Rawalpindi. Similarly, 470 grams of ice was recovered from two parcels sent to Australia at a courier office in Harbanspura, Lahore. — APP

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Briefs

Painting exhibition held at PAC

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Council of the Arts, Rawalpindi, hosted a vibrant exhibition featuring paintings and calligraphy by local artists. Dr. Mehdi Tavakoli, Director General of the Iranian Cultural Center, being the chief guest, inaugurated the exhibition. He praised the artists' skills and dedication. "Their work beautifully bridges tradition and modernity", he said. The Director Arts Council, on the occasion, shed light on the contribution of the Arts Council to promote art and culture. Visitors admired a variety of artworks, from traditional Islamic calligraphy to contemporary paintings. The exhibition also provided a platform for young artists to display their talent. At the closing ceremony, the Chief Guest distributed certificates and shields among participating artists. The Arts Council emphasized its commitment to supporting local talent by offering free gallery space for future exhibitions. The event was organized in collaboration with Afzal Art Gallery.—APP

NA Speaker expresses grief over passing Jamshed Thomas

ISLAMABAD, May 21 (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the demise of former Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Jamshed Thomas. In his condolence message, he extended heartfelt sympathies to the family of the late Jamshed Thomas and prayed for strength and patience for them in this time of great loss. He said Jamshed Thomas was a patriotic and active parliamentarian who always raised his voice for the rights of minorities and promoted interfaith harmony in the country. Ayaz Sadiq said that Jamshed Thomas's valuable services will be remembered for a long time. The Speaker prayed that the Almighty grants the bereaved family the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss.—APP

ICT Police congratulate COAS

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have extended heartfelt congratulations to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on his elevation to the prestigious rank of Field Marshal. A police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi praised the visionary leadership of Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir, COAS, saying: "Under his command, the Pakistan Armed Forces have effectively shattered the enemy's arrogance through exceptional strategic planning." He said that on behalf of every officer and personnel of Islamabad Police, warm wishes and prayers are extended for the continued success and leadership of Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff (COAS).—APP

NUML hosts commemoration conference on Allama Iqbal

The event concluded with an award ceremony to honour winners of the Allama Iqbal Photography Competition, celebrating creative interpretations of Iqbal's message

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Department of Persian Language at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), in collaboration with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, organized the 3rd National Commemoration Conference on Allama Iqbal under the theme "Solution to Contemporary Economic, Social, and Environmental Issues in the Light of Iqbal's Philosophy." His Excellency Reza Amiri Moghadam, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, graced the event as Chief Guest, while Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Director, National Language Promotion Department, delivered the keynote address. Welcoming the participants, Dean Faculty of Languages Dr. Jameel Asghar Jami emphasised that Allama Iqbal's poetry holds timeless solutions to the world's modern-day challenges, but unfortunately, his work has been confined to limited topics in academic and public discourse. In his keynote speech, Dr. Saleem Mazhar commended NUML for organising a seminar that stimulates deep intellectual reflection. He noted that nations that up-



hold their civilisation and traditions thrive, whereas those that abandon them face stagnation. He praised Iqbal for awakening the Muslim Ummah through his powerful poetry. Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam expressed gratitude to the Rector NUML for the opportunity to engage in an intellectual dialogue inspired by Iqbal's philosophy. He described Iqbal as a poet of love and peace, a visionary who offered new hope to the Islamic world and aimed to unite the Ummah through his

message. The Ambassador highlighted Iqbal's deep spiritual ties with Iran and stressed that the Muslim world should recognise its own strengths rather than emulating the West. Rector NUML, Major General (Retd.) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI(M), in his remarks urged the youth to draw inspiration from Iqbal's life and teachings. He emphasised that the future of Pakistan rests on the shoulders of its younger generation, who must prepare themselves for leadership through

character, wisdom, and a strong moral foundation rooted in the Quran. He encouraged students to read Kulliyat-e-Iqbal to gain guidance for personal and national development. The concluding session of the one-day 3rd National Commemoration Conference on Allama Iqbal was held at Iqbal Hall. H.E. Sharifzoda Yusuf, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan and a proud alumnus of NUML's English Department, graced the event as Chief Guest. In his address, Ambassador Yusuf paid

glowing tribute to Allama Iqbal, lauding his intellectual contributions to the Muslim world. He shared that Iqbal Day is celebrated with reverence in Tajikistan and called for a deeper engagement with Kulliyat-e-Iqbal to truly understand Iqbal's vision. He noted that Iqbal's poetry continues to inspire writers and thinkers in Tajikistan. The Ambassador also expressed his firm resolve to further strengthen bilateral relations with Pakistan and reiterated Tajikistan's unwavering support for Pakistan, even in challenging times. In his concluding remarks, Director General NUML, Brig (R) Shahzad Munir, appreciated the efforts of the organisers in successfully hosting the conference. He emphasised that Allama Iqbal is a rare intellectual asset whose legacy transcends borders. Brig Munir urged students to read and reflect on Iqbal's poetry, which continues to offer guidance and inspiration to the youth. The event concluded with an award ceremony to honour winners of the Allama Iqbal Photography Competition, celebrating creative interpretations of Iqbal's message.

Musadik calls for equal dialogue, warns of consequences

ISLAMABAD: Climate Minister Dr. Musadik Malik warned India that Pakistan will respond more aggressively than before, directing Pakistan's diplomatic corps to globally convey that Pakistan seeks equal dialogue and peaceful resolution. In an exclusive talk with media channels, Dr. Musadik Malik stated that Pakistan has shattered India's arrogance, especially concerning its military capabilities, including Rafale jets. India's propaganda was exposed, and Pakistan responded strongly. He emphasized that any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity will be met with unwavering resolve, leaving no room for compromise. Dr. Musadik Malik condemned India's unfounded claims, cautioning that failure to cease could lead to dire outcomes. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to peaceful dialogue to address pressing concerns, including terrorism, Kashmir, and water disputes. Malik announced that Pakistan's diplomats will reach out to multiple nations, aiming to raise awareness among the global community about what he described as India's false narratives and propaganda efforts.—APP

Explosion in Rawalpindi's sewage line leaves road cracked

ISLAMABAD, May 21 (APP): A massive sewage line explosion ripped through Syedpur Road in Rawalpindi on Wednesday morning after the underground pipe cracked beneath the road surface. Authorities suspect that gas buildup from a nearby factory likely seeped into the sewage line, causing the explosion on Syedpur Road in Rawalpindi, a private news channel reported. Locals claim a leaking gas pipeline that runs through the sewage line has been a longstanding issue, with repeated requests to fix it having gone unaddressed. A Rawalpindi Cantonment Board official announced plans to implement special cleaning measures in the affected area to enhance sanitation and minimize health risks.—APP

Pakistan's sesame exports to China reach new heights

"While supply-side developments such as improved seed varieties and research-led farming techniques have played a vital role, it is China's growing consumer demand, preference for high-quality imports, and competitive pricing that are driving this record-setting trend,"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's sesame seed exports to China have soared to unprecedented levels, reaching nearly \$49 million between January and April 2025. This surge marks a significant milestone in the deepening agricultural trade relationship between the two countries, according to a report carried by China Economic Net (CEN) on Wednesday. The report says, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, credited the impressive growth to both domestic innovation and China's rising demand for high-quality imports. He praised the contributions of local research institutions - such as the Ayub Agricultur-

al Research Institute (AARI) and its Oilseeds Research Institute (ORI) team - for their pivotal role in driving productivity through improved seed varieties and advanced farming techniques.

"While supply-side developments such as improved seed varieties and research-led farming techniques have played a vital role, it is China's growing consumer demand, preference for high-quality imports, and competitive pricing that are driving this record-setting trend," he said. Pakistan's rise in China's sesame import market has been dramatic. In 2019, it ranked as the 14th largest supplier with just \$4.6 million in exports. By 2024, it had climbed to third place by value at

\$226.53 million, and second by volume, with 177,640 tons of sesame seeds exported to China. From January to April 2025 alone, exports hit 38,828 tons, valued at \$48.58 million, representing a 337% year-on-year increase. Gopal Khamuani, Chairman of Pakistan Sesame Exporters Association, emphasized Pakistan's competitive advantage, citing an average export price of \$1,300 per ton, as well as fast transit times of 15-20 days via sea and land. Orders can be processed and shipped within 5-10 days, offering Chinese importers the flexibility to respond swiftly to market demands. Looking ahead, Ambassador Hashmi outlined a strategic roadmap to further deepen trade ties: enhancing seed quality, investing in val-

ue-added processing, expanding e-commerce presence, and strengthening joint ventures. "Our goal must be to move beyond raw exports and tap into China's booming sesame-based product market, valued between \$4.7 and \$9.5 billion annually," he said. He also underscored the Embassy's key initiatives such as the September 2024 sesame trade promotion event, which secured \$28 million in deals, and the registration of 177 Pakistani sesame companies in China. Concluding his remarks, Hashmi stated, "Our sesame trade with China is more than an export story - it's a blueprint for shared prosperity, " the report added.

Tributes paid to Mirwaiz Farooq, Ghani Lone and martyrs of Hawal

ISLAMABAD: Rich tributes continue to pour in for Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone and martyrs of Hawal on their martyrdom anniversary, today. Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party spokesman Advocate Arshad Iqbal in a statement issued in Srinagar said that the Kashmiri people were indebted to the sacrifices of these great martyrs who laid down their lives for the cause of freedom from Indian occupation. Iqbal said the history stands witness to the fact that the nations, which stood steadfast and committed to their cause have achieved their cherished goal by winning the battle against oppressors. He said that the tradition of remembering martyrs is something that rejuvenates Kashmiri's pro-freedom spirit. Lauding the supreme sacrifices of Kashmiri martyrs, the spokesman said that the path to freedom is always filled with thorns and hardships. He expressed the hope that the day was not far when Kashmiris would achieve their right to self-determination as acknowledged the United Nations. He said the world cannot turn away its eyes from Kashmir issue and people's legitimate struggle for right to self-determination for long but has to resolve it according to the wishes and aspirations of its people. Other Hurriyat leaders and organizations in their statements Hurriyat leaders said that the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir will never forget the immense sacrifices of martyrs like Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone and martyrs of Hawal, who laid down their lives for the just cause of Kashmir's freedom. The leaders said that affirmed that Kashmiris remain steadfast in their pledge to carry forward the mission of these brave leaders. Unidentified gunmen had shot dead Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq at his residence in Srinagar on 21st May in 1990.—DNA

Pak diplomatic warriors all set to unmask India's state-sponsored deceit

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Vice President Khurram Dastgir Khan declared that under Bilawal Bhutto's leadership, Pakistan is all set to reach out globally, convincing the European Union, human rights organizations and international media to brutally expose India's heinous propaganda, nefarious activities and state-sponsored terrorism. In an exclusive interview on a private news channel, Khurram Dastgir Khan said, "I am honored to be part of this high-level delegation. He said we will expose India's irresponsible and reprehensible activities to the European Union, Japan, China, countries supporting Palestine, Germany, Islamic nations, human rights organizations, parliament members and media houses globally. Khurram Dastgir asserted the nation's resolve to expose India's nefarious propaganda machinery, highlighting Pakistan's commitment to truth and justice on the global

stage. He said, "We will use the world's platform to compel India to acknowledge that there can be no peace without addressing the Kashmir issue, and they will have to come to the negotiating table." He further said that India has become diplomatically isolated on the global stage, whereas Pakistan has garnered unprecedented global support, underscoring the international community's growing recognition of Pakistan's stance on key issues. He stated that all delegates are mature and responsible, and they will raise global awareness about water bullying by India. If India violates the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), Pakistan will not compromise and will consider it a declaration of war. He stated that India's narrative was based on lies and that their attempts at propaganda were being exposed. Khurram emphasized that Pakistan is committed to dialogue.—APP

Govt has started many programs for youth: Mashhood

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister Youth Program PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmed said that the Shahbaz Sharif government has started many programs for the youth to face the challenges of the 21st century, which are in line with the modern technology of the present era. In all these courses, photojournalists of Rawalpindi Islamabad and their children will be included so that they can get a better position in their jobs and society and secure their future. He expressed these views in a meeting with a delegation led by President of Rawalpindi Islamabad Photojournalists Association Sajjad Haider, which included Rizwan Khan Jahangir Chaudry Pervaiz Mughal Raja Mudassar, and Raja Zafar. Chairman PMYP assured the association that the government would take all possible steps for the welfare of its members. He



said that photojournalists are the vanguard of the journalist community, and their sacrifices in journalism are unforgettable. All members of RIPJA would be included in the upcoming official visits of the Youth Program to foreign countries so that they can

further highlight their talents. He added Moreover, all photojournalists will be given courses in artificial intelligence and other advanced courses so that they will not be dependent on anyone in the coming era and can continue to earn a respectable living.

Field Marshal: History, origin and facts

Historical records indicate that the last time an army general in Pakistan was elevated to the post was 66 years ago

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir has been elevated to the prestigious rank of Field Marshal, in recognition of his distinguished service and commendable leadership during the recent short but significant war with India. Historical records indicate that nearly 66 years ago, in 1959, the then-Army Chief, Ayub Khan, was granted the rank of Field Marshal by the presidential cabinet of that era. Ayub Khan, a product of the British Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, took over power through a coup in October 1958, and in 1965, he was elected as the country's head of state. History, origin and interesting facts This five-star rank, which means the custodian or keeper

of the king's horses in the old German language, has existed in many countries for 840 years or since 1185, when General Alberic Clement was appointed the world's first Field Marshal by French King Philip Augustus, research shows. Field Marshal Clement had accompanied King Philip to the Third Crusade but died in 1191. Since then, the world has seen a few hundred Field Marshals, including 141 in Great Britain and 64 appointed by the Russian Empire. The title of Field Marshal was briefly abolished in France between 1793 and 1804. However, this office was later restored, and Napoleon became a Field Marshal himself. In Germany, where the rank has existed since 1631, more than 100 generals have gone on to become Field Marshals. German General Hans Boitzenburg was his country's

first Field Marshal in 1631.

In 1700, Count Golovin of the Russian Empire was awarded this title, according to "Encyclopaedia Britannica". In 1736, a British Army officer, General George Hamilton, was decorated as Field Marshal, according to the "Oxford Dictionary of National Biography". The prestigious slot of Field Marshal has existed in various countries including Great Britain, India, Pakistan, China, Finland, former Soviet Union, Russian Federation, Austria, Italy, Bangladesh, Brunei, Australia, France, Germany, New Zealand, Greece, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Poland, Sweden, Spain, South Korea, Malaysia, Nigeria, Brazil, Oman, South Vietnam, Afghanistan, Albania, Zaire, Nepal, Mongolia, Finland Ethiopia Egypt, Belarus, Bahrain, Yemen, Philippines,

Peru, North Korea, Ghana, Yugoslavia, Venezuela, Uganda, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Romania, Croatia, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Tunisia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, South Africa, Serbia and Syria, etc. General Sam Manekshaw was the first Indian Army officer to be promoted to the rank of Field Marshal in 1973. Under his command, the Indian forces had fought the 1971 Pakistan-India War that led to the birth of Bangladesh. The first Indian Army Commander-in-Chief, General Madappa Cariappa, who led the Indian forces during the Indo-Pak War of 1947-48, was appointed Field Marshal in 1986. Both Manekshaw and Cariappa had lived up to the age of 94. The Lyallpur-born Indian Air Force Officer, Arjan Singh, was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Air Force in 2002. He

spearheaded the Indian Air Force in 1965. He died at 98 in 2017. A Sri Lankan Army Chief, General Sarath Fonseka, was also promoted to this rank for defeating the Tamil Tigers. After retiring from the army in 2009, he pitched himself as a presidential candidate in his country's 2010 elections, though he was defeated by President Rajapaksa. Consequently, General Fonseka was stripped of his rank and decorations. In March 2015, the newly appointed Sri Lankan President, Sirisena granted General Fonseka a full pardon and promoted him to the rank of Field Marshal. Kings Birendra and Mahendra of Nepal were designated Field Marshals of the British Army. About a dozen foreign monarchs were also given this title by Britain as ceremonial diplomatic gestures. However,

German Emperor Wilhelm II, Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I, and Japanese King Hirohito were stripped of these honours when their countries became Britain's enemies in the two world wars. Arthur Wellesley, a former British premier, was just 44 at the time of his promotion in 1813, according to the "London Gazette". Charles Moore, 91, was the oldest to be promoted in 1821, while a further 23 officers were promoted as Field Marshal in their eighties. A few members of the British royal family, including George V, George VI, George VII, George VIII, Queen Elizabeth's sons Charles and Edward, and her late husband Prince Philip, were also promoted to this rank. Meanwhile, Queen Victoria had appointed her husband, Prince Albert, as Field Marshal, and her grand-

daughter, Elizabeth, followed suit by elevating her life partner. General Charles Guthrie of the British Army was decorated in 2012, and General John Walker was elevated to this titular post in 2014. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey and the country's first president, was also a Field Marshal. The United States has never used the rank of Field Marshal. However, General Douglas MacArthur was appointed Field Marshal of the Philippine Army in 1936. In 1944, the US Congress had created the rank of "General of the Army", a five-star rank equivalent to that of Field Marshal. Two days later, General George Marshall was promoted to this rank, becoming the first five-star general in American history. In Saudi Arabia, Prince Khaled bin Sultan was promoted to this rank by King Fahd, following the 1990-91 Gulf War.

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Banning X is not the solution

RUMORS are once again swirling that the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) may be banned in Pakistan, allegedly due to a surge in negative commentary regarding the recent war with India and critical remarks about the elevation of the Army Chief to Field Marshal. Such a move, if implemented, would be a step in the wrong direction. While it is true that social media often provides a platform for irresponsible behavior, disinformation, and even national security risks, banning a global communication platform like X is not a sustainable or effective solution. This is not the first time such an approach has been taken, and every time it happens, it disrupts public access to information, curtails freedom of expression, and damages Pakistan's image as a democratic country. In the digital age, platforms like X serve as crucial tools for information dissemination, citizen journalism, public awareness, and even government communication. Many ministries and official departments use X to broadcast updates. Silencing this medium over a few objectionable posts or misinterpretations amounts to punishing the majority for the actions of a few. The specific concerns this time reportedly stem from misinterpretations of Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar's statement about pre-warning Pakistan of the recent attack—claims that some say have been twisted on X. Others have pointed to disrespectful comments against the military establishment, particularly in light of Field Marshal Asim Munir's promotion. While such content is certainly inappropriate and must be addressed, banning the entire platform is like demolishing a house to fix a leaking pipe. The solution lies not in blanket bans but in better regulation and smarter governance. The government should work with X's management to report, flag, and remove harmful content that violates national security or legal standards. Cybercrime laws already exist in Pakistan, and those who spread hate speech or misinformation can be prosecuted under existing legal frameworks. Rather than depriving citizens of a vital communication tool, efforts should be made to enhance digital literacy, promote responsible online behavior, and strengthen counter-disinformation capabilities. Banning X also creates a vacuum that is quickly filled by proxy servers and VPNs, making the ban ineffective and encouraging tech-savvy users to bypass restrictions—often exposing themselves to even greater risks online. Moreover, such actions alienate the youth and tech communities who rely on X for everything from education and employment to activism and entertainment. As a responsible state, Pakistan must find a balance between maintaining national security and upholding constitutional freedoms. In a region where information warfare is real, the answer is more informed engagement, not digital blackout. Therefore, instead of banning X again, the government should adopt a proactive strategy: invest in digital monitoring, enforce accountability for violators, and encourage constructive online dialogue. Silencing voices, no matter how uncomfortable they may be, is not the hallmark of a confident and strong nation. Pakistan deserves an open internet—responsible, regulated, and free.



Corruption threatens TAPI's future

THE Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project was once hailed as a game-changer for regional energy cooperation and economic integration. Designed to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan's massive Galkynysh field to energy-hungry markets in South Asia, TAPI promised to reduce regional energy deficits and promote cross-border collaboration. But over a decade later, TAPI remains a vision on paper—mired in delay, dysfunction, and deepening distrust. At the heart of the project's stagnation lies a fatal flaw: widespread corruption in Turkmenistan. The opaque governance structure and lack of transparency in Turkmenistan's energy sector have made international stakeholders uneasy. Key decisions are often made behind closed doors, without third-party scrutiny or accountability. Western investors and financial institutions have steered clear of Turkmenistan due to governance concerns, further stalling project financing. With no real reform or will to combat corruption, Turkmenistan has failed to build trust with its partners. Pakistan, once a strong supporter of TAPI, is increasingly disillusioned—not just due to Turkmenistan's internal dysfunction, but also because of its insistence on keeping India in the project. While the idea of regional connectivity sounds appealing on paper, the current geopolitical climate renders cooperation with India extremely difficult. Tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi have escalated in recent years, and strategic mistrust runs deep. Pakistan views Turkmenistan's unwillingness to reconfigure the pipeline's framework—either by excluding India or pursuing bilateral alternatives—as a lack of understanding of regional sensitivities. From Pakistan's perspective, any economic or energy collaboration that includes India without addressing core bilateral disputes, particularly Kashmir, is unacceptable. On the other hand, Turkmenistan, desperate for a reliable and economically lucrative export destination, sees India as a vital end-market for its gas. This divergence in strategic priorities is a major obstacle, and neither side appears willing to compromise. Afghanistan, meanwhile, remains the weakest link. With security and political stability still fragile despite changing regimes, building and maintaining a critical piece of energy infrastructure across Afghan territory is a monumental risk. Investors are wary, insurance is nearly impossible, and logistical hurdles abound. In reality, the TAPI project is a victim of overambition, poor planning, and political contradictions. A multibillion-dollar pipeline cannot be built on hopes alone—it needs a foundation of mutual trust, robust governance, and geopolitical alignment. As long as Turkmenistan refuses to clean up its energy sector and accommodate regional concerns, particularly Pakistan's, the project is unlikely to move beyond paper. Instead of clinging to a failing four-party framework, perhaps it is time for Pakistan to explore alternative energy partnerships. Bilateral gas pipelines, LNG imports, and domestic renewable investments might prove more feasible and politically sustainable. TAPI was a bold dream. But without reform in Ashgabat and a serious reevaluation of strategic alignments, it is a dream that may never materialize. Regional energy cooperation is vital—but it must be rooted in realism, not rhetoric.

Why India and Israel stand alone?

Qamar Bashir



This growing defiance of Israeli overreach by traditional allies marks a turning point. Just as India was humiliated by the international community after its failed military aggression against Pakistan, Israel now faces global condemnation for its indiscriminate bombing, blockade, and mass displacement of Palestinians. From targeted airstrikes on hospitals and schools to the systematic denial of food and medicine, Israel's actions have shocked the conscience of the world. What India failed to learn from its diplomatic downfall, Israel seems determined to repeat

THE tides of global diplomacy are shifting rapidly, and two nations once seen as pillars of regional dominance—India and Israel—are finding themselves increasingly isolated on the world stage. After India's recent war with Pakistan, the global community united in its condemnation of Indian aggression. The overwhelming silence from the world in support of India, except a few isolated voices, exposed New Delhi's overestimation of its diplomatic capital. Now, as Israel intensifies its brutal military campaign in Gaza and the West Bank, it too is heading down a path of growing international alienation. On Monday, an unprecedented joint statement from British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney sharply rebuked the Israeli government. The leaders declared their opposition to Israel's expansion of military operations in Gaza, condemned the intolerable human suffering, and denounced the deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid. They warned Prime Minister Netanyahu that if Israel does not cease hostilities and lift restrictions on aid, "further concrete actions," including targeted sanctions, would follow. The statement also reaffirmed the illegality of permanent displacement and settlement expansions, calling them direct violations of international humanitarian law. The call for an immediate ceasefire and the revival of efforts for a two-state solution echoed growing consensus from across the globe. Yet, in this chorus of international outrage, one nation remains conspicuously silent—India. Far from condemning the assault, India appears to be tacitly encouraging Israel's savage military campaign, drawing disturbing parallels between their treatment of Palestinians and India's own conduct toward Pakistan and Kashmir. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded with fury, accusing the Western leaders of offering a "prize" for terrorism by pressuring Israel to halt its "defensive war." Rejecting the joint statement, Netanyahu claimed that calling for a Palestinian state rewarded Hamas for its October 7 attack and insist-

ed that Israel would instead adhere to President Donald Trump's plan—a controversial proposal involving the expulsion of Gaza's population and its redevelopment, widely dismissed by the international community as ethnic cleansing. Yet even Israel's closest allies are beginning to distance themselves. Reports surfaced that Trump's envoys engaged in direct talks with Hamas for the release of American hostages without informing Tel Aviv—a stark deviation from established protocol. Israel was reportedly blindsided, learning of the negotiations through its own intelligence services, not Washington. Similarly, Trump's recent decision to launch nuclear negotiations with Iran—without prior notice to Netanyahu—reflects a changing strategic calculus in Washington, even under a pro-Israel U.S. administration. This growing defiance of Israeli overreach by traditional allies marks a turning point. Just as India was humiliated by the international community after its failed military aggression against Pakistan, Israel now faces global condemnation for its indiscriminate bombing, blockade, and mass displacement of Palestinians. From targeted airstrikes on hospitals and schools to the systematic denial of food and medicine, Israel's actions have shocked the conscience of the world. What India failed to learn from its diplomatic downfall, Israel seems determined to repeat. Its arrogance, belief in military impunity, and dismissal of international norms are reminiscent of India's posturing in South Asia. Both nations, driven by hyper-nationalist ideologies, have mistaken silence for consent and economic strength for moral legitimacy. But the world is no longer willing to look away. The new regional dynamics are also working against Israel. The clout of Gulf nations—Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE—has surged, and their diplomatic and financial influence is shaping the future of the Middle East. Turkey is asserting its regional role, Syria is reemerging from isolation, and Iran has weathered decades of sanctions to remain a formidable power. The Arab world is no longer a passive observer; it is

an active participant in reshaping the region's geopolitical reality. Countries across the Muslim world—from Malaysia to Indonesia—are rising as economic and military powers, building alliances and advocating for justice in Palestine. The momentum for a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is accelerating. The June 18 conference in New York, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, will further solidify global consensus toward a two-state solution. Even European countries long considered Israel's allies are now proposing recognition of a Palestinian state. France has already hinted at such a move, while Canada and the UK are signaling that continued aggression will come at a diplomatic and economic cost. Israel, much like India after its debacle with Pakistan, is staring down the prospect of diplomatic isolation. The message is clear: the world will no longer tolerate unchecked aggression disguised as self-defense. The era of impunity is drawing to a close. Israel must now choose between perpetuating its cycle of violence or joining the international community in earnest efforts for peace. Its military dominance may buy time, but it cannot buy legitimacy. The writing is on the wall—tyranny has a shelf life. And if the Netanyahu government does not heed the warnings of its allies and adversaries alike, it risks leading Israel into an era of irreversible isolation and decline. The Palestinian cause, long suppressed under the weight of occupation, bloodshed, and despair, is finding renewed strength—not just through armed resistance but through diplomacy, moral clarity, and international unity. Pakistan has shown how a smaller nation can defeat aggression with strategy and resilience. Iran has shown how endurance and defiance can outlast decades of coercion. The Middle East is changing, and the world is watching. The future belongs to justice, not might; to co-existence, not conquest. Just as India was forced to face the consequences of its arrogance, Israel too must prepare to be held accountable. Liberation of Palestine is no longer a distant dream—it is becoming an urgent global demand. And sooner or later, it will be a geopolitical inevitability.

Four day Military confrontation: Understanding Pak-India conflict metamorphosis

Sohail A. Azmie

India often follows, what could be termed as 'terror turning strategy,' i.e., using terrorism as a pretext to militarily engage Pakistan. Since Uri attack 2016, India's terror-response algorithm, particularly under BJP, has been: Terror incident occurs, India blames Pakistan within hours of the incident, state-influenced Indian media begins a relentless war-mongering forcing the Indian government for a revenge, India conducts military action, claims victory, awards military personnel, BJP wins elections

FOLLOWING the Pehlgaam terror incident, India launched a military strike on alleged terror hideouts in Pakistan on 7 May, a reckless action lacking strategic acumen and verifiable evidence, despite ongoing investigations, as noted by India's MEA spokesperson Jaiswal on 12 May. While air domain and LOC saw intense combat in the Four Day Military Confrontation, 7-10 May 2025, with standoff weapons, the navies of both India and Pakistan remained disengaged, raising questions about the strategic value of naval warfare in this context. With a long land border between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, and each other's military bases well within combat ranges of each other's weapons, the question then naturally comes: given the Pak-India context, what it means to fight at sea, and to achieve what objectives? How does a short and intense air combat relate to the war at sea? These questions necessitate strategic contextualization. American maritime strategist Mahan in 1890 posited that decisive fleet engagements were necessary for 'command of the sea' facilitating control of trade routes and projecting power ashore. British maritime historian, Julian Corbett in 1910 argued that a navy's primary job was to influence events on land rather than looking for decisive battles at sea. When it comes to air warfare, the Italian airpower theorist Douhet in 1921 and American Billy Mitchell in 1925, argued for 'command of the air' to be a precondition for a decisive victory. On the contrary, Britain's first air chief Trenchard in 1920s and American airpower theorist Warden in 1988 noted that airpower could be effective in specific, short combat contexts helping a nation to cause paralysis and swift degradation. However, for longer versions of war, airpower alone was not enough to ensure victory. In past Pak-India wars (1948, 1965, 1971), land was the decisive domain, as hostilities began and ended with territorial gains or losses. Analysts have long viewed air and sea operations as tools to influence land warfare, not as decisive in themselves. However, the 2019 and 2025 conflicts suggest a shift. In 2019, Pakistan's downing of an Indian MiG-21 and capture of its pilot, and in 2025, air strikes on S-400 systems and shooting of Indian jets, forced India to halt operations rather than escalate, aligning with Trenchard and

Warden's views on airpower's role in short conflicts. C. Christine Fair, in an interview with Karan Thapar, and Pravin Sawhney of FORCE magazine, partially support Pakistan's claims while questioning India's reported outcomes, highlighting air warfare's growing significance in narrow operational windows. Here it could potentially mean the one shooting first could dominate the operational space as well media alike. India often follows, what could be termed as 'terror turning strategy,' i.e., using terrorism as a pretext to militarily engage Pakistan. Since Uri attack 2016, India's terror-response algorithm, particularly under BJP, has been: Terror incident occurs, India blames Pakistan within hours of the incident, state-influenced Indian media begins a relentless war-mongering forcing the Indian government for a revenge, India conducts military action, claims victory, awards military personnel, BJP wins elections. This cyclic pattern repeats within 3-5 years, usually coinciding with the Indian general or major state election schedules. Post-Pehlgaam, Indian declared political objective was 'to strike terror sanctuaries that helped plan and orchestrate Pehlgaam incident.' Pakistan sought 'to reestablish deterrence to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.' Though in both of these modern events airpower played a dominant role, yet nuclear deterrence coupled with India's limited objectives disincentivised it against expanding and prolonging military action. This could probably have inhibited India from embarking on a military course at or from the sea. Will this remain the case in a future Pak-India confrontation? Will Indian navy threaten Southern Pakistan with long range strike from the sea in sync with IAF? These aren't simple questions that can be answered in simple yes or no. Technological advancements, in both air and maritime power domains, coupled with artificial intelligence, social media and strategic communication, combat dominance with ability to inflict reckonable destruction through air and sea combatants could compel the opposing side to (re)think of starting or terminating a war. This does not mean totally negating the other domains of warfare, but requires a balanced approach through an integrated battle-space that coherently combines the combat effects of operations

in the multiple domains. With long range strike capabilities, Indian navy could possibly be deployed for combat as a response to Pakistan's counteraction against India's initial strike. India's 2025 strikes across the international border, violating Article 51 of the UN Charter and the 1837 Caroline Doctrine's necessity and proportionality criteria, suggest a potential shift from its traditional terror-response algorithm. In the future, India may increasingly opt for preemptive strikes inside Pakistan, justifying them by claiming that purported terror hideouts posed imminent threats requiring immediate action. This demands understanding the conflict metamorphosis that continues to evolve in Pak-India context. Under this theorem of kinetic necessity, the role of the Indian navy may figure out prominently should India choose to maintain 'calm' in air and land, while imposing a response dilemma upon Pakistan. Extensive use of inexpensive/ expendable drones by both sides ultimately means, the long-held concepts of sovereignty and territorial integrity could be debated, and probably redefined. Grounding of container ship Antonio on 10 May 2025 due to GPS jamming in Eliza shoals near Saudi Coast heralds a new threat to maritime assets. Israel's pager attacks and use of unmanned systems in almost all domains by several nations around the world signify burdens of 'being ready at all times' against India's capability and willingness to go for these kind of operations without warning. A future war at sea will most probably be the exact transposition of what happened over land in the Four Day Military Confrontation, i.e., drones, electronic warfare and long range weapons. Deployment of drones from surface ships, and even submarines, could be a possibility. Consequently, this shift toward autonomous, low-cost warfare coupled with traditional strikes challenges contemporary military paradigms, compelling opposing sides to adapt to a new era where rapid, unannounced strikes blur the lines between deterrence and provocation, potentially destabilizing regional security.

– The writer is an Islamabad-based researcher; his areas of interest include: maritime security, climate change and astropolitics. He can be reached at voxoceanus@outlook.com

FROM PAGE 01
million people, to the brink of famine, amid ongoing bombardment and recurrent displacement orders. The UN humanitarian affairs office OCHA said Israel cleared nine aid trucks to cross the Kerem Shalom border on Monday, but only five were allowed in. Dujarric said Israel requires supplies to be offloaded on the Palestinian side of Kerem Shalom. Items are then reloaded separately once the authorities secure humanitarian teams access from inside Gaza. Only then are we able to bring any supplies closer to where people in need are sheltering, he said. On Tuesday, one of the UN teams waited for several hours before being given the green light.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Bulgaria Irena Gancheva, Charge d Affaires of Malaysia and Indonesia, President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Usman Shaukat and other cutting cake to formally launch a private Sports TV channel, in Islamabad. – DNA

No Babar Azam, Rizwan, Shaheen in Pak T20I squad

The squad has been selected based on players' performances in the ongoing HBL PSL X, which concludes on 25 May. This series also marks the first assignment for newly appointed head coach Mike Hesson

DNA

LAHORE: The selection committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday named a 16-member men's squad for the upcoming three-match T20I series against Bangladesh, with Salman Ali Agha continuing as captain of the team. All three matches will be held at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, with the schedule set to be announced soon. The squad has been selected based on players' performances in the ongoing HBL PSL X, which concludes on 25 May. This series also marks the first assignment for newly appointed head coach Mike Hesson. 16-member squad (in alphabetical order): Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hassan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Raza (wicket-keeper), Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan (wicket-keeper), Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha (captain), and Shadab Khan (vice-captain).

Pakistan defeat India to reach West Asia Baseball Cup final



Men in Green overpower India by lopsided 14-1 score in semifinal held in Karaj, Iran

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan's baseball team delivered another remarkable performance Tuesday afternoon, overpowering India by a lopsided 14-1 score in the West Asia Baseball Cup semifinal in Karj, Iran. The mercy rule was invoked after seven innings as Pakistan's commanding lead left no chance for an Indian comeback. The defending champions came out swinging, putting up five runs in both the first and third innings to take firm control of the game. Third baseman Hussain led the offensive charge, going 2-for-4 at the plate with two RBIs and four runs scored. Center fielder Wasim Akram and designated hitter Muhammad Rehman also had strong performances, combining for four hits and four runs batted in. On the mound, starting pitcher Muhammad Haris set the tone with 4.1 solid innings, allowing just one earned run while striking out four Indian batters. The bullpen was even more dominant, with relievers Syed Muhib Shah and Hussain Imam combining for five strikeouts over 2.2 scoreless innings to seal the victory. India struggled in all phases of the game, committing an alarming 10 fielding errors while their pitchers issued eight walks. Their lone run came in the first inning, they managed just four hits total against Pakistan's stingy pitching staff. With this emphatic win, Pakistan advances to Wednesday's final where they will face Palestine as they seek to defend their West Asia Baseball Cup title.

Bangladesh to tour Pakistan for T20Is after successful talks

All three matches will be played in Lahore, confirms PCB chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) have reached a successful agreement following discussions, under which the Bangladesh national cricket team will tour Pakistan for a T20I series. The decision was finalised after a detailed meeting in Dubai between PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and BCB Chairman Nazmul Abedin, along with BCB President Faruque Ahmed. However, the series was

cut down from initial five matches to three. As part of the agreement, Bangladesh will play a three-match T20 International series against Pakistan. All three fixtures will be hosted in Lahore. PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi expressed his gratitude to his Bangladeshi counterparts for finalising the tour schedule and ensuring their commitment to Pakistan's international cricket calendar. Bangladesh will be led by experienced wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das, who was officially appointed as the T20I captain earlier this year after Najmul Hossain Shanto stepped

down. Off-spinner Mahedi Hasan has been named vice-captain for both the UAE and Pakistan tour. It is pertinent to mention that the series had faced uncertainty due to rising tensions between India and Pakistan, as well as the mid-season postponement of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Originally, Bangladesh was scheduled to arrive in Pakistan on May 21 in two groups, with a five-match T20I series set to begin on May 25 in Faisalabad. However, logistical adjustments and security considerations have now led to a revised three-match series, all to be hosted in Lahore.

Venezuela's Maduro aims to cement power in new divisive vote

Venezuelans are called on to elect 24 state governors and 285 national assembly members, but turnout is expected to be low. Many opposition supporters lost any remaining faith they had in the electoral process after July's presidential election, in which Maduro claimed a third term despite the opposition's vote tally showing a clear win for its candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia

CARACAS: Ten months after his disputed reelection, Venezuela's authoritarian leftist President Nicolas Maduro is aiming to complete his sweep of power in parliamentary and regional elections on Sunday that the opposition has vowed to boycott. Venezuelans are called on to elect 24 state governors and 285 national assembly members, but turnout is expected to be low. Many opposition supporters lost any remaining faith they had in the electoral process after July's presidential election, in which Maduro claimed a third term despite the opposition's vote tally showing a clear win for its candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia. That election, and the deadly crackdown that followed it, cemented Venezuela's pariah status on the world stage. Only a handful of countries, including longtime allies Russia and Cuba, recognized Maduro's reelection. The 62-year-old socialist has reacted defiantly, repeatedly alleging US-backed plots to topple him. On the eve of the vote, the government claimed it had captured a group of foreign mercenaries that infiltrated the country from Colombia to sabotage the election. Over 400,000 security personnel will be deployed for the election on Sunday, which will also take place in Essequibo, an oil-rich region on Venezuela's border with Guyana, which Guyana has administered for decades but Caracas has threatened to partially annex. The opposition's boycott plans have generated intense debate. Jesus Castillo, director of the Polianalitica political consultancy, deemed them a "tactical error" by what he called the "radical wing" of the opposition. In the absence of alternatives, "the map (of Venezuela) will be very red," he added, referring to the color of "Chavismo," the brand of anti-American left-wing nationalism Maduro inherited from his predecessor, Hugo Chavez. Polls show Maduro's United Socialist Party of Venezuela and its allies winning an absolute majority in parliament. The opposition is only tipped for victory in two of 24 states: Zulia state, home to Venezuela's oil capital of Maracaibo, and Nueva Esparta, which comprises the Caribbean tourist island of Margarita, among others. Yacson Rivas, a 46-year-old trade unionist in the construction sector, told AFP he would vote for Maduro as a bulwark against US President Donald Trump, who has tightened sanctions on Venezuela since returning to power in January. "We are dealing with a satanic enemy but we have a president who, despite all our problems, is implementing sound policies," Rivas said. — DNA

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*Military
conflict
between
two nuclear
states is
stupidity*

FROM PAGE 01

and has prevented the situation from escalating. Responding to Indian allegations of Pakistan's involvement in the Pahal-gam attack, he said that they would take action if India provided evidence against a Pakistani. However, in India, no one from its government was asking strict questions about the security lapse which led to the incident, nor was anyone interested in the reasons behind it. On the ceasefire, the military spokesperson said that Pakistan prioritises peace and the country is celebrating peace, not victory. To another question about backchannel contacts between the two countries, DG ISPR said that the foreign ministry could answer it, as the military does not deal with politics and diplomacy. Chaudhry said that Pakistan responded strongly to Indian aggression on the night between May 6 and 7. "We shot down six Indian aircraft, and we could have destroyed more of them," he added. Pakistan's armed forces launched a large-scale retaliatory military action, named "Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos", and targeted several Indian military targets across multiple regions in response to the unprovoked strikes. The strikes, described by officials as "precise and proportionate", were carried out in response to India's continued aggression across the Line of Control (LoC) and within Pakistan's territory, which New Delhi claimed were aimed at "terrorist targets". Pakistan downed its six fighter jets, including three Rafale, and dozens of drones. After around 87 hours, the war between the two nuclear-armed nations ended on May 10 with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States. The military confrontation between the two countries was triggered by last month's attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) that left 26 tourists dead, with India blaming Pakistan for the attack without offering any evidence.

India declares Pakistani official 'persona non grata'

FROM PAGE 01
The development came in the aftermath of recent escalation between the two-nuclear armed countries following an attack that killed 26 men at a tourist destination in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir's (IIOJK) Pahalgam area. A day after the attack, New Delhi suspended a water-sharing treaty, announced the closure of the main land border crossing with Pakistan, declared military, naval and air advisers in the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi persona non grata, and withdrew visas for Pakistanis. In response, Islamabad ordered the expulsion of Indian diplomats and military advisers, cancelling visas for Indian nationals, with the exception of Sikh pilgrims, and closing the main border crossing from its side.

Appointing field marshal was 'my own decision'

FROM PAGE 01
 Marsoos", the federal government elevated General Munir to the rank of field marshal. A Special Guard of Honour ceremony was also held at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi today to honour Field Marshal Munir, following his elevation. During a conversation with senior journalists, the prime minister said that he does consult his elder brother and PML-N President Nawaz Sharif on such crucial decisions.

Polar bear biopsies to shed light on Arctic pollutants

The idea is to show as accurately as possible how the bears live in the wild -- but in a lab,' Laura Pirard, a Belgian toxicologist

NORWAY: With one foot braced on the helicopter's landing skid, a veterinarian lifted his air rifle, took aim and fired a tranquilizer dart at a polar bear. The predator bolted but soon slumped into the snowdrifts, its broad frame motionless beneath the Arctic sky. The dramatic pursuit formed part of a pioneering research mission in Norway's Svalbard archipelago, where scientists, for the first time, took fat tissue biopsies from polar bears to study the impact of pollutants on their health. The expedition came at a time when the Arctic region was warming at four times the global average, putting mounting pressure on the iconic predators as their sea-ice habitat shrank.

"The idea is to show as accurately as possible how the bears live in the wild - but in a lab," Laura Pirard, a Belgian toxicologist, told AFP. "To do this, we take their (fatty)

tissue, cut it in very thin slices and expose it to the stresses they face, in other words pollutants and stress hormones," said Pirard, who developed the method.

Moments after the bear collapsed, the chopper circled back and landed. Researchers spilled out, boots crunching on the snow. One knelt by the bear's flank, cutting thin strips of fatty tissue. Another drew blood. Each sample was sealed and labelled before the bear was fitted with a satellite collar. Scientists said that while the study monitors all the bears, only females were tracked with GPS collars as their necks are smaller than their heads – unlike males, who cannot keep a collar on for more than a few minutes. For the scientists aboard the Norwegian Polar Institute's research vessel Kronprins Haakon, these fleeting encounters were the culmination of months of

planning and decades of Arctic fieldwork. In a makeshift lab on the icebreaker, samples remained usable for several days, subjected to controlled doses of pollutants and hormones before being frozen for further analysis back on land. Each tissue fragment gave Pirard and her colleagues insight into the health of an animal that spent much of its life on sea ice. Analysis of the fat samples showed that the main pollutants present were per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) – synthetic chemicals used in industry and consumer goods that linger in the environment for decades. Despite years of exposure, Svalbard's polar bears showed no signs of emaciation or ill health, according to the team. The local population has remained stable or even increased slightly, unlike parts of Cana-

da, where the Western Hudson Bay group declined by 27 percent between 2016 and 2021, from 842 to 618 bears, according to a government aerial survey.

Other populations in the Canadian Arctic, including the Southern Beaufort Sea, have also shown long-term declines linked to reduced prey access and longer ice-free seasons. Scientists estimate there are around 300 polar bears in the Svalbard archipelago and roughly 2,000 in the broader region stretching from the North Pole to the Barents Sea. The team found no direct link between sea ice loss and higher concentrations of pollutants in Svalbard's bears. Instead, differences in pollutant levels came down to the bears' diet. Two types of bears – sedentary and pelagic – feed on different prey, leading to different chemicals building up in their bodies. — **Agencies**

Briefs

Moderna pulls application for COVID-flu combination shot

NEW YORK: Moderna said on Wednesday it has withdrawn an application seeking approval for its flu and COVID combination vaccine candidate to wait for efficacy data from a late-stage trial of its influenza shot, which is due later this year. The company said it pulled the application in consultation with the US Food and Drug Administration. It is the latest sign of increased regulatory scrutiny of the vaccine approval process since Robert F. Kennedy Jr. took the top US health job earlier this year. Moderna's decision comes a day after the US FDA said it would require new clinical trials for approval of annual COVID-19 boosters for healthy people under 65. The combination shot comprises a new COVID vaccine and an influenza vaccine, both under development by Moderna. The company has previously said it does not expect a delay in the FDA's decision for the next-generation COVID vaccine, which is due by the end of the month. Shares of the company have been battered by declining COVID revenue as well as investor concerns spurred by the appointment of Kennedy, who is a vaccine skeptic, as secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services. Moderna has been banking on revenue from newer mRNA shots to make up for falling sales of its COVID vaccine and less-than-expected uptake of its respiratory syncytial virus vaccine, which sent its shares down nearly 60 percent last year. The company in early May pushed back the time frame for the likely approval of its combination vaccine — meant to protect adults aged 50 and above against both COVID-19 and influenza — to 2026.—APP

Indian Navy inducts first vessel built in ancient ship-building style

New Delhi: The Indian Navy inducted on Wednesday its first vessel constructed using traditional shipbuilding techniques dating back to the 5th century. The 21-meter wooden ship is a stitched ship, a type of boat that is carved-built, with its planks stitched together using cords or ropes. The technique was popular in ancient India in constructing ocean-going vessels. Named Kaundinya, the ship is a recreation of a vessel inspired by a painting from the Ajanta Caves — a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Maharashtra state, where ancient Buddhist rock-cut monuments feature exquisite murals dating from the 2nd century B.C.E. to the 5th century C.E. "The whole concept was to kind of connect to our ancient methodology of how the construction takes place and also, subsequently, connect to the historical maritime routes which Indian seafarers took during that particular time," Cdr. Vivek Madhwal, spokesperson of the Indian Navy, told Arab News. Funded by the Ministry of Culture, the project was launched in July 2023 and constructed by artisans from Kerala, who were led by master Indian shipwright Babu Sankaran.—APP

Israeli forces encircle two of northern Gaza's last functioning hospitals

Nearly a kilometer (about half a mile) away, Israeli drones fired Monday into the Al-Awda hospital courtyard, preventing movement, Shourafi said. On Wednesday, the hospital was shelled while its director was on the phone with The Associated Press. A large boom could be heard on the call

GAZASTRIP: Two of northern Gaza's last functioning hospitals have been encircled by Israeli troops, preventing anyone from leaving or entering the facilities, hospital staff and aid groups said this week, as Israel pursued its renewed offensive into the devastated Palestinian territory.

The Indonesian hospital and Al-Awda hospital are among the region's only surviving medical centers. Both have come under fire this week, including shelling at Al-Awda that happened Wednesday as The Associated Press spoke to its director on the phone. A third hospital, Kamal Adwan, is out of service, its director said, citing Israeli troops and drones in its vicinity. Israeli authorities issued evacuation orders Friday for large parts of northern Gaza ahead of attacks intended to pressure the Hamas militant group to release more hostages. New evacuation orders followed Tuesday. All three hospitals and three primary health care centers are within the evacuation zone. Israel has not ordered the evacuation of the facilities themselves. Another two hospitals and four primary care centers are within 1,000 meters (yards) of the zone, said Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus, the director general of the World Health Organization. Israeli military operations and evacuation orders "are stretching the health system beyond the breaking point," he said. Hundreds of attacks on health facilities Only 20 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals remain partially functioning, serving the territory's more than 2 million people, amid continued bombing, rising malnutrition rates, and dwindling medical supplies. The WHO said hospitals in northern Gaza are "at a serious risk of shutting down completely." The United Nations agency has documented nearly 700 attacks on health care facilities in Gaza since the start of Israel's 19-month war against the Hamas militant group. The Israeli military has raided or laid siege to hospitals throughout the war, accusing Hamas of using them as command centers and to hide fighters, though it has only provided evidence for some of its claims. Hamas security men have been seen in hospitals during the war, controlling access to certain areas, and in recent weeks Israel has targeted alleged militants inside health facilities. Palestinians say the latest attacks on hospitals in the north are part of a larger plan to

displace the population to the south and eventually drive them from Gaza. Israel has vowed to facilitate what it refers to as the voluntary migration of much of Gaza's population to other countries, which many Palestinians and others view as a plan for forcible expulsion. Israel wants to "ensure the forced displacement of people from the area" by putting hospitals out of service, said Rami Shourafi, a board member of Al-Awda hospital. The Indonesian hospital comes under attack. The Indonesian hospital, once the largest in northern Gaza, has been surrounded by Israeli troops, who were positioned about 500 meters (545 yards) away. Drones have hovered above, monitoring any movement, since Sunday, an aid group that supports the hospital said. The Israeli military said its forces were operating around the hospital and targeting Hamas infrastructure but that troops had not entered the facility and ambulances were allowed to move. Israeli bulldozers demolished a perimeter wall of the hospital, according to the aid group MERC-Indonesia and a hospital staff member who had since evacuated. The staffer spoke on condition of anonymity because

he was not authorized to speak to the media. On Tuesday, airstrikes targeted the hospital's generators, sparking a fire and damaging its main power supply. The strikes also caused damage to the hospital's water supply, according to a video posted by MERC-Indonesia. Large flames were seen rising from the area before daybreak. A speaker in the video said the fire was close to the hospital fuel supply, but firefighters controlled the flames. At least one staff member was killed, according to WHO, which said those who remained in the hospital were in urgent need of water and food. The UN said it was working to transfer remaining patients to other facilities. Military activity around the hospital also damaged ceilings, the hospital roof and some equipment. At least 20 doctors and staff members decided to stay in the building, said MERC-Indonesia, and most patients evacuated themselves after fighting intensified in the area starting Thursday. Doctors and staffers at the hospital were not immediately reachable for comment. A video posted by MERC-Indonesia that was shot from the hospital windows showed an Israeli tank a few meters (several feet) away from the hospital

Israeli strikes isolate Al-Awda hospital Nearly a kilometer (about half a mile) away, Israeli drones fired Monday into the Al-Awda hospital courtyard, preventing movement, Shourafi said. On Wednesday, the hospital was shelled while its director was on the phone with The Associated Press. A large boom could be heard on the call. "They are bombing the hospital," said Dr. Mohammed Salha, the facility's director. He later said one security guard was wounded. Patients were not near to the area hit, he said. A video shared with AP showed damage to the roof and debris in the corridors, with dust still rising from the area. On Tuesday, Israeli drones fired at two ambulances that transferred three patients to Gaza City as the crews tried to return to the hospital, spokesperson Khaled Alhelo said. Alhelo himself was unable to return to the hospital Tuesday because of military activity. There are currently no ambulances or Internet lines at Al-Awda hospital, according to Shourafi and Alhelo. Israeli troops are about 900 meters (about half a mile) away from the hospital, Alhelo said. But the real risk, he said, is from Israeli drones flying over the hospital and preventing any movement in or out.—Agencies

UK pledges over \$5m in aid to Gaza

LONDON: Britain pledged \$5.4 million in humanitarian aid to Gaza, the government said on Wednesday, as its Minister for Development Jenny Chapman visited Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

"The Israeli government's failure to allow full humanitarian access to aid workers is abhorrent. Far too few trucks are crossing into Gaza," Chapman said. "The UK is clear — Israel will not achieve security through prolonging the suffering of the Palestinian people."

Britain on Tuesday paused free trade talks with Israel over its new offensive in Gaza, with foreign minister David Lammy calling for an end to the blockade of aid. The British Red Cross will receive the new aid package and deliver it through the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Britain said.—APP

Lebanon says Israel strikes in south kill two

BEIRUT: Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes killed two people in the south on Wednesday, the latest attacks despite a ceasefire between Israel and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah. An "Israeli enemy drone" struck a car in the town of Ain Baal in the coastal district of Tyre, the ministry said. The Israeli army said its forces struck a Hezbollah operative in the Tyre area, saying he was "responsible for establishing the necessary infrastructure for the production of precise surface-to-surface missiles in the area." The health ministry later said an Israeli strike on the southern town of Yater "killed one person and wounded another." An official from Yater said the strike killed a man who was using a bulldozer to remove debris from his home which was damaged during the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, the state-run National News Agency reported.—APP

US to appoint Thomas Barrack as special envoy for Syria, sources say

DAMASCUS/ISTANBUL: The United States will appoint President Donald Trump's longtime friend and current US ambassador to Türkiye, Thomas Barrack, as a special envoy for Syria, a person with direct knowledge of the matter and a diplomat in Türkiye said. The decision follows Trump's landmark announcement last week that US sanctions on Syria would be lifted. It also suggests US acknowledgement that Türkiye has emerged with key regional influence on Damascus since Syrian strongman Bashar Assad's ouster by rebels in December, ending 14 years of civil war. Asked for comment, a US State Department spokesperson said: "There is no announcement at this time." Speaking to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday.—APP



ISLAMABAD: French Ambassador Nicolas Galey meets Federal Minister For Commerce Kamal Khan to discuss bilateral economic and commercial relations.

SAPM for boosting local auto manufacturing

ISLAMABAD, May 21 (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday underscored the importance of promoting local manufacturing to drive the growth of Pakistan's automotive industry. During a meeting with the CEO of Master Motors, he expressed satisfaction with the impressive capabilities demonstrated by domestic manufacturers such as Master Motors. The discussion focused on key topics including tariff policies, local production of automotive parts, and strategies to increase vehicle exports, said a news release. "Our Prime Minister envisions making Pakistan's automotive sector competitive both regionally and globally," said Haroon Akhtar. He also stressed the importance of ensuring passenger safety and comfort in bus manufacturing, calling it a crucial aspect of industry development. Highlighting ongoing government efforts, he added, "We are introducing policies aimed at elevating Pakistan's automotive industry to meet global standards." Haroon Akhtar further commended the outstanding performance of the Yutong bus service, which he personally experienced, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting and facilitating the sustainable growth of the automotive sector.—DNA

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 960 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 960.33 points, a negative change of 0.81 percent, closing at 119,931.46 points as compared to 118,971 points on the last trading day. A total of 667,685,585 shares were traded during the day as compared to 437,920,561 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 26.624 billion against Rs 20.811 billion on the last trading day. As many as 463 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 287 of them recorded gains and 125 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 51 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 103,655,617 shares at Rs 4.75 per share, Kohinoor Spinning with 40,320,997 shares at Rs 5.75 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 36,278,201 shares at Rs 1.27 per share. PIA Holding Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 1,507.38 per share closing at Rs 16,581.16 whereas runner-up was Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited with Rs 220.69 rise in its share price to close at Rs 10,462.44. Bhanero Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 32.83 per share price, closing at Rs 704.59, whereas the runner-up Sapphire Fiber Limited with Rs 26.02 decline in its per share price to Rs 1,023.98.—DNA

SECP ceases guarantee business of United Insurance

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan has ceased the guarantee business of The United Insurance Company of Pakistan Limited through direction issued on May 20, 2025, under section 60 of the Insurance Ordinance, 2000. Prior to issuance of the said direction, a show-cause notice was issued to the United Insurance, said a press release. The company obtained a stay order on February 21, 2024 from the Lahore High Court and on April 10, 2025, the Court dismissed the petition filed by United Insurance considering it without merit. United Insurance deliberately refused to encash called guarantees, on different pretexts, over a period of time, resulting in accumulation of guarantees amounting to Rs. 2.2 billion by December 2023. Further complaints amounting to Rs.822 million regarding non-encashment of guarantees were received during year 2024 and 2025. Despite provision of various hearing opportunities, United Insurance failed to demonstrate the requisite compliance with regulatory requirements to carry on guarantee business. United Insurance also made materially false statement to SECP, during the proceedings, regarding settlement of one of the guarantees, amounting to approx. Rs.1 billion. The matter of false statement by United Insurance is to be dealt separately by SECP based on the relevant provisions of Ordinance. To protect the interests of policy and guarantee holders of United Insurance and to maintain the trust of public in the insurance sector, SECP took the decision to cease the guarantee business of United Insurance with immediate effect. Furthermore, United Insurance has been prohibited from issuing any new guarantees and rolling over existing guarantees. Moreover, United Insurance has been directed to fulfill its obligations with regard to already issued guarantees as and when they become due. United Insurance has the right to seek cancellation/modification of the Direction from SECP, subject to its compliance with the requirements of regulatory framework including obtaining of proper collateral against the issued guarantees and settlement of all unpaid guarantees. As part of its ongoing commitment to ensuring compliance and enhancing consumer confidence, SECP has addressed over 3000 complaints since July 01, 2024, resulting in recovery of policy holders' claims aggregating to Rs.1,300 million. The proactive approach by SECP, is expected to enhance compliance in the insurance sector and build public trust.—DNA

Are quality standards being maintained in Punjab's road infrastructure projects?

Common complaints include the failure to conduct laboratory tests on construction materials and inaccuracies in the quantity of bitumen used, which is critical for ensuring road durability



MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

UNDER the directives of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the construction, maintenance, restoration, and repair of roads across Punjab are progressing at an accelerated pace. This focus on road infrastructure is a cornerstone of development, as well-maintained roads facilitate economic growth, enhance connectivity,

and improve the quality of life for citizens. While the rapid expansion of road networks is commendable, ensuring the quality and adherence to set standards during these processes is of paramount importance. The responsibility for maintaining these standards lies with multiple stakeholders, including the Communication and Works (C&W) Department, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) teams, Commissioners, and Deputy Commissioners. Despite these oversight mechanisms, concerns about irregularities and compromised quality in road projects persist, raising questions about accountability and the effective use of public resources. Road infrastructure is the backbone of any developing region, enabling the seamless movement of goods, services, and people. In Punjab, the government's commitment

to improving road networks reflects an understanding of this critical role. The success of these initiatives depends not only on the speed of construction but also on the durability and safety of the roads. Standards for construction, maintenance, restoration, and repair must be strictly followed to ensure that roads withstand environmental challenges and heavy usage over time. The C&W Department, tasked with executing these projects, plays a pivotal role in this process. Its leadership, including the Secretary, Chief Engineers, and Superintendent Engineers, is responsible for conducting regular inspections to verify compliance with these standards. M&E teams, Commissioners, and Deputy Commissioners are involved in monitoring and site visits to ensure that projects meet the

required benchmarks. Despite these layers of oversight, questions arise about whether the set standards are being consistently upheld. Reports of irregularities in several districts suggest that the monitoring mechanisms may not be as effective as intended. Common complaints include the failure to conduct laboratory tests on construction materials and inaccuracies in the quantity of bitumen used, which is critical for ensuring road durability. Such lapses compromise the structural integrity of roads, leading to premature deterioration and the need for frequent repairs. This not only undermines the government's development goals but also results in the wastage of public funds, which is a significant concern for the national exchequer. A critical aspect of ensuring quality is the docu-

mentation of inspections. The C&W Secretary, Chief Engineers, Superintendent Engineers, Commissioners, and Deputy Commissioners are expected to maintain detailed inspection notes during their site visits. These notes should highlight any irregularities observed, such as substandard materials or deviations from approved plans. It remains unclear whether these officials consistently document such issues or take action to address them. The absence of rigorous documentation and follow-up actions could allow irregularities to go unchecked, further eroding public trust in the system. Another troubling issue is the alleged practice of tarnishing development schemes to reduce estimated costs. Prioritizes short-term savings over long-term quality, ultimately leading to roads that fail to

meet safety and durability standards. Such compromises not only jeopardize public safety but also increase the financial burden on the government, as poorly constructed roads require frequent maintenance and reconstruction. Addressing these concerns requires a robust system of accountability, where those responsible for compromising quality are held answerable for their actions. To strengthen the quality assurance process, several steps can be taken. First, the C&W Department and M&E teams must enforce stricter compliance with laboratory testing protocols to ensure that all materials meet the required standards. Second, inspection notes should be made publicly accessible to promote transparency and allow for independent scrutiny. Third, mechanisms for addressing complaints about

irregularities should be streamlined, with clear timelines for investigation and resolution. Punitive measures for those found guilty of compromising quality should be implemented to deter future violations. While the rapid development of road infrastructure in Punjab is a positive step toward progress, it must be accompanied by unwavering commitment to quality and accountability. The C&W Department, along with other oversight bodies, must strengthen their monitoring and documentation processes to ensure that standards are met. By addressing irregularities, enforcing laboratory testing, and holding violators accountable, the government can ensure that public funds are used effectively and that Punjab's roads serve as a durable foundation for sustainable development. Only through these measures can the vision of a well-connected and prosperous Punjab be fully realized.

Briefs

Rs 2.50 per
litre carbon
levy on POL
products

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Petroleum Division has forwarded a summary to the Cabinet Committee for Disposal of Legislative Cases (CCLC), proposing the introduction of a carbon levy of Rs2.50 per litre on petrol, diesel, and furnace oil by the end of June for the fiscal year 2025-26. The levy is expected to be increased to Rs5 per litre on petroleum products in the subsequent fiscal year, 2026-27. This measure aligns with conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has provided Pakistan with \$1.3 billion under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) to help address the impacts of climate change. Officials privy to the development said Rs2.50 carbon levy on three POL products would help fetch Rs6-7 billion per month. When hiked to Rs5, the revenue will soar to Rs12-14 billion per month. The revenue may also be used for significant reduction of CO2 emissions by creating efficient incentives for the uptake and use of electric vehicles. It will contribute to the goal of 30pc penetration of new passenger EV sales and 50pc for 2-3 wheelers by 2030 and reducing balance of payment stability risks by shifting away from imported fuel products.

Modi govt
cracks down
on dissent

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: The Indian government has initiated legal proceedings against academics, journalists, and private firms perceived as critical of its recent military operation against Pakistan, including the arrest of a professor who publicly criticised pro-war sentiments. According to a report by The New York Times, the Modi administration has, over the past decade, frequently responded to dissent with criminal charges, legal probes, and travel restrictions. The current clampdown underscores the government's sensitivity to political criticism following a four-day military conflict that concluded through external mediation. The academic who was arrested, Ali Khan Mahmudabad, had cheered on his country's armed forces during the military face-off, as had millions of other Indians. But he also criticised "those who are mindlessly advocating for a war."

Over 10,000
KP schools
lack basic
facilities

DNA

PESHAWAR: Thousands of children studying in over 10,000 government schools across 28 settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continue to be deprived of essential facilities such as boundary walls, electricity, washrooms, and clean drinking water, according to a report by the provincial Education Department. The data reveals significant infrastructure deficiencies in the province's public education sector. More than 5,000 schools are without electricity, over 2,000 have no provision for clean drinking water, and a similar number lack proper washroom facilities and boundary walls. The report states that 2,211 primary schools do not have electricity, with the highest numbers recorded in Mansehra (344) and Upper Kohistan (252). In Upper Kohistan, 208 schools are without clean drinking water, and 1,253 primary schools lack washroom facilities. Of the 160 middle schools in the province, 136 are without boundary walls, 71 lack clean drinking water, and 57 have no washrooms. In the provincial capital Peshawar, 21 schools are without electricity, 15 lack clean drinking water, 17 have no washrooms, and 8 are without boundary walls.

In trilateral engagement

Pakistan and China agree to
extend CPEC to Afghanistan

Three nations also reaffirm cooperation for regional security, economic connectivity



DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant trilateral engagement, Pakistan and China have agreed to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan, reaffirming their commitment to enhancing regional connectivity and economic cooperation. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Chinese Foreign Minister and Member of the CPC Political Bureau Wang Yi, and Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi held an informal trilateral meeting in Beijing on Wednesday. "The three foreign ministers reaffirmed tri-

lateral cooperation as a vital platform to promote regional security and economic connectivity," the Foreign Office said. The ministers discussed enhancing diplomatic engagement and communications, while emphasising "practical steps to boost trade, infrastructure, and development as key drivers of shared prosperity." A key outcome of the meeting was the agreement to deepen Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation and formally extend CPEC to Afghanistan – a move expected to enhance regional integration and economic opportunities. The foreign ministers also underscored their shared commitment "to countering terrorism and fostering stability and development in the region."

According to the Foreign Office, it was agreed that the 6th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting will be held in Kabul at an

early, mutually convenient date.

Separately, DPM Dar met with Afghan FM Muttaqi on the sidelines of his visit. The two leaders recalled DPM Dar's recent visit to Kabul and welcomed the positive momentum in bilateral relations, particularly in enhanced diplomatic engagement, trade, and transit facilitation. They agreed to continue working together to advance mutual interests in key areas including trade, transit, connectivity, and security, the MOFA said. Today's meetings take place during the DPM's three-day official visit to China – his first since the recent episode of cross-border tensions between Pakistan and arch-rival India. Dar was invited by his Chinese counterpart, FM Yi following the ceasefire agreement between Islamabad and New Delhi.

Discussions during the visit covered the multifaceted Pakistan-China relationship and a range of bilateral and regional issues in the light of Pakistan and India standoff. During the recent escalation with India, China voiced its support for Pakistan with Chinese ambassador reaffirming the "enduring and time-tested friendship between China and Pakistan", describing the relationship as one of "ironclad brothers" who have always supported each other in challenging times. In a meeting with Dar on Tuesday, Yi called Pakistan an ironclad friend and all-weather strategic partner, expressing China's desire to elevate ties. He praised Pakistan's stance on sovereignty and reaffirmed China's continued support for Pakistan's integrity, development, and regional peace.

Pakistan to
establish digital
assets authority

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark move to embrace the future of finance, the Ministry of Finance has announced the initiation of a comprehensive strategy to regulate digital assets and accelerate the growth of Pakistan's virtual asset economy. The government has endorsed the establishment of a dedicated body – the Pakistan Digital Assets Authority (PDAA) – to regulate blockchain-based financial infrastructure. The aim is to ensure FATF-compliant innovation, economic inclusion, and responsible adoption of digital assets. "Pakistan must regulate not just to catch up – but to lead. With the PDAA, we are creating a future-ready framework that protects consumers, invites global investment, and puts Pakistan at the forefront of financial innovation," said Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Chairman of PCC. Global Alignment, National Impact The PDAA will serve as a specialized regulatory body with a clear mandate: to oversee licensing, compliance, and innovation within the digital asset ecosystem. It will regulate exchanges, custodians, wallets, tokenized platforms, stablecoins, and DeFi applications – all under a single, agile framework. This strategic decision aligns Pakistan with other forward-thinking economies such as the UAE, Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong – all of which have established digital asset regulators to foster innovation while ensuring compliance with global financial norms. The PDAA is expected to:

- Regulate a \$25B+ informal crypto market
- Enable tokenization of national assets and government debt
- Provide legal clarity to global and local investors
- Facilitate monetization of Pakistan's surplus electricity through regulated Bitcoin mining
- Empower youth and startups to build blockchain-based solutions at scale.

Amb. Dan visits Gujranwala
Romania, Pakistan have
huge business potential

ISLAMABAD: Romanian Ambassador Dr. Dan Stoenescu, met with Rana Mohammad Sadique, President of the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), to discuss ways to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Romania and Pakistan. The meeting focused on exploring opportunities for trade and investment, particularly in the SME sector, and strengthening economic ties between the two countries. The Ambassador and the President GCCCI exchanged views on how to promote business-to-business interactions and joint ventures between Romanian and Pakistani companies. Sohail Shamim Firpo, Chairman Pakistan-Romania Business Council (PRBC), was also present in the meeting. Atif Farooqi, Advisor & COO PRBC, said, "This meeting is a significant step towards strengthening economic ties between Romania and Pakistan. We're excited to explore new opportunities for trade and investment." He also met with Gujranwala Division Commissioner Syed Naveed Haider Shirazi to discuss bilateral trade opportunities. The meeting, attended by key members of the Pakistan-Romania Business Council (PRBC), focused on strengthening economic ties between the two countries. The Ambassador highlighted the potential for cooperation between Romanian and Pakistani businesses, particularly in the SME sector, given Gujranwala's status as a hub for small and medium-sized enterprises. – DNA

India's 'new normal' works against
its interests, says Bilawal Bhutto

Former foreign minister will lead Pakistan's delegation to brief key global capitals following India's unprovoked aggression

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former foreign minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has warned that India's so-called "new normal" of aggression is neither sustainable nor in its own interest, especially given that both Islamabad and New Delhi are nuclear powers. Hours earlier this month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed that Operation Sindoor had "carved out a new benchmark in our fight against terrorism and has set up a new parameter and new normal". Pakistan and India halted their worst fighting in nearly three decades after agreeing to a ceasefire on May 10, following four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes – which took place after India launched unprovoked attacks on Islamabad. Speaking to state-run television on Wednesday, Bilawal, who will lead the government's diplomatic delega-

tion that will counter India's narrative abroad, emphasised that any full-scale conflict between the two neighbours would have repercussions far beyond their borders. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has tasked Bilawal and a high-level delegation to brief world leaders, parliamentarians, and international media in various countries about Pakistan's peace-focused stance. Bilawal said that lasting peace in the region is impossible without resolving critical issues like Kashmir, cross-border terrorism, and India's weaponisation of water. The PPP chief said India's narrative of normalising hostility is built on lies, hatred, and division. "Pakistan stands with truth and peace, while India's stance is grounded in falsehoods and aggression," he remarked. He condemned India's attempt to politicise water through violations of the Indus Waters Treaty, calling it a "serious development" and a form of hybrid warfare. "Future generations will be fighting over water if this continues," Bilawal warned. "Our diplomatic outreach will explain Pakistan's responsible behaviour during the recent conflict and highlight India's provocation."

US expects
Russia offer
soon as
Zelensky
sounds
warning

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday he expected Russia to present a Ukraine ceasefire outline within days that will show if it is serious, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Moscow of buying time. President Donald Trump spoke separately by telephone on Monday to Zelensky and Russia's Vladimir Putin, after Russian and Ukrainian officials met in Istanbul on Friday for their first direct talks on the conflict in three years.

Putin has consistently rejected proposals for a 30-day truce put forward by Kyiv and its Western allies. But Rubio said that Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated they would present their own terms "maybe in a number of days, maybe this week hopefully." The Russians will offer "just broad terms that would allow us to move towards a ceasefire, and that ceasefire would then allow us to enter into detailed negotiations to bring about an end of the conflict," Rubio said. He said that the presentation will "tell us a lot about their true intentions." – Agencies

3 lives lost as
car plummets
into Lahore
canal

ISLAMABAD: At least three people died on the spot when a speeding car plunged into the Lahore canal on Wednesday morning. Rescue sources said the incident occurred when a brand-new Honda City car fell into a canal as the driver lost control due to over speeding near Doctors Hospital on Canal Road in Johar Town, private news channels reported. The identities of the deceased individuals had yet to be determined, with authorities still working to notify next of kin and confirm details about the victims. The car was traveling from PCSIR Society towards Thokar Niaz Baig when the accident occurred, claiming the lives of three young individuals aged between 18 and 25 years. Following the accident, the Rescue 1122 team swiftly arrived at the scene, retrieved the bodies from the canal and transferred them to Jinnah Hospital for further procedures. – Agencies

Pakistan to 'extend'
airspace ban for
Indian flights

Indian carriers lose Rs8 billion from fuel costs and stopover expenses in one month

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan has decided to extend the closure of its airspace for Indian flights by another month. According to sources, the decision is expected to be announced today (Wednesday) or tomorrow. Following this, a Notice to Airmen (Notam) will be issued. Under International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) rules, airspace restrictions cannot be imposed for more than one month at a time, necessitating periodic extensions. The decision followed a National Security Committee (NSC) meeting earlier this month, where Pakistan resolved to block Indian overflights after India took provocative steps post-Pahalgam. The restrictions apply to both commercial and military aircraft. The extension comes amid heightened tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours following the Pahalgam attack in April, which resulted in the deaths of 26 tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). India had unilaterally closed its airspace to Pakistani flights on April 23, prompting a reciprocal ban from Islamabad the next day. India then took several other measures against Pakistan.



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