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Detailed News On Page-08

Pakistan needs world support, Amb. Rizwan

Detailed News On Page-07


Remaining PSL marches will be hard

Detailed News On Page-06



Indian nasty designs

Army top brass vows to decimate terrorist proxies

Following its military failure, India employing non-state actors to pursue its destabilisation agenda, observe top commanders

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A day after a blast in Khuzdar martyred six people, including four children, the military's top brass has vowed to dismantle and decimate all proxies and facilitators of terrorism with unrelenting resolve, according to a statement issued by the military's media wing on Thursday. "These hostile elements, trained and financed to incite chaos and fear, will be dismantled and decimated with full force of national will and institutional strength."

The statement came after Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir chaired the 270th Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at the General Headquarters, Rawalpindi. The ISPR said the top commanders' meeting commenced with Fateha for the martyrs of Bunyan-um-Marsoos, and the heinous terrorist attack in Khuzdar, Balochistan, an atrocity perpetrated through India-sponsored proxies, which resulted in the loss of four innocent children and two adults. The forum unequivocally condemned the barbaric act, noting its deliberate targeting of non-combatants, particularly children, as a reprehensible violation of all norms of humanity and international conduct.

The ISPR added that the top military commanders deliberated in depth on the threat posed by India-backed terrorist proxies operating in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was observed that following its military failure in the wake of the Pahalagam incident, India, the so-called and self-claimed victim of terrorism, is actually a perpetrator of terrorism and the epicenter of regional instability, upped the use of covert means, employing non-state actors to pursue its destabilisation agenda. The military's

top brass resolved that Pakistan will never allow its peace to be compromised by externally sponsored terrorism. The armed forces, in close synergy with intelligence and law enforcement agencies, will pursue all proxies and facilitators of terrorism with unrelenting resolve.

The top military huddle came amid heightened tensions between Pakistan and India in the wake of last month's Pahalagam attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) wherein 26 tourists were killed by gunmen. India blamed Pakistan for the attack without offering any evidence and launched missile and drone attacks on civilians, leaving at least 53 individuals, including 13 personnel of the armed forces and 40 civilians, dead in an unprovoked cross-border attack. Pakistan, in response shot down over 80 Indian drones and six IAF fighter jets, including three Rafales, before launching a large-scale retaliatory military action, named 'Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos', and targeted several Indian military installations across multiple regions.

The military huddle undertook a comprehensive review of the prevailing internal and external security environment, with particular emphasis on the successful conclusion of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, a decisive chapter of Marka-e-Haq. The forum lauded the professionalism, synergy, courage, and resilience of Pakistan's Armed Forces and the unwavering support of the nation, which together repelled aggression with exemplary precision and resolve. The military leadership also acknowledged Pakistan's media and information warriors who stood in step with the state against Indian propaganda onslaught, fake news and war hysteria, while accurately portraying facts and figures, thereby fostering public trust and countering misinformation.

Rejects many SIC pleas

Supreme Court allows live hearing of the reserved seats case

The Supreme Court also dismissed the plea seeking to defer the reserved seats hearing until after a decision on the 26th Amendment petitions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's Constitutional Bench on Thursday allowed live streaming of proceedings in the reserved seats case, issuing directives to its IT department to make necessary arrangements. The court announced a short order on multiple petitions filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), while rejecting several related pleas, including objections to the composition of the bench and the request to hear the 26th Constitutional Amendment case prior to the reserved seats case. The Supreme Court also dismissed the plea seeking to defer the reserved seats hearing until after a decision on the 26th Amendment petitions. The court made it clear that the hearing would proceed as scheduled and adjourned the proceedings until Monday. A detailed verdict will be released later,

while the short order has already been pronounced in court. Today's hearing: During the hearing on review petitions related to the reserved seats case at the Supreme Court, a larger bench headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan resumed proceedings. Senior lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan, representing women affected by the Supreme Court's 12 July verdict, completed his arguments on the objections raised by the SIC. Makhdoom contended that Article 191-A and the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act override the application of the 1980 Rules in matters concerning the composition of benches. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail asked the counsel to specify which provisions of the 1980 Rules conflict with the new constitutional amendment. In response, Makhdoom maintained that the 1980 Rules are inconsistent with the latest

Continued on Page 06

KP CM says won't support govt on IMF

Province would not join negotiations with Fund if Centre don't change its attitude, says Ali Amin Gandapur

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Thursday demanded that the authorities allow five to six individuals from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to meet incarcerated party founder Imran Khan to finalise the provincial budget. He warned the federal government that the KP government would not support it on the conditions laid down by the IMF if meetings were not allowed.

Gandapur's statement came at a time when the federal and provincial governments commenced preparing budgets for the next fiscal year. Last year, the federal government and the provinces struck a National Fiscal Pact for extending cooperation on a 19-point agenda, including discontinuation of support and procurement prices of commodities by the provinces. The pact was signed to comply with the International Monetary Fund conditions under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Continued on Page 06

Senators denounce school bus bombing

Senators say foreign proxies intensifying assaults after military operations failed

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Thursday strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Khuzdar, labelling the targeting of schoolchildren as inhumane, calling for a stronger defence against external threats and reaffirming the country's commitment to safeguarding its citizens. Senator Agha Shahzaib Durrani presented the motion seeking the suspension of normal business and discussing the Khuzdar attack, which took the lives of six people, including four schoolchildren. During the debate, senators accused India of supporting the perpetrators and emphasised the importance of national unity in the fight against terrorism. Initiating the debate, former caretaker prime minister Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar condemned the growing influence of Hindutva ideology in India, which he described

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif conferring the baton of the Field Marshal upon the Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir NI(M), during a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Batton of Field Marshal

Pakistan disproved India's conventional warfare superiority

Heirs of martyred armed forces members to be awarded up to Rs18m based on their rank, announces premier

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Thursday that the perception of India's superiority in conventional warfare was proven wrong by Pakistan during the recent war between the two nuclear powers in South Asia. The prime minister made the remarks while addressing a ceremony of bestowing Batton of Field Marshal upon General Asim Munir. Calling the Pahalagam incident "regrettable", the premier reiterated that New Delhi made baseless allegations against Islamabad. PM Shehbaz said that the government convinced the international community that India's allegations were based on lies, and the Pahalagam incident was part of India's conspiracy. He maintained that Pakistan proposed an impartial international investigation into

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan will not get water over which India has rights: Modi

Modi continues belligerent rhetoric, says Pak will pay heavy price for every terrorist attack

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Pakistan will not get water from rivers over which India has rights, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday, a month after a deadly attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK)

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

US to be blamed if Israel attacks Iran N. facility

DNA

TEHRAN: Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran would hold the United States responsible for any Israeli attack on its nuclear facilities, after US media reported that Israel was preparing for a strike. The report came even as Iran and the United States were set to meet in Rome on Friday for a fifth round of Omani-mediated nuclear talks. "We believe that in the event of any attack on the nuclear facilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the Zionist regime (Israel), the US government will also be involved and bear legal responsibility," Araghchi said in a letter to the United Nations published on Thursday.

PTI greets Field Marshal Asim Munir

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan has felicitated Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir for his elevation to the rank of field marshal, saying that he now had more responsibility to "make the situation better". Earlier this week, the govt promoted Gen Munir to the rank of field marshal in recognition of his "strategic leadership and decisive role" in defeating India during the military confrontation between the two countries that ended with a US-mediated ceasefire. Field marshal is the highest rank in armies modelled after the British Army. In Pakistan, it was awarded only once before, to General Mohammad Ayub Khan in 1959. Speaking to reporters outside Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail yesterday after meeting with incarcerated expremier Imran Khan.

Continued on Page 06

Ishaq Dar says major economic, security milestones achieved

FM says visit not routine diplomatic engagement, held bilateral meetings with Chinese leadership with clear and urgent objectives

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday, while calling his three-day China visit 'highly successful', said Pakistan achieved significant progress on the diplomatic, strategic and economic fronts during engagements held in Beijing. Addressing a press conference, Dar said it was not a routine diplomatic engagement. With clear and urgent objectives, he held bilateral meetings with the Chinese leadership and had trilateral talks involving Afghanistan. He further told the media that a clear agreement was reached with both China and Afghanistan that no terrorist organisation – whether TTP, BLA or any other militant group – would be allowed to use any country's soil against another. While referring to CPEC 2.0, he added, "We have successfully laid the groundwork for expanded cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative." He also confirmed that China has expressed its intent to finance the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan railway project, calling it a transformative step for regional connectivity. "We have already sent a draft framework to Uzbekistan and Afghanistan... I am committed to finalising this by early June," Dar said that the financing and coordination for

Pakistan ready for meaningful negotiations with India on terror

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah stated Thursday that Pakistan is prepared to participate in direct negotiations with India or mediated talks involving a third country to discuss peace initiatives, counter-terrorism cooperation and a resolution to the Kashmir issue, as per the UN charter. In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, Rana Sanaullah said that Pakistan remains committed to meaningful negotiations with India on issues of terrorism, peace and the Kashmir dispute. He emphasized Pakistan's willingness to engage in dialogue to address these critical concerns and find peaceful resolutions. Sanaullah stated that Pakistan has no issue with a mediator country playing a role in facilitating dialogue between Pakistan and India, should both parties agree to it. He said that just as India has previously sought international

Continued on Page 06



Kundi, Hanif agreed to restore Safari Train

Governor Kundi emphasized the need to transform the Peshawar to Karachi railway track into a model corridor, offering the public safe, fast, and high-quality travel services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi met with Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi here on Thursday to discuss the improvement of railway infrastructure in the province, promotion of tourism, and enhancement of travel facilities. Pakistan Peoples Party's parliamentary leader in KP Assembly, Ahmad Karim Kundi, also attended the meeting. During the discussion, both sides agreed on the early restoration of the historic Safari Train between Peshawar and Landi Kotal of district Khyber. The revival aims to boost tourism and allow both local and foreign tourists to experience the scenic beauty of the Khyber region. Governor Kundi emphasized the need to transform the Peshawar to Karachi railway track into a model corridor, offering the public safe, fast, and high-quality travel services. He added that revitalizing the railway system in KP would contribute significantly to the province's economic growth. Minister Hanif Abbasi assured the Governor that practical steps are

being taken to modernize the railway infrastructure, with a focus on timely train operations, cleanliness, and improved travel conditions. The two leaders also discussed plans for the Peshawar Safari Train in detail. Minister Abbasi accepted the Governor's invitation to visit Peshawar in the near future. The United States Acting Ambassador to Pakistan, Natalie A. Baker, met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi in Islamabad on Thursday. The meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, including the promotion of bilateral cooperation, trade, and foreign investment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Ambassador Baker expressed deep condolences over the recent terrorist attack on a school bus in Balochistan, which resulted in the tragic death of innocent children. She extended her sympathies to the bereaved families and condemned the attack. Discussions also included the enhancement of trade relations and investment in KP's mineral sector, with Governor Kundi highlighting the province's vast potential in marble, granite, and other valuable minerals. He invited American investors to explore

these opportunities and emphasized the need for international partnerships, particularly in the tourism and natural resources sectors. Both sides underscored the importance of educational and cultural exchange, particularly through technical and vocational scholarships for KP's youth, and providing global exposure to the province's talented young athletes, including potential opportunities in the United States. The two also agreed on the importance of exchange visits between trade delegations from the U.S. and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to strengthen economic ties. Governor Kundi appreciated the United States as a long-standing development partner, and called for continued support in providing technical education and scholarships to youth in the merged tribal districts. He also thanked the U.S. for its role in maintaining regional peace, particularly acknowledging former President Donald Trump's efforts in the ceasefire initiative. Ambassador Baker reaffirmed the United States' commitment to strong relations with Pakistan and its dedication to enhancing bilateral cooperation across diverse sectors.

Heatwave alert, doctors advise increase hydrants intake

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The current heatwave has pushed temperatures 4-5°C above normal, creating a surge in demand for traditional cooling drinks like Shakar Cola, made from jaggery and Shakanjebeen, a lemon water drink across local markets. However, health experts caution these should supplement, not replace, water intake. Authorities have begun setting up emergency cooling stations in high-risk areas as the meteorological department predicts continued extreme temperatures. Dr. Yousaf, a neurologist at DHQ Hospital said that the unprecedented heat demands immediate action. "Residents must drink at least 4 to 5 liters of water daily and limit outdoor exposure between 11 AM to 4 PM", he advised. Dr. Parvez, also urged the citizens to use maximum hydrants to refrain from directing the sun. "We're seeing dangerous heat-stroke cases. Wear light clothing, use umbrellas outdoors, and immediately seek medical help for symptoms like dizziness or no sweating", he said and added children and elderly need extra care in this extreme weather." Medical teams advise residents to check on vulnerable neighbors and avoid unnecessary sun exposure during peak hours. The Punjab government has already announced summer vacations from 28th May till 15th August as a precautionary measure to save children and youth from heat stroke.

50,000 youth to be trained annually with global certifications

ISLAMABAD: In a major step toward empowering Pakistani youth with globally recognized technical skills, Pakistan has signed a strategic agreement with City & Guilds London to certify 50,000 students annually through GEMS UAE. Under the agreement, the students will receive internationally accredited certifications from City & Guilds London each year. The announcement was made during a media briefing held upon the return of a high-level Pakistani delegation from London, led by Minister of State for Education, Ms. Wajha Qamar. The delegation included Ms. Gulmina Bilal, Chairperson of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), Mr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, Executive Director of IBCC, Mr. Amir Saadati, Executive Director of GEMS Middle

East, and Mr. Hussain Shaikh, Business Head of GEMS Pakistan. Speaking at the briefing, Minister Wajha Qamar and NAVTTTC Chairperson Gulmina Bilal stated that a Strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been signed to offer global-standard technical training to youth in Pakistan. This initiative is expected to create vast employment opportunities abroad and enhance the competitiveness of Pakistani professionals in the international labor market. "Our goal is to empower Pakistani youth with skills that meet global standards," said Ms. Gulmina Bilal. "Through this agreement, 50,000 students will be trained annually with the collaboration of City & Guilds, enabling them to secure quality employment opportunities in Europe, the Middle East, and other regions." The agreement

was formalized at the headquarters of City & Guilds in London, where the Pakistani delegation signed the MoU with City & Guilds CEO Ms. Kirstie Donnelly. Ms. Bilal added that this partnership will revolutionize Pakistan's vocational education sector and align its skilled workforce with international benchmarks. "We do not want our youth to be limited to the local job market. This collaboration is a game-changer, as it will grant global recognition to Pakistani certifications," she said. During the visit, the delegation also met with The Rt Hon. Lord Boateng and discussed bilateral cooperation on workforce mobility and skills development. Lord Boateng appreciated Pakistan's initiative and assured full support for future collaboration.—DNA

WB delegation visits BISP One Window Facilitation Center

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from the World Bank, headed by Managing Director of Operations Ms. Anna Bjerde, visited the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) One Window Facilitation Center in Islamabad, to assess the integrated services being provided to BISP beneficiaries. The delegation was warmly welcomed by Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Syed Imran Ahmad Shah, BISP Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid, and BISP Secretary Amer Ali Ahmed. Among the visiting officials were World Bank Country Director Mr. Najib Benhassine; Operations Manager Mr. Gailius J. Draugelis; Program Lead (Human Development) Ms. Hnin Hnin Pyne; Senior Operations Officer Ms. Eva Liselotte Lescauwat; Senior Social Protection Specialist Mr. Amjad Zafar Khan; Special Assistant to the MD Operations Ms. Anne Senges; and Senior Program Assistant Mr. Waleed Anwar. In her welcome remarks, Senator Rubina Khalid expressed deep appreciation for the World Bank's longstanding and transformative partnership with BISP. She underscored the program's legacy, rooted in the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and its role in empowering women through CNIC-based eligibility and access to social safety nets. She highlighted BISP's contributions to increasing child registration with NADRA and its position as the second-largest data repository in the country. "BISP is not only a social safety program—it is a movement for women's recognition and empowerment," she added. Secretary Amer Ali Ahmed briefed the delegation on BISP's core initiatives, including the new programs under the World Bank-supported Crisis Resilient Social Protection (CRISP) framework. He emphasized the organization's drive towards financial inclusion through digital banking and mobile payment solutions. The delegation toured the facilitation center, interacting with beneficiaries and observing the delivery of efficient, inclusive services. Impressed by the operations, Ms. Anna Bjerde praised BISP's role in delivering both conditional and unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable populations. She particularly lauded the focus on digital payment systems.—DNA

Governor Punjab lauds IHCBA role in society's uplift

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan paid a significant visit to the Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA), where he was warmly welcomed by the legal fraternity. During the visit, the Governor praised

the Islamabad Bar for its unwavering role in defending the Constitution and standing firm in times of national trials. He emphasized the vital role of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in strengthening democratic institutions and mentioned the crucial involvement of President Asif Ali Zardari and

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in steering Pakistan towards stability and progressive politics. The Governor expressed gratitude for the heartfelt welcome and commended the legal fraternity for standing high with the Armed Forces and the people of Pakistan. He stressed the need for national unity in the current geopolitical context and lauded the black coat community for their critical contributions to democracy, law, and the protection of constitutional rights. The Governor approved two key proposals presented by the IHCBA cabinet and announced his support for the Bar Library, recognizing the critical need

for academic and legal resources for lawyers. A commemorative shield was presented to the Governor by the Bar leadership at the conclusion of the event. Earlier, The Governor of Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, paid a significant visit to the Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA), where he was received with great warmth and respect by the legal fraternity. The welcoming delegation was led by President of IHCBA, Mr. Wajid Gillani, alongside Mr. Chaudhary Manzoor Ahmad Jajja Secretary, and Mr. Naseer Kiyani Vice Chairman Islamabad Bar Council. Members of the Islamabad Bar Council and others were also present.



SARGODHA: A BISP beneficiary woman fell unconscious on an open ground in scorching weather due to the lack of shade and seating facilities at the BISP Cash Distribution Center.

RDMC holds inaugural community feedback forum

QUETTA: Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC) convened the first meeting of its Community Feedback Forum, an initiative aimed at creating a formal platform for local community members and individuals across Balochistan to voice concerns related to RDMC's employment practices and local procurement procedures. Five community members submitted details of their concerns in advance, allowing RDMC to conduct thorough reviews and investigations of each case prior to the meeting, said a news release. During the forum, each participant was given individual time to present their case, ask questions, and engage in open and transparent discussions with RDMC representatives. The session was attended by key RDMC personnel, including the HR Site Lead, HR Manager, Community Relations (CR) Manager, and Community Engagement (CE) Lead. Observers included members from the Par-e-Koh and Fan Sediments Community Development Committees. Ashley Price, RDMC's Head of Sustainability, was also present. This forum represents just one of the platforms RDMC uses to enable open communication, transparency, and meaningful community engagement. CDC representatives and participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss the concerns of community members and to better understand RDMC's policies and processes, acknowledging it as a demonstration of the company's commitment to responsible operations.—APP

DC Attock directs authorities to complete their targets

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: A meeting of the District Coordination Committee Attock was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza at the DC Office. The meeting was attended by DPO Attock Dr. Ghyas Gul Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Anil Saeed, SP Safe City Shahid Siddique, representatives of law enforcement agencies, and other relevant officers.

Key topics discussed in the meeting included the anti-encroachment drive, electricity theft control

campaign, price control of essential commodities, inspections of petrol pumps, and other matters. It was informed during the meeting that from April 1 to April 30, a total of 6,408 traffic challans were issued under the traffic campaign, resulting in fines amounting to Rs. 3,683,750. Action against illegal petrol pumps led to the sealing of 31 petrol pumps, imposition of a fine worth Rs. 198,000, and the registration of one FIR. Eight points selling illegal LPG cylinders were sealed, and a fine of Rs. 5,000 was imposed. Under the anti-encroachment campaign, fines worth Rs. 92,000 were imposed. As part of

the anti-electricity theft campaign, 48 inspections were conducted, resulting in fines totaling Rs. 2,253 million. In the anti-begging campaign, 43 beggars were arrested. Under the Societies Act, 97 seminars and 5 more were registered with the Federal Ministry of Education. On this occasion, DC Attock emphasized that all concerned departments should complete their assigned public welfare targets within the given timeframe. He further stated that law enforcement agencies are actively taking action against illegal activities and regularly submitting reports to senior officials.

VC reiterates strong commitment to Jehlum Valley campus uplift

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UJAK), Prof. Dr. Nadeem Haider Bukhari, on Thursday paid a special visit to the Jehlum Valley Campus, reaffirming the administration's commitment in providing all possible resources to strengthen the campus and elevate it as a model center of learning within the university. Upon his arrival, the Vice Chancellor—accompanied by Registrar Prof. Dr. Saadat Hanif Dar, Dean Faculty of Sciences Prof. Dr. Muhammad Raffique, Controller of Examinations Prof. Dr. Wajid Aziz Lone, Director Finance Prof. Dr. Khawaja Basharat, Director Students

Affairs Dr. Sharif Saeed, and Director Works Azhar Ali—was given a warm and enthusiastic welcome by Director Jehlum Valley Campus Dr. Imtiaz Awan, along with faculty members, administrative staff, and students, said a press release issued here. The reception was marked with vibrant gestures, including students showering rose petals in a display of respect and gratitude. A comprehensive presentation was delivered by Dr. Imtiaz Awan, providing a detailed overview of the campus's current status, challenges, and future vision. The presentation covered key areas such as faculty strength, student enrolment, infrastructure development,

laboratory and library resources, transport facilities, equipment needs, and budgetary constraints. In his keynote address, Prof. Dr. Nadeem Haider Bukhari expressed his satisfaction over the campus's steady progress and lauded the efforts of the faculty and administration in building a strong academic culture. He assured the audience that all-out support would be extended to the JV Campus, including enhanced infrastructure, transport, and academic equipment. "You should feel proud of being students of a premier institution that commands a strong regional and national standing," Dr. Bukhari told the students.—DNA

NEPRA concludes hearing for requested relief of PKR 5.02 under March 2025 FCA

ISLAMABAD : NEPRA concluded its hearing on K-Electric's petition of provisional monthly fuel charge adjustments (FCA) for March 2025, in which KE presented its request for a relief of PKR 5.02 per unit. Following the public hearing, the regulator will issue a decision clarifying the FCA amount to be passed on to customer bills and the period for which they will be applicable. Fuel charge adjustments are incurred by utilities due to global variations in fuel prices used to generate electricity, and the changes in generation mix. These costs are reflected in customer bills following NEPRA's scrutiny and approval. Customers also benefit from negative FCA in their bills when global fuel prices decrease. Rates charged to customer bills are determined by NEPRA and notified by the Federal Government. KE has also highlighted the adjustments regarding part load, degradation curves, and startup costs pursuant to determination of Generation Tariff of Powerplants of KE for the period post June 2023 and requested NEPRA to consider the recovery of the same from negative fuel cost variation to ensure that consumers are not burdened at later stage. As per the Regulatory Authority's decision, the negative FCA shall be applicable to all the consumer categories except lifeline consumers, domestic protected consumers, Electric Vehicle Charges Stations (EVCS) and prepaid electricity consumers of all categories who opted for prepaid tariff.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

- MAY
- May 03/Poland National Day
- May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day
- May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day
- May 07/Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day
- May 08/Czech Republic National Day
- May 09/European Union National Day
- May 17/Norway Constitution Day
- May 21/Hungary Armed Forced Day
- May 22/Yemen Republic Re-unification Day(National Day)
- May 24/Eritrea National Day
- May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
- May 25/Argentina National Day
- May 25/Jordan Independence Day
- May 28/Azerbaijan Republic Day
- May 28/Ethiopia National Day
- May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



- Emergency
- Rescue (Police).....15
- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.1122
- & Rescue Services.4451122
- Motorway Police...9266044
- Motorway Police.9270601-20
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
- Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



- Enquiry
- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
- CAA.....9281092



- Hospitals
- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....561116
- Canth Hospital...9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



- Departments
- CDA.....9221334-43
- CDA.....9208301-04
- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

- Water Tank
- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pak gender climate award 2025 celebrates women climate champions

This was followed by two moderated panel discussions explored the transformative potential of gender-inclusive climate policies and grassroots leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 3rd edition of the Gender Climate Award (GCA) concluded today in Islamabad, celebrating individuals and initiatives that are driving gender-responsive climate action across Pakistan. This year's winners were recognized in two categories: Climate Action and Climate Journalism. The Climate Action award was designed to honor individuals or organizations that are implementing gender responsive solutions to build climate resilience in multidisciplinary domains. The Climate Journalism award acknowledged the role of media professionals in bringing visibility to climate-gender linkages and amplifying the voices of those most affected by climate change. The nation-wide call for applications made in February 2025 for the Gender Climate Award received 275 applications with 211 under the category of climate



action and 64 under climate journalism. All applications were evaluated by a six-member selection committee to select the winners. The Pakistan GCA 2025 winners are Anusha Fatima (Climate Action) and Aisha Farrukh (Climate Journalism) Each winner received a cash award of PKR 1.2 million as a recognition for their contributions to help them take their work forward.GCA 2025 is a continuation of the initiative launched by the Embassy of France in 2023 in Pakistan to recognize outstanding

as the implementing agency for organizing and executing the GCA activities. The Pakistan Gender Climate Award ceremony held at the Serena Hotel was attended by dignitaries from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, diplomats, civil society, academia, youth and the media. The ceremony opened with welcome remarks by H.E. Mr. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France to Pakistan, who reaffirmed France's commitment to inclusive and equitable climate action. On the 10th anniversary of the Paris agreement, Ambassador Nicolas Galey underlined the importance of gender inclusivity and climate action in France's foreign policy, with the Gender and Climate Award being a key initiative initiated by France in Pakistan, and reaffirmed France's commitment to support Pakistani government and civil society in their efforts against climate change. This was followed by two moderated panel discussions explored the

transformative potential of gender-inclusive climate policies and grassroots leadership. The first featured representatives from the collaborating partner organizations, highlighting the contributions of their organizations, and rationale behind supporting the GCA initiative. The second panel brought together winners from all three editions of the Award, who shared personal stories, challenges, and lessons learned from their frontline climate work. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Samuel Rizk, UNDP Resident Representative in Pakistan, lauded the Award as a model for promoting intersectional climate leadership and advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The event concluded with an award distribution ceremony where Dr. Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal, Minister of State for Climate Change, honored the winners with recognition and a cash prize.

Record numbers of women choose male-dominated academic fields

ISLAMABAD:In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed a growing number of female students stepping into academic fields that were once considered male territory, Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science, Data Analytics, Business, and others. This shift reflects a broader change in societal attitudes, as more young women defy stereotypes and pursue careers in technology and innovation. Data from institutions such as the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) highlights this encouraging trend, with a 40% increase in female enrollment in computer science programmes between 2018 and 2023. The National Incubation Centers (NICs) have also played a role in promoting inclusivity, reporting that 30% of startups they incubated are now women-led. These centers require at least 25% of their founders to be female, fostering a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs and helping bridge the gender gap in the tech startup space. To explore this transformation more closely, female students from universities across Pakistan shared their motivations for entering fields like AI, cybersecurity, and data science. Bakhtawar Malik, a Software Engineering graduate from Mirpur University of Science and Technology, talking to APP revealed that her decision to pursue tech was driven by a mix of passion and defiance. "People didn't take me seriously, and I wanted to prove them wrong," she said with a strong note of confidence. Another student Samra Batool, a student of Data Analytics in COMSATS University echoed same sentiments, stating that the desire to challenge traditional thinking and expectations was a major reason for choosing her field. Alishba Haider, a student of Artificial Intelligence at the same university, pointed to societal changes that are supporting this shift. "Previously, girls were pushed toward more conventional degree programs. Now, many are choosing tech fields because the job market has improved, and families are becoming more supportive," she said. Alishba added that the emergence of role models, new protective laws, and better opportunities have helped build confidence among young women. Male students also acknowledge the importance of increasing female representation. Uzzam Arif, a cybersecurity student at FAST University, emphasized the need for early exposure and supportive networks. "We need to highlight successful female role models and introduce tech concepts at the school level. Mentorship programmes and women-focused networking groups can also make a big difference," he noted. Educators believe that institutions have a crucial role to play in encouraging this shift. Mr. Kamran Qureshi, a professor at Askaria College Rawalpindi, advises students to explore tech through internships, workshops, or online courses. "AI and related fields are vast. Whether you're interested in creativity, problem-solving, or analysis, there's something for everyone. Don't let stereotypes or self-doubt stop you," he advised while encouraging the female students Miss Asma Ahmed, a faculty member at Islamic Asian College of Commerce, in response to an APP's query highlighted practical steps universities can take. "Offering interdisciplinary programs, hands-on research opportunities, and building strong industry partnerships are key to attracting more women into AI and tech," she explained. Globally, countries that have actively worked to close gender gaps in STEM fields are witnessing transformative results. For instance, in the United States, women now make up nearly 45% of the workforce in science and engineering occupations at the bachelor's level, according to the National Science Foundation (2023). Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden and Norway, have introduced strong policy frameworks to support gender equality in tech and engineering, with female enrollment in STEM-related university programs exceeding 35%. —DNA

NUML celebrates Fete de la Francophonie with cultural zeal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The French Department of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) celebrated the vibrant and culturally rich F te de la Francophonie with a series of captivating performances and activities. The event featured French songs, skits, poems, and the screening of a short film, showcasing the linguistic talent and cultural appreciation of the students. Globally celebrated in March, Francophonie Day honours the French language and the diversity of Francophone cultures. The celebration at NUML served as a platform for students to demonstrate their fluency and passion for French while highlighting the significance of linguistic diversity. Dean

Faculty of Languages, Mr. Jameel Asghar Jami, in his welcome address, emphasized the importance of such cultural events. He expressed gratitude to the French Department for organizing the celebration and noted, "All languages deserve equal respect, just as all humans are created equal." The event was graced by officials from the French Embassy and the Swiss



Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. George Steiner, who appreciated NUML's commitment to promoting cultural exchange. "Pakistan is a fascinating country for diplomats to live in," he said. Commending the efforts of the university and its students, he encouraged them to remain humble, embrace forgiveness, and pursue their professional dreams through language learn-

ing. Head of the French Department, Mr. Amir Zaheer, lauded the event as a powerful reminder of the unifying nature of languages. "Languages serve as bridges between cultures and traditions," he remarked, applauding the tireless efforts of the faculty, organizers, and students in making the event a success. The event concluded with a certificate distribution ceremony for students who successfully passed the A1 and B2 level French language certifications, marking a milestone in their academic journey. The F te de la Francophonie at NUML not only celebrated language learning but also reinforced the university's commitment to cultural dialogue and global understanding.

ICCI President urges CDA to act swiftly on business concerns

Qureshi also pointed to deteriorating sanitation conditions and the acute shortage of parking spaces in markets, urging the relevant departments to take swift remedial measures to restore order and facilitate smoother business operations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has reaffirmed the business community's unwavering commitment to Pakistan's economic development, despite persistent challenges. Addressing various business delegations at the ICCI on Thursday, Qureshi highlighted critical issues affecting businesses in the capital, emphasising problems related to the Capital Development Authority (CDA). He stressed the urgent need for CDA to address these matters on a priority basis to improve the ease of doing business and

ensure the sustainability and growth of commercial activities in Islamabad. He expressed serious concern over the growing encroachments in commercial hubs, stating that they have severely disrupted business operations. "Immediate action is required to abolish encroachments which are choking the city's main business centers," he emphasized. Qureshi also pointed to deteriorating sanitation conditions and the acute shortage of parking spaces in markets, urging the relevant departments to take swift remedial measures to restore order and facilitate smoother business operations. He called for the introduction of a one-window operation for business licensing to

streamline administrative processes and create a more business-friendly environment in the capital. Additionally, he expressed hope that the upcoming federal budget would avoid overburdening existing taxpayers and instead focus on broadening the tax net to bring more entities into the formal economy. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi reaffirmed ICCI's continued support for the growth of the business sector and attracting foreign investment for the economic uplift of Pakistan. He concluded by stating that ICCI remains committed to advocating for the interests of the business community and working closely with government authorities to drive sustainable economic progress.

Installation of AC in NIRM's female wards ordered

ISLAMABAD:Taking cognizance of a large number of complaints against the National Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (NIRM) Islamabad, the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Inspection Team headed by Senior Advisor, Ahmad Farooq here on Thursday visited the NIRM and directed the authorities to install an air-conditioning unit in the female ward within 15 days. It also instructed that repairing of the faulty air conditioners be carried out expeditiously. The team further directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to accomplish the task of renovation and repair of the hospital premises speedily. It also called for holding medical camps in the peripheral areas of the federal metropolis. They went round the hospital and visited its various units. They also inquired from the patients their respective problems. Later in a briefing, the hospital administration informed the Inspection Team that the hospital's MRI machine has been dysfunctional for a long time whereas a new costly MRI machine imported from abroad has been lying at the Port Qasim, Karachi for a long time for want of custom clearance.—APP

ITP holds free medical camp

ISLAMABAD:Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) in collaboration with a private organization organized a free medical camp for professional and heavy vehicle drivers to assess their health and raise awareness about traffic rules and road safety. An official told APP on Thursday that the primary objective of the camp was to ensure smooth traffic flow and reduce the number of road accidents by educating drivers and identifying potential health issues. He said specialist doctors conducted important medical examinations, including blood pressure, blood sugar, eyesight, hearing, and mental stress assessments. Based on the reports, several drivers were given medical advice and referred for further treatment where necessary. He said traffic police officers also briefed drivers on traffic laws, safe driving practices, and accident prevention methods.—APP

HEC hosts 10th best research award

ISLAMABAD:The Higher Education Commission (HEC), hosted on Thursday the 10th HEC Best Research Awards ceremony to celebrate the exceptional achievements of Pakistani researchers and faculty in various fields. During the ceremony, graced by Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed as chief guest, HEC conferred a total of nine awards, three each in the categories of Best Publication, Best Researcher, and Best Young Researcher across three broad disciplinary domains of Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, Law, Education, Management, Public Policy; Physical Sciences, Engineering, Technology, Computer Science, Statistics, Mathematics; and, Life Sciences, Biological Sciences, Health, Pharmacy, Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences. The awards comprised Rs. 1 million for the Best Publication, Rs. 500,000 for the Best Researcher, and Rs. 500,000 for the Best Young Researcher. Prof. Dr. Abdul Majid from University of Gujrat, Prof. Dr. Jawad Abbas from University of Central Punjab, and Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid from Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission of Pakistan (PAECP) have won the Best Publication Awards. The Best Researcher Awards have been clinched by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tahir Khalily from Shifa Tameere-Millat University (STMU) Islamabad, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Usman Akram from National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Islamabad, and Prof. Dr. Abdul Qayyum Rao from the University of the Punjab. Likewise, Dr. Waris Ali from University of Sahiwal, Dr. Muhammad Qasim Mehmood from Information Technology University Lahore, and Dr. Massab Umair from National Institute of Health Sciences have been awarded the Best Young Researcher Awards. It is pertinent to mention here that the HEC Research Awards Programme was launched in 2009, aiming to recognize and reward outstanding research conducted by faculty members of higher education institutions. Over the past nine ceremonies, 279 awards have been conferred, setting a strong precedent for academic recognition in Pakistan. Addressing the ceremony, Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed lauded the contributions of Pakistan's academic and research community towards the socio-economic development of the country. He emphasized the need for determined efforts to inspire researchers to contribute meaningfully to Pakistan, as he underlined that, "our existence lies in the existence of Pakistan." He added that, "We are indebted to our motherland and must do our part to ensure its prosperity. This nation deserves to be a prosperous country.—DNA

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Briefs

Crackdown
against
professional
beggars

ISLAMABAD: The district administration of Islamabad on Thursday intensified actions against professional begging in the federal capital and detained 23 individuals from the Blue Area.

The operation is part of a broader effort to discourage street begging and involve citizens in reporting such cases. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, in a recent operation, the district administration officials detained 23 people from the Blue Area. The group included 8 women, 5 children, and 10 men. All of them were taken into custody and transferred to local police stations. This operation comes under the orders of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, who has asked for increased action across the capital.

The anti-begging campaign aims to control the growing presence of street beggars, especially in public and commercial spaces like the Blue Area, where such activities are more visible.

The Deputy Commissioner has also appealed to the public for help in identifying and reporting beggars. He encouraged residents of Islamabad to inform the administration through the official DC helpline if they see individuals begging anywhere in the city.

DC Memon said that public cooperation is essential to make the campaign successful. He urged citizens to report the presence of beggars without delay so that the district administration can respond quickly. The campaign has been gaining pace, especially in central areas where the number of beggars appears to be on the rise.

The authorities are focusing on areas like shopping centers, markets, traffic signals, and busy intersections where begging is common. Officials say that most of the individuals involved in begging are part of organized groups. These networks often include women and children, who are seen on roadsides or outside commercial buildings, approaching people for money. The administration believes that removing these groups from public spaces can help reduce related concerns such as child exploitation, harassment of passersby, and misuse of public areas. To support this effort, the district administration is planning further operations in other parts of the city.—APP

Police
conduct
search
operations

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police on Thursday conducted search operations in different areas aiming to root out criminal elements. According to the police spokesman, the search operations were carried out in the areas of Civil Lines, Taxila, Wah Saddar, Jatli, Kallar Syedan, Chakri, Gujar Khan, Kahuta, Rawat and Chontra police stations. Local police, Elite Force, ladies police and other law enforcement agencies participated in the search operations. A total of 68 houses, 60 shops and 343 individuals were checked during the operations.—APP

Yaji cultural saloon highlights centuries of friendship

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The Embassy of the People's Republic of China celebrated the 74th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan with a vibrant cultural event "Tea and Harmony: Yaji Cultural Saloon" held at the historic Sir Syed Memorial Hall, Islamabad. Ambassador of the People's Republic of China H.E Jiang Zaidong and Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan Sardar Ayaz Sadiq were Chief Guest of the event. In his remarks, H.E Jiang Zaidong said that China has consistently supported Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty, combating terrorism, and pursuing national development. Similarly, Pakistan firmly upholds the one-China principle and supports China on issues concerning its core interests. Both nations have demonstrated unwavering solidarity during times of crisis, including natural disasters and the pandemic, further strengthening their iron-clad friendship. Guided by the leadership of both countries, China remains committed to building an even closer China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the New Era. Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, highlighted the strategic depth of Pakistan-China relations, praising China's achievements in economic growth, technological innovation, and defense modernization. He emphasized the enduring partnership between the two



nations built on mutual trust and progress. Noting defense cooperation as a key pillar, he commended the integration of advanced Chinese technologies like the JF-17 Thunder, J-10C fighter jets, and PL-15 missile systems into Pakistan's arsenal. Looking forward, he reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties through the second phase of CPEC, focusing on sectors such as agriculture, IT, mining, and climate resilience. May 21st is not only the day of establishment of dip-

lomatic relations between China and Pakistan, but also recognized as "International Tea Day" by UNESCO in the year 2019. This year is the first time Chinese Embassy organized "Tea and Harmony – Yaji Cultural Saloon" in Pakistan, reflecting the shared values of peace, friendship, and cultural appreciation that underpin the enduring partnership between the two nations. The event featured a rich blend of traditional Chinese culture and art, showcasing a special exhibition and live demonstration

of classical Chinese tea-making techniques, inviting guests to experience the elegance and serenity of Chinese tea culture. From the delicate tea ceremony to regional tea traditions, the demonstrations highlighted the diversity and depth of Chinese heritage. Adding to the immersive experience, attendees were also invited to participate in a Hanfu trying-on activity, offering a unique opportunity to wear and learn about traditional Chinese attire, symbolizing harmony

between cultures. Dignitaries, diplomats, scholars, and citizens from various walks of life gathered to commemorate the historic and time-tested friendship between China and Pakistan – a relationship built on mutual respect, strategic cooperation, and deep-rooted people-to-people ties. The event emphasized the importance of cultural exchange in strengthening bilateral relations and building a shared future marked by mutual understanding and prosperity.

China graduates establish Pak, China Alumni Association

The purpose of the PCAA is to support student development and fostering collaborations with various institutions across China and Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: China graduates of Pakistani origin on Wednesday launched the Pakistan China Alumni Association(PCAA) to foster collaboration through education linkages on the 74th anniversary of the bilateral relations. Dr. Furqan Rao elected as president of Pakistan China Alumni Association (PCAA), Dr Arif Senior Vice President while Dr. Aftab will hold office of the General Secretary. The other office bearers include Dr. Mazhar Gondal Chief Coordinator and Dr Mehmood elected as additional general secretary and Mr. Hanan Information Secretary of the newly elected PCAA. PCAA aims for connecting, communicating, collaborating, and creating opportunities for graduates from China in Pakistan. China graduates to become future leaders as Pakistan and China endeavor for modernization under the BRI and CPEC. The purpose of the PCAA is to support student development and fostering collaborations with various institutions across China and Pakistan. Pakistan China Alumni Association aims to serve as a bridge, making it easier for Pakistani students to collaborate with institutions in China, through a network of students who graduated from various universities of China. Pakistan now ranks third globally in terms of the number of international students in China, said newly elected President Dr. Furqan Rao, emphasizing the significance of Pakistani students in bridging Pakistan china ties. China is considered the top education destination for Pakistani students, with many studying on scholarships. According to data of 2019, there were around 28,000 Pakistani students in Chinese universities. Pakistan ranks third in the number of international students studying in China, said Dr Furqan. Elaborating the mission of association, Dr. Furqan emphasized to enhance the educational engagement by offering substantial support to Pakistani students through various training and scholarship programs. "We focus on human resource development, aiming to improve the skills and qualifications of students, as well as young executives and professionals," he said. The first meeting of the graduates was attended by dozens of graduates from China, both in-person and virtually. During the meeting, office bearers of PCAA emphasized the importance of professional career development programs for the China graduates. "Since China is rising and CPEC is achieving socio-economic milestones, thus, making a path for China graduates to unite, engage and contribute in the development of Pakistan is vital. "There's no time to wait. Let's begin immediately by connecting, communicating, collaborating, and creating opportunities for China graduates," Dr Arif said speaking with participants of Pakistan China Alumni Association. In his remarks, General Secretary , Dr. Aftab Ahmad, expressed the Association's commitment to supporting the China graduates to become future leaders as Pakistan and China endeavor for modernization under the CPEC and BRI. "The goal is to build leadership skills in members of PCAA, so that when China graduates enter the workforce, they are already equipped with essential knowledge of China and Pakistan development partnership," Dr Aftab said. In his concluding remarks, Sabahuddin Qazi, former media manager Huawei-Pakistan, said highlighted PCAA's collaboration programs with the leading Chinese intuitions, reflecting PCAA's broader mission to positively impact on China Pakistan relations through education diplomacy.—DNA

FPCCI religious committee meeting held

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD (PR) the 6th meeting of the Standing Committee for Religious and Social Harmony of FPCCI Federal Capital Islamabad was held at the FPCCI Capital Office, chaired by its Convener, Huzoor-ul-Islam. The meeting mainly focused on the difficulties facing by Pakistani Hajj pilgrims and organizers as over 67,000 Pakistanis are depriving from performing Hajj this year causing heavy financial losses of billion of rupees both by the pilgrims and the hajj operators. The committee unanimously urged the government to immediately take

up the matter in the concerned quarter and resolve the issue. Attendees included Deputy Convener Mufti Mahmood Aamir, Chairman Retailers Ijaz Khan, Former Senior Vice President Islamabad Chamber Mahmood Warraich, Chairman Religious Affairs Committee Islamabad Chamber Tariq Wani, Executive Members Chaudhry Muhammad Irfan and Chaudhry Muhammad Nawaz Basra, and other members. Huzoor-ul-Islam and Mufti Mahmood Aamir stated that an agreement signed in January allowed 179,210 Pakistani pilgrims to perform Hajj, with approximately 90,000 under the government scheme. However, a

subsequent Ministry of Religious Affairs notification permitted only 23,620 pilgrims to perform Hajj privately, leaving the fate of 67,000 Hajj pilgrims uncertain. It was highlighted that 2.67 billion Saudi Riyals (approximately Rs. 199.67 billion) had already been transferred from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia for Hajj arrangements. Consequently, the more than Rs. 36 billion paid by the 67,000 affected pilgrims is now in an uncertain situation. Huzoor-ul-Islam, Mufti Aamir Mahmood, and other participants emphasized that many of these pilgrims are poor individuals who saved for years to fulfill their Hajj obligation.

SECP warns public against fraudulent online trading platforms

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) cautions the general public against investing through unlicensed online trading platforms, websites, and mobile applications offering unrealistic returns on investment in stocks or other financial products traded in local or international securities markets. SECP has received complaints from licensed securities brokers and investors against platforms, such as, Interactive Brokers Group (IBKR), IGIL Securities Country, BMA Capital No.108/BMAC Global Pro, WTIC World Top Investor Competition, Aviva Securities, among others, says a press release. Such fraudulent platforms are being promoted via social media enticing the public with deceptive claims of high returns and minimal risk. They solicit investments through unverified mobile or web-based applications, using links that appear to represent legitimate trading platforms. In order to appear credible, they frequently misuse the names, logos, and images of reputable companies, professionals, and even regulatory authorities. These platforms display fake dashboards showing false account balances and profit figures, while in reality no actual trading or investment is taking place. Initially, investors may be allowed to withdraw small profits to build trust; however, this is typically followed by pressure to invest larger amounts. Once additional funds are deposited or if an investor refuses to invest further or attempts to withdraw remaining funds access is suddenly blocked. In Pakistan, trading in securities of listed companies and commodities can only be carried out through SECP-licensed securities and futures market brokers. The lists of authorized brokers can be accessed through the websites of Pakistan Stock Exchange and Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Limited.—DNA

Gen. Asim's elevation proud moment in Pakistan's history

ISLAMABAD: Noted business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) strongly endorsed the government's decision to promote General Syed Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal, calling it a wise, timely, and patriotic step fully aligned with national interest. He praised the government for honouring a military leader who not only defended the country in the face of unprovoked aggression but also led Pakistan to a historic victory. Shahid Rasheed Butt stated in a press release issued today that this decision demonstrates the value and respect the government and the people of Pakistan have for their heroes. "We never forget those who defend our sovereignty and dignity," he remarked. The business leader noted that there was rare consensus on this promotion, even among political rivals, which proves that General Asim Munir truly deserves this honour. Shahid Rasheed Butt stated that the decision to elevate Gen. Munir has garnered overwhelming national support, sending a strong message of unity and respect for merit. Recalling the events of early May 2025, he mentioned that on the night of May 6 and 7, India launched an unprovoked and unjustified war against Pakistan, targeting civilian populations, including women and children. India attempted to challenge our independence and territorial integrity through aggression and drone attacks. Still, it underestimated the resolve of the Pakistani nation. He added that, contrary to Indian expectations, the Pakistani people displayed resilience rather than fear. "Our people chased enemy drones instead of hiding," a symbol of the nation's spirit. Shahid Rasheed Butt emphasised that Pakistan has never desired war, never initiated aggression, and has consistently refrained from interfering in India's internal affairs. However, once attacked, Gen. Asim Munir responded with unmatched courage, planning, and faith. He inflicted such a strategic and psychological blow to the aggressor that India is still reeling from its losses. Following the war, Pakistan emerged stronger on both domestic and international fronts. This conflict has unified the nation and fractured India's internal unity. He further pointed out that Pakistan's recent victory has opened up new opportunities at both local and global levels. To capitalise on these opportunities, we need a comprehensive strategy that is as effective as the one we used to defeat the enemy. Highlighting the international response, Butt mentioned in a recent interview that former U.S. President Donald Trump praised the intelligence and capabilities of the Pakistani people and called for more meaningful economic engagement. Mr. Butt said that Gen. Asim Munir's promotion has strengthened national harmony and confidence. The entire country is united today. This unity must be preserved and directed towards building a stronger, more self-reliant Pakistan.—DNA

ANF arrests 11 smugglers

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting six operations across the country, recovered as many as 106.530 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 10.8 million and arrested 11 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday.

He informed that 2 kg of heroin was recovered from parcels being sent to the UK at the cargo shed of Islamabad International Airport, and three suspects were arrested. As many as 74 ecstasy pills weighing 130 grams were recovered from a parcel sent from the UK at the courier office in Chaklala, Rawalpindi. Similarly, 60 kg of hashish was recovered from secret compartments of a vehicle near Shamkot Toll Plaza, Khanewal, and four suspects were arrested. In another operation, 37.2 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle near Janali Bridge on Sohrab Goth Road, Karachi, and a suspect was arrested. As much as 4.8 kg of hashish was recovered from secret compartments of a vehicle near Kam Bridge on Islamabad Expressway, and three suspects were arrested. On a tip-off, 2.4 kg of hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused near Sahianwala Interchange, Faisalabad. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.—APP

ITP holds free medical camp

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) in collaboration with a private organization organized a free medical camp for professional and heavy vehicle drivers to assess their health and raise awareness about traffic rules and road safety. An official told APP on Thursday that the primary objective of the camp was to ensure smooth traffic flow and reduce the number of road accidents by educating drivers and identifying potential health issues. He said specialist doctors conducted important medical examinations, including blood pressure, blood sugar, eyesight, hearing, and mental stress assessments. Based on the reports, several drivers were given medical advice and referred for further treatment where necessary. He said traffic police officers also briefed drivers on traffic laws, safe driving practices, and accident prevention methods. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (retd) Syed Zeeshan Haider said that the protection of citizens' lives and property is the top priority of ITP. CTO Zeeshan emphasized that driver health assessments and awareness campaigns directly contribute to reducing traffic accidents and ensuring public safety.—APP

WTO urges quality management reform

FARRUKH NASIM ABBASI

Geneva : In a landmark statement released this week, the World Trade Organization (WTO) emphasized the rising importance of quality management systems as a driver of fair competition and sustainable global trade. At the heart of this reform is the internationally recognized ISO 9001 standard, which the WTO highlights as a critical framework for ensuring transparency, compliance, and trust in cross-border commerce.

With global supply chains still recovering from pandemic-era disruptions and geopolitical tensions, the WTO is pushing member nations to harmonize quality protocols and reduce

trade friction by adopting standardized management systems.

"A quality-first approach to trade is no longer optional. ISO 9001 provides a scalable and universal framework for businesses to align with international expectations," said WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala during a summit on regulatory convergence in Geneva.

In an interconnected marketplace, where goods and services move rapidly across borders, quality inconsistencies often lead to disputes, delays, and increased costs. A 2024 WTO report estimated that non-tariff barriers related to quality and conformity issues cost developing nations up to \$400 billion annually in lost

trade opportunities.

ISO 9001, the globally adopted Quality Management System (QMS) standard developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), provides a common language for quality assurance. It defines principles like customer focus, risk-based thinking, process standardization, and continuous improvement—all essential for organizations participating in international trade.

technical product standards that vary by country or sector, ISO 9001 is universally applicable. Whether you're exporting textiles from Pakistan, software from India, or precision parts from Germany, ISO 9001 certification signals to buyers that your systems are capable of consistently deliver-

ing quality.

"Our clients in Europe and the U.S. now require ISO 9001 certification as a baseline," said Rashid Khan, CEO of a logistics firm in Karachi. "It has become a passport for serious exporters. This aligns with WTO's push for 'regulatory interoperability'—ensuring that different national standards and procedures can work together without hindering the flow of goods. WTO's guidance outlines several benefits of ISO 9001 adoption for member nations and businesses: Reduced inspection times and customs clearance delays Lower rejection rates of export goods due to non-compliance Greater access to international procurement markets Improved domestic product quality and

safety standards According to the WTO, ISO-certified companies are 31% more likely to secure export contracts and 40% more resilient during supply chain disruptions. The WTO is working with national standardization bodies, including UNIDO, ISO, and regional trade blocs, to provide technical assistance to developing countries. Efforts include: Funding for ISO 9001 training programs in SMEs Accreditation support for certification bodies in least-developed countries. Streamlining mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) on ISO-compliant audits These measures aim to level the playing field, enabling smaller firms in developing economies to compete on

quality—not just cost. While the WTO strongly supports ISO 9001, it acknowledges that implementation can be difficult, especially for small exporters. Challenges include: certification and audit costs Limited local access to accredited consultants Resistance to documentation and process formalization To address this, the WTO is urging governments to incorporate QMS funding incentives, such as tax rebates or grant programs for first-time ISO certifications. The WTO's focus on quality management marks a strategic shift away from tariffs toward systemic competitiveness. Instead of just negotiating lower taxes on goods, the conversation now includes how those goods

are made, and whether systems behind their production meet global expectations. As cross-border trade increasingly depends on trust, traceability, and compliance, ISO 9001 is becoming the gold standard for assuring stakeholders of a company's operational discipline. As the global economy becomes more integrated yet more complex, quality management is emerging as a cornerstone of sustainable trade. With the WTO endorsing ISO 9001 as a tool for fairness and growth, businesses that prioritize quality today will be better positioned to access global markets tomorrow. In the words of the WTO Director-General: "Quality management is the new trade infrastructure—unseen, but essential."

Trump’s golden dome plan: A bold vision or an expensive gamble?

U.S. President Donald Trump has unveiled an ambitious missile defense initiative known as the Golden Dome, a project aimed at shielding the United States from aerial threats, including ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles. With an estimated cost of \$175 billion, the plan seeks to integrate land, sea, and space-based technologies to create a multi-layered defense system. While Trump has touted the project as a game-changer in national security, critics argue that it may be too costly and technologically unrealistic. The Golden Dome plan echoes Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), famously dubbed “Star Wars,” which aimed to develop space-based missile defense systems in the 1980s. Trump has positioned his plan as a continuation of Reagan’s vision, claiming that advancements in technology now make such a system feasible. The initiative would rely on hundreds of satellites to detect and intercept enemy missiles before they reach U.S. soil. Trump’s administration has earmarked \$25 billion in initial funding for the project, but experts warn that the final cost could far exceed the projected \$175 billion. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has estimated that space-based missile defense alone could cost over \$500 billion in the next two decades. Given the economic challenges facing the U.S., including inflation and national debt, many question whether such an investment is financially responsible. While Trump has promised that the Golden Dome will be operational by 2029, military analysts remain skeptical. The system would need to track and intercept missiles at various stages, including before launch, mid-flight, and final approach. This requires highly advanced sensors, AI-driven tracking systems, and rapid-response interceptors, many of which are still in development. Additionally, critics argue that Russia and China could respond by accelerating their own missile programs, potentially triggering a new arms race. The Golden Dome plan has already sparked international concerns, with China and Russia warning that it could destabilize global security. Some U.S. lawmakers, particularly Democrats, have raised concerns about transparency and the selection process for key contractors, with companies like SpaceX and Lockheed Martin expected to play a major role. Meanwhile, Canada has expressed interest in joining the initiative, signaling potential international collaboration. Trump’s Golden Dome plan represents a bold vision for U.S. defense, but its high costs, technological hurdles, and geopolitical risks make it a controversial proposal. While supporters argue that missile defense is essential in an era of growing threats, skeptics warn that the project could become another expensive experiment with uncertain results. As the debate unfolds, the U.S. must weigh the benefits of enhanced security against the financial and strategic risks of pursuing such an ambitious defense system.

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The future of the Russia-Ukraine war after US mediation

THE ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has been one of the most devastating conflicts in modern history, with thousands of lives lost and millions displaced. The United States, under President Donald Trump, recently attempted to mediate peace talks between the two nations, but the results have been mixed. While Trump initially claimed that negotiations would begin “immediately” following his call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Kremlin has since downplayed expectations, stating that the process will be complex and without a fixed deadline. The U.S. mediation efforts have sparked hope for a ceasefire, but skepticism remains high. Trump’s approach has been unconventional, relying on direct communication with both Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. While the Vatican has expressed interest in hosting negotiations, European leaders have warned that any peace deal must involve Ukraine and its allies. Despite Trump’s optimism, Russia continues its military operations, launching drone attacks and artillery strikes across Ukraine. The Ukrainian military has reported over 1,000 Russian casualties in the past 24 hours, highlighting the intensity of ongoing battles. This raises concerns about whether Moscow is genuinely interested in peace or merely stalling for time. One of the biggest obstacles to a lasting peace agreement is the territorial dispute. Russia insists that Ukraine must accept its territorial claims, while Ukraine refuses to cede any land. This fundamental disagreement has stalled previous negotiations, and it remains unclear whether U.S. mediation can bridge the gap. Additionally, Trump’s administration has signaled that the U.S. may step back from its role as a mediator if progress is not made soon. Vice President J.D. Vance has warned that the conflict is ultimately between Russia and Ukraine, and that the U.S. will not continue shuttle diplomacy indefinitely. This shift in strategy could leave Ukraine in a vulnerable position, forcing it to negotiate directly with Russia without strong Western backing. The outcome of these negotiations will have far-reaching consequences for global security. If a ceasefire is reached, it could pave the way for economic recovery in Ukraine and improved trade relations between Russia and the West. Trump has hinted at large-scale trade opportunities with Russia once the war ends, suggesting that economic incentives could play a role in future diplomacy. However, if talks collapse, the war could escalate further, drawing in more international players. European nations have already expressed concerns about Russia’s long-term intentions, with Germany’s defense minister warning that Putin may not be genuinely interested in peace. The future of the Russia-Ukraine war remains uncertain. While U.S. mediation has introduced new possibilities for peace, deep-rooted tensions and territorial disputes continue to hinder progress. If negotiations fail, Ukraine may have to rely on its European allies for support, while Russia could seek to strengthen its military position.

A peaceful nation, A powerful warning



Pakistan, on the other hand, has always acted with restraint and dignity. It is a peaceful country, seeking peace and development not only for itself but for the entire region. Our intentions are rooted in cooperation, not confrontation. Yet, we are never negligent in our defense. History bears witness that we have never been the first to strike—but when the enemy crosses the line and tests our patience, we have always known how to correct his behaviour with forceful clarity. We do not raise the sword by choice, but when it is raised against us, we do not falter in its use

THERE was a time when the art of “Kush’ti” wrestling held a cherished place in the hearts of the youth. It was not merely a pastime, but a noble pursuit—an emblem of strength, discipline, and honour. Young men, in the prime of their years, would engage in rigorous exercise with great zeal and pride, preparing themselves for the challenges in the “Akharra” Arena. The streets echoed with the determined footsteps of these young wrestlers, who walked their neighborhoods with chests puffed in the innocent arrogance of youth and the boldness that comes with untested strength. Often, when two such spirited souls crossed paths, their silent stares would be enough for the elders to intervene, directing them to the akharra—the arena—where strength could be proven not in words or boasts, but in action and courage. In those contests, the skilled and powerful wrestler would dominate, tossing his opponent to the ground with clean and commanding moves. And when victory was his, he was celebrated with beating drums and songs of triumph, a true hero of the soil. The defeated, though humbled, would accept his loss as part of the game—perhaps consoling himself with schemes for a future rematch. But no amount of whispering in corners or brewing of petty plots could stain the honour of the victor, for his triumph had been earned in open combat, under the watchful eyes of all. And now, what was once a tale of the wrestling pit seems to have come to life on the larger canvas of nations. In recent days, India has found itself in the place of the defeated wrestler—cast to the ground by Pakistan in a manner both public and undeniable. Stripped of its pride on the battlefield, it is left with no honourable

avenue through which to respond. But rather than accept defeat with dignity, it has chosen the way of whispers and plots. Like the vanquished wrestler who cannot bear the sting of loss, India has turned away from the open arena and has instead embraced the shadows. Pakistan, on the other hand, has always acted with restraint and dignity. It is a peaceful country, seeking peace and development not only for itself but for the entire region. Our intentions are rooted in cooperation, not confrontation. Yet, we are never negligent in our defense. History bears witness that we have never been the first to strike—but when the enemy crosses the line and tests our patience, we have always known how to correct his behaviour with forceful clarity. We do not raise the sword by choice, but when it is raised against us, we do not falter in its use. Unfortunately, India’s rulers have long followed a dangerous pattern: whenever elections approach, they drag Pakistan into their political theater, weaving false dramas and fabrications to stir public emotions and win votes. This tired tactic has not only poisoned the atmosphere of the region but has also made a mockery of the idea of responsible leadership. It is high time they abandon this reckless strategy and begin to act like good neighbors rather than hostile provocateurs. They must understand that Pakistan’s hands are now untied—and if they make the mistake of provoking us again, the response will be far more decisive than before. The elders have long said that a hint is enough for the wise, but it seems that wisdom has long fled their counsel. India, having failed in direct confrontation, now seeks to inflict harm through underhanded means—by rekindling old al-

liances with elements hostile to Pakistan, by sowing discord in Balochistan, and by nurturing the venom of terrorism in the very veins of our nation. These are not the acts of a noble adversary but of one who has lost both the contest and the courage to face the truth of his defeat. Pakistan must not allow this moment of triumph to dull its senses. Indeed, now is the time for sharper vigilance and deeper unity. We must recognise that the defeated often become the most dangerous, for they carry the bitterness of loss with them, feeding on it, waiting for a moment of weakness in their adversary. India, wounded and embarrassed, will not soon forget the humiliation it has suffered. Its pride has been pierced, and it shall roam the region like an injured beast, desperate to strike, even if only in small and cowardly ways. We must not give it that chance. Our resolve must be steeled, our development plans guarded, and our national unity preserved. Let us not be caught off-guard in this next phase, for while the war may be over in one form, it continues in another—less visible, but equally insidious. We must look beyond the celebrations of victory and recognise the long road that still lies ahead, fraught with trials and the constant tests of our strength, our patience, and our wisdom. The lesson from the wrestling arena is a timeless one: victory must be followed by vigilance, and strength must be tempered with foresight. As long as we remain watchful and united, the defeated may plot, but they shall never prevail. Let the drums of triumph continue to sound, not only for our victories on the field but for the steadfastness we show in the face of every storm that follows.

Taxation: Revenue vs welfare



Let’s look at an example from the 2024–25 budget. The government imposed an 18% GST on packaged, safe milk, shifting it from zero-rated to fully taxed. Why was this decision made?There seem to be two main reasons. First, policymakers likely assumed that packaged milk is mainly consumed by the wealthy, making the tax progressive

TAXATION is the foundation of a strong economy. It funds essential services like infrastructure, education, healthcare, and security, supporting the well-being and growth of society. Paying taxes isn’t just a legal duty; it’s a shared investment in our nation’s future. The core purposes of taxation are i) creating an environment where businesses can thrive and public welfare can be supported through government revenue, ii) promoting fair wealth distribution by ensuring equal opportunities for all; a level playing field, iii) aligning with global tax standards to stay competitive in international trade, and iv) driving national development and progress. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of government decision-makers, those who design and approve the budget, to ensure the said goals are achieved through sound tax policies. Fairness is a fundamental principle of taxation. The idea isn’t new. In The Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith introduced the Four Canons of Taxation: Equity - taxes should be fair, Certainty - taxpayers should know what to expect, Convenience - taxes should be easy to pay, and Efficiency - tax collection should not be wasteful. Modern economists like Joseph Stiglitz and Arthur Laffer have built on these ideas, focusing on how to raise government revenue while still encouraging growth and supporting public welfare. Arthur Laffer, known for the “Laffer Curve,” presents another view. He suggests that lower tax rates can sometimes lead to higher revenue by stimulating economic activity and broadening the tax base. According to Laffer, high taxes discourage investment, work, and entrepreneurship. For countries under IMF programs like Pakistan, adopting a more growth-friendly tax policy might increase revenues without stifling the economy and compromising public welfare. While taxation is meant to support pub-

lic welfare in all economic models, the real issue lies in how policies are designed and applied. For a country like Pakistan; facing fiscal pressure and operating under IMF programs, it’s crucial to adopt smarter, fairer, and more equitable tax systems. Even the IMF emphasizes the need to protect public welfare. Do our policymakers follow this vision? Maybe, but some recent decisions suggest otherwise. Let’s look at an example from the 2024–25 budget. The government imposed an 18% GST on packaged, safe milk, shifting it from zero-rated to fully taxed. Why was this decision made? There seem to be two main reasons. First, policymakers likely assumed that packaged milk is mainly consumed by the wealthy, making the tax progressive. However, a study by Mackenzie disproved this. It found that 60% of packaged milk in Pakistan is consumed by households earning around PKR 50,000 per month; clearly not part of the rich class. This makes the tax regressive. Second, the government may have expected higher revenues by taxing the formal dairy sector. But the result was the opposite: sales dropped by 20%, and revenue targets weren’t met. Beyond these two misjudgements, the decision also led to other negative impacts on public health, consumer trust, and the formal dairy industry, which already struggles to compete with the huge unregulated sector. As an agriculture-based country, farmers are the economy warmers. However, the recent imposition of 18% GST on packaged milk has severely impacted them. According to a report by the Pakistan Dairy Association (PDA), over 500 milk collection centres have shut down. Instead of adding 10–15% new farmers each year, 35% of existing formal dairy farmers were forced to shift back to the unsafe and unregulated loose milk market. Meanwhile, the price of loose milk increased by PKR 30–40 per litre, but farmers had no benefit from this rise, rather the sellers (gawalas).

This tax decision also caused dairy companies to halt major investments. Around PKR 1.3 billion per year meant for farm productivity and farmer development was withdrawn. Additionally, companies had to lay off 20% of their workforce, run their plants at less than 50% capacity, and cancel PKR 400 million per year in investments aimed at converting consumers from raw to safe packaged milk. A 2024 report by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) highlights another serious impact of the 18% tax on the formal dairy sector. After the tax was imposed, the unregulated loose milk market, controlled by milk sellers (gawalas), not farmers, gained an extra PKR 1,319 billion through unfair price hikes. Yet, the government didn’t earn a single extra rupee in tax revenue from this shift. The result? More unsafe milk flooded the market, putting public health at risk. Gawalas and shopkeepers made huge profits, while farmers suffered. Who lost? The farmers, the consumers, the regulated dairy sector, and ultimately, the government itself. This policy undermined progress in food safety, rural livelihoods, and long-term economic development. In a country like Pakistan, with a population of 242 million and over 40% of children suffering from stunted growth due to malnutrition, taxing safe packaged milk goes against public health goals and it is also not even in line with global practices. Safe milk be either zero taxed or should not exceed 5%. Dairy example raises concern about, how taxes been dealt in preparation of budget. If pressure of revenue collection is superseding public welfare, we need to re-evaluate our approach. Pakistan needs to expand its tax base, improve administration, and generate sustainable revenue without harming economic growth, compromising on public health and blocking investment into regulated sector.

Briefs

Ishaq Dar
says major
economic,
security...

FROM PAGE 01
this project had been taken up directly with China, which responded positively. "This project, along with the Peshawar-Kabul Highway and ML-1 upgrades, will massively boost Pakistan's connectivity to the Central Asian Republics and enhance the commercial potential of our under-utilised ports." Reflecting on security cooperation, FM Dar stated, "China has deep concerns over attacks against their people in Pakistan. I assured them that we are addressing these threats seriously. We discussed a permanent mechanism to prevent cross-border terrorism. I commend both China and Afghanistan for aligning with our zero-tolerance stance." During their previous government from 2013 till 2017, he reiterated that over \$4 billion was spent on Operation Zarb-e-Azb, leading to effectively eliminating terrorism. "Unfortunately, the situation deteriorated due to the previous regime's careless border policies and the release of hardcore terrorists. Now, our resolve is clear: we will crush terrorism with an iron hand as we did before."

Pakistan
ready for
meaningful...

FROM PAGE 01
support for a ceasefire, Pakistan is now willing to engage in talks to resolve issues, indicating openness to diplomatic efforts. He further warned that if India refuses to engage in dialogue and continues to provoke, Pakistan will respond with strength and determination to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Responding to a query, he also expressed his strong condemnation for the Khuzdar terrorism attack and stated, "We will treat terrorists with the same severity as we do our country's enemies; there will be no compromise with them." He also recalled the APS tragedy, where innocent children were targeted. "Terrorists targeting innocent children are the most heinous of enemies, and their actions are utterly unacceptable. We strongly condemn such atrocities and stand in solidarity with the victims' families."

Supreme
Court
allows live...

FROM PAGE 01
constitutional framework, particularly regarding the scope of review hearings. He noted that the new constitutional amendment outlines the jurisdiction of the constitutional bench, whereas, under the 1980 Rules, review petitions were heard by the original bench. He argued that after the 26th Amendment, cases involving constitutional interpretation must be reviewed by the Constitutional Bench. Makhdoom further challenged the number of judges on the current bench, asserting that, in his view, it should be considered a 13-member bench, not 11. He said that in such a bench, a majority decision would require at least seven judges.

Pakistan
disproved...

FROM PAGE 01
the Pahalgam incident, but India ignored the offer and attacked Pakistan. Shehbaz added that Pakistan's armed forces gave a befitting response to Indian aggression and shot down six IAF fighter jets instead of targeting the civilian population. "A measured response was given to India while exercising the right to self-defence," the premier added. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Indian government would now think a hundred times before attacking Pakistan again." It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan's armed forces launched a large-scale retaliatory military action, named 'Operation Bunyar-um-Marsoos', and targeted several Indian military installations across multiple regions in response to the unprovoked strikes on the night between May 6 and 7.



ISLAMABAD: Players of the Rising Stars Hockey Club (male and female) posing for a picture with the Ambassador of Palestine Dr Zuhair Zaid and CEO of the Hashoo Group Bastien Blanc on the occasion of the Australia Day in Spring 2025, hosted by the Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins. – DNA

UN: Pakistan urges national reconciliation for Syria stability

'These violations must end, including in the Golan Heights and Areas of Separation,' the Pakistani envoy added

UNITED NATIONS: Noting that Syria stands at a "pivotal juncture", Pakistan has underscored the need for national reconciliation and a unified security framework for building sustainable peace and stability in the country. "The resurgence of violence in some areas, including in the coastal regions, underscores the urgency of addressing historical grievances and fostering genuine reconciliation," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan, told the UN Security Council on Wednesday. Speaking during a debate on 'Political and Humanitarian Situation in Syria', the Pakistani envoy also welcomed recent announcements by the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom to lift sanctions on Damascus, saying it would help restore critical infrastructure, attract foreign investment and reintegrate the country into regional and global economies. "The sanctions, imposed mostly during the Assad era, have long been blamed for hindering economic recovery. Regional powers, including Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Qatar are supporting renewed engagement, offering support to fund pub-

lic salaries, energy infrastructure and Syria's obligations to international financial institutions. The easing of sanctions comes amid significant domestic developments, with Syria's interim government announcing last week the formation of two key bodies: the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the National Commission for Missing Persons. In his comments, Ambassador Jadoon noted the formation of the Transitional Justice Committee and hoped that it would be guided by principles of impartiality and transparency, supported by neutral international stakeholders, including the United Nations. "We must also remain vigilant against terrorism, and the presence of foreign terrorist fighters and groups," he said. At the same time, Ambassador Jadoon said that the humanitarian situation remains grave, with over 16 million people in need, most in poverty and food insecure. Yet, he said, funding remains insufficient, pointing out that with Syrians returning to their communities, these needs would only grow. Ambassador Jadoon urged the international community to ensure predictable,

sustained and depoliticized humanitarian assistance. He also called for fully respecting Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, asserting that Israel's continued military actions are a blatant violation of international law, the UN Charter and the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, threaten regional peace and security. "These violations must end, including in the Golan Heights and Areas of Separation," the Pakistani envoy added. Highlighting Syrians' suffering for over a decade, he said they deserve peace, stability and the chance to rebuild their lives. "This moment demands collective resolve in support of a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process grounded in sovereignty, unity and respect for national institutions," Ambassador Jadoon said. "Stabilization and reconstruction must be supported through safe and voluntary returns, economic revitalization and regional reintegration, in accordance with international law and the principles of the UN Charter. "In this effort, Pakistan stands with the Syrian people in their pursuit of peace, prosperity and dignity." At the outset of

he debate, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen welcomed moves to lift sanctions on the country. However, he acknowledged that Syria "faces significant structural challenges, with an economy ravaged by over a decade of war and conflict, and a host of other destabilizing factors". Revitalizing a devastated economy will require from the interim authorities sustained actions, including overall economic reform and governance standards across the financial system, and this will need international support, he said. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of Coordination for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said that "humanitarian needs remain immense" across Syria and "they are growing in complexity". Today, 16.5 million Syrians need protection and humanitarian assistance; over half of the population is food insecure; and nearly 3 million people face severe food insecurity. More than 670,000 men, women and children have been displaced since November 2024. This includes some 15,000 people displaced between April 30 and May 6 from rural Damascus due to the violence in Druze-majority areas. – Agencies

Pakistan will not get water over...

FROM PAGE 01
led New Delhi to suspend a key river water-sharing treaty between the neighbours. The suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), negotiated by the World Bank in 1960, was among a slew of measures announced by India against Pakistan last month after the April 22 attack that killed 26 men, mostly Hindu tourists. New Delhi accused Pakistan of the attack without presenting evidence and launched missile strikes on Pakistani cities, triggering the worst military clashes in nearly 30 years before both sides agreed to a ceasefire on May 10. "Pakistan will have to pay a heavy price for every terrorist attack ... Pakistan's army will pay it, Pakistan's economy will pay it," Modi said at a public event in the northwestern state of Rajasthan, which borders Pakistan. The Indus treaty provides water for 80% of Pakistan's farms from three rivers that flow from India, but Pakistan's finance minister said this month that its suspension was not going to have "any immediate impact". The ceasefire between the countries has largely held, with Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar saying that there is no exchange of fire currently and "there has been some repositioning of forces accordingly".

KP CM says won't support...

FROM PAGE 01
The Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan governments had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the federal government on sharing the fiscal responsibilities on June 27, July 30, July 12 and July 26 this year, respectively. The News reported. Speaking to the media after meeting PTI founder at Adiala jail, Gandapur reiterated that the supremacy of the Constitution and "real democracy" should be established in the country, and PTI's "stolen mandate" should be returned in the national interests. He also demanded that the courts give verdicts on cases against the PTI leaders.

Senators denounce school bus bombing

FROM PAGE 01
as a threat to minorities and regional stability. He warned of the ideological spread of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) within Indian state institutions and cited the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as a case of state-sponsored terrorism. Kakar criticised India's secularism as a facade, citing coercive laws targeting minorities, and denounced the Pulwama attack as a false flag operation. He commended Pakistan's united and restrained response, praising the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and reaffirmation of the Two-Nation Theory.

Shakib Al Hasan emphasises importance of upcoming matches

DNA

LAHORE: DStar all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has highlighted the critical importance of Lahore Qalandars' upcoming matches, particularly their clash against Karachi Kings, as the team pushes for a play-off spot in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Speaking to Geo News ahead of Lahore Qalandars' clash with Karachi Kings today, the former Bangladesh cricket team captain, who recently joined the Qalandars, expressed satisfaction with his first outing. "A win was very important to qualify for the playoffs," he stated. "Our match against Karachi Kings is very important. We have to win and that is our target at the moment. Karachi Kings are a very good team. We have to play our best cricket," he added. Shakib, who has witnessed the evolution of the PSL over the past



decade, noted: "I have seen the Pakistan Super League improve in 10 years." He further elaborated on his positive experiences in the league, stating: "I have played PSL before and it has always been good. Every time I came to PSL, the experience here has been good. PSL has grown a lot in the past 10 years. I have seen improvement." The veteran cricketer also shared his positive impressions of the Lahore Qalandars' team environment.

Pakistani Ju-Jitsu team off to Jordan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's national Ju-Jitsu team flew to Amman, Jordan on early Thursday to participate in the Asian Ju-Jitsu Championship 2025, scheduled to commence from Thursday. The five-day prestigious continental event will feature top athletes from across Asia, with Pakistan fielding competitors in both the Adult and Under-21 (U21) categories. According to the Pakistan Ju-Jitsu Federation (PJJF), the national squad includes Isra Waseem, Kainat Arif, Bano Butt, M. Ali Rashid, and Abdullah in the Adult category, while M. Yousuf Ali and Umar Yaseen will represent the country in the U21 category. To further strengthen Pakistan's representation, Dalawar Khan Sannan and Abu Hurrara have been appointed as official referees for the championship. Tariq Ali, General Secretary of the PJJF, will lead the delegation and represent the country at the Ju-Jitsu Asian Union General Assembly. – Agencies

US justifies sending migrants to South Sudan

WASHINGTON: The US government on Wednesday justified its decision to deport a group of migrants, several of them Asian, to impoverished South Sudan – now in the throes of internal conflict – but suggested it was not their last stop. Department of Homeland Security spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin slammed a federal judge in Boston for suspending the expulsion, accusing him of "trying to force the United States to bring back these uniquely barbaric monsters." The judge on Tuesday ordered the government to "maintain custody... of class members currently being removed to South Sudan or to any other third country, to ensure the practical feasibility of return if the court finds that such removals were unlawful." Donald Trump campaigned for president promising to expel millions of undocumented migrants, and he has taken a number of actions aimed at speeding up deportations since returning to the White House in January. Trump claims that the United States is facing an "invasion" from foreign criminals. But his mass deportation efforts have been thwarted or stalled by numerous courts, including the Supreme Court, over concerns that migrant rights are being ignored. At a new hearing on Wednesday, District Judge Brian Murphy said the government had violated one of his previous orders, calling the timeframe given for the migrants to contest their expulsions "plain-

ly insufficient." The White House identified the eight men as two citizens of Myanmar, two Cubans, a Vietnamese man, a Laotian, a Mexican and a South Sudanese citizen. The statement listed the crimes they allegedly committed. "These are the only eight on the flight," McLaughlin told reporters. "Because of safety and operational security, we cannot tell you what the final destination for these individuals will be," she said. When pressed on the question, she said: "We're confirming the fact that that's not their final destination," though she never named South Sudan as the stopover country. "They're still in DHS custody," McLaughlin told the press conference, when asked if the administration was respecting the judge's decision. "We are following due process under the US Constitution." While the government said those scheduled for expulsion had ample warning, lawyers for the Vietnamese national and one citizen of Myanmar said in court filings that their clients only learned the night before or on Tuesday, when the flight left. The attorneys argue that the government violated an earlier order by not allowing their clients time to file for protection under the UN Convention against Torture. When Murphy temporarily blocked the government from expelling Asian migrants to Libya earlier this month, he said migrants being sent to a third country had to be afforded the time to request such protection. – Agencies

PHM holds 'Moavineen Orientation' session

The Day of Arafah is one of the most significant days for Muslims, as Allah Almighty refers to it in Surah al-Ma'idah as the day He perfected His religion, completed His favors upon Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and approved Islam as a way of life

MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH: The Pakistan Hajj Mission (PHM) is conducting orientation sessions in batches for Hajj support staff, known as Hajj Moavineen, to equip them with essential knowledge of routes, accommodations, and responsibilities for assisting pilgrims during the Hajj days in the Mashair, including Mina, Muzdalifah, Arafat, and Jamarat. Talking to APP on Thursday, Deputy Coordinator Operation Sadaqat Ali said that the orientation sessions started on May 3 and will conclude on May 27. He said that there are total 561 Moavineen including 131 Seasonal Duty Staff (SDS) of Ministry of Religious Affairs. "Over 430 Moavineen, currently serving in the transport, accommodation, and food departments, have been oriented so far on how to assist Pakistani intending pilgrims

in Mashair during the Hajj days," Sadaqat Ali said. He said that the Moavineen was selected through the National Testing Service (NTS), ensuring that "all Moavineen are highly qualified and committed to serving the guests of Allah Almighty. He said that Coordinator Makkah, Zulfiqar Khan, is personally supervising and monitoring the performance of the Moavineen. Responding to a query, he said there are 34 Maktabas for Pakistani intending pilgrims, numbered from 101 to 134 in Mina. Seventeen Maktabas are located on Roads 56 and 62, while the remaining 17 are situated at Road 511 Chowk. To a question, Sadaqat Ali said that the pilgrims near the railway stations in Mina will be transported by train while the others will be provided with buses. He said that Minister for Religious Af-

fairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, during his visit to Saudi Arabia, also reviewed the transport, accommodation, and catering arrangements for Pakistani pilgrims, particularly for the Mashahir days from the 8th to the 12th of Zilhaj. It is pertinent to mention that the first rite of Hajj is entering ihram—a pilgrim's sacred state—upon crossing the outer boundaries of Makkah, called Miqat. On the 8th of Zilhaj, pilgrims enter ihram and leave Makkah en masse for the sprawling tent-city of Mina, either on foot along pilgrim paths or by buses, cars, or train. It is an 8-kilometer journey. Pilgrims spend the day in Mina, engaging in prayer and remembrance of Allah. On the 9th of Zilhaj, the second day of the pilgrimage, pilgrims (guests of Allah

Almighty) head to the plain of Arafat and offer combined Zuhur and Asr prayers (two rakats each instead of four). A sermon is delivered from Masjid al-Nimra on Mount Arafat. The Day of Arafah is one of the most significant days for Muslims, as Allah Almighty refers to it in Surah al-Ma'idah as the day He perfected His religion, completed His favors upon Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and approved Islam as a way of life. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "There is no day on which Allah frees more people from the fire than on the day of Arafah. He comes close to those (people standing on Arafah) and then He reveals before His angels, saying, 'What are these people seeking?'" After sunset, pilgrims leave Arafat and proceed to Muzdalifah, an open plain between Mina and Arafat. – APP

Briefs

Gold price
decreases to
Rs.347,500
per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs.1,900 on Thursday and was sold at Rs.347,500 against its sale at Rs.349,400 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.1,629 to Rs.297,925 from Rs.299,554 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat came down by Rs.1,494 to Rs.273,107 from Rs.274,601. The rates of per tola silver depreciated by Rs.38 to Rs.3,428 from Rs. 3,466 and ten gram dipped by Rs.33 to Rs.2,938 from Rs.2,971. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$19 to \$3,291 from \$3,310 whereas that of silver also decreased by \$.038 to \$32.70, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds
10 paisa
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 10 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.06 against the previous day's closing of Rs 281.96. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.65 and Rs 284.15, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 02 paisa to close at Rs 319.36 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.38, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 2 paisa and closed at Rs1.97, whereas an increase of Rs 0.75 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 378.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 378.07. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 02 paisa to close at Rs 76.79 and Rs 75.19, respectively.—APP

France
condemns
Israeli
minister's
accusations of
inciting hatred

PARIS: France on Thursday dismissed claims by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar that European governments were inciting hatred against his country. "These are completely outrageous and completely unjustified remarks," foreign ministry spokesman Christophe Lemoine said. "France has condemned, France condemns and France will continue to condemn, always and unequivocally, any act of anti-Semitism." In Washington on Wednesday, two Israeli embassy staffers were shot dead outside a Jewish museum by a gunman who shouted "free Palestine" as he was arrested. US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu led global condemnation of the attack, each of them blaming anti-Semitism. Israel's foreign minister said: "There is a direct line connecting anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli incitement to this murder." He added: "This incitement is also done by leaders and officials of many countries and international organizations, especially from Europe." Tensions have risen in recent days between Israel and European governments over Israel's military offensive in Gaza and the plight of civilians in the territory. Speaking in the southern French city of Nice, Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot reiterated that France had condemned the killing as "a horrific attack targeting Israeli diplomats." He said he had sent a message to his Israeli counterpart "to tell him how saddened I was by what had happened, how much I was thinking of the families of these diplomats but also of all their colleagues at the Israeli foreign ministry.—APP

Pakistan and Philippines vow to
strengthen trade and cultural ties

Both countries plans to honor their national poets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Philippines, Emmanuel Fernandez, has said that direct air links are crucial for enhancing trade and tourism between Pakistan and the Philippines. He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation led by Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman of the Pakistan-ASEAN Friendship Association (PAFA). Former ICCI President Ahsan Bakhtawari and ICCI Executive Member Imran Minhas were also present at the meeting. Rain R Mendoza head of economic section of Philippines was also present. The ambassador said he is committed to exploring all possible avenues and identifying new paths for cooperation in this regard. He also expressed a desire to introduce the Philippines' healthy coconut oil to the Pakistani market and to boost exports. He emphasized ensuring strong representation of Philippine products in upcoming trade exhibitions in Pakistan.



The ambassador mentioned that the current bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and the Philippines stands at \$360 million, which is in Pakistan's favor. He stressed the need for both countries to take effective measures to increase this volume. Speaking on the occasion, Zafar Bakhtawari said that the Philippines is a populous country with great potential for Pakistani

products. He noted that the economic models of Pakistan and the Philippines share several similarities, particularly the vital role of foreign remittances in both economies—approximately \$35 billion annually for Pakistan and over \$40 billion for the Philippines. He also emphasized that Pakistan should be made a full dialogue partner of ASEAN. Ahsan Bakhtawari high-

lighted the importance of cultural exchanges and business delegations in strengthening the friendship between Pakistan and the Philippines. He expressed interest in leading a Pakistani business delegation to Manila to explore business opportunities there. He also proposed that a day in honor of Allama Iqbal be celebrated in Manila to strengthen intellectual and literary ties between the two countries. In response, the ambassador agreed to promote the legacy of Dr. José Rizal, the national poet and hero of the Philippines, in Pakistan. It was agreed during the meeting to explore the possibility of direct flights between Pakistan and the Philippines. Pakistani companies interested in importing Philippines coconut products will be identified. Details of the Manila FAME trade exhibition (October) will be provided to the Pakistani side. The proposal to organize a Filipino film and cultural festival at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) was also discussed. The translation of Dr. José Rizal's literary works into Urdu will be considered.

Commerce leads EDF reform push to
turn Pakistan into global export leader

ISLAMABAD: The Export Development Fund (EDF) Board met other day to discuss the report prepared by FCDO funded Remit Project to position EDF as a catalyst for transforming Pakistan into a globally competitive export economy. The meeting was chaired by Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan who had earlier recommended to get input of wider audience through a third party on the strategy developed by the EDF management, said a release issued here. The Remit team gave a detailed presentation to the Board indicating the approach followed for crafting the strategy which included study of global good practices, stakeholder consultations and analysis of issues which have curtailed EDF from becoming a game changer for Export Development. The presentation also included the country dynamics and the issues which have kept Pakistan confined to few products and markets. The team presented the vision, mission and strategic objectives finalized after the consultation with stakeholders. It was recommended that EDF will offer targeted technical and financial support to assist current and future exporters in accessing markets, fostering innovation, and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. To achieve the strategic objective, the study recommended that EDF has to be transformed into a professionally governed and managed organisation with lean and effective organization's structure while forming networks and alliance for achieving the objectives. The consultants recommended establishment of 13 financing windows targeting firm-level growth, increasing international compliance, marketing intelligence services, labour productivity, branding, market access, supply chain infrastructure, export credit/insurance etc. It also recommended creating a challenge fund for new markets and products. The Remit team also presented the transformation plan which included legal review of EDF Act for establishing a professional Board, internal restructuring, establishing of financing windows, framework agreements and monitoring & evaluation systems. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani with the participants of "Pakistan-African Friendship Day" at Parliament House.

KSA, Spain sign
MoU to boost
SME sectors

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia and Spain are set to strengthen cooperation between small- and medium-sized enterprises thanks to a wide-ranging agreement across key sectors. The memorandum of understanding, signed by Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Alibrahim and Spanish Minister of Economy, Trade and Business Carlos Cuerdo in Riyadh, outlines joint efforts in economic modeling and policy-making. It aims to back SMEs through partnerships and initiatives, as well as facilitating joint projects and bilateral participation in economic events, according to a statement by the Ministry of Economy and Planning. The agreement comes as the Kingdom's Vision 2030 plan aims to further elevate the SME sector's contribution to 35 percent of the gross domestic product by the end of the decade as part of its economic diversification initiative. The signing of the agreement coincided with the fourth session of the Saudi-Spanish Joint Commission, which convened in Riyadh. The meeting was co-chaired by Alibrahim and Cuerdo, with senior officials from both countries in attendance. "Officials from both sides joined the session to discuss ongoing and future initiatives aimed at enhancing economic, social, and cultural collaboration between the two countries," the Ministry of Economy and Planning said on X. The session focused on strengthening economic, social, and cultural ties, reflecting the deep-rooted partnership and shared ambitions between the Kingdom and Spain. The MoU also includes the exchange of information and statistics related to industry, technology and innovation to achieve sustainable development goals within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030. In an interview with Al Arabiya, Cuerdo described the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Spain as a strong and deepening economic partnership, highlighting the Kingdom's central role as the European country's primary trade partner in the region and noting the steady growth in bilateral trade in recent years. "I say over the past three years, it's grown by 13 percent. Investment has grown, also, heavily over the past few years. But there is still room for us to grow, for us to further collaborate and further diversify our relations, particularly in terms of investment, and particularly also in terms of the presence of Spanish companies here and also of Saudi companies in Spain," Cuerdo said.—APP

Jordan-Syria
coordination
council will
strengthen
ties

LONDON: King Abdullah II of Jordan and Syrian Arab Republic interim President Ahmed Al-Sharaa spoke on Thursday about bilateral relations and regional developments. The telephone conversation came after the two countries this week signed an agreement to establish the Higher Coordination Council, which aims to strengthen collaboration in key sectors such as water, energy and trade. The king said the new body would institutionalize cooperation and maximize opportunities for both nations. He also reiterated his support for Syrians and the country's security, stability and territorial integrity, the Jordan News Agency reported. Al-Sharaa praised Jordan's support for enhancing Syria's international presence after both the EU and US this month announced the lifting of Assad-era sanctions on the country. The two leaders also emphasized the need to increase efforts to stabilize southern Syria and improve border security.—APP

Govt committed to
strengthening olive
value Chain: Rana

He said that he government has set a target to produce 10 million cotton bales during the current season, by ensuring the availability of high-quality seeds and agricultural inputs to support farmers in meeting production targets

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday reaffirmed the commitment of the government to strengthening the olive value chain in the country through innovation, strategic partnerships and investment. Speaking at a workshop titled "Innovating the Olive Value Chain", the minister said that the initiative aims to reduce the country's heavy reliance on imported edible oils bill, which was recorded at \$5 billion annually. He emphasized that the government is actively working to reduce this dependence by promoting the cultivation of oilseed crops, particularly olives. The olive value chain is breathing new life into Pakistan's agriculture economy, he said adding that more than 85 olive-focused startups are currently operating via e-commerce platforms. The olive industry is emerging as a new source of employment, innovation and export potential. He noted that the integration of agriculture and trade is vital in today's digital era and acknowledged the role of olive cultivation in empowering women and youth. He also praised the global success of the LO brand as a point of pride for Pakistan's olive industry. Addressing broader food security challenges, the minister stressed the need for surplus production of major crops to ensure food safety and sustainability. He underlined the importance of agricultural research in increasing per-acre yields of both major and minor crops. The Prime Minister has placed special emphasis on the development of the agriculture sector, which remains one of his top priorities, he said adding that this sector also offers short-term benefits by promoting the cultivation of high-value, short-duration crops to increase farm income. He called for balanced and sustainable growth across all agricultural sub-sectors to elevate local produce to international standards, enhance farm incomes, and alleviate poverty in rural areas. Highlighting the success of recent government policies, the minister noted significant improvements in the output of major crops, particularly a substantial increase in rice exports over the past year. He said that he government has set a target to produce 10 million cotton bales during the current season, by ensuring the availability of high-quality seeds and agricultural inputs to support farmers in meeting production targets.—DNA

Suspected
Houthi
fighter
arrested in
Germany

BERLIN: A Yemeni man suspected of having fought with the country's Iran-backed Houthis was arrested in Germany on Thursday, prosecutors said. The man, partially name as Hussein H., was detained by police in the southern town of Dachau, the federal prosecutor's office said in a statement. He is suspected of "being a member of a terrorist organization" after allegedly joining the Houthis in October 2022. Prosecutors said the man, after receiving ideological and military training, had briefly fought for the militia in clashes in Yemen's central Marib province in early 2023. The Houthis have imposed strict rule over the large swathe of Yemen under their control, covering two-thirds of the population. Since the Gaza war broke out after the Hamas attack of October 2023, the Houthis have regularly fired missiles and drones at maritime traffic and at Israel in what they say are acts of solidarity with Palestinians. The militia warned Monday they would impose a "naval blockade" on the Israeli port of Haifa after the country's military intensified its offensive in Gaza.—APP

UK net
migration
in 2024 fell
by half to
431,000

LONDON: Net migration to the UK dropped by half in 2024, the latest official figures showed on Thursday, in what will be a welcome boost for under-fire Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated the figure for last year stood at 431,000, a dramatic drop from the 860,000 recorded in the year to December 2023. It was the biggest fall in net migration since the Covid pandemic. "Long-term net migration is down by almost 50 percent," the ONS said in its latest report. "We are seeing reductions in people arriving on work- and study-related visas," it added. It had also recorded "an increase in emigration over the 12 months to December 2024," especially by those on work and study visas. The previous Conservative government had toughened the rules for people applying for such visas, setting higher caps on salaries and refusing permission for people to bring their families with them. Migration has become a hot-button issue in UK politics and Starmer unveiled tough new policies on May 12 vowing to "finally take back control" of Britain's borders. The measures included cutting overseas care workers, doubling the length of time before migrants can qualify for settlement and new powers to deport foreign criminals. Starmer, a former human rights lawyer who voted for the UK to remain part of the European Union.—APP

Vietnam says
'positive
progress' in
trade talks
with US

HANOI: Vietnam said on Thursday "positive progress" has been made in trade talks with Washington, as it tries to slash President Donald Trump's threatened 46 percent levy imposed on the country in his global tariff blitz. The ministry of industry and trade however said both sides have "groups of issues for further discussion" in the coming rounds of talks, with the next scheduled for early June. The southeast Asian nation has the third-biggest trade surplus with the United States of any country after China and Mexico and is anxious to address the imbalance to head off the tariff threat. At the end of three days of talks in Washington, both sides had identified matters of common concern "in the spirit of goodwill, frankness... and balance of interests", the ministry said in a statement on its website. The Vietnamese team sought help during its time in the United States from US tech and industry giants, including Lockheed Martin, SpaceX and Google.—APP

Pakistan needs world's support as frontline
state fighting against terrorism: Envoy

WASHINGTON: Pakistan continues to be the frontline state in the global combat against terrorism, Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh said at a dialogue held at the Pakistani embassy in Washington on Wednesday. The dialogue, titled 'Regional Dynamics Covering Afghanistan,' brought together diplomats, security experts, and academics to discuss the evolving geopolitical landscape of South Asia and its broader implications, according to a press release issued by the Pakistani embassy. Attending were military attaches from the Washington Association of Mil-

itary Attaches (WAMA), embassy officials, regional security analysts, and scholars with a focus on Afghanistan. The panel featured a distinguished lineup, including Ambassador Munir Akram, former Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations; Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh and Dr. Amira Jadoon, an Afghanistan expert from Clemson University, who moderated the discussion. In his remarks, Ambassador Sheikh emphasized the complex security dynamics of South Asia and the impact on Pakistan. "Pakistan is directly impacted by

the security situation, not only in South Asia but in the broader Middle East region," the Pakistan envoy said. "Our region doesn't require episodic attention; we need the international community's consistent support as he frontline state in global combat against terrorism," he added. In this regard, the Ambassador highlighted Pakistan's sacrifices and unwavering commitment. "We are, as we speak, lifting dead bodies on a regular basis, in the global combat against terrorism," he said. "The smallest coffins are the heaviest to carry, and we have carried too

many of those in this war." Furthermore, Ambassador Sheikh also stressed the importance of regional peace as a foundation for economic progress. "Pakistan has significant geographic connectivity to Central Asia and Europe, and in the absence of peace and stability, our economic potential cannot be materialized," he noted. "The thrust of Pakistan's foreign policy has pronouncedly and deliberately shifted to geo-economics." Ambassador Munir Akram afforded a detailed overview of the security situation in the region, highlighting Pakistan's long-term vision for

regional integration and development. "We believe that the connectivity projects through Afghanistan and its economic development will be the best peace dividend that we can achieve through normalization in Afghanistan," Ambassador Akram said. He also underlined the growing threat posed by TTP and alliances it has created in the region. "The TTP is emerging as an umbrella organization with various other terrorist groups present in Afghanistan joining under its ambit in order to seek protection for themselves," Ambassador Akram pointed out. —Agencies

Briefs

UN says
around 90
aid trucks
'dispatched'
into Gaza

GAZA CITY: The UN said Wednesday it had "dispatched" around 90 trucks carrying aid into Gaza, as international pressure intensified over Israel's renewed offensive and blockade of the war-ravaged Palestinian territory. The first aid distribution in Gaza since early March came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was open to a "temporary ceasefire", but reaffirmed the military aimed to bring the entire territory under its control. Three days after Israel announced it would allow in limited aid, the United Nations "collected around 90 truckloads of goods from the Kerem Shalom crossing and dispatched them into Gaza", said Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres. The development came hours after Israeli troops fired what the military called "warning shots" near a delegation of foreign diplomats visiting the occupied West Bank, triggering global condemnation. In Gaza, the Hamas government media office reported the arrival of 87 aid trucks, which it said were allocated to international and local organisations to meet "urgent humanitarian needs". Netanyahu said it was necessary to "avoid a humanitarian crisis in order to preserve our freedom of operational action" in Gaza. Palestinians have been scrambling for basic supplies after weeks of near-total isolation, with Israel's blockade leading to critical food and medicine shortages. — APP

Romanian
Ambassador
visits Sialkot

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Romania Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Dan Stoenescu, on Thursday visited Sialkot and met Deputy Commissioner Saba Asghar Ali, Deputy Commissioner and discussed to enhance cooperation and mutual understanding between Romania and Pakistan in region. The officials discussed potential areas of collaboration and explored ways to foster stronger ties between the two nations. The visit was attended by key members of the Pakistan-Romania Business Council (PRBC), including Sohail Shamim Firpo, Chairman, Atif Farooqi, Advisor and COO, and Ahmad Ikram Lone, President of the North Chapter. The meeting marked a positive step in strengthening bilateral relations and promoting cooperation between Romania and Pakistan.

KSE-100 hits
record high as
rally extends
on bullish
sentiment

DNA

KSE-100 Index hits intraday high of 120,699.17, rising 767.72 points, or 0.64% The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark index surged to a new historic high of 120,699.17 points, rising 767.72 points, or 0.64%, during the intra-day trader, up from the previous close of 119,931.45. The index also marked a low of 120,210.56, still up 279.11 points, or 0.23%, during the early session, maintaining a firm bullish tone throughout. "It's a continuation of the rally post relief from Indo-Pak war," said AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. "The market overall remains attractive with more investors deploying funds consistently." Agreement with IMF on the budget is likely to give impetus to growth sector stocks and continue bull run eventually towards 150,000 in a year," he added. Investor confidence was further buoyed this week after Pakistan's nominal GDP crossed \$400 billion mark for the first time, according to provisional estimates approved by National Accounts Committee (NAC).

Pakistan and Azerbaijan focus on
energy & economic partnerships

Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik expressed gratitude for Azerbaijan's steadfast support to Pakistan in recent conflict with India, reaffirming the deep-rooted brotherly ties between the two nations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik was called on by the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, H.E. Khazar Farhadov, at the Ministry of Petroleum today. The discussions centered on strengthening bilateral relations particularly in the energy sector and exploring new avenues for economic cooperation.

Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik expressed gratitude for Azerbaijan's steadfast support to Pakistan in recent conflict with India, reaffirming the deep-rooted brotherly ties between the two nations. He underscored that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif greatly values the Azerbaijan's solidarity with Pakistan. Azerbaijan has always stood behind Pakistan. Pakistan is thankful to the brotherly countries for extending support in one of the most challenging occasions of recent times. He emphasized the importance of enhancing collaboration in oil and gas exploration, energy trade, and investment opportunities.



Ambassador Farhadov reiterated Azerbaijan's commitment to deepening economic and energy cooperation with Pakistan, emphasizing the shared vision for energy connectivity and development. He stressed that Azerbaijan highly regards its relationship with Pakistan. Together, we aim to deepen our historic brotherly relations through stronger economic cooperation, focusing especially on energy partnerships. The Minister highlighted his upcoming participation in the Baku Energy Week, where he will represent Pakistan and engage with global energy leaders to promote partnerships for sustainable energy development. He also noted that SOCAR Upstream, Azerbaijan's state owned company, is in talks with Pakistani counterparts for potential collaborations in the exploration sector, which could open new opportunities for mutual growth. Both sides agreed to accelerate discussions on joint ventures to harness the full potential of their strategic partnership. They expressed optimism about future collaborations that will benefit both nations and contribute to energy security in the region.

G7 finance chiefs seek unity
as Canada talks near end

The meeting's host, Canadian FM Francois-Philippe Champagne, declined to say whether he raised the issue of tariffs in his bilateral meeting with Bessent, but insisted the pair "get along very well"

BANFF: Talks among G7 finance ministers faced challenges Wednesday as the group worked to overcome divides on thorny issues like the impact of US President Donald Trump's tariffs and support for Ukraine.

With discussions set to close Thursday, hopes for a final communiqué reflecting unity among the Group of Seven advanced economies remained uncertain, as tensions persist on Trump's trade policies.

The day began with an exchange of pleasantries and the traditional group photo in front of snow-capped mountains at a hotel in western Canada's Banff National Park. But friction among the group — comprising Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — emerged shortly after meetings began.

Italian Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti said the start of the talks faced "some difficulties." But he added that the group was "able to overcome these differences," and voiced hope a final statement reflecting G7 unity could be reached. Few concrete details emerged from Wednesday's

talks but US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent had been expected to face pushback on Trump's tariffs, which threaten to drag down global economic growth. Bessent described Wednesday's talks as "very productive." The meeting's host, Canadian Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne, declined to say whether he raised the issue of tariffs in his bilateral meeting with Bessent, but insisted the pair "get along very well."

Asked about friction in the talks, Champagne said: "That's why we have meetings, we have frank discussions." "We're both pleased about the progress we're making and the sense of unity of the G7," Champagne told reporters.

Japanese Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato told reporters that during his meeting with Bessent, he affirmed that US tariffs were "extremely regrettable" and "not always an appropriate measure to adjust trade imbalances." Trump has repeatedly complained about US trade deficits, and at times implied his global tariffs were partly aimed at balancing US exports and imports. — Agencies

IMF pushes for
higher taxes on
fertiliser, pesticide

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is pressing Pakistan to significantly increase taxes on key agricultural inputs in the upcoming budget, a move that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team are reportedly striving to mitigate or avoid. Sources indicate that the IMF has specifically called for an increase in the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on fertiliser, from the current 5% to 10%. The News reported on Thursday. Additionally, the global lender is proposing a new 5% tax on pesticides. The demands were part of discussions held Wednesday between Jihad Azour, the IMF's visiting director for the Middle East, and Pakistan's Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb, at the Ministry of Finance, as they work towards finalising the national budget. PM Shehbaz is reportedly making efforts to persuade the IMF to reconsider these proposed tax hikes, arguing that they would place an undue burden on the farm sector. A key point of contention for Pakistan is the impending implementation of the Agriculture Income Tax (AIT), which is set to become operational from July 1, 2025, with the next budget. While precise revenue projections for the AIT are still in their early stages, various estimates suggest that provinces could generate between Rs40 to Rs50 billion from farmers in the short term. — APP

'Serious' accident
at North Korea
warship launch

SEOUL: A major accident occurred at the launch ceremony for a new North Korean naval destroyer, state media reported Thursday, with leader Kim Jong Un calling the mishap a "criminal act". At a ceremony to launch a new 5,000-ton vessel in the eastern port city of Chongjin on Wednesday "a serious accident occurred", the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. South Korea's military said North Korea also fired "multiple unidentified cruise missiles" on Thursday, which were detected near the North's South Hamgyong province after being "fired toward the East Sea", also known as the Sea of Japan. Blaming "inexperienced command and operational carelessness" for the destroyer's botched launch — which was observed by Kim — KCNA said there was a mishap which left "some sections of the warship's bottom crushed". It said the accident managed to "destroy the balance of the warship". Kim watched the entire incident and declared it a "criminal act caused by absolute carelessness", warning it "could not be tolerated". He said the "irresponsible errors" of officials responsible would be "dealt with at the plenary meeting of the Party Central Committee to be convened next month". South Korea's military said US and Seoul intelligence authorities assess that North Korea's "side-launch attempt" of the ship failed. "The side-launch method used in this case is no longer employed by South Korea's military," Lee Sung-jun, spokesperson for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters. The vessel is currently listing in the water, Lee said, and based on its size and scale, it is believed to be similarly equipped to the 5,000-ton destroyer-class warship Choe Hyon, which North Korea unveiled last month. — APP

Trump's 'Golden Dome' US missile
defense plan faces major challenges

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's plan for a nationwide missile defense system — dubbed "Golden Dome" — faces significant technical and political challenges, and it could cost far more than he has estimated to achieve its goals. Trump wants a system that can defend against a wide array of enemy weapons — from intercontinental ballistic missiles to hypersonic and cruise missiles to drones — and he wants it ready in about three years, or as he nears the end of his second term in office.

Four months after Trump initially ordered the Pentagon to develop options for the system, however, little in the way of further details has emerged. "The main challenges will be cost, the defense industrial base, and political will. They can all be overcome, but it will take focus and prioritization," said Melanie Marlowe, a nonresident senior associate in the Missile Defense Project at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"The White House and Congress are going to have to agree on how much to spend and where the money will come from," Marlowe said, noting that "our defense industrial base has atrophied," though "we have begun to revive it." She also cited the need for more progress on sensors, interceptors and other components of the project. Trump on Tuesday announced an initial \$25 billion in funding for Golden Dome, saying its eventual cost would be about \$175 billion. That figure is likely far lower than the actual price of such a system. Thomas Roberts, assistant professor of international affairs and aerospace engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, said the price estimate was "not realistic." "The challenge with the statements from yesterday is that they lack the details needed to develop a model of what this constellation would really look like," he said. Earlier this month, the non-partisan Congressional Budget

Office (CBO) estimated the cost of space-based interceptors to defeat a limited number of intercontinental ballistic missiles at between \$161 billion and \$542 billion over 20 years. A system such as that envisaged by Trump "could require a more expensive SBI (space-based interceptor) capability than the systems examined in the previous studies. Quantifying those recent changes will require further analysis," the CBO said. The Golden Dome concept — and name — stem from Israel's Iron Dome air defense system. But the United States' missile threats differ significantly from the short-range weapons that Iron Dome is designed to counter. Beijing is closing the gap with Washington when it comes to ballistic and hypersonic missile technology, while Moscow is modernizing its intercontinental-range missile systems and developing advanced precision strike missiles, according to the Pentagon's 2022 Missile Defense Review. The document also said the threat of drones — which have played a key role in the Ukraine war — is likely to grow, and warned of the danger of ballistic missiles from North Korea and Iran, as well as rocket and missile threats from non-state actors. Chad Ohlandt, a senior engineer at the RAND Corporation, said "the threat is clearly getting worse," but the "key question is how to most cost effectively counter" it. "Any questions of realism or feasibility" for Golden Dome "depend on where we set the bar. Defend against how many threats? Threats of what capability? What is to be defended? As you raise the bar, it becomes more expensive," Ohlandt said. Thomas Withington, associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, said "there are a number of bureaucratic, political, science and technological milestones that will need to be achieved if Golden Dome is ever going to enter service in any meaningful capacity." — APP

Indian HC
official
declared
persona
non grata

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has declared a staff member of the High Commission of India here, as persona non grata for engaging in activities "inconsistent with his privileged status." The official concerned has been directed to leave Pakistan within 24 hours, according to a Foreign Office press release issued late Wednesday night. In this regard, the Indian chargé d'affaires was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to convey this decision. It was stressed that none of the diplomats or staff members of the Indian High Commission should misuse their privileges and status in any manner. — APP

TTP, BLA
Indian
proxies: Asif

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that two major terrorist groups operating in Pakistan were "Indian proxies", adding that Islamabad will present "complete evidence" to prove New Delhi's involvement in the attack on a school bus in Balochistan's Khuzdar district that killed three children and injured several others.

At least six people, including three students, were slain while over 40 others — mostly students — sustained injuries after a bomb targeted the bus near Zero Point in Khuzdar on the Quetta-Karachi highway when it was on its way to drop the students at the Army Public School in Khuzdar Cantonment.

The condition of at least a dozen is said to be serious due to critical injuries, officials said, adding that at least 15 girl students were among the injured. Security forces vowed to "relentlessly pursue" the culprits of the attack as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir visited the injured in Quetta yesterday.

Speaking on Geo News programme 'Aaj Shahzade Khanzada Kay Sath' late on Wednesday, Asif asserted there was evidence that the proscribed Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) was working as an Indian proxy.

